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Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur

JANICE M. STAPLES

Date of Birth — Date de naissance

July 15, 1951

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance

CANADA

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe

60 MacLaren St. Apt #401
Ottawa

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse

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Dr R. Whitaker

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Janice Staples

BEYOND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL: A STUDY
OF THE INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF RADICAL PROTEST POLITICS
IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY CANADA

by

JANICE STAPLES

A thesis submitted to

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

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the requirements for the degree of

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Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

The undersigned hereby recommend to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
acceptance of the thesis, submitted by
Janice Staples, B.A. (Hons.), M.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

.....
Chairman, Department of
Political Science

.....
Thesis Supervisor

.....
External Examiner

Carleton University

April 1985

FOR MY PARENTS

ABSTRACT

Social gospel radicalism and its major theoreticians have left a lasting imprint on Canadian socialist tradition. This thesis examines the political thought of four social gospellers, J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem Bland. These men were born at a time when the character of Canada was being transformed, economically and demographically. As social gospel ministers in prewar Winnipeg they shared common experiences which influenced not only their future career decisions but ultimately the direction and content of their thought. Mounting opposition from the Church for their radical views coupled with the social gospel's emphasis on interaction with the secular surroundings, in this case the particularly volatile environment of social unrest prevailing in prewar Winnipeg, contributed to their secularization. As a result they turned increasingly towards the political party as the major vehicle for social change.

However, elements of their religious and class backgrounds remained as major influences on their views, as

an analysis of their political thought within C.B. Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist assumptions indicates. Their religious legacy manifested itself in their writings and speeches in a variety of ways, including a preoccupation with the workings of human nature. Their ambiguous class position as ministers in a capitalist society with a large, politically conscious, independent commodity producer class led them to identify with the experiences and perceptions of both agrarian and urban workers. The perspective which they subsequently gained helped them to recognize the necessity of bridging the theoretical and organizational elements of the farm and labour movements, the interplay of which forms the very basis of Canadian social democratic tradition.

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PREFACE

From the late 1800's to the first quarter of the twentieth century, the economic and social character of Canada was radically transformed. This transformation included the creation of two new provinces, the exploitation of mineral resources, the exportation of new staples (especially wheat), a population increase of more than three million and an accelerated shift towards urbanization. Global economic conditions, a national policy which had created a western agricultural hinterland, and technological innovation and industrial expansion not only precipitated the above changes but had the effect of radically restructuring the Canadian workforce. In central Canada, the number of factory workers increased, while the number of skilled craftsmen and farmers decreased. In the West the position of the numerically dominant class, the farmers, became consolidated within a quasi - colonial economy. These phenomena created major problems to which certain new critiques and solutions were developed.

Canadians, whose occupation allowed them to think in broad social terms, began to lend a voice to the demands for social and economic change emanating from farmers and

labourers. Those who were used to thinking critically reacted in different ways when confronted with the manifestation of great strains within Canadian society. While most chose to ignore the unrest and never challenged the hegemony of the capitalist class, others reacted critically by analyzing and offering solutions to the problems as they perceived them. Prominent among this latter group were many members of the social gospel movement, mainly ministers, teachers, and social workers.

This thesis focusses on the political thought of four social gospellers. They were J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem Bland all of whom were active and influential in the labour and agrarian protest movements and who had theorized from a socialist perspective on the problems of early twentieth century Canada. What is of particular interest is that these individuals were all, at one point, Protestant ministers with common ecclesiastical and secular experiences in prewar Winnipeg. Furthermore, all had, by the second decade of the twentieth century, been relieved of their various professional posts within the Church.

The subsequent paths which each decided to follow

differed, however. Woodsworth, Smith, and Irvine decided to leave the ministry and enter the political arena. This switch from sacred to secular activism manifested itself differently for each individual. J.S. Woodsworth in choosing social democratic politics became instrumental in forging the first solid links between the farm and labour movements, which eventually led to the merging of the greater part of these two movements into the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1932. Smith, in contrast, after flirting with social democracy, embraced, at the sacrifice of originality and individuality of thought, the other alternative of protest politics of the time, the Communist Party of Canada. William Irvine's path at first deviated from, but eventually merged with Woodsworth's by the early 1930's. Bland, unlike the others, did not resign the ministry, and while not totally substituting the Church for the political party as the major vehicle for change he, nevertheless, heavily supplemented ecclesiastical activity with the secular pursuits of journalism and politics.

Their individual choices were, of course, reflected in their political thought, which will be analysed within C.B. Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist.

assumptions. Among the issues which are examined is the influence of their religious and, in particular, social gospel background not only on the content but on the focus of their political thought. Also examined is the extent to which their ambiguous class position in a capitalist society with a politically conscious agrarian population led them to encompass the perceptions of both farmers and urban workers, as well as any effects which this may have had on their political thought.

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first provides the context in which their thought developed and focusses specifically on prewar Winnipeg. Four chapters follow, one devoted to the political thought of each of the four individuals under study, using as a framework C.B. Macpherson's possessive individualist assumptions. The sixth and last chapter contains conclusions and observations.

CHAPTER I

The well-documented historical pattern of Christianity has been one of the perpetuation of the existing social structure through a doctrine of peaceful acceptance of earthly sufferings and submission to secular powers in return for a heavenly reward. At times, the church has gone further down this path and openly supported the dominant ideology of the ruling class. But Christian discourse also reveals a substantial potential for radicalism. As opposed to being used as the panacea for social unrest, Christianity has also acted as a catalyst for social revolt. The Primitive Christian communities of the earliest centuries A.D.; the millenarian movements of the Middle Ages, (e.g. Taborites); the Anabaptists of the 16th century; radical protestantism of the British civil wars, (e.g. the Levellers); and the Christian Socialists of mid-nineteenth century Britain are all examples of a Christianity based on the concern for quality of life on earth.¹ The social gospel falls within this tradition.

Social gospel philosophy rested "on the premise that Christianity was a social religion, concerned, when the misunderstanding of the ages was stripped away, with the quality of human relations on this earth...it was a call

for men to find the meaning of their lives in seeking to realize the Kingdom of God in the very fabric of society."² Very simply put, it utilized religious principles as a blueprint for the reconstruction of society.

The social gospel was not a uniquely Canadian movement, but was part of a widespread attempt in Europe and North America to revive and develop social insights and to apply them to the emerging forms of collective society. This task was undertaken under the pressures of positive, organic, and developmental forms of thought arising in Europe and Britain in the wake of Comte, Darwin, and Marx.³

However, the Canadian social gospel movement emerged and developed its own national tendencies, moulded by historical circumstances unique to the country.⁴ Primarily, social gospel ideas were embraced as the vast transformations taking place in early twentieth century Canada, and the human misery which ensued, illustrated the need for social amelioration.

The reasons why social gospel took root so tenaciously can be found in the particular religious and cultural heritage of English Canada. As Hobsbawm observed: "historically speaking, the process of building new institutions, new ideas, new theories and tactics rarely starts as a deliberate job of social engineering. Men live surrounded by a vast accumulation of past devices, and it is natural to pick the most suitable of these and to adapt them for their own (and novel) purposes."⁵ In Canada, the influx of

• British Methodist immigrants and Congregationalists and Baptists from the New England States⁶ with a strong evangelistic background stimulated the development of the social gospel in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. The Methodist, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches form the main historical roots of Protestantism in Canada with Methodism as the largest denomination by the mid nineteenth century⁷. Furthermore "the dominant strand in Canadian Protestantism was evangelical" with Methodists as the "most enthusiastic exponents of the evangelical position".⁸

Historically, evangelism has played an important role in the acceptance of the social gospel movement in English speaking nations.⁹ Generally speaking, the widespread presence of evangelism in nineteenth century Canada helped foster the development of gentler and more compassionate ideas of God, a crucial component of social gospel doctrine. Less preoccupied with metaphysical debate over what constituted the nature of God, evangelism believed that God's love was attainable by anyone who seriously desired it. Furthermore, the Methodist theme of sanctification also contributed to social gospel thought. However, social gospel theologians instead of stressing individual

sanctification called for the sanctification of society as a whole.¹⁰

As well, however, Anglicanism and Presbyterianism (which, with Methodism, constituted the main elements of Protestantism in Canada) also contributed to the entrenchment of this religious doctrine of social amelioration, especially through their more evangelical strains. For example, Presbyterianism lent its support to the social gospellers through the Free Kirk movement, which was established in 1844, a year following the secessionist move of the Free Church from the Established Church of Scotland. Of the eight distinct Presbyterian bodies in Canada during this period the Free Church was the most evangelical and, thus, influential in the social gospel movement. In terms of Presbyterian doctrine, its influence on social gospel thought can be discerned in elements of the Calvinistic ethic of "strong moral activism" and the belief that, although the individual was not necessarily judged by his/her good works alone, "good works were certainly the consequence of and expression of salvation"¹¹.

Anglicanism, too, made its contribution to the movement, through the Established Church whose paternalistic values had by now undergone a transformation and had become manifested in the social service movement. Aspects of the

old structure, which strengthened the movement, included the stress laid on the concept of the corporate entity of the Church, a factor which tended to counter-balance the effect of economic individualism, and sacramentalism, which perceived that material objects could be construed as avatars of spiritual transcendence. These two elements repudiated mere materialism whether it was of capitalist or socialist origins.¹²

By the 1890's, the social gospel movement had been firmly established in Canada. Queen University's Annual Theological Conference and Winnipeg's Wesley College were the two main centres of intellectual and organizational activity for the social gospel during "the generation of its ascent."¹³ Of the two, Wesley College proved to be the most vital and influential. Founded in 1888, as an affiliate of the University of Manitoba, it was not until 1894 that Wesley established "a separate faculty in Theology for the examination for, and the granting of, the degrees of Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Divinity".¹⁴

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth "Wesley's students to a degree evidently unique in the Canadian prairies and perhaps in the country as a whole - reflected the spirit of the age of reform, and became agents of its dissemination."¹⁵ From

this school, and the environs of Winnipeg generally, came a number of individuals who would soon enter the fray of radical labour and agrarian protest politics, among them, J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem Bland.¹⁶

Of Wesley, Richard Allen has said:

Set in a community already impressed with the social possibilities of new beginnings on the Canadian prairies, it provided a nucleus of Christian social enthusiasm, not only for some of its faculty and students but for younger clergy of various denominations and socially conscious young men outside the college.¹⁷

The social gospel, by its very nature, focussed on its secular environment and, in turn, was affected by it. This was especially true for the social gospellers of Wesley who were particularly pragmatic in their application of social gospel teachings to the specific economic and social problems experienced in the West (and the four men under study were at the forefront of this tendency). The college was situated in the major metropolis of the west, a city which has its beginnings with the growth of the wheat economy and which in its early years was highly dependent on the grain trade and thus was susceptible to the instability of such a foundation.¹⁸ These factors, plus Winnipeg's

placement as the capital city of a rural prairie province, exposed its residents to the particular concerns of the prairie independent commodity producers. It was, therefore, natural that, as Richard Allen in the Social Passion has observed "tariffs and grain trade, railway rates and direct legislation became vital Christian concerns" at Wesley College, with Salem Bland as one of the major exponents of this perspective.¹⁹ The social gospellers' focus on the problems of the prairie farmers and the reforms necessary for rectification led to their involvement in the organizational structures and politics of western progressivism to the extent that "by 1919, the social gospel had become in effect, the religion of agrarian revolt."²⁰

Concomitantly, urban social problems emanating from the rapid industrialization were also major preoccupations of social gospellers in prewar Winnipeg, as well as in other Canadian cities. Following in the footsteps of their British counterparts, Canadian social gospellers, especially within the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, created special study committees to focus on the problems of industrialization and urbanization. These committees dealt with topics such as temperance and social services. As well, the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada was

established in 1913, again through the efforts of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches.²¹ The Council's first nation-wide conference on social problems, held a year later at the peak of the social gospel movement in Canada, attracted two hundred delegates from across Canada. Representatives of governments, labour unions, welfare organizations, farm groups and churches listened to the ideas of some forty speakers. The closing address, presented by Rev. Stelzle of New York, summed up the prevailing theme of the conference when he called on the delegates to "apply the principles of Jesus Christ fearlessly to the economic and social conditions....[and] to talk about social salvation"²².

Winnipeg social gospellers displayed particular concern for the problems of rapid industrialization and urbanization, perhaps reflecting concern for the conditions prevailing in the city during the pre-war period. Acting upon the principles of the social gospel "a legion of men and women, lay and clerical, attempted to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to north Winnipeg".²³

The city was particularly subjected to the vast changes which the National Policy had wrought. Winnipeg by the turn of the century had benefitted greatly from the

burgeoning grain trade, the completion of the Canadian National Railway from the east and the accompanying vast influx of immigrants. By World War I, the city had become a major distributing point, as well as the fourth largest manufacturing center in Canada. While in 1891, the average manufacturing company in Winnipeg engaged the services of 8 workers and possessed a capitalization of \$10,000, by 1911, these figures had increased to 62 and 147,000 respectively.²⁴ Mergers and consolidations were marking the expansion of industrial capitalism, not only in Winnipeg, but throughout the country at large. Although the number of non-railway industrial establishments had decreased from 307 to 103, total production rose from \$5.6 million to over \$8.6 million worth of goods between 1891 and 1901. By 1911 further expansion resulted in the diversification of Winnipeg's industrial plant to 35 types of firms with a wide range of products and production of over \$32 million worth of goods.²⁵

One of the consequences of this boom in industrialization was a population explosion. Winnipeg's growth rate from 1871 to 1921 outstripped those of almost every other Canadian city from a town of 241 ranking 62nd in the country to 3rd among the urban centres in 1911, with a population of

136,035.²⁶ Although this expansion delighted the business community the rate of growth was too rapid to be controlled. Overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions in cheap tenements resulted in numerous health problems such as endemic disease, especially typhodal outbreaks.

Much of this population growth can be accounted for by massive immigration, the majority of which was from other provinces and the British Isles. However, a full twenty-two percent of Winnipeg's population in 1911 was of non Anglo-Saxon origin.²⁷ The special problems that arise when a significant amount of an explosive population growth emanates from immigrants of different languages and cultures, was further exacerbated by the particular demographic distribution of Winnipeg's population. The routing of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the city and the establishment of the railway yards coupled with the subsequent development of other industries attracted by the railway, helped determine Winnipeg's demography. By the turn of the century the North End "had in fact become dominated by the working class and by large groups of foreign immigrants". Although encompassing less than 1/3 of the city's geographical territory, by 1906 this area held within its confines 43% of the population.²⁸ Concomitantly

the city's South and West ends were inhabited by upper and middle classes of Anglo-Saxon stock. This particular segregational pattern of growth only aggravated and exacerbated Winnipeg's overall social ills, which were not being properly attended to, either by public or private sources.

Winnipeg, like the other western cities of Edmonton and Vancouver, attempted to copy Ontario's example by offering public aid based on private charity.

To be successful, such a practice required that each partner be of roughly the same strength. But, however, in the west the private sector was weak....All three municipal experiments ended with the cities assuming a policy making role that was commensurate with their overwhelming financial contributions. Exigency dictated that the public sector would play the preponderant role in the welfare field in the western cities...But an apparatus of exigency does not imply a highly developed sense of social responsibility, and in fact this was the case. The various apparatuses were mainly an efficient means of disbursing funds. What appeared at first to be a radical and thoroughly modern approach to welfare was in almost every respect a matter of structural expediency. There was a very weak sense of social service within the civic structure and virtually no trained personnel, apart from nurses."²⁹

Some of the private initiatives which did develop in response to the social problems of unbridled growth in Winnipeg emanated from the churches. The Methodist church

was one of the more generous contributors among the religious organizations, and one of its major initiatives took the form of the All Peoples Mission, which was originally established privately by Dolly McGuire in 1899 as a Sunday School for European immigrant children. However, by the turn of the century, the Mission had come under the official auspices of the Methodist Church. It soon expanded into two branches which, in 1907, were consolidated under its first superintendent, J.S. Woodsworth.³⁰

Under Woodsworth's directorship commencing in 1907, the religious aspects of the mission, such as Sunday school classes, remained strong, while new impetus was given to such secular activities as kindergarten, sewing, gardening and English classes and house-to-house visitations. "In consequence the entire mission became less evangelical and less denominational than it might have been under another leader."³¹ By the time of his resignation in 1913, Woodworth had instituted settlement houses and Sunday afternoon "People's Forum" meetings, which had a distinctively secular flavor, in addition to attempting to educate the general public on the problems it encountered.³² Yet, despite the attempts of such organizations as the All People's

Mission, the Charity Organization Society, and the Social Welfare Commission, as well as attempts by middle class progressives³³ to deal with the "frontier of poor" within the city, problems of incredible magnitude remained.³⁴

The reinforcing class, demographic, and ethnic cleavages in prewar Winnipeg were but manifestations of the particular interplay of class relations which existed in the workplace and which were endorsed and actively supported by provincial and civic authorities.

These processes were evident throughout Canada in the first decades of the twentieth century but were particularly pronounced in Winnipeg. Here the owner-managerial class was newer, fewer in number and more tightly knit than in many other industrial centres. All frequented the same clubs and associations and lived in the same areas...This class deeply believed they would be the elite of a new industrial centre that might, with luck, ambition, and intelligence, soon rival Chicago as the western capital of the continent."³⁵

Unified in their quest for economic growth and hence profit, and in their belief that they were "agents of improvement", Winnipeg businessmen measured progress in material terms and "directed their effort toward achieving rapid and sustained growth at the expense of any and all considerations."³⁶

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The working class movement in early twentieth century Winnipeg, however, was not easily daunted by opposition mounted either from employers or political authorities. By the late 1890's, trade unions were firmly established in the city. Railway yards had brought in their wake unions and these unions, as well as those of the shop craft and running trades, came to constitute the vanguard as well as provide the leadership, organizational skills, members, and the basic ideology of the early trade union movement of the city.³⁷ Many of these unions were composed of British immigrants, skilled tradesmen whose commitment to the concept of unionization had been formed long before their trek to the new world. The expectations of a better life, which motivated their move westward, only served to add fuel to their struggle for change.

Those who had worked the land in Europe, who had survived the mining wars of the American frontier, who escaped the turbulence, insecurity, restrictiveness, and polarization of British society, or the falling wages and lower productivity of the Welsh coal fields, had come to the Canadian frontier for a new start and better opportunities. But they soon found themselves victims of a new oppression. This was the frontier, but the mining communities were pockets of industrial

feudalism denying the opportunity of the frontier to those who sought it while the cities were only slightly better. This deep frustration provided fertile soil for the socialists and syndicalists who offered radical change and abolition of 'wage slavery'.³⁸

The exploitation caused by Winnipeg businessmen was supported by both sins of commission and omission on the part of political authorities. This reality was all too clear to the city's trade unionists and only served to accelerate the development of radicalism. For example, the various aspects of the federal government's National Policy were perceived by western trade unionists as detrimental to their cause. They realized that because of the tariff, central Canadian manufacturers possessed a natural advantage, and their Western counterparts, in attempting to compete with them, exploited their employees with less pay and longer hours. In addition, prairie workers were convinced that the tariff also artificially inflated the prices they had to pay for goods. Their perception of the tariff, was similar to that of their rural neighbour, the western independent commodity producer whose belief was that the tariff "forced him to buy the necessities of life at prices artificially protected, while he had to sell his products on an unprotected market."³⁹ This was a case where the regional cleavage

overrode that of class thus causing a split between the trade unionists of Western Canada and their counterparts in the East⁴⁰.

Winnipeg's labour movement was no less enamored of its treatment at the hands of the Manitoba provincial government. Labour standards legislation in Manitoba was abysmal and for the most part the few pieces that were passed were either rescinded or not enforced for fear that any restrictions placed on the employer's freedom would discourage economic growth. An instance of this occurred in 1906 when the Manitoba government, at the request of Winnipeg businessmen, took the step of actually reducing the minimum age for child labour and increasing the maximum number of hours of work allowed for women and children⁴¹. Immediately prior to World War One, legislation still allowed children to work a maximum of 72 hours a week, the same amount of time as men who worked in establishments of five or more. "In promulgating such restricted and primitive legislation and further amending it so that its effectiveness, debatable at best, was undercut, the provincial government created a legacy of mistrust and ill will that stimulated the growth of trade unionism."⁴²

By its very intransigence and oppressiveness, the city government also contributed to the growth of trade unionism. "Politically, the city was governed by a select group of successful businessmen who, by means of a restricted franchise, plural vote, and centralized form of government, excluded Winnipeg's labour and ethnic groups from political office, thereby ensuring that only their conception of desirable public policy would prevail."⁴³ This conception was one of economic growth, a notion that was equated with rapid population increase. Monies were spent on advertising for immigrants rather than providing adequate living conditions for the influx.

Therefore, by 1911 a mixture of economic, political, and cultural factors had interacted to place Winnipeg among the most heavily unionized cities in Canada.⁴⁴ The city's union members were among the most highly developed in terms of class consciousness as well as amenability to the use of both syndicalist and political methods. Class polarization came early in Winnipeg. Just as the capitalist class were united in the pursuit of economic growth so did the workers experience a strong sense of community. "They were the vanguard of the industrial working class on the prairies and often the vanguard of trade unionism as well. They lived in

a closely defined geographic area and were isolated from the great centres of Ontario and the United States."⁴⁵

Strikes, a common form of protest in prewar Winnipeg, only tended "to increase the individual workmen's awareness of his position in society and heighten his identification with others of his group."⁴⁶ This tendency was even further reinforced by the frequent use of court injunctions and militia against the strikers by the various levels of the state. Some of the earliest major strikes in Winnipeg took place in 1906 in the street railway dispute and the Vulcan Iron Works lockout. In the latter it was the first time the legal system had been used against the strikers in Winnipeg. The court injunction, although prompting the involvement of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, ended in bitter defeat for the workers. These plus other strikes within the next few years, such as the Great West Saddlery Company strike of 1911, laid the foundations for the sympathetic strikes of 1918 and, of course, the General Strike of a year later. In fact, the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike was simply the manifestation of

the continuing class division that has marked the history of the city for over half a century. The events of May and June 1919, were preceded and followed by growing splits

in society and were largely products of those divisions. The strike was the most dramatic of events which contributed to class memory and polarization, but it did not initiate these psychological attitudes. Class consciousness was a strong factor in Winnipeg prior to the strike [and] laid the foundation for labour's political successes of the 1920's...⁴⁷

Since the inception of trade unions in Winnipeg, political activity had been seen by trade unionists as a viable and even necessary ingredient to the labour movement's success. Prompted in part by the newly arrived British trade unionist's legacy of political activism, the first attempts at forming a labour party came as early as the turn of the century.

Labour's first registered success was the election of Arthur Puttee in a federal by-election in 1900.⁴⁸ Factionalism, ideological division as well as the ability of the two traditional parties to maintain the allegiance of the urban worker hampered the move to the political arena in early twentieth century Winnipeg. By the time of the General Strike, however, labour had gained representation in both the civic government and provincial legislature. With this as a basis, the 1919 strike further solidified the concept of political action as a means of change for the labour movement because it demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the syndicalist weapon against the combined power of the

employers and the state. This, combined with the fact that "the long struggle had given labour a sense of solidarity and of effectiveness and the prosecution of the strike leaders...created a martyrology" resulted in a number of individuals who were actively involved in the strike, being elected to political office.⁴⁹ In 1920, four such individuals were elected to the Manitoba Legislature, including A.E. Smith, and in the following year J.S. Woodsworth was voted into the House of Commons for Winnipeg Centre.

Well before the outbreak of the war, the groundwork had been laid for the events which were to wrack Winnipeg in the immediate postwar period. The war simply crystallized the situation.

Workers believed they were being forced to suffer low wages and rising prices while the wealthy raked in fat war profits. They saw that without men to fire the guns or run the lathes there would be no war effort. They heard stirring pronouncements from their patriots; but when they asked government for concessions in the form of fair wage clauses in war-supply contracts they were turned back. Once again it appeared as though those in power would not recognize the special desires or necessities of workers and they became more convinced than ever that they had little or nothing in common with employers or governments composed of and supported by the wealthy.⁵⁰

Just as events of the last half decade of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth century precipitated the General Strike of 1919, and labour's political coming of age in Winnipeg, it also profoundly affected the lives of J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem Bland.

It was precisely because of their adherence to the doctrine of the social gospel that their attention was turned towards the secular environment. What had started as a strong concern for the injustices of Canadian society, motivated by the religious aim of establishing a Kingdom of God on Earth, gradually became transformed into the goal of founding a new social order based on the premise of social, political, and economic equality. Richard Allen, agreeing with James Nichols in History of Christianity, 1650 - 1950, commented that the social gospel "was a call for men to find the meaning of

their lives in seeking to realize the Kingdom of God in the very fabric of society. Although there were clear theological implications in such a position, the social gospel did not regard itself as primarily a theological movement. Indeed, it has been observed that its preoccupation with social problems may have been partly motivated by a desire to escape from theological perplexities."⁵¹

Moreover, the belief of these four men in the social gospel only served to further frustrate them by increasing their expectations of social change; expectations which the Church could not easily fulfill. The social gospel gave them the content and focus for change but it could not adequately act as the vehicle. As a consequence these men increasingly turned towards secular organizations in their quest to better society; a quest made more intense by the social reality of prewar Winnipeg. Their attempts at social amelioration in a city that was experiencing the most intensive process of industrialization and urbanization in early twentieth century Canada, and which acted as the gateway to three prairie provinces of independent commodity producers, solely dependent on the wheat economy for survival, led them to realize the inadequacies of using the Church as the only vehicle for social change.

These men from an early stage had become involved in secular activities in Winnipeg. J.S. Woodsworth, as noted, headed the All People's Mission for a six year period and was aided in some of its supplementary activities by William Irvine. Woodsworth also sat on the Trades and Labour Council for the Winnipeg Ministerial Association during the Great West Saddlery Company Strike of 1911. Salem Bland and

A.E. Smith were also involved in Winnipeg's industrial disputes, such as speaking on behalf of the strikers in 1906. In addition, Bland, Irvine, and Woodsworth had all become involved either in an organizational or journalistic capacity for prairie agrarian organizations, if not during their stay in Winnipeg, shortly thereafter. As well, all of these individuals, by the end of the war, had experienced political baptism either by running for office themselves or becoming very involved in the campaigns of other candidates.

Generally speaking, there existed a dialectical relationship between the increasing secularization of the lives of these four individuals during this period and the reaction of the Church to them as radical social gospellers. Also important was the particular interaction among the various wings of the social gospel movement within the Church, which after the start of the war began to demonstrate internal divisions.

What has been said of the American Progressives, previous to World War One, can also be applied to Canadian social gospellers of the same time period. "The very vagueness of the vision and rhetoric of a Christian democracy created a semblance of a national unity of purpose, encouraging the progressive generation to minimize divisions between various kinds of reformers and

conservatives within and without the Churches."⁵² But after 1914, three different tendencies of thought began to crystallize within the Canadian movement. The conservative emphasis, based on traditional evangelism, lay in placing the onus and responsibility for sin on the individual and attempting to eradicate it through personal salvation. This was to be achieved through the modification of certain characteristics of individual behaviour, although some slight alteration, such as prohibition, should be made to the overall social environment, in order to facilitate individual redemption. Conversely, the radicals viewed society as an organic whole. They felt that there could be no personal salvation without a complete societal reconstruction. Finally the progressive section, attempted to bridge the gap between the two extremes.⁵³

The radical social gospel wing, of which these four men were members, was often in conflict, not only with the Church hierarchy but with the other social gospel factions. The war was one of the major points of contention. "Whatever the long-run possibility of tensions between them [the radical social gospellers] and the rest of the movement, it was through the pressures of the war and issues relating to the war that the crisis developed."⁵⁴ In the

case of Woodsworth, it was his direct opposition to militarism based on strong pacifist convictions. With the others it was more their "concern with the successful prosecution of the war [which] required national unity and equality of sacrifice...[and which] could be fulfilled they believed, through a reorganization of the federal government and more social controls on industry."⁵⁵

Support for the war on the part of the Protestant Churches was intense. This was especially true for the Methodist Church where ministers virtually acted as recruiting officers. Ironically, it was during the war years that the Methodist social conscience was at its height. The clearest illustration of such heightened radicalism can be found in the report of the Committee on the Church in Relation to War and Patriotism which was adopted, after long debate, by the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada. The authors called for "a transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of cooperation and service." Moreover, they realized that "the acceptance of this report, it cannot be too clearly recognized, commits this Church, as far as this representative body can commit it, to nothing less than a complete social reconstruction."⁵⁶

Similarly, the Presbyterian Church especially its Board of Evangelism and Social Service expressed strong sentiments of social reform through its annual resolutions. However, these radical statements from both the Methodist and Presbyterian Conferences did not necessarily correspond to either the actions of the Church hierarchy or the attitude of the various congregations. All four men, notwithstanding the Church's more radical pronouncements during this period not only "found themselves relating even ~~more~~ closely to their favorite constituencies, the agrarian and the labour movements" but had "lost their professional posts...[and]..believed their fate to be the result of increasing commercialism in the Church and the growing reaction in the state."⁵⁷

A mixture of factors contributed to this particular conjuncture of events. The internal dynamics of the social gospel movement prompted increasing interaction with the secular environment on the part of these individuals (in this case the particularly exploitative, class-divided environment of Winnipeg). As well, the intransigence of the Protestant Churches not as much to the ideas of the radical social gospel as to the actions which would translate these ideas into reality also served further to

alienate these individuals from the organized Church and push them even further down the path of secularization to the point where three of the four left the ministry. Yet elements of their social gospel background, and especially of their original religious vocations, remained and affected the content and, especially the focus, of their political thought.

Also influencing their thought was their position as members of a relatively free floating middle class, specifically their class position as clergy in early twentieth century Canada. Members of the middle class reacted in different ways when confronted with manifestations of great strains within the Canadian political economy. While most chose to ignore the strains and continued to contribute to the ideological hegemony of the capitalist class, others reacted critically by analysing and offering solutions to the problems as they perceived them.

Many of those belonging to the latter category were in "professions particularly teaching, preaching and journalism, which were in a somewhat problematic relationship to the dominant forces of capitalism, and were feared by these forces as unruly and untrustworthy agitational elements."⁵⁸ The most vocal and active members

of the middle class who adhered to progressive ideals were social gospel clergy. In other Western countries, especially in the United States and Great Britain, various professions, including journalism, teaching and social work contributed to the middle class pressure for social reform. In Canada, however, a number of factors, such as the relative lack of industrialization, frontier demographic conditions, and the numerical size and political impact of the agrarian population in the early 20th century, intensified the rôle the clergy was to play, both within the Canadian intellectual milieu and as catalysts to the industrial and agrarian unrest of the time. It was specifically those clergy of social gospel persuasion, among them Woodsworth, Smith, Irvine, and Bland who allied with those classes of subordinate position in the prevailing relations of production.

It was their religious background, middle class position in a capitalist society with a politically conscious agrarian sector, and their involvement and identification with farm and industrial workers which led to some interesting contradictions in their political views. No particular set of political ideas was unconditionally embraced and none was immune to being tempered by their

perspective of the Canadian experience. This was especially the case in their advocacy of farm-labour cooperation, which emanated not from any British or American theory, but rather from their observations of the Canadian social structure.⁵⁹

It is precisely because of these individuals' background, their ambiguous class position, and the subsequent interdependence of "theory and practice",⁶⁰ evident in their political thinking, that particular importance should be placed on an analysis of their assumptions towards human nature and societal relations. These factors bore heavily on their critique of early twentieth century Canada, as well as their vision of a new social order.

Needed is a reference point, from which to study these assumptions. The framework chosen is C.B. Macpherson's outline of the major assumptions towards human nature and societal relations prevalent in capitalist societies as contained in Democratic Theory and The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism.

This specific framework will be used because it constitutes an explicit description of the assumptions underpinning modern liberal democratic societies. Even though these assumptions were outlined so as to draw out

the underlying premises of seventeenth century political theorists, especially in terms of their "concepts of freedom, rights, obligations and justice", they are useful for the understanding of early twentieth century Canada, and remain evident in modern western democratic countries.

These possessive individualist assumptions have been summed up as follows:

a) Man, the individual, is seen as absolute proprietor of his own capacities, owing nothing to society for them. Man's essence is freedom to use his capacities in search of satisfaction. This freedom is limited properly only by some principle of utility or utilitarian natural law which forbids harm among others. Freedom, therefore, is restricted to, and comes to be identified with, domination over things, not domination over men. The clearest form of domination over things is the relation of ownership or possession. Freedom is, therefore, possession. Everyone is free, for everyone possesses at least his own capacities.

b) Society is seen, not (as it had been) as a system of relations of domination and subordination between men and classes held together by reciprocal rights and duties, but as a lot of free individuals related to each other through what they have produced and accumulated by the use of their capacities. The relations of exchange (the market relation) is seen as the fundamental relations of society.

c) Political society is seen as a rational device for the protection of property, including capacities; even life and liberty are considered possessions rather than as social rights with correlative duties.⁶³

Up to the mid-nineteenth century, the liberal tradition with its postulates of possessive individualism and the justificatory theories of political obligation were considered by Macpherson to be scientific.

A political theory may be called scientific insofar as it seeks to deduce the desirable or right kind and degree of political obligation from the nature of man, and insofar as its view of the nature of man is based on inquiry as scientific as possible within the prevailing limits of knowledge and vision.

The great tradition from Hobbes through Locke, Hume, Burke, and Bentham does meet these standards. It makes up a ~~corpus~~ of classical theory, an essentially utilitarian theory of political obligation based on postulates of human nature which, within the limits of the then bourgeois vision, were profound. The limits of bourgeois vision with respect to political theory lay... in the assumption that bourgeois human nature is the final form (or, more usually, the universal form except for some supposed primitive age) of human nature.⁶⁴

In other words, up to the mid-nineteenth century, the assumptions "corresponded with social reality"⁶⁵ and were used as a basis for a theory of political obligation which was, at the same time, both scientific and justificatory.

This situation ceased to exist with the emergence of certain modifications in the economic base of 19th century England, as a consequence of the maturation of the

capitalist system. The growth of the working class, and its subsequent development of a political consciousness demonstrated the limitations of both the liberal theory of political obligation and the possessive individualist assumptions from which it was derived. Both the justice and the inevitability of the market were put into question. "Men no longer saw themselves fundamentally equal in an inevitable subjection to the determination of the market."⁶⁶

John Stuart Mill was the first political thinker, within the liberal tradition, to evaluate the possessive individualist assumptions and the accompanying theory of political obligation in light of the new conditions. He realized that the fundamental market relations of capitalist society were not producing a community of free and equal individuals, but rather a "dominant" and a "subservient" class and that freedom for the former meant domination over the latter. Furthermore, this "subservient class" was beginning to visualize alternatives to the system which had produced this injustice.⁶⁷ Therefore, both the abject poverty of the English working class and the subsequent development of a form of class consciousness, prompted Mill to radically modify the

prevailing liberal theory of political obligation and its underlying assumptions.

The liberal theory of political obligation as stated in utilitarian terms by Bentham, included the belief that market relations maximized the aggregate utility of all the members of a community. Although technically, all utilities were to be given equal weight, ultimately, material utilities were given preference.⁶⁸ Mill "revolted against Bentham's material maximization criterion of the social good. He could not agree that all pleasures were equal, nor that the market distributed them fairly."⁶⁹ Mill replaced it with the theory that the social good was not to be found in the maximization of material goods but in the development of each individual's intellectual pleasures and that some pleasures (those of the spirit as opposed to those of the flesh) were of higher value. These theories presupposed a specific conceptualization of human nature. Supporters of Bentham's justificatory claim "view man as essentially a consumer of utilities... a bundle of appetites demanding satisfaction,"⁷⁰ while Mill's was based on the belief that "man's essence [is] not as a consumer of utilities... [but] a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted."⁷¹

Furthermore, Mill not only rejected the classical liberal theory of political obligation, but also some of the assumptions from which it was derived. What Mill attempted to do was to replace the maximization of extractive power, "the ability to extract benefits from others", with the justificatory claim of the maximization of developmental power, "the ability to develop one's human capacities without rejecting the economic system which perpetuated the use of extractive power."⁷² Mill realized that the working class was not able to develop its human capacities but did not attribute this as being the fault of the capitalist relations of production but rather of an unjust method of distribution that minor adjustments to the system could rectify. Furthermore, Mill believed unjust distribution of wealth was not a consequence of the capitalist relations of production as much as the former economic system of feudalism.

The principle of private property has never had a fair trial in any country... The social relations of modern Europe commenced from a distribution of property which was the result, not of just partition, or acquisition by industry, but of conquest and violence; and notwithstanding what industry has been doing for many centuries to modify the work force, the system still retains many and large traces of its

origin. The laws of property have never yet conformed to the principles on which the justification of private property rests... That all should indeed start on perfectly equal terms is inconsistent with any law of private property, but if as much pains as has been taken to aggravate the inequality of chances arising from the natural working of the principle, had been taken to temper that inequality by every means not subversive of the principle itself; if the tendency of legislation had been to favour the diffusion, instead of the concentration of wealth--to encourage the subdivision of the large masses, instead of striving to keep them together; the principle of individual property would have been found to have no necessary connexion with the physical and social evils which almost all Socialist writers assume to be inseparable from it.⁷³

Mill, therefore, realized that there were certain problems emanating from the capitalist relations of production itself. This was also evident in his discussion of "the standing feud between capital and labour", which he felt could be solved by the introduction of producers' cooperatives, involving the "transformation of human life from a conflict of classes struggling for opposite interests, to a friendly rivalry in the pursuit of a good common to all; [and] the elevation of the dignity of labour..." ⁷⁴.

Even if Mill questioned market relations and offered suggestions for change, his solutions, such as the establishment of cooperatives, were not structural in nature. He upheld the buying and selling of labour power, while not excluding the possibility that future societies

might not be based on an economic system founded on the market relation. "It is for experience to determine how far or how soon any one or more of the possible systems of community of property will be fitted to substitute itself for the "organization of industry" based on private ownership of land and capital."⁷⁵

Mill rejected market morality, yet was inconsistent in his analysis of the problem.⁷⁶ Repulsed by some of the more dire consequences of the capitalist market society, Mill, nevertheless, accepted the relations of exchange as the economic foundation best suited for nineteenth century England.

One major question to be examined is the extent to which the political thought of J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine and Salem Bland questioned the validity of the capitalist market society and the relations of exchange upon which it is based. Closely tied to this issue is their belief as to whether the problems with the capitalist system could be rectified through minor adjustments, such as welfare legislation or whether the problem was structural in nature. A study of their political and social thought within the framework of Macpherson's possessive individualist assumptions and the attending

theory of political obligation, as well as their philosophy of history, will aid in this analysis.

As previously mentioned, these assumptions are not an explanatory tool but rather a reference point, allowing one to focus on their views towards human nature and societal relations. These, in turn, play an important role in their critique of Canadian society and the formulation of suggestions for reform. Their adherence to possessive individualist premises and the extent to which they had reassessed them can be gauged through an analysis of the following perspectives:

- 1- their view of human nature as cooperative or competitive
- 2- their view of societal relations both historical and contemporary: (i) Is society composed of atomistic individuals or organic, interdependent classes? (ii) If society is composed of classes, what constitutes a class? What is the relation of one class to another? Are classes unequal?
- 3- their view as to whether the market relation is the central relation among individuals
- 4- their view as to whether labour is alienable.

There is one crucial element of early twentieth century Canada that influenced their views of human nature and societal relations, and, therefore, must be taken into

consideration. Although Canada, by the early twentieth century was a class-divided, possessive market society, there was, nevertheless, a large number of Canadians, independent commodity producers of the prairie provinces, who lived in an economic environment possessing elements of a simple one class society.

There are important differences between the postulates of the simple market model and those of the possessive market model. In the former, labour is not alienated and each individual has land or resources by which to earn a living through his/her labour. The major consequence is that, in a simple market, there exists a market for products but not for labour. All individuals engage in the process of a division of labour in terms of exchanging the fruits of their labour (and not their labour power). Furthermore, the market for these products is characterized by a state of pure competition, where the price is determined by the equilibrium point of supply and demand.

This state of pure competition, however, did not exist in the market for agricultural products in early twentieth century Canada. Moreover, the simple market

model deviated from economic reality in yet another way. Theoretically, each farmer owned land and agricultural implements, but in early twentieth century Canada, many farmers had mortgaged their farms and borrowed money to buy agricultural machinery. Therefore, although theoretically owning the means of production, their debts were heavy enough so as to make this ownership precarious. Basically this position meant that the farmers, in marketing their products and borrowing on the credit market were caught up in a possessive market society i.e. the capitalist system.⁷⁷ They were independent commodity producers in a country where that class was becoming transitional and where the dominant mode of production was capitalist.

This in turn affected their class consciousness and the somewhat contradictory expressions which it took, i.e. Social Credit in Alberta versus the C.C.F. in Saskatchewan.

Still while the farmers recognized the oppression produced among them by monopoly capitalism, by the government that protected industrial interests and by the intermediary businesses in their own communities, they wanted to protect the ownership of their own homesteads and use cooperative organizations to promote the development of their own property. The farmers wanted to be entrepreneurs and make the most of their agricultural operations, and it was in the defense of these things that they were driven to a radical critique of modern capitalist society. This has been called the paradox of agrarian radicalism. An entrepreneurial approach to their own farming operations was coupled with a radical

stance towards the capitalist system. Their class consciousness was not without a certain contradiction. While the forces of oppression had become transparent to them, they did not question the implications of their own economic struggle.⁷⁸

Most of the individuals whose political and social thought will be analyzed in this study were involved in the western agrarian movement, in varying degrees. It was thus only natural that some of their perceptions of human nature and society were affected by their identification with the plight of the farmers (i.e. independent commodity producers in a regional, simple market society) who were trapped within, and affected by, possessive market relations.⁷⁹

J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem Bland were social gospel Ministers, and all but one became disenchanted with institutionalized religion to the point where they left the ministry. In their analyses of Canadian society, there remained strong evidence of their social gospel background. Of significant import, however, was not simply their former occupation but the positioning of that occupation within the Canadian social structure. Early twentieth century Canada was a society where certain factors, previously noted, intensified the role of social gospel clergy as an intellectual and organizational force. Their ambiguous class position within a capitalist society

containing a large politically conscious agrarian sector (a situation not existing in Europe) gave them a unique perspective, which at times led to contradictions within their thought. It is this Canadian perspective that will be the focus of the upcoming chapters, especially in light of their view of human nature and societal relations, and the consequences it had on their critique of, and solutions to, the Canadian political economy.⁸⁰

CHAPTER 1 FOOTNOTES

1 In English speaking countries the Christian faith has "exerted a powerful influence in the shaping of such...cultural movements as political democracy and humanitarianism, modern technology and capitalism, and modern philosophy and history. This influence was more indirect, more lay than clerical, more unconscious than intended; yet it produced a new synthesis of faith and culture." (James Nichols, History of Christianity p. 11).

2 R. Allen, The Social Passion, (Toronto: U of T Press, 1973) p.4.

3 Ibid p. 3-4.

It is generally recognized that the German scholar, Albrecht Ritschl "provided the implicit theological foundations of much of the social gospel...Ritschl saw no great gulf between mankind and Jesus. Jesus marked the moral perfection that was possible to every man, and His work was to bring the believer into a kingdom of moral ends. The church, it followed, was representative of the universal society that was to come, and was commissioned to be an agent in its fulfilment. Thus, not only man and God, but religious meaning and the social process ended to merge in Ritschl's thought.

4 For the view that it was indigenous see S. Crysdale The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada.

5 E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964) p. 371.

6 Allen p.5.

7 Ibid p.8. In the West, especially in Winnipeg, Methodism "gives evidence of marked expansion" (J. Riddell Methodism in the Middle West, p.302).

8 D. French, "The Evangelical Creed", The Shield of Achilles, W. Morton (ed.) (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968) pp. 18-19.

- 9 In general, although the emerging industrial bourgeoisie of the late 18th and early 19th centuries readily embraced Wesleyan Methodism because it emphasized "discipline and order", its acceptance among the working class is more difficult to comprehend. E.P. Thompson has offered a few explanations for this phenomenon, the most feasible being that the Methodist church, an established but undenominational organization, offered a sense of community to the dispossessed working people of the industrial revolution whose traditional community patterns had been destroyed.

While some historians of the period, most notably E. Halevy, believed that Wesleyan Methodism hampered the development of class consciousness among the 19th century English working class, others, such as Hobsbawm and Thompson, took issue with this view. Hobsbawm contented that Methodism and Radicalism advanced in unison, whereas Thompson felt that religious revolution gained supremacy just at the point where temporal aspirations failed.

"Both historians were convinced that the extreme political and moral conservatism of the leaders of Wesleyanism was not shared by the majority of their followers. Consequently, when various breakaway sects came into being, they exhibited a radical attitude which is borne out by the fact that some of these sects, such as the Primitive Methodists, produced a large number of labor leaders.

- 10 B. Smillie, "The Social Gospel in Canada: A Theological Critique", The Social Gospel in Canada, R. Allen (ed) (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Mercury Series No. 9, 1979), p. 325.
- 11 Ibid, pp. 323-4.
- 12 Allen p.5-6.
- 13 R. Allen "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928". Canadian Historical Review LIX, December 1968, p.391.
- 14 G. Bedford The University of Winnipeg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) p. 42.

- 15 R. Allen "Children of Prophecy: Wesley College Students in an Age of Reform" Red River Valley Historian Summer, 1974.
- 16 Bland was a professor and a pivotal force in the social gospel faction of Wesley, while Woodsworth, Irvine and Smith were students of the college.
- 17 Allen, Social Passion, p. 10.
- 18 Such as climatic conditions, the fluctuating price of wheat and the financial machinations of Eastern Canadians and European financiers.
- 19 Allen, Social Passion, p. 10. French has also expressed this view, see p. 29.
- 20 R. Allen "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928" p. 397. In The Social Passion Allen elaborates: "not only were leading figures of the social gospel prominent in every stage of progressive political development but their ideas from their theology through to their various tactical proposals, had made a deep impression upon the movement". (p. 218).
- 21 Ibid, p. 13.
- 22 Ibid, p. 29.
- 23 D.J. Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg (Montreal: McGill University Press 1974) p.5.
- 24 A.R. McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement 1899-1919 (Toronto: U of T Press) p. 3-4.
- 25 Bercuson p. 3.
- 26 A. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914 (Montreal: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1975) p. 132-133.
- 27 Bercuson, p. 3.
- 28 Artibise, p.158.

- 29 J. Taylor "The Urban West, Public Welfare, and a Theory of Urban Development". Cities in the West (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 305.
- 30 G. Emery in an article entitled "The Methodist Church and the European Foreigners of Winnipeg: The All People's Mission" for the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Transaction, Series III has noted that the goal of the Church was not only to teach immigrants the basic elements of gospel citizenship but also, as put by J.S. Woodsworth's father, James Woodsworth in his capacity as senior superintendent in Western Canada to "teach them the principles of Christianity, as far as we can understand the principles of Christ; and ultimately, as far as may be, attach them to the Methodist Church." (p. 85).
- 31 Ibid, p. 92.
- 32 During this period, in addition to giving many speeches, Woodsworth wrote two books on the problems of immigration and urbanization, Strangers Within Our Gates in 1909 and My Neighbour in 1911.
- 33 Bercuson p. 7
- These reformers were basically concerned with four causes - direct legislation, female suffrage, prohibition and single tax.
- 34 Taylor, p. 291.
- 35 Bercuson, p. 191.
- 36 A. Artibise "Economic Change in Winnipeg" Religion and Society in the Prairie West Richard Allen, (ed) (Canadian Plains Studies 3, 1974), p. 168.
- 37 Bercuson, p.8.
- 38 D. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier: 1897-1919". Canadian Historical Review Vol. IVIII no. 2.
- 39 R.C. Brown and R. Cook, Canada 1896-1921 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), p.156.

- 40 The ramifications of the National Policy added to the divisions within the labour movement in the opening decades of the 20th century. For a discussion of the development of the split see Crisis, Challenge and Change: Party and Class in Canada by J. Brodie and J. Jenson, specifically Chapter III.

Yet it must be remembered that eastern workers were also affected, albeit in a different manner. See. F. Watt's article "The National Policy, The Workingmen, the Proletarian Ideas in Victorian Canada" for an examination of the "tradition of radicalism" especially as displayed in the labour press of central Canada which "foreshadowed the more familiar radicalism which grew into prominence in the twentieth century after the National Policy had largely done its work". Canadian Historical Review, Vol XI, 1959 no. 1 p. 2.

- 41 McCormack, p. 8.
- 42 Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, p.9.
- 43 Artibise, p. 285.
- 44 Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, p. 20.
- 45 Ibid, p. 189.
- 46 Ibid, p. 8.
- 47 Ibid, p. 189.
- 48 See McCormack's article "Radical Politics in Winnipeg 1897 - 1915" in Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Transactions, Series III, No. 29 especially pp. 83-84 for a good background discussion.
- 49 D.C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: U of T Press, 1973), p. 146.
- 50 Bercuson, p. 191.
- 51 R. Allen The Social Passion, p.4.

For a good discussion of the specific effects of the war which both the farmers and urban workers of the prairie provinces experienced see John Thompson's Harvests of War.

52 Clyde Griffen "The Progressive Ethos", p. 149.

53 Allen, The Social Passion, p. 17.

54 Ibid, p. 45-46.

55 Ibid.

56 Salem Bland, The New Christianity, p. 31-32.

57 Allen "The Social Gospel, and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890 - 1928", p. 391-2.

Allen includes Ivens rather than A.E. Smith in his description of those who had lost their professional posts, but generally speaking Smith could also fall into this category.

58 W. Irvine, The Farmers in Politics, (1920, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1976) Introductory comments by R. Whitaker, p. x.).

59 As J.S. Woodsworth noted in his address to the C.C.F. Convention in July 1933, "We in Canada will solve our problems along our own lines." (W. Young, The Anatomy of a Party: the National C.C.F., Toronto: U of T Press, 1969, p. 45.) J. S. Woodsworth's "Canadian way" has been noted by a number of historians and political scientists including Gregory Baum in Catholics and Canadian Socialism (p. 16) and Norm Penner in The Canadian Left (p. 38)

60 N. Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1977) p. 4.

61 Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, p. 3.

62 Macpherson, Democratic Theory, pp. 192-3.

Although Macpherson clearly states his belief that modern western democratic countries are 'closer to

* the market model than to any other', he is ambivalent as to the applicability of the possessive individualist assumptions to modern society. In Political Theory of Possessive Individualism he states that the assumptions 'still do correspond to our society...but...that one change in possessive market society - a change which does not alter the validity of possessive individualist assumptions, since it is a change in an aspect of market society that was not reflected in those assumptions has made it impossible on two counts, to derive a valid theory of political obligation from the assumption. The change was the emergence of working class political articulacy... The assumptions remain indispensable,* but no sufficient principle of political obligation can now be derived from them'. (p. 271). But in Democratic Theory, he states that the possessive individualist assumptions were made invalid by this change. "...The development of society had made the old assumptions invalid...Working class consciousness, we may say, both made the old theory invalid and made it obvious that it was invalid". (p. 200). In the former work he maintains that the appearance of a politically conscious working class does not affect the validity of the assumptions; they merely affect the conditions necessary to derive a valid theory of political obligation, in the latter he states that both the theory of political obligation and the assumptions were affected. Perhaps the discrepancy can be partially explained by the slightly different presentations of the possessive individualist assumptions. In Democratic Theory the particular postulates that are necessary for deriving a theory of political obligation were more clearly stated than in Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, postulates such as, 'Man's essence is freedom to use his capacities in search of satisfactions' and 'Freedom is therefore restricted to, and comes to be identified with domination over things not domination over men. The clearest form of domination over things is the relation of ownership or possession. Freedom is therefore possession' (p. 199). Another explanation for the discrepancy as to the validity of these assumptions is that only the assumptions needed to justify the theory of political obligation are no longer valid

while the other assumptions remain valid, although Macpherson never made the distinction very clear.

Nevertheless, this does not affect the validity of using these assumptions as a framework (not an explanatory tool) on which to hang the basic elements of the political thought of the four chosen individuals since there is no assumption on my part that their middle class position in a possessive market society led them to unquestioning acceptance of possessive individualist assumptions. An individual's position within the class structure does not predetermine his conceptualization or his subsequent behavior. One's perception of their position and rôle in society is affected by many historical factors, many of which are not economic in nature. The inability to reduce these individuals' views of society and behavior to their economic class is further aggravated by the fact that their class position in Canada was ambiguous. Their social gospel background led them to identify with the less privileged class and not act in their own economic self-interest. Further complications arise due to the fact that the social gospellers were not confronted with a clear cut possessive market society and were exposed to a large rural population.

⁶³ C.B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) p. 199. A slightly different version is presented in his earlier work, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. It is as follows:

- (i) What makes a man human is freedom from dependence on the will of others.
- (ii) Freedom from dependence on others means freedom from any relations with others except those relations which the individual enters voluntarily with a view to his own interest.
- (iii) The individual is essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities for which he owes nothing to society.
- (iv) Although the individual cannot alienate the whole of his property in his own person, he may alienate his capacity to labour.
- (v) Human society consists of a series of market relations.

- (vi) Since freedom from the will of others is what makes a man human, each individual's freedom can rightfully be limited only by such obligations and rules as are necessary to secure the same freedom for others.
- (vii) Political society is a human contrivance for the protection of the individual's property in his person and goods, and (therefore) for the maintenance of orderly relations of exchange between individuals regarded as proprietors of themselves(p. 264)

- 64 Macpherson, Democratic Theory, p. 198.
- 65 Ibid. p. 199
- 66 Macpherson, Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, p. 273.
- 67 Macpherson, Democratic Theory, p. 200.
- 68 C.B. Macpherson, The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p.33 and p. 52.
- 69 Macpherson, Democratic Theory, p. 174.
- 70 Ibid. p. 44.
- 71 Ibid. p. 5.
- 72 Macpherson, Democratic Theory, p.5.
He did not see that there is a contradiction between the two claims; the use of extractive power by some men would necessarily decrease the developmental power of others, if one assumes that the selling of one's labour power leads to alienation and, hence, a decrease in one's human capacities.
- 73 J.S. Mill, The Principles of Political Economy, Bk. II ch. 1, sect. 3, ed. Sir W.J. Ashley (New York - Augustus M. Kelley 1925) p. 209.
- 74 J.S. Mill, The Principles of Political Economy, Bk. 4, ch. 7, sect. 6, p. 790.

- 75 J.S. Mill The Principles of Political Economy Book II, Chapter 1, Section 4, p.216-217.

Mill continues:

"In the meantime we may, without attempting to limit the ultimate capabilities of human nature, affirm, that the political economist, for a considerable time to come, will be chiefly concerned with the conditions of existence and progress belonging to a society founded on private property and individual competition; and that the object to be principally aimed at, in the present stage of human improvement, is not the subversion of the system of individual property, but the improvement of it, and the full participation of every member of the community in its benefit.

The implication is that although Mill believed that the market relation is best suited for individuals in their present stage of development (19th century Britain), he did not reject the possibility that, in the future, civilization could change to a point where another type of economic system might be instituted, one that better matched their needs. He, in fact, realized that his own assumptions of human nature were limited by his perception of the surrounding environment; something for which Macpherson did not give him sufficient credit."

- 76 John Robson, in his introductory remarks to Mill's Principles of Political Economy, observed "[there is] scope for long debates about how socialistic Mill was at various parts in his career. What is really valuable is not his changing answers, but his continuing questions. The criteria for judging society as it existed, and society, as it might be, emerge from the questions". (p. 1).

- 77 As Gregory Baum in Catholics and Canadian Socialism noted. "While farmers owned their means of production, they were as dependent on the corporations and on government as were many of the industrial workers. In fact, farmers were more exposed to the complex system that controlled their income than workers. While workers received their pay envelope and never encountered the agencies that determined the amount they received, farmers

found themselves constantly at odds, with industrial companies in regard to the prices they charged, with the government in regard to tariffs and transportation costs, with insurance companies and banks at times of loss, and so forth. Hence it was the very mode of production of single-crop farmers that affected their consciousness and prepared them to become radicals when times were bad - and businessmen when times were good." (p. 24)

78 Baum, op. cit. p. 28

79 Their identification with the agrarian protesters which was aided by their own ambiguous class position will be studied in terms of how it affected their political and social thought.

80 In my analysis of their ideas I will at times, point out the similarities in their thought to other thinkers or ideologies. However, this will be a rather incidental activity. These individuals embraced ideas not simply because they came into contact with them but because these ideas fitted their perception of society.

CHAPTER II

James S. Woodsworth was the first of these individuals to decide to leave the ministry and embrace the political party over the Church as the medium for social change. He was also the most successful and influential in his new vocation as a politician. A mixture of factors contributed to his decision to resign and choose the political path of social democracy, among them the reaction of the Church to Woodsworth's views, the internal dynamics of the social gospel, and his increasing involvement in the surrounding secular environment. These elements are outlined in the first section of this chapter as part of a brief biographical sketch. Woodsworth's career path had important ramifications on his political thought and the remainder of the chapter contains an analysis of the major tenets of his thought within C.B. Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist assumptions. In particular, Woodworth's religious and political vocations and his ambiguous class position, which led him to identify with both urban and agrarian workers, will be examined from the perspective of their influence on the direction and focus of his political thought.

For the most part James S. Woodsworth's political thought was nurtured within the atmosphere of unrest and discontent of early twentieth century Western Canada. Born in 1874 in Ontario, Woodsworth's early childhood was spent on the prairies as was most of his adult years. In spite of a few years in British Columbia and a shorter period of time in Ontario, the bulk of Woodsworth's experience both as a minister and a politician was in Winnipeg. It was in prewar Winnipeg that not only did his commitment to the social gospel blossom but also fade, to be replaced by a more lasting commitment to secular humanism.

His first exposure to social gospel doctrine did not take place in Winnipeg. He attended Wesley from 1891 to 1896 where he specialized in Mental and Moral Science as well as participated in a myriad of extra curricular activities. "At Wesley he had encountered the semi-classical education of a small church college of the day."¹ It was rather at Toronto's Victoria College in 1898 that Woodsworth first learned of the social gospel but it was not until his attendance at Oxford University in England that his convictions of the need for radical social change solidified. There, he lived at a university social

service settlement and attended brotherhood church sermons which, in reality, were political speeches based on the principles of Christian socialism.²

After his return in 1900, he was ordained a Methodist Minister and following a two year stint as a frontier missionary in Manitoba and Ontario rural communities, he returned to Winnipeg. It was there that he began to put his beliefs into practice by becoming deeply involved in his secular environment and eventually through the dialectic of the secular and ecclesiastic progressed beyond the limits of the social gospel. In his first posting in 1904 at Grace Church, one of the wealthiest parishes in Winnipeg, he began to preach the social gospel. The contents of his sermons were often secular in nature, with special focus on the political issues of the era, such as graft and corruption in Canadian elections. During these sermons, sometimes presented in collaboration with Salem Bland, who had started to teach at Wesley a year earlier, he called for radical social reform and the establishment of the basic principles of Christian socialism on earth.³ It was also at this time, however, that he was first subjected to opposition to his views from many of his wealthier parishioners, an experience which he

was to encounter a number of times before his departure from the ministry.

This opposition, as well as other considerations, such as his increasing doubts as to his vocation, prompted him to request a leave of absence and the year following, in 1907, to submit a letter of resignation.⁴ As an incentive to withdraw his letter, Woodsworth was offered a position as Superintendent of the All Peoples Mission of Winnipeg. During his six years as director, he not only expanded and unified the various branches of the mission but attempted to establish certain social services for Winnipeg's poor.⁵

During this period, Woodsworth's "secular drift was understandable in view of his daily exposure to North End social problems⁶. He became more disillusioned with the ability of the Church to act as a vehicle for social reform and deepened his involvement in organized labour and political activism. In 1910 he was appointed a member of the Trades and Labour Council as representative of the Ministerial Association. In that capacity he became indirectly involved in the Great West Saddlery Company dispute of 1911 by establishing a conciliation committee of Protestant ministers who submitted a report supporting the cause of the strikers. Political involvement was also an

important aspect of these early years. Woodsworth, in both advocacy and organizational roles, supported provincial and municipal labour candidates.⁷ Therefore,

His experience in those years led him to accept the ideas of the social gospel and have even carried him beyond, tentatively, into the field of politics. His contact with labour organizations led him to consider the general question of socialism; and his feeling of frustration while working within the denominational church framework had influenced him to move further and further from the centre of Manitoban Methodism.⁸

Within the next few years, he was to travel further along this path, becoming even more involved in community, political, and labour activities. In 1913, he was elected secretary of the newly established Canadian Welfare League, which published Studies in Rural Citizenship, a book on adult education written largely by Woodsworth. It contained some rather progressive critiques of the Canadian economic system and suggestions for reform, including government ownership and control of public utilities.⁹ Furthermore, in his capacity as secretary, he mounted a strong lobbying campaign, resulting in the establishment by the three prairie provincial governments of a Bureau of Social Research in 1916.

J.S. Woodsworth became the Bureau's first director and from this perspective broadened his understanding of social problems in both the urban and rural prairies. "Perhaps the most enduring importance of this period was that it greatly expanded Woodsworth's contacts with and understanding of western rural communities...As Director of the Bureau he had, for example, participated in the Conference for Rural Leadership which met at the University of Alberta during the second week in August 1916. There he delivered several speeches and met Henry Wise Wood and other Alberta farm leaders". His new career ended by dismissal within the year, however, when in a letter to the editor of the Manitoba Free Press, he expressed his strong opposition to the federal government's registration policy. He then returned to religious activities as minister of Gibson's Landing, a small British Columbian community, which again ended in his dismissal, this time due to his financial and organizational involvement in a small cooperative enterprise within the community. One of the leading Methodist merchants had lodged a complaint with church officials which resulted in the non-renewal of Woodsworth's mission post, and indirectly, led to his decision to again submit his resignation.

From his ordination Woodsworth had expressed doubts as to his suitability for the ministry. In 1902 and again in 1907 he wrote letters of resignation citing church doctrines in which he could no longer believe. Both offers of resignation were refused. However, his third and final letter of resignation, composed on June 8, 1918, and addressed to the President of the Manitoba Conference, A.E. Smith who, was also soon to leave the Methodist ministry, was accepted. The letter outlined his long struggle, which culminated in his rejection, not only of church doctrine but of the institution itself. In it, he denounced the Methodist church as a reactionary institution, which advocated militarism and war. His own pacifist views further strengthened the conviction that he could no longer remain within the institution.

For me, the teachings and spirit of Jesus are absolutely irreconcilable with the advocacy of war. Christianity may be an impossible idealism, but so long as I hold to it, ever so unworthily, I must refuse, as far as may be, to participate in or to influence others to participate in war. When the policy of the State - whether that State be nominally Christian or not, - conflicts with my conception of right and wrong, then I must obey God rather than man...The vast majority of ministers and other church leaders seem to see things in an altogether different way. The churches have been turned into very effective

recruiting agencies. A minister's success seems to be judged by the number of recruits in his church rather than the number of converts.¹¹

This letter, however, does not adequately convey the opposition which Woodsworth faced within the Methodist Church because of his stance. Michael Bliss in his article "The Methodist Church and World War I" describes the extent to which critics of the war were accused of lack of patriotism and admonished to keep silent. In the May 1st, 1918 edition of the Guardian, a publication of the Methodist Church, the following appeared:

In time of war any type of religion which is pro-German is not a desirable type for the country and any type which is not ardently pro-British and pro-American is not very much better. The matter of conscience does not change these facts, and a conscience which does not sanction patriotism is a very poor affair."¹²

However, it was not just the Church's opposition to pacifism but the fact that it provided ideological justification for the war in stating that it was every man's divine duty to fight the "German anti-Christ" which repulsed Woodsworth.¹³ He was also alienated from the Church's belief that the war was part of the fight for social reconstruction. To Woodsworth, the Methodist Church's radical pronouncements for social reform, were

meaningless when pitted against its support for the war. He had realized that the Church constituted a bureaucracy with its own aims, whose policies were often controlled by "men of wealth" and, therefore, was not a feasible instrument for social change. As he wrote in a letter to his mother, shortly after his resignation, "more than ever I feel that we shall have to work for the people" and it was within the next few years that he would discover a new vehicle by which to fulfill his goal.

The events which followed his resignation further refined Woodsworth's social and political views and helped to determine the path which he would take in his attempts to implement them. Personal convictions as well as the necessity of supporting a young family, involved Woodsworth in a number of activities, and allowed him an even better understanding of the plight of agrarian and industrial workers in early twentieth century Canada. Rooted in these experiences, Woodsworth was soon to become one of the foremost exponents of farm and labour cooperation.

His resignation allowed him to experience the life of the working class first hand. Within a year, Woodsworth had not only participated in organizational activities for the Non-Partisan League of Alberta, but had worked as a

longshoreman on the docks of Vancouver.¹⁴ The latter sensitized him to the problem of alienation. His recollections of this period are worth quoting at length.

Yes, I hesitated to make the plunge. Where a man has spent all his time up to middle life along one line it is not easy to make a complete break and, as it were, start life all over again. But circumstances have a curious way of pushing one right up to the brink. Then, unless a man is downright coward, it is a case of 'Here Goes!'. . . And the water was cold - no doubt about that! Longshoring is hard and monotonous and irregular and, taking it the year round, not much better paid than other unskilled labor. Being a townbred boy and having gone through school and college into professional life, I had never done manual work. . . There is a certain exhilaration in having broken through artificial distinctions - in meeting men as men irrespective of nationality or creed or opinions - in being one of them. . . Perhaps it is in part because 'he that is down need fear no fall' - but there is a certain sturdiness and fearlessness about the workers that is not commonly found among the so-called higher classes.¹⁵

It was the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, however, which finally helped to determine his choice of a new career. The experience of the Strike crystallized his decision to "work for the people" through the mechanism of parliamentary political action. In the spring of 1919, during a slack period on the docks, Woodsworth embarked on a prairie speaking tour, at the behest of Reverend William Ivens, editor of the Western Labour News. The tour

completed, Woodsworth arrived in Winnipeg in early June, some three weeks into the General Strike and immediately threw himself into the fray. He spoke at mass meetings and the Sunday gatherings of Ivens' Labour Church, helped raise money for the strike fund, and took over as editor of the Western Labour News when the regular staff members were arrested. His editorial reports on the infamous 'Bloody Saturday' parade, one of which quoted two verses from Isaiah, earned him a charge of seditious libel - a charge which in time was quietly dropped.¹⁶

His enthusiasm for the striker's cause was not surprising given Woodsworth's previous experiences in prewar Winnipeg. His exposure to the city's environment which led to his decision to change from the sacred to the secular were also the same factors which culminated in the Strike. Woodsworth's biographers have noted the Strike's impact on his thinking. Frank Underhill, in the "Untypical Canadian", writes:

Mr. Woodsworth's career from the time of his return from Oxford falls into two clearly divided periods. The dividing line is the Winnipeg of 1919. Before that, as Minister of the gospel and social worker, he was to find himself unable to conform to some of the beliefs and practices of his society, and by the end of the summer of 1919 he was an outcast from all the respectable and right-thinking people among whom he had grown

up. After that, from the election of 1921, he was to devote his life to building up a political movement which would give expression to the social and economic ideas in which he believed.¹⁷

Kenneth McNaught, in A Prophet in Politics, expressed it somewhat differently.

For Woodsworth, the collapse of the strike steeled a resolution already formed to work for the prevention of another such social catastrophe. If the utmost effort and self-denial on the part of the workers, expressed through exclusively economic action, could not achieve even their minimum demands it was more than ever evident that political action was essential... Much more vigour, he was now convinced, must be put into the attempt to capture control of the governmental machinery which, in the hands exclusively of businessmen and their representatives, could be used to such disastrous effect. The story of his activities and thought from the end of the strike, until his election to the House of Commons is one of constant organizational work. His purpose was to establish a strong working-class political party on the British model.¹⁸

From the summer of 1919, until his election to the House of Commons in December of 1921, Woodsworth, in addition to the constant speaking tours and newspaper articles, actively campaigned on behalf of labour candidates in the 1920 Manitoba election and the agrarian candidate in the Medicine Hat by-election, as well as unsuccessfully contesting a seat, as a Federated Labour Party candidate. These activities culminated in his

election to the House of Commons on December 6th, 1921, as representative of the constituency of Winnipeg Centre. He remained in that capacity until his death. During that time, his energies were directed towards nurturing greater farm and labour cooperation, of both a parliamentary and extra-parliamentary nature, in the hope of establishing a national social democratic party, a hope which had been born of his earlier experience in prewar Winnipeg. His dreams were realized in 1932, with the formation of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. He was one of the major architects of the party's constitution, and President of the National Council until his death in 1942.¹⁹

This background produced in Woodsworth's thought an interesting and sometimes incongruous melange of detailed critiques of the exploitation inherent in the capitalist system and of general sermons on the necessity of ushering in a new society based on the Christian principles of brotherhood and love.

His experience as a member of the clergy in early twentieth century Canada and the particular class position which that occupation entailed in a country with a large, politically conscious independent commodity producer class and an emerging industrial working class, coupled with the

social gospel's belief in secular activism led J.S. Woodsworth to embrace the experiences of both subordinate classes. These experiences resulted in his commitment to build a social democratic party founded on the aspirations of both classes and had specific ramifications on the development of his political thought.

Furthermore, opposition from the Church towards Woodsworth's pacifist views and his increasing disillusionment with the Church as an instrument for social justice were also determinants of the focus of his political thought, especially in terms of the secularization process. Yet it must be remembered that he rejected the institution of the Church not its Christian belief system. Therefore aspects of his religious heritage remained active in his thought.

Both the religious and class elements will be examined as aspects of Woodsworth's political thought from within C.B. Macpherson's framework individualist assumptions. These are broken down into the following components:

- 1- his view of human nature as cooperative or competitive

- 2- his view of societal relations both historical and contemporary: (1) Is society composed of

atomistic individuals or organic, interdependent classes? (ii) If society is composed of classes, what constitutes a class? What is the relation of one class to another? Are classes unequal?

3- his view as to whether the market relation is the central relation among individuals

4- his view as to whether labour is alienable.²⁰

Elements of Woodsworth's views on human nature and societal relations can be found in his theory (or theories) of historical development. In his more idealistic moments, James Woodsworth's views on the progression of society closely resembled those of John Stuart Mill's. He believed that civilization progressed due to the constant search for Justice, Truth and Mercy. "We as a race begun down in the slime, yet in some way or other, have risen to the stage we call civilization, and this in spite of the brutes our ancestors were. The race has risen because there were a few men of each generation who caught a gleam of something greater ahead. There are such things, in my opinion, as truth, justice and love."²¹

Although this particular passage was penned only a few years before his death, he had emphasized a similar theme in his earlier, more radical years. In a prayer entitled, New Wine in Old Bottles, he asked for the strength to "endeavor to follow the truth at whatever

cost... to pledge ourselves to united effort in establishing on earth an era of justice and truth and love... (and to) not impede, but rather cooperate with the great spiritual forces, which we believe are impelling the world onward."²² In these writings, one discerns a certain belief in fate; truth and justice were expected to prevail in spite of all opposition. These views can be attributed, in part, to his social gospel background.

Woodsworth's idealistic, somewhat spiritualistic conceptualization of historical development contrasts sharply with the theme of historical materialism, which he pursued in other writings, during the same period (circa 1920), where he broadly categorized five stages of development:

- 1) the Hunting Age, where individuals lived by hunting animals
- 2) the Pastoral Age, which was ushered in with the domestication of animals
- 3) the Agricultural Age, when individuals learned to grow food
- 4) The Age of Handiwork, when individuals made rudimentary tools in order to simplify tasks
- 5) the Machine Age when man invented machinery and called water, wind, steam and electricity to help him in his work'.²³

According to Woodsworth, "Each of these ages has produced its own ideas and institutions; its own laws and customs and codes of morality and religion. As one age runs into another, so old ideas and institutions are not suddenly and absolutely changed but are modified and transformed and then parts of them incorporated into the new."²⁴ Economic structures, therefore, affect social mores and political institutions. Woodsworth's philosophy of dialectical materialism, however, clashed at times with his belief in the historical progression of ideas. His ambiguous position within the class structure and his social gospel background helped produce this inability to stand firmly with one camp.²⁵

Whatever Woodsworth's particular view of history, implicit in his social and political thought are the assumptions that human nature is a *tabula rasa* free of inherent tendencies towards either cooperation or competition, and that environmental forces determine the primary motivations of the individual. He embraced the progressive social gospel belief that the traditional religious emphasis on preventing the individual from succumbing to his natural state of depravity was misplaced. Rather the problems arising from the more

unsavory elements of human nature were perceived as social in origin and, therefore, requiring changes in the overall environment.

The main impetus historically for the development of a competitive streak in human nature has been material scarcity:

Brotherhood involves sufficiency for all... in countries afflicted with famine or drought the starving populations have, in some instances, been reduced to the verge of cannibalism. Primitive instincts have asserted themselves above the slowly developed social codes. Four hundred men stand on the docks awaiting for (sic) some sixty or eighty jobs. When the gain for one means the loss for others, how can they exhibit principles of brotherhood? When two merchants in a limited market are competing for trade, how can they be expected to pray for each other's success?²⁶

With the discoveries of modern science and the ensuing technological development, scarcity is no longer an unsolvable problem, and competition no longer an inevitable trait of human nature.

In spite of his constant criticisms of the capitalist system, or what Woodsworth sometimes called the 'machine age', there are indications that he also considered it advantageous, in that it laid the groundwork for the new epoch of socialism which was to follow the capitalist stage. It eradicated one of the main causes of

competition, scarcity, and forced men to work together because of the changeover from individual to collective production.²⁷

There are, nevertheless, some unclear and inconsistent aspects of Woodsworth's theory of the rôle of competition in the capitalist system. Generally speaking, he perceived capitalism as harmful, engendering social injustice domestically and militarism abroad.²⁸ Yet there were a number of cases where he tolerated the competition inherent in capitalism, at least the free, unfettered competition of early capitalism. This became evident in his discussion of the development of the factory structure.

The workers generally were granted a mere wage, that is, a wage sufficient to provide for food, clothing and shelter and the upkeep of their families. This might not have been so bad when there was a considerable competition between rival groups, but as organization was carried further, monopoly entered, which meant that the workers were almost absolutely under the control of the employer, while on the other hand, the employer was able to demand for his product, a price that had little relation to the real cost of production.²⁹

Two decades later, his view towards free competition remained unchanged. In the House of Commons, he noted that competition was advantageous in that it acted as a natural regulator of supply and demand, however, the

development of monopoly capitalism compelled the government to act in a regulatory capacity.³⁰ He expressed sympathy for the plight of small businessmen, whom he considered victims of the inevitable development of monopoly capitalism, and compared their plight to that of British craftsmen during the Industrial Revolution. In the same speech, he also admitted that the early state of free competition, while developing a 'great many abuses' also developed 'certain qualities in the individual that were good'.³¹

Upon reviewing Woodsworth's views on competition throughout the years, both as a trait of human nature and as an economic state, certain inconsistencies leap out. Although, generally condemning competition, there were instances where he sung its praises. This ambiguity seems to partially stem from his belief that it was not competition, but the actual restriction of free competition, that is, the development of monopoly capitalism which detrimentally affected society. Both free competition and its subsequent restriction were seen as inevitable historical developments.³² "There is a tendency to eliminate [competition] and develop monopoly ... monopoly is bound to come but when it comes we will insist that it must not be a private monopoly but a government monopoly."³³

Woodsworth also dealt with the theme of individualism. According to him, individualism is closely linked to competition. Like competition, individualism is not an inherent, but a learned trait of human nature. Individualism, which at one point, developed certain positive qualities is no longer a viable way of life in our present economic system.³⁴

We have nearly all been born and brought up under an individualistic system. Many of us are children of pioneers... (but) we cannot start our own individual business. The trouble is that the collective system under which we are living is under the control of a very small group of people who are using that system to feather their own nests rather than give service to the public.³⁵

Therefore, in Woodsworth's view, at the beginning of the capitalist stage, competition and individualism were not particularly harmful, however, both eventually aided in the concentration of economic power in the hands of a small oligarchy. This development has increased the inherent contradictions in capitalism to the point where it is apparent that it can no longer supply the needs of the Canadian population. Thus its downfall is inevitable.³⁶

The eventual demise of the capitalist system was a well-worn theme of Woodsworth's. He had very definite ideas as to how the transformation from capitalism to

socialism should occur.³⁷ The changeover should be of a non-violent nature. He refused to consider violence as a means to an end, and believed that not only did the end justify the means, but the means affected the end.³⁸ Education would trigger the process of change.³⁹ Once the population became enlightened as to the destructive competitive tendencies, inherent in capitalism, they would opt for a new social order based on the principle of cooperation. Only peaceful methods of implementation, principally, the election of members of Parliament, would be contemplated in order to initiate the transformation to socialism. Certain weaknesses in Woodsworth's logic become manifest with his conviction that political means could not only redress the wrongs of the present economic system but completely transform it. Yet he also, at the same time reiterated that a small, but powerful, financial oligarchy controlled, not only the rest of the economic establishment, but also Parliament, the press, and the country's educational institutions.⁴⁰

Woodsworth compared the capitalist class to an octopus; "a monster that dominates and is dominated by the machine. This octopus draws its sustenance from the most remote parts of the modern social organism. Its insatiable

greed is bleeding white the very roots by which it lives..."⁴¹ He further extended the analogy by describing the mystification process of the capitalist classes as "the inky fluid of the octopus". Moreover he noted that, although Canadians do not lack for educational and political institutions, they do not possess political or economic freedom because of the employing classes' control over the major institutions of society, (church included).⁴²

In spite of Woodsworth's conviction that the financial and industrial oligarchy controlled Parliament, he, nevertheless, believed that political methods could bring about economic change. In his acceptance speech for the nomination of Winnipeg Centre's Independent Labour Party, he stressed that the workers had to gain political control in order to best the businessmen at their own game. This ambiguity is partly due to his refusal to consider anything but non-violent methods of change especially the constitutional use of the parliamentary process. However, even with his pacifist convictions, he claimed to understand why people are sometimes driven to commit violent acts, especially if frustrated over government inaction on such issues as unemployment.⁴³

Nevertheless, his commitment to pacifism remained unshaken, even when confronted with his belief in hegemonic control by the capitalist class.⁴⁴ It was based not on a mere adherence to a political theory but a deep and abiding commitment emanating, in a large part, from his religious background.

Another important element to be considered in Woodsworth's thought is his perception of the main benefactors in his envisaged social order. He considered himself the political representative of all exploited groups in Canada, in particular, industrial and agrarian workers.⁴⁵ In his view, there existed a natural affinity between the two groups within the present economic system, both being exploited and manipulated by the same small financial and industrial oligarchy. In the case of labour, evidence of exploitation was clear cut; the workers laboured for a few powerful individuals who owned the means of production and, in return received sustenance level wages. The farmers, on the other hand, nominally owned the means of production, but, in effect, their land and machinery, being heavily mortgaged, were owned by others.⁴⁶

Woodsworth remained optimistic that the realization of a common thread of experience connecting the two groups would

eventually lead to greater organizational cooperation and theoretical proximity.⁴⁷

Woodsworth, while constantly emphasizing their similarities, was not blind to the differences that did exist between the two movements. In a 1932 House of Commons debate on the address to the Throne, he noted:

We have found that in a great many ways the farm and labour groups can work in close cooperation, but, I must say that in some respects, labour would state its case just a bit differently from the case stated by the farmers - possibly because the needs of the industrial workers are somewhat different from those of the agricultural workers.⁴⁸

Woodsworth did not limit the movement for a new social order to farmers and labourers, but included what he called the 'progressive middle class' (of which he considered himself a member). Even though "small business people and clerks and teachers and the great masses of those whom we call the middle class have been so closely associated with big business and its ideals that they have frequently accepted the viewpoint of big business, they are still able to transcend the boundaries of their present class consciousness"⁴⁹ as are contemporary political, religious and intellectual leaders, if "they too gain the social conscience, renounce their special privileges, and

become, in spirit 'like unto their brethren'.⁵⁰ The new movement, therefore, would be open to all who renounce their privileged social position and identify with the aim of introducing a society based on the principle of cooperation involving the overthrow of the present system of capitalism.⁵¹

What exactly did Woodsworth envisage as the new social order? As previously mentioned, he repeatedly stressed that the principle of cooperation would form the basis of the new social order (cooperative commonwealth), yet he rarely indulged in specific descriptions. Accordingly, it is necessary to turn to more indirect methods of determining his blueprint of a cooperative commonwealth, one method of which is an examination of his criticisms of the existing system. Probably his most often mentioned criticism was that although a modicum of political democracy existed in Canada, economic democracy did not. Based on his conviction that 'economic justice is the only basis of permanent stability in society'⁵², he concluded that the existing system was not democratic; it, in fact, was the very negation of democracy given the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few.⁵³ He believed, moreover, that the denial of industrial

democracy endangered the existence of political democratic institutions.⁵⁴

Woodsworth followed a similar line of reasoning in his discussion on freedom and liberty. According to him, a new type of economic serfdom predominated, characterized by the presence of a small, yet powerful, economic oligarchy.⁵⁵ Political liberty, such as voting, is a very small aspect of personal liberty, "If somebody else owns the very means by which I live, I am not a free man".⁵⁶ Parliamentary democratic tradition remained stalwart.

As a short-term measure within capitalism, Woodsworth suggested more workers' participation in the management of the work-place, while at the same time never losing sight of his conviction that these improvements in themselves are not sufficient and did not negate the need for a new social order. In order to determine what this entailed, an examination of Woodsworth's definition of capitalism and socialism is warranted. Notes entitled Property Rights, written in 1915, seem to contain his most succinct definitions on the subject. In the capitalist system, 'a few own and control the means of production, while the masses work under their direction, receiving little more than a substant (sic) wage'. On the other

hand, the underlying principle of socialism is that "since there is collective production and since modern industry tends to monopolize the means of production, that all should have a claim on the means of production and a share in what is produced". It is clear in his early years that he considered the ownership of the means of production as the crucial differentiating factor; ownership of the means of production in the hands of a few versus ownership by the people. In later years, he elaborated on his definition of socialism by contrasting it to communism. For example, in his House of Commons speech in February of 1933, he stated: "it is quite true that both believe in a changed social order, in a new economic system. The communists are convinced that it can be brought about only by violence... We believe that it may come in Canada by peaceful methods". Woodsworth perceived the difference between socialism and communism in the means rather than the end.

The above quote was taken from the 1933 parliamentary debate on Woodsworth's resolution for the introduction of a cooperative commonwealth in Canada. Yet only three years later, in the 1936 debate on the cooperative commonwealth, he expressed hesitancy at the use of the word socialism, rationalizing that since there are so many

different types of socialism, employing the term would only further confuse the debate.⁵⁷ Within a three year period, Woodsworth went from equating the goal of communism with that of the new socialist order to refusing to apply the term socialism to his concept of the cooperative commonwealth. Reasons for this were rather straightforward. Woodsworth wished to differentiate the ideology of the CCF from that of the Communist Party due to the increasing hostility shown towards the latter by the government and general public. Moreover, the Communist Party had made Woodsworth a primary target and Woodsworth's attitude became more hostile and rigid as their attacks on him increased.⁵⁸

A moderating process can be seen, not only in his usage of terms, but also in his suggestions for implementing the new social order. Soon after the Winnipeg General Strike, Woodsworth produced a series of articles entitled "What Next" in the Western Labour News. In the August 8th article, he stated that the aim of all exploited groups should be the complete turnover of the present economic system by such methods as "the progressive socialization, that is, the bringing under national, provincial, municipal or cooperative ownership and the

control of manufacturing establishments and commercial institutions...[and]... the management of industries [which are] to be under the joint control of the committees representing the administrative body engaged in the industry... [until]... ultimately, the state producing all - and producing only to meet the needs of the people - would control all the revenues, and taxation as we know it would be unknown". This was the most radical statement of aims ever presented by Woodsworth and congruent with the perception of the differentiation of classes as the ownership of the means of production.

Twenty three years later, in his capacity as a parliamentary representative of the CCF, he presented another full scale program for the transformation of the economic system, this time, in the House of Commons. In a 1932 resolution calling for the setting up of a cooperative commonwealth, he moved:

Whereas under our present economic arrangements large numbers of our people are unemployed and without the means of a livelihood for themselves and their dependents:

And whereas the prevalence of the present depression throughout the world indicates fundamental defects in the existing economic system;

Be it therefore resolved: that, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately take measures looking to the setting up of a

cooperative commonwealth in which all natural resources and the socially necessary machinery of production will be used in the interests of the people and not for the benefit of the few.⁵⁹

In the ensuing debate, Woodsworth referred to the necessity of socializing the 'productive-distributional machinery', through gradual, peaceful methods.⁶⁰ Further on, he suggested that every time the government replaces private ownership with public ownership (operated democratically), allows more control to employees in their place of work, and introduces heavy taxation of the wealthy steps are being taken towards the implementation of a cooperative commonwealth.

In the 1933 debate on the same issue, Woodsworth again discussed the methods by which the new economic system would be introduced, and the hardships which would thus be alleviated. He called for the following measures: 1) a planned economy which would promote a better relationship between distribution (consumption) and production, and would correct the problem of overproduction which existed at the time; 2) the nationalization of banks; 3) an increase in the public control of industry (no mention of ownership); and 4) a decrease in bond indebtedness. These suggestions seem very moderate when compared to those put forth by him in 1919 in a series of

articles in the Western Labour News. The former are all of an economic nature; very little was mentioned of the political and organizational aspects of the cooperative commonwealth and then only in a negative context. "It (the CCF) does not advocate a bureaucratic state socialism. We recognize clearly that there are certain matters which must be dealt with by the state; there are other matters that may be left to voluntary cooperative effort..."⁶¹

The 1934 cooperative commonwealth resolution, although worded differently, conveyed the same meaning as those of previous years, with Woodsworth elaborating on the following aspects of the Regina Manifesto:

1) Planning - "The establishment of a planned, socialized economic order, in order to make possible the most efficient development of the national resources and the most equitable distribution of the national income... the first step in this direction will be the setting up of a national planning commission, consisting of a small body of economists, engineers and statisticians, assisted by an appropriate technical staff (who are) public servants acting in the public interest and responsible to the people as a whole".

2) Socialization of Finance - "... the socialization of all financial machinery..."

3) Social Ownership - "... the socialization [dominion, provincial or municipal] of transportation, communications, electric power and all other industries and services essential to social planning and their operation under the general direction of the planning commission by competent management freed from day to day political interference".

Contradicting his views of earlier years, Woodsworth added that "the CCF has never thought of socializing all industries" and went on to quote from a supplementary note of the manifesto. "Transportation, communications and electric power must come first in a list of industries to be socialized. Others, such as mining, pulp and paper and the distribution of milk, bread, coal and gasoline, in which exploitation, waste and financial malpractices are particularly prominent, must be brought under social ownership".

6) Cooperative Institutions - "The encouragement by the public authorities of both producers' and consumers' cooperative institutions".

11) Taxation and Public Finance - "A new taxation policy designed, not only to raise public revenues but also to lessen the glaring inequalities of income...". He

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concluded his speech by quoting the last paragraph of the Manifesto which called for the eradication of capitalism.

In the 1935 debate on the cooperative commonwealth resolution, Woodsworth quoted a statement from the CCF Council which insisted, as did the last paragraph of the manifesto, that capitalism must be destroyed since it "can neither be reformed nor restored". In spite of this, the 1935, as well as the 1936 resolutions and debates were more moderate in tone than those of former years. A moral twist was injected with the call for the subordination of the profit motive to that of public service with the ultimate purpose of making the proposition of a new social order, less threatening.

In these debates on the establishment of a Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, Woodsworth aired his views on the issue of private property. During the 1933 debate, he stated that he did not disagree with private property as such, just with its unwarranted extension through the creation of the business corporation.

We create an artificial body which we call a corporation, and then, without imposing upon it any responsibilities, we give it all the privileges of a private person: without its having any soul, we endow it to immortality... It may very well be that my home is private property, but the original idea should never have

been extended to the machinery by which modern production is carried on. It does not belong there at all and ought never to have been extended to such a degree...⁶²

Three years later, when asked in the House of Commons if he believed in private property, Woodsworth replied that it depended on how one defined it. If it is defined from its latin derivation to mean personal belongings, which an individual can own and enjoy personally then he not only believed in it but actually advocated its extension. However, he did not believe in the right of a corporation to own property. If a corporation was not serving the needs of the people, then it should either be disbanded or taken over by the government. Ironically, it was not in his speech on the yearly cooperative commonwealth resolution, but during a debate on the recommendations of the price spread commission (June 11/35), that Woodsworth gave one of his strongest statements, at least in his later years, on the new social order.

I want a cooperative system under which we will be free. Our present system - though collective - we do not control; we have overhead control. What I advocate is a control exercised by the people themselves in a democratic fashion, a control that will no longer permit a few people to own the very tools by which we live, the machinery through which wealth is produced, but

under which that machinery and those tools of production will be under the control of the people themselves.

Why did Woodsworth advocate public ownership?⁶³
Implied in his writings and speeches was the view that public ownership:

1) enhanced the government's ability to plan the economy. (However in later years, he felt that the same goal could be achieved by government ownership of a few key industries, such as transportation and utilities.)

2) facilitated the use of industrial profits for the benefit of the whole population. (However, he frequently mentioned that this end could be achieved through heavy taxation of wealthy individuals and corporations),

3) alleviated the alienation experienced by the workers in these industries.

Of the three, the third most closely touches the question of Woodsworth's adherence to possessive individualist assumptions. One can discern a pattern in Woodsworth's writings, the more he stressed the theme of alienation, the more he mentioned the desirability of public ownership. In his early years, previous to his career as a Member of Parliament, he not only offered his

most comprehensive list of industries which should be under public realm, but was most vocal in his condemnation of the alienation produced by the capitalist system. In article three of the "What Next" series in the Western Labor News, he advocated the socialization of transportation, communications, public utilities, banks, and "manufacturing establishments and commercial institutions". Supporting the British Labour Party's call for "the progressive elimination from the control of industry of the private capitalist, individual or joint stock", he stated that this type of private ownership should be replaced by government ownership and control by committees consisting of government officials (federal, provincial or municipal) and representatives of the employees in the industry.

In a series of lectures to the Winnipeg Social Work Study Group in 1915, one can find Woodsworth's most comprehensive definition of alienation and description of its development in capitalist society. He noted that the industrial revolution produced specialization in switching from "individual production by hand and tool to collective production in factories". "A worker was assigned to a particular machine whose work it was to make a particular part of the article... [which means that]... he knows

nothing whatever about the other parts of the work and has little knowledge of the relation of any one part of the finished product". The industrial revolution also led to "a complete change in their (workers) status".⁶⁴ According to Woodsworth:

In the handicraft stage, each man owned his own workshop and tools, he was his own boss, he had a measure of independence. When he went to work in the factory he used the tools of another, worked in the plant owned by another, was forced to accept working conditions imposed by another, in fact, he simply became a hired man, a wage earner... the big tool machine or factory was of course very expensive and could be owned only by a few wealthy individuals, or by a number of employers combining. This meant that the ownership was confined to a few. Those who owned the machine claimed the right to the products of the machine. The workers generally were granted a mere wage, that is, a wage sufficient to provide for food, clothing, shelter and the upkeep of their families.⁶⁵

In his writings, Woodsworth dealt with two types of alienation; alienation from the fruits of one's labor and alienation arising from specialization. In reference to the first type, Woodsworth wrote that the main struggle in the capitalist system was between the workers and the owners, "between those who are making a real contribution to social welfare and those who are living on the fruits of other men's labour".⁶⁶ In a speech to the House of

Commons, some years later, Woodsworth chastized the government for not implementing the first article of the Labour Convention, which stated that labour should not be treated as a commodity or an article of commerce. In the debate that followed, King, when asked by Woodsworth, if that particular provision had been fulfilled, answered: "What would the honourable gentleman say with regard to the appointment of the president of the TLC to the Board of the Canadian National Railways". To which Woodsworth replied, "I fail to see how he connects the appointment of the president of the TLC to the Board of the Canadian National Railways with this principle that labour is not to be regarded as a commodity". Further along in the debate he criticized the government for not introducing another provision of the Labour convention which called for the introduction of the principle of representation in industry where labour and the community would share, with the owners, in industrial decision making. He suggested that a plan along the lines of the Whitley Council could be introduced.⁶⁷

Woodsworth also stressed the other aspect of alienation; alienation caused by specialization which he himself had experienced while working as a longshoreman in Vancouver in 1918 (his first job as a manual labourer):

"1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - the monotony of it all... 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - again I look at my watch - ten o'clock. What about the dignity of labour? What about the opportunities for self-expression, for initiative, for artistic enjoyment? How the last hour did drag! ... 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - long hours, heavy work, monotony, no personal interest..."⁶⁸

In another article of the same period, Woodsworth talks of the sense of accomplishment, creation and usefulness derived from completing a project or piece of work. A satisfaction which the worker in a capitalist system does not experience. Locked into an uninteresting, unfulfilling job, the worker is, in a sense, a prisoner, however, unlike the prisoner, the worker can quit his job only if willing and able to accept the consequences of no income.⁶⁷

References to alienation as well as full scale public ownership of industrial and commercial institutions had diminished greatly by the mid-1920's. In later years when Woodsworth talked of production it was usually not in reference to the means of production but to the amount of consumer goods produced, which was inextricably linked, in Woodsworth's mind, to distribution. In fact, he stressed that the problem was not one of production, i.e. amount of goods produced, but of distribution.⁷⁰ There is an abundance of wealth in this country but it is too

concentrated in the hands of a few because of the lack of proper distribution. Hence, through the years Woodsworth began to place more emphasis on the methods of distribution and less on the methods of production and resulting alienation.

In summary, a moderation of J.S. Woodsworth's perception of a new social order is clearly evident. How extensive was this moderating process and what did it encompass are issues of importance. In general, his critique of the Canadian capitalist system remained constant. Marxist in orientation, it viewed the capitalist relations of production and the poverty and alienation which it produced as the ultimate problem. If his critique of Canadian society remained relatively constant, his solutions did not, proceeding in early years from a call for the common ownership of all the means of production to one of selective state ownership, coupled with the establishment of cooperatives and the use of massive governmental redistributive programs, all within the prevailing relations of production.

If his critique of existing Canadian society did not change to any great extent, why was there such a modification in his perception of the new social order?

Part of the explanation can be found in the political environment of the time. As mentioned, with the Canadian government and general populace demonstrating increasing hostility towards communism, the CCF sought to dissociate itself from the commonly perceived notion of communism for the sake of political survival. Although Woodsworth was a man of principle and for all intents and purposes his parliamentary speeches were expressions of his true views,⁷¹ he was also a pragmatist with a strong belief in the concept of a 'socialist party.' However, the core of an individual's political and social thought does not consist solely of practical political considerations.

The issue under determination is whether Woodsworth perceived the capitalist relations of production as the major problem of Canadian society and whether the solutions which he put forth reflect this. In his early years both his critique and solutions meshed. He identified the prevailing relations of production as the problem, and hence called for their abolition, although always by peaceful means. In later years, although not as vocal and frequent in its expression,⁷² the essence of his critique remained. His solutions, however, no longer reflected his critique, focussing not on production as much as the

distributive process. This ambiguity could exist, in part⁷³, because of his eventual recognition that the changes which he had advocated earlier could not be brought about by peaceful parliamentary means unless they underwent significant moderation and were implemented at a much slower pace. This he was willing to do, so committed to non-violence as well as the belief that no change should be thrust upon the Canadian population, but rather should flow from them.

However, another important fact to be considered is that Woodsworth's critique of capitalist society emanated from his earliest experiences in Western Canada, previous to his election to Parliament. His community activities with the urban poor of Winnipeg, his first hand experience with alienation as a longshoreman in Vancouver, and his involvement in the Winnipeg General Strike produced some of his most radical critiques of Canadian societal relations and suggestions for reform based on the abolition of the capitalist relations of production. Overlayed with this, however, was his interaction during the same period with the prairie independent commodity producers. Although he did not fully incorporate their perspective into his political thought, he, nevertheless, believed that their

grievances were just as worthy as those of the urban working class and that ultimately both shared a common enemy, a fact which overrode all differences. He also was not blind to the reality that if a socialist party was to claim any success in Canada it would have to include both agrarian and rural workers as its basis of support.

Woodsworth's theory of political obligation was also affected by his background but more in terms of his religious heritage rather than his class position. A new socialist society would have to satisfy both material and moral dimensions of humankind. Although the former could easily be satisfied through the establishment of a new social order, the latter according to Woodsworth, could only be fulfilled if the principle of cooperation, the embodiment of truth and justice, was adhered to. The means necessary to satisfy the material wants of the populace must be brought about in a non-violent, cooperative manner, in order to satisfy the moral dimension. The populace, therefore, must realize the necessity for change. This realization would be accomplished by education or as Gregory Baum has termed it "the process of conscious-raising" which "introduced people to a critique of the present order and offered them an alternative view

of society"⁷⁴ This process involves no diminution of civil liberties or democracy as would forced economic changes. The importance which this belief plays in Woodsworth's thought was shared to some extent by his contemporaries and is attributable, in part, to his religious background. Baum has theorized that the "commitment of British (and Canadian) socialism to democracy and civil liberties was related to the Protestant tradition".⁷⁵ He also attributed the populist nature of Canadian socialism, i.e the belief in the judgment of the ordinary person (and hence the belief in the process of education) to the nonconformist protestant heritage of early radical Christians such as the Anabaptists and Calvinists.

Woodsworth's religious background therefore, did to some extent influence the direction and intensity of his views, but it should be placed in perspective. The extent to which it was the predominant factor in either his perception of Canadian society and its alternatives or the language used to describe his views is debatable. J.S. Woodsworth resigned from the Methodist Church for both political and doctrinal reasons. He did not, as mentioned, reject the basic precepts of Christianity and had, in fact, resigned because he felt he could no longer express them within the confines of the organized Church.

With his resignation and entrance into politics, Woodsworth's social gospel convictions, like his terminology, gradually became secularized. Baum attempts to explain this:

Since the churches claimed a monopoly on religious language, many radicals, Woodsworth among them, produced a secular counter-language to express their basically religious convictions. For this reason it is not always easy to evaluate the religious position of the activists.⁷⁶

The diminishing use of religious language in Woodsworth's speech and prose through the years should not be dismissed as an attempt to produce a secular counter-language. This would presuppose a conscious attempt at mystification on the part of Woodsworth in order to attract a new audience to his cause. Woodsworth decided, after much intensive soul searching, to resign from the ministry. It was natural that the movement from the ecclesiastical to the political realm would precipitate a secularization of his views as well as their expression.

Nevertheless, Baum's belief that "the secular language adopted by them [social gospel radicals] does not necessarily imply that the sense of urgency that moved them had lost its essentially religious quality" applied very

much to James S. Woodsworth. Of no doubt is the fact that he maintained his Christian belief system even after his resignation from the ministry. A dialectic continued to exist between his ~~secular~~ understanding of the human condition and its history, and the religious background against which his political philosophy had developed, a dialectic which was readily recognizable in his social and political thought through the years.

The process of secularization had started in Winnipeg within a few years of his ordination. Woodsworth's increasing interaction with farm and labour groups and his subsequent identification with these classes due to the peculiarities of his own class position as a social gospel minister in early twentieth century Canada, coupled with the Church's opposition to his pacifist beliefs resulted in his rejection of the Church. He rejected it as a vehicle for social change while maintaining his basic religious beliefs, which lived on to influence his political thought. The party replaced the Church as the instrument of reform in Woodsworth's schema and with it came a new set of exigencies. Woodsworth's dream of a social democratic party based on the goals of both the independent commodity producer class and

the industrial working class and his attempts to accommodate both groups under one political roof placed limitations on his radicalism. Over the years this vision was to act as a modifying force on his conception of a new social order, while at the same time, his religious background was to exercise a moderating influence on his perception of how this new social order should be achieved.

CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

1 K. McNaught, Prophets in Politics, (Toronto: U. of T. Press, 1952) p. 6

2 It is interesting to note that during this period, Woodsworth criticized British Methodism's preoccupation with personal salvation and its neglect of important social issues, and while in Britain attended Church of England rather than Methodist services.

3 McNaught p. 25-26.

4 The Manitoba Conference of Methodist ministers struck a special committee to study the letter and subsequently reported:

Having had a full and frank conversation with Bro. James S. Woodsworth re the cause of his resignation, we find that there is nothing in his doctrinal beliefs and adherence to our discipline to warrant his separation from the ministry of the Methodist Church, and therefore recommend that his resignation be not accepted and that his character be now passed.

5 During his tenure he published two books, Strangers Within our Gates and My Neighbor. These books as well as the various articles written during this period reveal some of Woodsworth's prejudices. Although he admitted that certain types of British immigrants, "the failures of the cities", were undesirable, he preferred British immigrants to those of any other nationality. "We need more of our own blood to assist us to maintain in Canada our British traditions and to mould the incoming armies of foreigners into loyal British subjects". His biases were also clearly evident in his views on education. Bilingual schools in Manitoba should promptly be replaced by "truly national schools", that is unilingual English schools, since the former inhibit the assimilation process of immigrants (McNaught p. 48).

6 G. Emery "The Methodist Church and the "European Foreigners" of Winnipeg, The All-Peoples Mission, 1889-1914" Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Transactions Series III, No. 28, 1971-2 p.92.

7. McNaught p. 53-55.

This was looked upon with some disapproval from some of the wealthier Methodist businessmen of Winnipeg.

- 8 Ibid p. 57.

- 9 Ibid p. 61.

- 10 Ibid p.74.

- 11 "Why I Resigned from the Church Ministry" J.S. Woodsworth - Woodsworth Papers, Public Archives of Canada.

- 12 M. Bliss "The Methodist Church and World War One" Canadian Historical Review.

- 13 Ibid p. 213.

- 14 Woodsworth also joined the union as well as helped to organize the British Columbia Federated Labour Party

- 15 Frank Underhill "The Untypical Canadian" p. 16-17.

- 16 For details, see McNaught pp.125, 126, 135 and Underhill p. 20

- 17 Underhill, ibid. p. 11.

- 18 McNaught, ibid. p. 130.

- 19 In 1940, the office of the president was abolished and that of honorary president was created. J.S. Woodsworth was partially paralyzed from a stroke when he resigned the position of presidency and became honorary president. He felt that his illness plus his solitary stance on the war were reasons enough for resignation.

- 20 See Chapter One p. 34.

- 21 House of Commons, March 30, 1939

- 22 Written by J.S. Woodsworth in 1920 for the Winnipeg Labor Church

- 23 "Unconventional Sermon" in Western Labor News April 16/20

- 24 Ibid.

- 25 The latter prevented him from embracing a purely deterministic view of historical materialism which did not allow for an important role for the human spirit and which as Gregory Baum notes "opt[s] for a mechanical, not dialectical understanding of the impact of economic institutions on human consciousness... underestimat[ing] the creativity of the spirit" (p.116). A description of Woodsworth's view which comes close but does not ultimately banish the inherent ambiguities is again found in Baum's book in his description of the view of history found in socialist thought. "In liberal and in the dominant philosophies, consciousness is looked upon as independent of society; it can stretch and move in any direction depending on the creative spirit of the thinker. In socialist thought, on the other hand, consciousness is regarded as interrelated with society. Consciousness is grounded in social institutions. It does not float freely above the material conditions of life but to a large extent reflects these conditions, at the same time, at certain historical moments, thanks to human creativity, consciousness is able to affect in turn the material conditions of life and thus have a transforming effect on human history. This dialectical relationship between institutions and consciousness was proposed by Marxism as well as the cooperative movement from their very beginnings in the 1840's. These two movements argued that man's egotism or self-centeredness could be overcome, not indeed by preaching higher values and demanding spiritual effort, but by involving men and women in new economic institutions that would summon forth cooperation and co-responsibility and hence transform human consciousness... They insisted that public or cooperative ownership would be the key to a new consciousness and to the qualitative transformation of human life. This dialectical materialism; then, in no way neglected the spiritual dimension" (Baum, p. 115-116).
- 26 "Is World Brotherhood Practicable?" P. 2 Vol. 16, Woodsworth Papers, P.A.C.
- 27 Of course, there were some detrimental aspects. For example, scarcity was not fully eradicated because of the lack of proper distribution and the change from individual to collective production which resulted in

alienation. However, J.S. Woodsworth felt that the above were results of the capitalist system, and these problems would be quickly rectified under socialism.

28 House of Commons June 18, 1936

29 "Is World Brotherhood Practicable?" p. 3 Vol. 16 Woodsworth Papers, P.A.C.

30 House of Commons June 10, 1938 and March 28, 1935

31 House of Commons June 11, 1935

32 House of Commons May, 20 1932 and Feb. 24, 1936, "The Incoming of the Machine Age", Vol. 16 Woodsworth Papers, P.A.C. This is incongruent with the philosophy of dialectical materialism whereby certain aspects of one stage of history are transferred, and in the process transformed within the new epoch. The ambiguity occurs in Woodsworth's praise of competition as a trait and his condemnation of the consequences of such competition when allowed to go unchecked (a view primarily held by many farmers of the time, see Chapter II). It is due, in part, to his ambiguous class position that he could identify with the agrarian perspective. The difference, however, lays in the fact that the farmers wanted the maintenance of the capitalist relations of production, but not some of its more dire consequences, while Woodsworth had serious reservations regarding these relations of production (as we shall see later).

33 House of Commons, May 20, 1932

34 House of Commons June 11, 1935

35 House of Commons, Feb. 11, 1935

For a good discussion of Woodsworth's views on the positive role of individualism in pioneer society see A. Mill's article "The Later Thought of J.S. Woodsworth 1918-1942: "An Essay in Revision" in Journal of Canadian Studies, Fall 1982 pp. 76, 77, 93.

36 According to Woodsworth this is mostly due to the failure of capitalist countries to successfully

expand into external markets, which were shrinking rapidly. See House of Commons March 2, 1932

- 37 See House of Commons June 11, 1935, Feb. 9, 1932, Feb. 5/34, Feb. 11/35, Jan. 22/35, May 5/36, April 19/39, March 9/32, April 13/32, March 13/35, March 28/35, and Feb. 27/36. Problems specifically arise when Woodsworth discusses what he considers to be the driving force of historical change. Although he did not make particular mention of how one economic epoch is transformed into another, he constantly stressed the fact that the change would be non-violent.
- 38 House of Commons March 30/39
- 39 The Fabian influence is recognizable. See Baum p. 44
- 40 See House of Commons Feb. 15/34 March 1/34 and March 24/39
- 41 "Unconventional Sermon" August 27/20 in Western Labour News.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 See House of Commons May 3/32, Feb. 1/33, June 17/31, Aug. 1/31, June 27/35, and June 30/38
- 44 This commitment to pacifism was tested by fire in the House of Commons during World War II.
- 45 House of Commons Nov. 25/32
- 46 House of Commons June 11/35
- 47 To a certain extent his optimism was warranted by the creation of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1932
- 48 House of Commons Nov. 25/32
- 49 "Socialism" 1915 Volume 16 Woodsworth Papers P.A.C. In another article, entitled "The Businessman Psychology", Woodsworth expressed some sympathy with the capitalist who is caught up in his own class consciousness.

- 50 "The Rising Tide of Democracy", (mid 1920's) Vol. 37 Woodsworth Papers P.A.C. In another article, entitled, "Inspiration in a Wash tub", Woodsworth was more critical of the leaders in the present system. He said that there exists an artificial division between the hand worker and the brain worker, and this division is to the detriment of the brain worker, who we usually turn to for leadership
- 51 "What Next", Part I, Western Labor News July 25/19
- 52 House of Commons May 3/32
- 53 "Is World Brotherhood Practicable?" Vol. 16 Woodsworth Papers, H. of C. Feb. 24/36 and Jan. 17/39
- 54 House of Commons April 27/39
- 55 See House of Commons March 2/32 and Feb. 1/34
- 56 House of Commons Feb. 27/36. For a similar theme see House of Commons May 14/36 and Jan. 22/38
- 57 House of Commons Feb. 27/36
- 58 N. Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1977) p. 215
- 59 House of Commons March 2/32
- 60 In this respect J.S. Woodsworth referred to Sydney and Beatrice Webb's Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain
- 61 House of Commons Feb. 1/33
- 62 House of Commons Feb. 1/33
- 63 As we have already seen, Woodsworth as he got older, greatly narrowed the scope of 'essential industries' which should be socialized
- 64 "The Incoming of the Machine", Vol. 16, Woodsworth Papers
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 "What Next", Part I, Western Labor News, July 25/19. The same theme was also stressed in other

articles, "Unconventional Sermon" Aug. 27/20 "A Sabbath Day Meditation" Vol. 37 and "What Next" Part I July 25/19.

- 67 Simply because Woodsworth here and in other places emphasized the need for cooperation between labour and capital, does not mean that he saw it as a goal in itself but rather as a short term reform which could be brought about within the capitalist system.
- 68 "On the Waterfront", (mid-1920's) Vol. 37, Woodsworth Papers
- 69 "The Beauty of Work - Actual and Ideal", (mid-1920's) Vol. 37, Woodsworth Papers
- 70 See House of Commons March 4/25, Sept. 18/30, March 31/31, Feb. 1/33, March 27/33, April 15/33, Feb. 5/34, March 12/37
- 71 Furthermore, Woodsworth's views during the early period were often taken up by the Party, so heavy was the imprint of his philosophy on the young CCF's political platform
- 72 Although the fact that he spoke of it less could be an indication that his views had moderated somewhat, it is difficult to determine, since his views remained the same when he did speak out.
- 73 Beyond the mere political considerations mentioned above.
- 74 Baum, op. cit. p.66
- 75 Ibid. p. 63.
- 76 Ibid. p. 50.

CHAPTER III

A.E. Smith, as president of the Manitoba Conference from 1916 to 1918 accepted, albeit reluctantly, J.S. Woodsworth's letter of resignation. Ironically, Smith himself was destined to follow Woodsworth's footsteps only two short years later. Although the same secular and ecclesiastical atmosphere acted as the stimulus for both decisions, there were differences which are worth exploring and which have an impact on the path which Smith subsequently followed. Although both chose the politics of protest as their new vocation, Woodsworth decided not only to embrace social democracy but also to build a new socialist party based on the chaos of fractionalized agrarian and labour groups in Canada. In contrast, Smith decided, after a short foray into the unstructured world of social democratic politics during his term as member of the Manitoba legislature, to opt for the highly disciplined organizational structure of the Communist party.

"The metamorphosis of Smith from a dedicated preacher to a fervent revolutionary" will be outlined in

the first part of the chapter, while the latter part will examine Smith's political thought within C.B. Macpherson's framework, specifically from the perspective of the extent to which his religious and political choices, as motivated by his life long search for order and discipline, affected his thought.

This search started early, prompted in part by the instability which Smith had experienced during his childhood. His father, having resigned from the military before Albert's birth in Guelph in 1871, had compiled an unsteady record of employment as a manual labourer and frequently changed jobs and locations. Smith's memories of his father, however, were kind. He painted him as a beaten man, a victim of the prevailing social structure which had denied him the opportunity of providing a decent life for his family². In sharp contrast, J.S. Woodsworth's early life was relatively stable. Despite the fact that his father's work produced long absences and frequent relocations, there, nevertheless, prevailed a sense of security and well-being not present in Smith's early life.

These economic conditions forced A.E. Smith to start working at the age of 13. From a message boy, he progressed to apprentice machinist, then bookbinder. More

than fifty years later, he wrote "I am convinced the environment and the workers had a very great and lasting influence on my later life. I was trained and educated by them. I became a worker."³ It seemed, however, that this influence was overshadowed for the time being by his "conversion" to religion, when he decided to devote his life to God. He was born again at a local evangelical service and from his recollection of the meeting, it seems probable that the Methodist church he attended was of a traditional fundamentalist strain with emphasis on personal salvation.⁴

It was religion rather than politics which was to provide Smith's life with structure, meaning, and easement from the harsh realities of poverty and alienation of his earlier years. With hindsight, Smith dismisses this first of three conversions or "turning points" in his life as "... fanciful but vague, religious emotionalism induced in the youth of eager temperament by the dramatic evangelism of fifty years ago."⁵ He also described himself as an alienated individual who would naturally be attracted to the Church because of the sense of friendliness and belonging it induced. Reasoning which was also applicable to his decision many years later to join the Communist party.⁶

At 17, Smith was named lay preacher. For the next three years, he held evangelical services while retaining his position as a bookbinder. In 1890 he was instructed by the Methodist Conference to take up a position as a missionary student in rural Manitoba and three years later was chosen as a candidate for Wesley College. It was at Wesley that he came in contact with fellow students like J.S. Woodsworth, who helped broaden his understanding of religion beyond orthodox fundamentalism encouraging him "to accept the more liberal and scholarly interpretation of the scriptures".⁷

His first contact with social gospel was also made in Winnipeg, where his thinking evolved from an emphasis on individual responsibility for sin and personal salvation to the realization that only a new social order would eradicate the evils prevalent in society. This reorientation towards the social gospel, and hence the secular environment was solidified with his appointment, in 1902, to the MacDougall Memorial Methodist Church in the heart of the working class section of Winnipeg. It was during this posting that Smith became involved in labour politics. He worked for the re-election of A.E. Puttee, labour candidate for the House of Commons in 1904, and

spoke on behalf of strikers involved in labour disputes, such as the 1906 street railway strike.

Smith's stand led to the non-renewal of his appointment in Winnipeg in 1906, and to successive postings in Portage Plains and Nelson, British Columbia. At the latter he became further exposed to labour strife as well as to the ideas of leading labour spokesmen and Marxist socialists. In 1913, he accepted an invitation to become Minister of the First Methodist Church of Brandon, Manitoba.

The years in Brandon would constitute a major turning point in his career. The direction of that change was already foreshadowed upon his departure from British Columbia. His childhood background and his experiences since coming West were combining to alter significantly his goals as a Minister. The emotionalism of Methodist evangelism and its corollary of "saving souls" from "earthly wretchedness and sin" became replaced by a concern for the quality of human relations in a collective society. Smith's endorsement of the labour movement and socialism were manifestations of his changing religious perspective. His ministerial endeavors in the frontier outposts and in the slums of Winnipeg had convinced him that the new civilization which was emerging on the prairies could best be served by a social and institutional rather than moral reform.⁸

During his term at Brandon, his radical social gospel beliefs were thrust further to the left with his first reading of the Communist Manifesto in 1917. "I remember the first time I read it through. It was like the revelation of a new world into which I felt I must enter and to which I seemed to belong... I saw that Jesus was a Communist. I linked his life with the old prophets, the great preachers of the Old Testament, who were early Communists."⁹ This "revelation" has been described by Smith as his second conversion when he "found the new Christ... a great Communist."¹⁰

Yet it was during this same period that Smith progressed up the echelons of the church bureaucracy with his election for two terms as President of the Manitoba Conference from 1916 to 1918 (mainly as a result of his interest in church union). Smith's personal conversion and his commitment to the ministry lasted for a number of years. Although he became involved in labour politics as early as 1904 and had become increasingly unorthodox in his religious beliefs, it was not until the latter part of the 1910's that he experienced what he termed "mental and spiritual struggle."¹¹

In comparison, J.S. Woodsworth had not experienced such a "personal conversion", which had caused him concern since the Methodist Church of his youth was revivalist in character. Woodsworth's doubts as to his vocation were present as early as his ordination. In contrast, Smith's conversion experience carried him through to the point where he was in a position of authority to accept J.S. Woodsworth's resignation and to oversee the firing of Salem Bland from the teaching faculty.¹² Smith did resign in 1920, but only when his request for a one year leave of absence was denied. Although his beliefs had become increasingly unorthodox he was unwilling to abandon the structure and framework which the Church offered. It was only when he was refused wide latitude to pursue his secular activities that he resigned.

Smith's final break with the formal institutions of religion came with the events surrounding the Winnipeg General Strike. Smith and Woodsworth participated to some extent in the strike effort and for each the effect on their thinking was profound. Smith, as the Ministerial Association's representative on Brandon's Trades and Labour Council, became involved in the Brandon city workers strike during the same period. He also openly supported the

Winnipeg General Strike at mass meetings and helped prepare strike bulletins for the Western Labour News.¹³ As expected, his sermons were imbued with the subject of the strike ranging from statements of support for the striker's demands to more general pronouncements on the need for the Church to take up the worker's cause as part of its task of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

Many of his congregation as well as Church officials resented Smith's outspoken support of the strike, and as a consequence denied his request for a leave of absence to further pursue labour activities. The refusal precipitated his resignation from the ministry. With both J.S. Woodsworth and A.E. Smith, the reason given for their resignations was the incompatibility of their own Christian principles with those of the organized Church, albeit on different issues.¹⁴ For Woodsworth, it was the war; for Smith, the Winnipeg General Strike.¹⁵

However, the differences were more far reaching than the above may indicate and touched on their perception of the role of the Church in their lives. Woodsworth, as noted in the previous chapter, had great difficulty with certain ecclesiastical doctrines from a very early stage. He replaced the institution of the Church with that of the

political party as the main vehicle for social change when he realized that it could not adequately perform the function of precipitating reform. In comparison, Smith was not overly concerned either with his own increasingly unorthodox doctrinal beliefs nor with the Church's failure to deal with the major problems pervading Canadian society. It was more of a case of the Church rejecting him. Smith fought the decision through the various levels of appeal and only when all such avenues were exhausted did he submit his resignation. Even afterward he continued for some months within the same general realm, organizing People's Churches (Labour Churches) in Brandon and other cities. Only reluctantly did he finally abandon a framework which had held him in good stead for a number of years, when his focus of attention broadened beyond the ministry to political life.

In June of 1920, he won a seat in the Manitoba Legislature as a member of the Brandon Labour Party, an independent political organization, along with William Ivens and nine other Labour representatives.¹⁶ The party attempted to join forces with agrarian representatives in the Legislature but failed, partly due to their refusal to compromise their platform,¹⁷ which advocated issues such as

collective bargaining, the nationalization of railroads, the single transferable vote and group government.¹⁸ Within a year, Smith had come to the conclusion that a national labour party was needed, and seconded the historic motion at the 1921 T.L.C. Convention which led to the formation of the Canadian Labour Party.

Smith's defeat in 1923 may have ended his career as an elected member but not his interest in politics. He then moved to Toronto where he became involved in the Labour Forum, an organizational offshoot of the Canadian Labour Party which held study sessions on such topics as Social Reformism vs Communism. There he became exposed to the views of men, such as Tim Buck and Jack MacDonald, which led to his application for membership into the Communist Party in 1925. The reasons given for this decision after more than twenty years of hindsight are worth quoting at some length.

While still in the Church I had come to see that the transfer of industrial production from the basis of profit and self-interest to the basis of service and use was the essential step to human brotherhood. In the general strike I learned that this would not be accomplished by a great captain and a band of angels but by the party of workers. I had the conception of a gradual achievement of reform after reform, step after step, until the new social order would emerge. I

stood for evolution over revolution. Now experience and study were teaching me that revolution was part of evolution, a most important part. The Russian Revolution was victorious. The Soviet government which it was first predicted would not last very long, was now firmly established ... The Labor government in England had been a great disappointment to me. In the strikes and in the clash of opinions in the Canadian Labour Party and in my own Committee, I was drawing near the conclusion that the Communist position was often what was needed.¹⁹

However, a good part of the explanation for his latest conversion lay in his search for structure and order, coupled with his experiences in the Manitoba Legislature and the fractionalism among its labour and farm members. "If there was one lesson that Smith learned in the legislature, it was that if the socialists were to be effective - in order to pose a challenge to the capitalist parties - they had to become disciplined by well-defined objectives".²⁰

This became his third and final conversion. In the first he had embraced religion; in the second radical social gospel; and in the third he rejected "all religious forms", and embraced "scientific materialism" and "returned to the great working class."²¹ Smith's third conversion was, in a fashion, similar to his first: it resulted from a need to embrace a framework on which to organize one's

view of the world. Religious evangelism was replaced by political evangelism.

Smith's career, from 1925 on, can be summarized by the motto of the Canadian Labour Defense League (C.L.D.L.): "Every worker a Defender".²² The C.L.D.L. was originally created as a support organization for strikers in Cape Breton, Glace Bay, Reserve and Drumheller. His involvement in this, plus other social committees, was all encompassing and tenacious. When the C.L.D.L., along with sixteen other organizations, were declared illegal in 1940, Smith reacted by creating a front organization called the National Committee for Democratic Rights.

His interest in international affairs, with trips to Moscow and Spain, was linked to his passion for civil liberties; the purpose of these trips was closely tied to the subject of workers' rights. The rights which Smith most passionately defended were those of his fellow Communists. The trials of 1931, where Tim Buck and seven others were charged under section 98 of the Criminal Code and subsequent events, such as the attempt on Tim Buck's life, completely engulfed Smith. He, himself, had been arrested in 1934 for sedition, with regard to certain statements on the rôle of the federal government in

the "attempted assassination" of Tim Buck. The charges, however, were subsequently dropped. He was closely involved with the Communist Party of Canada until his death in 1947.

The particular political avenue which Smith had chosen was not accidental, rather it was motivated by a multitude of factors. Smith's early activity as a manual worker and his later experience as a social gospel minister in pre-war Winnipeg solidified his identification with the working class. His need for order and discipline, and the desire to form a framework by which to view society, initially drove Smith to embrace the ministry. Subsequently, when the Church thwarted his freedom to completely envelope himself in secular activities, he adopted the Communist party as a substitute Church.

Among the Canadian Marxists, Smith found that sense of purpose which seemed to be lacking in the Methodist Church and in other socialist parties. The individuals Smith encountered within the organization appeared "intelligent, well-read, and most importantly disciplined and dedicated." They believed fervently that in Marxist communism they had found the single, totally all-inclusive explanation for the ultimate questions - questions as to the cause of things, the sources of history, and the destiny of mankind. It was a belief readily acceptable to Smith since he had never lost his original evangelical zeal to find the "truth".²³

Although he took on a new "religion", which was to dramatically affect his views,²⁴ certain elements of the old perspective remained to influence his political thought. Both his religious as well as his class background will be analyzed within Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist assumptions according to the following components:

1- his view of human nature as cooperative or competitive

2- his view of societal relations both historical and contemporary. (i) Is society composed of atomistic individuals or organic, interdependent classes? (ii) If society is composed of classes, what constitutes a class? What is the relation of one class to another? Are classes unequal?

3- his view as to whether the market relation is the central relation among individuals.

4- his view as to whether labour is alienable.

An indication of Smith's view of societal relations and human nature is evident in his philosophy of history. Although Smith was not particularly preoccupied with the major universal and social laws dominating society his writings periodically indicate his views on the subject. He believed the individual's primary motivation throughout the ages has been "self-interest, prompted by the primal struggle for existence".²⁵ Humans organized into groups

primarily for the purpose of survival and not because of any natural social tendencies:

The first dealings and associations of early men, out of which came the rudimentary forms of human society were prompted by the idea of personal advantage [which] is the main idea in the working of the artificial social system of today, only the advantage is controlled for the few as against the many.²⁶

Smith's historical scenario originated with the struggle of man against nature, then extended to man against his fellow human being, and finally elevated itself to class against class. The strong continually preyed upon the weak to the point where in the capitalist stage "the wealth of the world was never so prodigious... and yet poverty was never so widespread or so painfully oppressive".²⁷

Smith believed that the maxim of human interaction should be "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".²⁸ However,

...under capitalism this is only a sham. No men or class of men who degrade their fellow men to a position of economic subservience can obey this maxim. No society which has as its center the principle of exploitation of man by man for profit can ever realize human brotherhood. Brotherhood can only exist on a firm economic basis. Capitalist exploitation must be abolished before brotherhood can be achieved.²⁹

For Smith, only the introduction of a new social order would prompt the development of "altruistic service just as the present age develops selfishness."³⁰ Furthermore, Smith felt that in a capitalist society, cooperation was not possible. "The class interests of the different classes in Society do not harmonize. No, never under the existing class system. No, nothing is able to produce harmony."³¹

There were, however, a few redeeming characteristics which resulted from the economic structure of capitalism.

The system of capitalism has had a long history. It has accomplished much for mankind. It has put men to work. It has taught man, as an animal to desire to work; to almost love to work. Man is not by nature a worker. It has taught man to have design in work to get an objective and strive for it. It has embedded the profit system in the very mind and heart of its high class.³²

It must be mentioned that the above quote was written as an explanation of the goals of the Labour Progressive Party of Canada and the statements were, of necessity, couched in rather conciliatory language. It is a point of interest that the only positive statement made by Smith with regard to the capitalist system came within the concept of a "united front party".

On the other hand, the failures of capitalism were many, the greatest being its inability to rectify the material wants of the majority. Poverty, according to Smith, is the greatest evil of the capitalist system.

Poverty is a social crime. It represents that something is out of proper adjustment in the social system so that wrong results are produced. The maladjustment exists at the point of production. The fact that a private property system in the machinery of production in the possession of a few is the sore spot in the social system. By virtue of this ownership, these few are able to extract an enormous share of the wealth produced and at the same time they are able to impose cruel conditions of life and labor upon those who have no share in this ownership.³³

Smith's interest in the subject of poverty surfaced as early as 1915 and persisted throughout his life.³⁴ He perceived the eradication of poverty as the main goal of a new emerging social order. In response to the question: "What is the objective of Society?" Smith suggested that:

The greatest happiness for the greatest number of people over all Earth would be a worthy objective. It would embrace all the main problems of life. Happiness is to be defined in the terms of production and consumption. There is no real basis for happiness apart from these vital functions. The human being is happy when he is producing wealth he can possess and when he is consuming the same. This is the basis of all individual and collective happiness... Organized

society should be and eventually will be, based upon the principle of work. Every member of society should be a wealth producer. He should produce by work. The wealth he produces should be his possession and should minister to his whole life. Organized society should be established on the basis of the common ownership of all the means of production.³⁵

His call for common ownership of the means of production indicates his disagreement with the prevailing market relations of capitalism and the resulting alienation of labour. Nevertheless, the problem of alienation was not given the same attention, being dealt with only in connection with the issue of economic scarcity. In fact, a perusal of his writings did not locate any direct reference to the term "alienation", although he did refer to the sale of "human labour power" as a commodity which did not receive its full value.³⁶ On the whole, his emphasis remained on the eradication of poverty. Although he did see the need for a change in the relations of production and not simply those of distribution, it was prompted more by economic reasons rather than any satisfaction that might have been derived from the ownership of the fruits of one's labour.

In the above quote, Smith refers to the individual in the act of producing, but not necessarily the individual

as a producer. He emphasized the necessity of the individual receiving the fruits of one's labour in order for him/her to achieve a better standard of living as a consumer. Yet he did not refer to the other benefit, that is, the sense of fulfillment from ownership of the fruits of one's labour, which is not simply monetary in orientation. Marx, on the other hand, considered both elements as vital components of his political theory.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, John Stuart Mill believed that "man's essence is not as a consumer of utilities ...[but] a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted". He had reworked Bentham's view of man as "a bundle of appetites demanding satisfaction". Essentially, Smith did not deal with Mill's and Marx's view of man as a producer deriving fulfillment from that action, he only emphasized man's pleasure and self-fulfillment as emanating from the monetary result of this production. This is consistent with Smith's belief that the individual is not a worker by nature. His view of man is that of a consumer not a producer, although he did not reach the conclusion that the only reform necessary involved a change in the distribution of wealth. Like Marx, Smith viewed the basis of a new social order as being the common ownership

of the means of production, although his assumption of the nature of the individual differed.

Smith's call for common ownership is not surprising, since as early as 1925 he had fully embraced Marxism. What is interesting is the manner in which he described common ownership, especially in the few years separating his second and third conversions (from 1919 to 1925), where in his thinking radical social gospel and visionary terminology mixed freely with Marxist doctrine.³⁷

A prime example can be found in a sermon given July, 1919 entitled The Uprising of the Common People when Smith described capitalist society as divided in two classes.

"(1) Those who own the instruments and material of production, (2) those who furnish the labour for this production".³⁸ The latter possess no capital and live by the sale of their labour,

He went on to warn labour against ameliorative measures which would not affect the basis of capitalism, yet in the next sentence Smith described the aim and purpose of society as "the achievement of the ideal of fraternity". Further on, he stated that the overthrow of capitalism "will end in the whole means of production being owned by the whole body of workers ... this would prove a

permanent solution of the labour problem...[it] would develop altruistic service just as the present age develops selfishness."

Within a year of delivering this homily, Smith had taken up his own call for action by successfully running for the Manitoba Legislature. The platform of the Labour Party, dated May 1920, to which he belonged, although hinting at the need for full common ownership of the means of production by the working class, did not make a clear unequivocal statement to that effect. After calling for such reforms as collective bargaining, nationalization of banks and the organization of agricultural production, the platform culminated in a call for the socialization of industry and capital. This, on the surface, could be taken as a cry for common ownership of the means of production. However, the reasons mentioned by the party for the last demand make this conclusion suspect. The platform concluded that:

The central problem of the social life of the world is the emancipation of the working class from economic and industrial oppression. This problem is not only social and economic but is fundamentally an ethical demand, calling for the transference of the whole basis of industrial activity from that of self-interest and profits to that of service and use. The justification

for advancing this position is discovered in the demand of the workers for better conditions of life; the severe condemnation of the competitive system which is disclosed by the application of economic principles already made by great trusts, and as well in the revelations of superior efficiency made by national organization and true cooperation."³⁹

The implication here seems to focus on a need for redistribution of wealth rather than a change in the actual ownership of the means of production.

During his three years as a Member of the Manitoba Legislature Smith spoke for many of these reforms, as well as for the establishment of industrial councils and the creation of group government.⁴⁰ As he recalled "there was not a Marxist student or thinker among us. We were confronted with a peculiar opportunity in a critical period, but we could only grope about to try to find a way."⁴¹ This seems to be a particularly appropriate description of Smith's thinking at that time: a vacillation between social democratic and Marxist thought, between an emphasis on distribution of wealth as opposed to ownership of the means of production. Interestingly, Smith's sermons during this period were more radical than his speeches as a member of the Manitoba Legislature.⁴²

Smith's belief in the need for the common ownership of the means of production, solidified by 1925, was in evidence previous to that time, especially around the Winnipeg General Strike.⁴³ Before 1925, the most radical statements in this regard were made by Smith in the pulpit, not the Legislature. Smith's use of religion as a vehicle for his political message (especially via the People's Church) far outweighed J.S. Woodsworth's whose conscience did not allow him that luxury.

Any speculation as to the basis of Smith's view of a new social order, be it common ownership or otherwise, would naturally include an analysis as to how this would be achieved. Smith's theory of social change in his later years (post 1925) was that of historical materialism. "History is always in motion - a motion not haphazard, but governed by certain social laws which must be recognized and cooperated with."⁴⁴ The prevailing laws are both dialectical and material in nature, and consist of a series of quantitative leaps.

The ultimate culmination of history will be a revolution which, according to Smith, is

... carried out by a conscious majority possessing a single well-defined object... [it]

is not a political act - it is a life, a movement which is revolutionary only in the sense that it is speeding up the political consciousness of the community and it is giving bulk and weight to the Cause of the People such as never was.⁴⁵

Overall, Smith preached the inevitability of the general process and direction of history while at the same time emphasizing the necessity of human intervention. He maintained that capitalism was on the decline, based on the assumption that capitalist countries were failing in their quest for expanding foreign markets while faced with a rapidly expanding working class.⁴⁶ There were certain times, however, when he expressed doubts as to the presence of any particular historical design:

The social system is an artificial production out of the haphazard experience of mankind. Human society has arrived at its present position without design or direction. The system that has been thus produced can be changed, indeed, it is being changed all the time. There is nothing supernatural about human society.⁴⁷

At other times, Smith introduced the factor of choice, implying that historical development was not totally pre-determined, but possessed of a certain degree of autonomy. Individuals have a choice. As he stated in a broadcast for the 1945 election:

Let us not fail to recognize that we have reached a turning point in the history of our country. Two pathways into the future are opening before us at this time. One leads to the days of brighter and happier conditions. The other leads to a period of darkness and misery for the workers and farmers."⁴⁸

To what extent the future was predetermined had little bearing on Smith's belief that the working class was to play a major rôle. Increased consciousness on the part of workers of their exploitation would lead to "the development of the working class movement to a point at which the working class should advance to the seizure of power".⁴⁹ This faith in the leading rôle which the working class would play was also evident in his earlier writings. In the Uprising of the Common People sermon, Smith predicted that the logical result of the labour movement would be the overthrow of capitalism. There are two aspects of the movement, the Ideal and the Practical. The former follows the Christian ethic of Fraternity, "but there must be a full recognition of the fact that ideals have to be worked out in the actual."⁵⁰ Idealism alone, according to Smith, is insufficient as it is mitigated by the intransigence of the ruling class and their control of the political, legal, social and economic institutions.⁵¹ Only consciousness born of the economic reality of

exploitation can succeed in motivating an individual to overthrow the existing relations of production. Only the proletariat can fight for the ideal social order since the interests of the capitalist class are directly opposed to that of the proletariat, and the professional class is ultimately incapable of intervening successfully in the struggle.⁵²

His view of the rôle of the various classes is somewhat influenced by his perception of his own position within the social structure. Smith was convinced that his work experience as a youth greatly affected his later life. He noted in his autobiography, "I was trained and educated by them [workers]. I became a worker."⁵³ A.E. Smith considered his subsequent years as a minister and member of the professional class an interlude. Upon his resignation from the Church he commented, "I turned from the comfortable but stultified position, the rich friends and prominent career to go out with the struggling masses, fighting for the principles of social justice. I returned to the great working class where I proudly belong."⁵⁴

His perception of the rôle he and his counterparts played during the immediate years after the Winnipeg General Strike also yields some insight into his view of societal relations.

The heavy groundswell [the labour movement] carried me with other Ministers and professional men in the lead of the workers' movement. Unconsciously, we headed the movement on lines indicated by our own backgrounds. While championing the justice of the cause, many of these new converts mistakenly considered that the workers were ill advised in striking, parading, demonstrating. They felt called upon to give 'some' advice to the workers, in whom they lacked confidence. I was groping my way to a more positive understanding. My leadership suffered from great shortcomings.⁵⁵

Smith's perception was that while many members of the professional class were sympathetic to the workers' cause, their upbringing and economic position limited their criticism of societal relations and consequently, the solution needed.

Smith's view of the agrarian class was similarly subdued. Although his contact with farmers, especially during the early part of his ministry, was quite extensive,⁵⁶ his understanding of the problems they faced and consequently his identification with their plight was limited. Smith's sympathy lay with the industrial workers. The agrarian sector was seen only as a possible means of support for the working class struggle. During his years in the Communist Party, this perception can be partially explained, by the general attitude the party entertained

towards the agrarian population.⁵⁷ Although there was an attempt to court them, it was by no means a consolidated, concentrated effort, and due to the nature of the rural economic environment, it was not a successful one. Furthermore, during his earlier years, Smith had hopes of a farm-labour coalition in both the 16th Manitoba Legislature and the federal Parliament of 1921. However, his hopes were dashed by the successful cooptation of many of the farmers by the traditional parties. "I remember well how the great western farmers "revolt" of that time was led back safely into the Liberal fold."⁵⁸ Therefore, in his final analysis, it was the working class alone who would spearhead the thrust for social change.

Yet, the power of increased class consciousness on the part of industrial workers was not to be overestimated when pitted against the powerful social, economic, and political tools of the ruling class. Smith warned that the new social order would not be created without conflict.

Generally speaking, while Smith did not advocate violence, he was not, like Woodsworth, a confirmed pacifist. Instead, he tempered his view with the pragmatic realization that physical force, although not an integral part of his concept of revolution was on occasion,

necessary. In 1925, in answer to a reporter's question on the inevitability of revolution Smith stated: "We take the position that someday the egg will ripen ... and when the chick comes out it will, of necessity, break the shell."⁵⁹ At other points in time, he likened the process to the birth of a child with the inevitable pain involved in creation.⁶⁰

Despite the fact that Smith had a clear idea of his basic economic strategy for the possession of state power, his political strategy was less certain. Whereas J.S. Woodsworth strongly believed in the eventual triumph of a farm-labour party, through parliamentary means, Smith's views on this issue were rather nebulous. In his early days he had believed in the efficacy of parliamentary democracy, advocating the establishment of group government. However, as the years passed, this belief dimmed in intensity.

Overall, his writings indicate mixed feelings on this subject. Previous to 1919, Smith confessed that being devoid of any party consciousness he had voted for different parties. After the Strike, however, he had become convinced of the need for a labour party which he subsequently joined in 1920. By 1925, his loyalty had

changed to the Communist Party, although he continued as a member of the Executive of the Canadian Labour Party, before its purge of Communist members. Later Smith ran as a Communist Party candidate, but Parliament was no longer his primary focus for action.

J.S. Woodsworth's intuitive belief in parliamentary democracy is not evident in Smith's thinking. It was seen more as a means to an end, whereas for Woodsworth, it had become an integral part of any new social order. Although Woodsworth realized that political liberty alone was insufficient without economic freedom; that the power of the ruling class was firmly entrenched he, nevertheless, kept parliamentary democracy as a pivotal belief. In contrast, Smith focussed on political action rather than the principle of parliamentary democracy.

Another indication that Smith's belief in parliamentary democracy was not as deep and abiding as Woodsworth's is his implication of social control under a new social order.

Canada can become the home of the millions of strong and happy people, whose mental capacity will be under the control of socially minded intellect - each member conscious of his place as a factor in the whole social economic unit - giving himself to his task with joy and by the

very task being developed into a still higher type of being.⁶¹

Generally speaking, J.S. Woodsworth, as his political career progressed, placed more importance on the process of parliamentary democracy and maintenance of liberties with his conception of a new social order becoming less radical, while with Smith the process seems to have been reversed. This, of course, is partly due to the nature of the political parties which each man had joined and the fact that J.S. Woodsworth worked within the political system as a Member of Parliament while Smith, with the exception of a few years, not only worked outside it, but often in conflict with it, as a Communist party member. This fact affected not only his activities but almost every facet of Smith's political thought. His unquestioning acceptance of Communist party doctrines and dictates were part of Smith's constant search for structure, order, and an all-encompassing perspective from which to view the world. Both Methodism and Marxism had filled this need.

Elements of both, mixed during his social gospel stage. While still a Methodist minister, Smith had described Jesus as the first communist, a statement which he made before the Toronto Methodist Ministerial

Association. This theme was to prevail through the years. In a 1926 newspaper article entitled "Religion", he described Christ as "a great Socialist, a great Communist [who] was not so much concerned about the salvation of the souls of men as he was about the salvation of their social relations."⁶² More than twenty years later, in a religious service at the Maple Leaf Gardens, Smith carried the analogy further:

Jesus was a worker. He was known as the Carpenter of Nazareth. He was associated with some form of organization in connection with his work as a carpenter. He became a leader in that body. He thus attained recognition and influence. His country was suffering under the conquest of the Romans. He was a protestant against the oppression. He was in revolt. Jesus was a Communist. He was one with the great prophets of old, when common ownership of land prevailed."⁶³

Smith rejected organized religion but was somewhat more ambiguous as to his rejection of religion in general. Soon after his third conversion (to communism) Smith announced that he had abandoned religious forms. He, however, added a codicil

Nevertheless, I possess a far greater sense of value in my consciousness which may be just as correctly called "Religion" as anything I ever had, or ever saw or heard about the Church. The

true meaning of "Religion" after all is in the word itself. It signifies discipline, restraint, constraint... Religion is the consciousness of solidarity with the class struggle which is in human society today. Jesus Christ felt that sense of solidarity... That was why they killed him. That is my Religion today."⁶⁴

Smith considered himself a religious man, defining religion in very broad terms. His need for order and discipline and a perspective from which to view society, which he himself had identified, was filled by religion. Only the form and expression were modified. Methodism was replaced by scientific materialism, the Church by the Communist Party and it was the latter which radically determined the form and content of his political thought in later life. Ironically, however, Smith more than Woodsworth, continued to utilize religious expressions and symbolism in his support of a political ideology and party which was most critical of religion as an institution and which perpetuated the political hegemony of the ruling class.⁶⁵

Smith in embracing the Communist Party of Canada consciously abandoned individuality and independence of thought and action. Smith, however, not only felt that this subordination to a party line was a necessary sacrifice in order to inject discipline and order into the

cause of a new social order but also into his own life. Early on, Smith had experienced the harsh realities of life as a member of the working class. In an attempt at "emotional escapism" he subsequently embraced religion and entered the ministry. It was in Winnipeg that he was first introduced to social gospel thought and subsequently re-oriented himself from other worldly preoccupations towards more secular pursuits. Coming into close contact again with the urban working class, he focussed his energies on attempting to alleviate the problems facing the workers rather than trying to escape from them.

Smith's class position as minister in pre-war Winnipeg, as well as his commitment to the social gospel did not as much expose Smith to the working class as it reintroduced him to the sufferings and aspirations of that class. The internal dynamics of the social gospel did, in a sense, hasten the process of secularization, but perhaps less dramatically than it would have otherwise, if Smith had not been a worker as a youth. The events of early Winnipeg played an important role in this re-orientation and demonstrated to Smith the availability of alternatives beyond escapism into religion; alternatives such as political protest and industrial action. However, his

resignation from the Church had less to do with the secularization process inherent in the social gospel or with Smith's intellectual differences with the Church's teachings than with the physical limitations placed on his secular activities by the Church.

Within a few years, Smith was to embrace another institution, the Communist Party, with all the fervour and dedication of a convert. A.E. Smith represented a particular aspect of religious experience. His three conversions were all of the 'born again' type with an unquestioning transfer of allegiance to all aspects of the new belief system and its accompanying organizational structure. This Stalinist approach, prompted by his self-admitted need for a framework of order and discipline, varied greatly from Woodsworth's almost tortured self-examination of his own beliefs at every point in his life, and his lack of hesitancy in taking a stand when these convictions differed from those of his ecclesiastical and political colleagues. Both Smith and Woodsworth's paths were, nevertheless, rooted in the same Christian ground.

CHAPTER III FOOTNOTES

- 1 J. Petryshyn "From Clergymen to Communist: the Radicalization of Albert E. Smith", Journal of Canadian Studies, 13: 61-71, Winter '78-79, p. 61
- 2 Interestingly enough, not included in Smith's autobiography was the fact that his father was an alcoholic, a condition prompted by his inability to cope with the adjustment to civilian life.
- 3 A.E. Smith, All My Life, (Toronto, Progress Publishing Company, 1949) p. 12
- 4 As he described himself, "This teenaged boy... had at times felt himself to be a vile and wicked sinner.. He saw God.. He saw... Jesus upon the Cross... He saw the Devil and heard the cutting hissing of his breath."
- 5 Smith, All My Life, p.221
- 6 Ibid. p. 17
- 7 Petryshyn, p. 63.
- 8 Ibid, p. 65.
- 9 Smith, All My Life, p. 43
- 10 These thoughts are contained in an article entitled "Religion" written by Smith and published in the Toronto Star Weekly, June 26, 1926.
- 11 Smith, All My Life, p. 42
- 12 A situation which Smith said caused him much anguish. See Petryshyn.
- 13 Of interest is Smith's observation on the strike some 30 years later: "This was not a revolutionary struggle for power. As I look back now I know that the leadership from the beginning was itself afraid of the great power of the strike. There was no working-class party with a conscious understanding of this power and what should be done." (All My Life, p. 50)

14 J.S. Woodsworth's reasons are contained in Chapter 2 of the thesis. As for Smith, the following quote aptly sums up his feelings "No one but myself knows what mental conflict I went through... for me everything was at stake. If I abandoned the fight for social justice when its principles were applicable to a struggle in my own day... of what use was it to preach about ideals and principles in bygone ages... If I stultified myself and stayed in the Church, what was left for me to preach about? It was my religion that pointed the way - the hard way - out of the Church, away from secured employment, new friends and comfort - out with the struggling masses sometimes blindly, for the principles of social justice, I lost everything but my religion." (Petryshyn, p.67-68, as quoted from Smith's article Religion)

15 Whereas J. Woodsworth had clearly spoken out against the war soon after its outbreak, Smith, volunteered as a Methodist chaplain although he "hated the idea of war". Not only were his feelings towards the war ambiguous but also his recollection of those feelings.

In his autobiography, Smith wrote "As time passed, I came to regard the War of 1914-1918 as an imperialist war, a war of mastery over the world for markets and colonies, for indemnities and annexations". He also recalled that he refused to run as a pro-union candidate in the 1917 federal election, declaring his lack of confidence in the existing political parties. However, this recollection is contradictory to what he wrote in 1917. "The Union Government should be regarded as the result of the very best political thought of one leading statesman at this time and should be loyally supported in the efforts that are now being made to establish order and give direction to governmental agencies in the new system for the active prosecution of the war. In a 1931 letter, also contained in the PAC collection, Smith wrote to Woodsworth "I was wrong at the time of the Great War. I was functioning as a member of the bourgeoisie class in giving support to that class. You were a pacifist at that time but did not take up that class position."

- 16 The Brandon Labour Party was one of a number of small labour and socialist parties in Manitoba including the Dominion Labour Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of Canada which cooperated in fielding a slate of labour candidates in the election.
- 17 Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, (Kingston: Queen's University Press, 1968) p. 209
- 18 Smith himself introduced a resolution calling for the introduction of group government based on proportional representation. The concept will be explained in some detail in the next chapter.
- 19 Smith, All My Life, p. 75-76.
- 20 Petryshyn, p. 69.
- 21 Smith, All My Life, p. 221 - 222.
- 22 Smith did not leave active politics altogether. He was President of the Ontario Section of the Canadian Labour Party and candidate in the 1925 and 1926 elections for the Party before the Canadian Labour Party decided to exclude Communist members. A good part of his time afterwards was spent in the Canadian Labour Defense League. For a good discussion of his involvement in the CLDL, see J. Petryshyn's article "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: the Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defense League, 1925 - 1940" in Labour/Le Travailleur, Autumn 1982.
- 23 Petryshyn, p. 70.
- 24 Consequently the various stages in the development of Communist Party policy will be kept in mind when analyzing Smith's political thought and behaviour during his years as a Party member. Although the Communist party was created in 1921 by Canadians, nevertheless, the dictates of the Soviet Union were quite closely adhered to after the party's inception, especially on the issue of the war, as well as on a strategy towards unions and other labour parties. Other areas, such as the basic organizational structure of the party, were less successfully transferred from the Soviet Union.

Ian Angus comments: "The chief characteristic of the new party - of Tim Buck's Party - was unquestioning submission to the dictates of the Kremlin. From 1930 until today the Communist Party of Canada has followed every twist and turn of Soviet foreign policy. Its program and policies are determined not by the needs of the working class in Canada and abroad, but the narrowly perceived diplomatic concerns of the Soviet bureaucracy" (Canadian Bolsheviks, p. vi).

Furthermore, Smith's thought will also be analyzed by keeping in mind the actions of the Canadian government regarding the persecution of Communist Party members and the changing views on the legality of the party.

- 25 "Social Science and Human Society", Smith Papers, United Church Archives, Toronto.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 "Capitalist greed imposes", Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 29 Ibid. Also see All my Life, pp. 218 and 220
- 30 "Uprising of the Common People", Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 31 Lesson in Elementary Economics, July 30, 1939 speech, Smith papers, U.C.A.
- 32 "What about the Labour Progressive Party? Smith Papers, U.C.A. Of interest is that Smith's statement that man is not by nature a worker is not shared by Marx or Mill.
- 33 "Social Science and Human Society", Smith Papers, U.C.A. There is also a similar theme contained in his radio address found in the Smith papers as well as in All my Life, pp. 61 and 218.
- 34 The identification of the problem was similar, in later years, however, the solution was different.

- 35 Typewritten note, no title, no date, Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 36 "Uprising of the Common People", "Unity of Opposites" Smith Papers, U.C.A. His lack of reference to the term 'alienation' is not particularly surprising given the fact that orthodox marxism of the 1930's to 1950's, i.e. Stalinism, did not deal with the issue of alienation.
- 37 As described earlier in the Chapter.
- 38 At least on the surface, this seems like a clear indictment of the prevailing market relations.
- 39 Labour Party Platform - May, 1920; Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 40 Manitoba Legislature Hansard did not exist at this time. However, the Manitoba Free Press gave in-depth descriptions of the Legislature's proceedings.
- 41 A.E. Smith, All my Life, p.65
- 42 This is not particularly surprising, for a few reasons, including the fact that the People's Church was as much a political forum as a Church, if not more. Also, in his rôle as politician in the Manitoba Legislature, it was natural that he would be somewhat constricted.
- 43 In any discussion of his views on the distribution of wealth and ownership of the means of production, there is one piece of writing in the U.C.A. collection which must be mentioned, even though it is undated and untitled. It places a strong emphasis on distribution:
- "The cause of poverty is unequal distribution... Laws should be enacted (1) to establish a minimum wage for all industrial workers and the highest possible wage that any industry can bear (I am not one who conceives of the wage system as the last word) but while we have it, it should be as much a matter of law as the inspection of weight and measures... (2) fix by law protection against

unemployment, sickness, accident, etc.... for the industrial workers of the land (3) pension for the old age and poor. These safeguards by law would serve to establish for a certain property right in the business to which he contributes by energy and skill which are his very life - and would help to save money, if not all, from dropping into the bottomless pit of poverty - or else the fear and dread of it - and would obliterate the method of war such as strikes, etc...."

This quote, although evidence of Smith's preoccupation with redistribution as the major solution, should not be given too much importance in any analysis of his political and social thought. First, it lacks a date, making it difficult to gain perspective and second, it is the only statement of that nature which can be found. It could have been written at any time, but based on the contents, it was probably penned previous to the Winnipeg General Strike or during his three year tenure as M.L.A.

- 44 This theme is contained in a number of papers in his United Church Archives Collection, including his speech in Kingston, July 1946, the articles "The Unity of Opposites", "Socialism", and his radio address.
- 45 Handwritten pages, no date. Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 46 See Campaign speech, June 13, 1934, in Smith Papers, U.C.A. as well as his speech given in Niagara Falls, as reported in the Toronto Star, May 2nd, 1935
- 47 Social Science for the Man in the Street, Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 48 Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 49 Typed index card, no date, Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 50 "Uprising of the Common People", 1919, Smith Papers, U.C.A.

- 51 Smith, All My Life, p. 12
- 52 "The Unity of Opposites", Smith Papers, U.C.A.
Similar theme is also found in his radio address,
Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 53 Smith, All My Life, p. 12
- 54 Ibid. p. 222
- 55 Ibid. pp.66-67
- 56 Some of the communities in which he lived his
youth were rural. He lived on a farm for three
years and also toured the rural circuits in
Western Canada as a student preacher.
- 57 Smith, as mentioned, adhered very closely to the
C.P.C. doctrine after joining the Party.
- 58 Smith, op. cit. p. 67
- 59 Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 60 Letter to Rev. Hunter, Smith papers, U.C.A. The
same theme can be found in his letter to the
editor of the Toronto Star, January, 22, 1946, and
in his letter to William Irvine, August 13, 1946,
both found in Smith papers, U.C.A.
- 61 Radio address, Smith papers, U.C.A.
- 62 "Religion", Toronto Star Weekly, June 26, 1926.
For a similar theme, see All my life, p. 222
- 63 Smith Papers, U.C.A.
- 64 "Religion", op. cit.
- 65 Religious terminology can especially be found in
Smith's theory of political obligation, maybe in
part because the C.P.C. more than the C.C.F. was
considered "godless" by the Canadian public and
hence, more in need of justification couched in
religious terms.

CHAPTER IV

The same Christian ground which produced J.S. Woodsworth and A.E. Smith could also claim William Irvine. Although Irvine was eventually to be found in the House of Commons representing the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation as a colleague of J.S. Woodsworth, the path which he took to reach that point was long and winding, deviating in many respects from Woodsworth's and leaving a lasting imprint on his political thought. His philosophy consisted of an array of theories. Of the four individuals it is probably safe to say that Irvine's political thought was not simply the most eclectic, but also the most original. He embraced particular aspects of various theories and moulded them into a world view rather unique to the period. Furthermore, he most closely identified with the independent commodity producer class and incorporated their perspective into his political thought.

Irvine's early background coupled with his increasing interaction with the surrounding urban and rural environment of Western Canada not only led to the break from ecclesiastical institutions but prompted his decision to enter politics and encouraged his political advocacy of

specific groups. Aspects of Irvine's career and character are outlined at the beginning of this chapter in a short biographical sketch. The rest of the chapter focusses, through C.B. Macpherson's framework, on how Irvine's religious and political experiences, as well as his ambiguous class position as a member of the clergy, affected the formulation of his political thought.

Although Irvine came to be closely tied to the prairie farmer, his first contact with rural life was in the Shetland Islands. Born to a family of crofters in 1885,¹ Irvine's early years were spent in poverty on a farm in the Shetland Islands. Economic circumstances forced Irvine to apprentice as a boatbuilder and carpenter at the age of fourteen and, influenced by his grandfather who was a Congregational Minister, Irvine became a lay preacher at a nearby Methodist Church. His first exposure to socialism took place in his homeland where he was introduced to the various tenets of socialist thought by his cousins, who were involved in the widespread debate between marxist and fabian theories.

Tony Mardiros has observed that by the time Irvine sailed for Canada in 1907, "there is a very real sense in

which it could be said that he had already formed the fundamental concepts upon which his future activities would be based."² Although he had studied the Christian Socialists, it was not until his arrival in Canada that he was formally introduced to social gospel thought. At twenty-two he was recruited by James Woodsworth, J.S. Woodsworth's father, for study at Wesley College.

It was in Winnipeg that he came into close contact with urban class divided society which had the effect of expanding his socialist perspective beyond the theoretical. During this period he was also exposed to the world view of the independent commodity producer while preaching the rural circuit. These experiences were given strong intellectual foundations through his studies at Wesley, where agrarian concerns, especially as expounded by his teacher Salem Bland, took on special significance as part of the social gospel doctrine. He also became involved in the urban aspect of social gospel activities by J.S. Woodsworth, who drew upon Irvine's organizational abilities by asking him to establish a study group to discuss broad social questions. Irvine also actively participated in Woodsworth's People's Forum as well as meetings of the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party.

In effect, by the end of his college years (1914), the basis of Irvine's religious beliefs had been shaken by his commitment to social gospel doctrine, which had also increased his interaction with the urban and agrarian classes of Winnipeg and the surrounding area. It was during these years that his future path was determined. Irvine's years of theological training and student preaching had dampened his religious convictions, while solidifying his adherence to socialism. He had converted to Presbyterianism from Methodism³, and although he refused to sign the Articles of Faith he was, nevertheless, ordained.

All in all, despite Irvine's expressed dissatisfaction, the formal and informal education he received between 1907 and 1914 could hardly have been better. The socialism of his youth had been deepened and broadened, while the religious doctrines he had been brought up with were subjected to critical scrutiny and replaced by the Social Gospel.⁴

Irvine's first posting was to Eno, a small Ontario town near the Manitoba border which he accepted, only on the proviso that he would be able to preach the social gospel. His commitment to the social gospel took its natural course with his increasing involvement in various community activities, such as the establishment of a farmers' cooperative. However, these activities, as well

as his call for the conscription of wealth for the war effort and his sometimes questionable interpretation of Presbyterian doctrine, irritated members of Irvine's congregation. They were particularly annoyed by the latter aspect which resulted in them bringing a charge of heresy, against the young preacher. Although these changes did not culminate in his dismissal, they certainly acted as a catalyst in prompting his resignation from the Presbyterian ministry.

Irvine subsequently accepted a position with a Unitarian Church in Calgary which had recruited him specifically for his radical views. Included in the terms of the new appointment was a proviso, well suited to Irvine's idea of religious service, that nine tenths of his time should be spent on community work. Irvine had little difficulty fulfilling this aspect of the bargain. Drawing on Woodsworth's example, he established a People's Forum where trade unionists, suffragettes, Socialist Party Members and I.W.W. supporters congregated. Irvine, also added a new medium by which to propagate his message when he became the editor and main writer of a new bi-monthly paper called The Nutcracker.⁵ His contributions to the paper are excellent barometers of his political thought during that period.

His interaction with both farm and labour groups escalated during this period beyond community work through the medium of sermons and news editorials. His ambiguous class position as a member of the clergy in Canada allowed him the scope to become involved in and accepted by both agrarian and urban groups and, hence, to work towards increasing the level of cooperation between the two. He became immersed in agrarian organizational activities of a political nature by helping to establish the Calgary Non-Partisan League (NPL) in 1916⁶. He also extended his talents by helping western labour with the formation of the Labor Representation League (LRL), the political arm of the Calgary Trades and Labour Council, where, at the first meeting, he officially represented the NPL⁷.

This act constituted one of the first concrete manifestations of two principles which were to be the foundations of Irvine's political thought. The first is his belief in the necessity of cooperation between the agrarian and industrial workers. The second is his view that the only future for these two classes lay in united political action. Acting on these beliefs, Irvine offered himself as a Labor candidate for both the provincial and federal elections of 1917.⁸

For all intents and purposes, by this period Irvine had progressed beyond the limits of the social gospel. He had switched religions twice and at each posting had become more secularized to the point of spending nine tenths of his time performing community work. It was only a matter of time before his departure from organized religion was made official. He handed in his resignation soon after the Winnipeg General Strike.

Although Irvine was living in Calgary at the time and did not directly participate in the Winnipeg General Strike, his attention was riveted to the event as indicated by his writings during this period. Within a week of the Strike's inception, Irvine had observed that the Strike "gives evidence of a solidarity in the labour ranks hitherto unknown, and it clearly defines the struggle of the future as between the workers as a class and organized capital." He continued "...if the Winnipeg Strike proves successful in accomplishing its end it will give the encouragement necessary at this time to the industrial activists represented in the One Big Union (OBU) and will be the precursor of that strike which is contemplated as the means of upsetting the capitalist system".⁹ As Harqiros pointed out, from Irvine's perspective outside of

Winnipeg in a city where there had been a sympathetic strike, the Winnipeg General Strike could have been "seen as the prelude to a revolutionary situation".¹⁰ Irvine was closely connected to supporters of OBU principles and, although he was not in agreement with their tactics, it was natural that their perspective would affect his views of the Strike.

After his resignation from his pastorate in December of 1919, he assumed the position of full time editor of the Western Independent, while continuing to give sermons intermittently at the Labour Church in Calgary, established by A.E. Smith in 1920. Irvine's dedication to the cause of social justice for both the urban labourer and the prairie farmer continued with his aid in establishing the Calgary Dominion Labour Party and its subsequent cooperation with the United Farmers of Alberta. Irvine's job as editor of the Western Independent ended abruptly with the destruction of the office by fire. Although the paper reemerged under a different name, and in a much abbreviated form, Irvine did not remain as editor. Reduced to poverty he decided to move to Moncton at the end of 1920 in order to organize agrarian cooperatives. During his brief, yet fruitful, six month stay in New Brunswick, he

also campaigned for a provincial agrarian candidate as well as completed his pivotal book Farmers in Politics.

It was upon his return to Alberta in June 1921, that Irvine demonstrated in a politically concrete manner his identification with both the independent commodity producer class and the urban working class and his commitment to their eventual cooperation. He campaigned on behalf of both Dominion Labour Party and United Farmers of Alberta representatives for the 1921 provincial election, which returned a majority of UFA candidates¹¹. Later that same year, during the federal election, he went further, and ran as the Labour candidate for East Calgary, while convincing the UFA to back him in return for labour support for the agrarian candidate in Calgary West. Although collaboration was limited to voting¹², it was, nonetheless, a breakthrough considering the U.F.A.'s past reticence in cooperating with other groups, especially that of labour.

Irvine's lengthy, yet interrupted, career as a federal member of Parliament personified his life-long commitment towards greater farm-labour cooperation. Irvine ran under the banner of the Dominion Labour Party with U.F.A. support in 1921 and again, this time unsuccessfully, in 1925. In the 1926 and 1930 federal general elections he captured the Alberta riding of Wetaskwin as a member of

the United Farmers. However, under the banner of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, he lost the riding in 1935 only to return to Parliament for four more years in 1945 as CCF member for Cariboo, British Columbia.¹³

Seated as either a Labour or Farm representative Irvine worked closely with the other group. Although refusing to sit with the Progressives, he attended UFA caucuses, whose members he did not consider as part of the Progressives¹⁴. Irvine "served both as a representative of Labor and as a radical catalyst within the farmer's group ...During this period he and Woodsworth had gathered themselves a small but vigorous band of the more radical progressives who were to constitute what was aptly termed 'The Ginger Group'.¹⁵ This group embodied the first concrete manifestation of farm-labour cooperation in the House of Commons and became the parliamentary forerunner of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF).

Irvine's commitment to the new party was instantaneous. His participation in the CCF was not limited to acting as a parliamentary representative but extended to extra-parliamentary activities. The first convention in Calgary in July 1932, elected J.S. Woodsworth as president and Irvine as a member of the National

Council. After Irvine's parliamentary defeat in 1935 he was elected a year later as president of the Alberta CCF and the following year was appointed provincial organizer. As Reg Whitaker noted of Irvine's ten years in parliamentary exile:

...his devotion to the new party cannot be questioned. Defeated in 1935, and out of Parliament for the ten years following Irvine did not seek employment which might offer him some economic security, but instead turned his attention full time to organizing and propagandizing for the CCF, on a salary so intermittent and low that his personal finances were wrecked.¹⁶

With his defeat in 1949 Irvine again fell back on his former occupations as journalist for the People's Weekly and CCF organizer.¹⁷

To the end, Irvine's independent streak caused him difficulty with the CCF hierarchy. In areas of both domestic and international policy Irvine took radical left-wing stances which were, at times, at odds with his earlier views. In addition to writing pamphlets and books, Irvine went beyond the theoretical with visits to Russia and China in 1956 and 1960 respectively, the former nearly leading to his expulsion from the CCF. Despite cancer, Irvine demonstrated to the end of his life his commitment to political change by continuing to write and organize.

politically with the CCF's successor, the New Democratic Party. His last piece, Democracy - Fact or Fiction, with its emphasis on the ability of financial interests to control the political system through party contributions, a theme which had predominated his earliest writings¹⁸, completed the circle of Irvine's political thought.

His political thought was firmly based on his perception of his surrounding environment. Irvine took to heart the social gospel's call for secular activism. In his capacity as a member of the clergy in pre-war Western Canada he had become deeply involved both with a growing urban working class and, in particular, a large, politically conscious agrarian class. He not only identified with the basic aspirations of these two groups, but endeavored to bring about cooperation between them at the political level. Like Woodworth and Smith, his radical social gospel perspective, demonstrated through his occasional departure from religious doctrine and intense involvement in the community, alienated him from the mainstream of his congregation. Irvine had not been committed to orthodox religious doctrine for quite some

time. Institutionalized religion had long become secondary to his concern for social justice. However, elements of his religious background as well as his class position remained to influence his political thought.¹⁹ Both of these aspects will be examined within C.B. Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist assumptions which can be indicated by the following:

1- his view of human nature as cooperative or competitive

2- his view of societal relations both historical and contemporary: (i) Is society composed of atomistic individuals or organic, interdependent classes? (ii) If society is composed of classes, what constitutes a class? What is the relation of one class to another? Are classes unequal?

3- his view as to whether the market relation is the central relation among individuals

4- his view as to whether labour is alienable.

An integral aspect of the above is Irvine's perception of human nature. What Irvine did describe of human nature was in accord with the views of Woodsworth and Smith in that the goal of humanity was the greatest happiness for the greatest number.²⁰ Yet, as has already been noted in Chapter II, broad variations occurred in the definition of what this constituted. Like the others,

Irvine adopted J.S. Mill's view that happiness does not merely involve the attainment of material but also of spiritual goals. This is demonstrated in his discussion of the United Farm Women when, echoing the thinking of the time, he attributed to farm women not only an interest in the development of character, moral standards and aesthetic tasks, but also the realization that these cannot be attained without the eradication of economic injustice.²¹

It is worthwhile to quote his views on the definition of happiness in some detail because it brings into play other aspects of his political thought.

He wrote:

It cannot be truthfully denied that economic questions are fundamental. The first question to every person is, 'How am I to live?'. But that is not the only question. There is another and an even greater, 'Why am I living?'. If one has to live merely to secure bread in order to live while more bread is secured, then death is preferable to life. But 'How am I to live?' is still, and must remain, the first question. If an answer is not found to this, the second there can be none. Without bread one does not make inquiries about that for which one should live. These questions have produced two schools of thought, one the materialistic, the other the idealistic, and much of the world's time and energy is being wasted in a conflict which is based largely on abstractions. Obviously, both outlooks belong to life. The one has no meaning without the other. If life is to continue, its means of existence must first be secured. Hence the importance of

school number one. But having been secured, if progress is to be made, happiness must take precedence over mere means of existence. The emphasis therefore is placed by school number two on this latter problem. But it is artificial to distinguish between life itself and life worthwhile. The materialistic and idealistic schools must be brought together and unified on a basis that will uphold life as a whole.²²

Irvine's thought on this subject possesses strong overtones of John Stuart Mill's writings, as does his glorification of the concept of truth. "No truth can be permanently hindered, and no falsehood is endowed with eternal life...But history, with a note of assurance, whispers to the faltering that there is nothing to fear; for eternal truth, refined as gold by the fire will stand every test"²³. Irvine, like his radical labour and agrarian contemporaries, used J.S. Mill's idea of the infallibility of truth in an attempt to alleviate any fears which the population might have to change. "The challenge which comes to every leader in new thoughts and new methods comes from truth itself. Truth knows nothing of destruction..."²⁴.

Irvine and Woodsworth, linking truth to the coming of a new social order, lent credence to the latter. According to them, there is nothing to fear from the new

social order since it would be a manifestation of 'Truth' which is synonymous with 'Good' and, therefore, benevolent in character.²⁵ "'Truth', if it be lifted up will draw all people into it. The world will follow when we can show a better way"²⁶. Irvine applied this concept in a practical political manner in his opening editorial of the October 1st 1919 Western Independent.

As a farmers' paper this publication must necessarily be the gospel of cooperation. It must interpret the spirit of cooperation as applied to all departments of life and as the fundamental principle upon which the New Social Order towards which all are working must be founded. With deep conviction that the gospel of cooperation is 'Right' and 'True' we shall use our columns for the education of public opinion in its favor and to promote organization toward the end that cooperation may become practical, both in matters industrial and political.

Irvine, true to the thinking of his social gospel contemporaries, emphasized the inevitability of the new social order based on the workings of certain natural laws. This is most forcefully stated in his section 'The New Leaders' in Farmers in Politics with his discussion of social unrest. "All institutions are in the ever-moving current of progress, and there is nothing to be feared unless there is tampering with natural laws. The only

danger comes from those who would seek by artificial means to retard progress²⁷. The task is to discover these social laws which are "as irrevocable in their nature and certain in their result as the laws of the physical world"²⁸.

These laws may be hindered or abetted, but cannot be arrested. According to Irvine, the ultimate solution to the problems in Canada lay in organizing society so as to work in coordination with these universal laws of nature. In this respect, Mardiros' comments on Irvine's use of the Spencerian theory of evolution is worth noting. He believed that Irvine, as a minister, embraced this concept as a "means of secularizing religion, since it enabled him to dispense with the notion of a supreme being and creator".²⁹ Although the first part of the statement is credible, it should not be said that Irvine ever questioned or attempted to deny his belief in God. His adherence to a theory of social evolution probably allowed Irvine, like Darwin and Spencer, to divorce God from the immediate workings of society and the world in general, while retaining his belief in God as the ultimate creator of the universe.

Mardiros also pointed out how Irvine attempted to deal with the dilemma arising from any deterministic theory

of evolution, which is the extent to which human actions affect history. Irvine embellished the Spencerian theory of evolution with G.B. Shaw's "conception of an unconscious life-force [as in the theory of evolution] working in cooperation with man's conscious efforts to produce a better society....[thus] enabling him to be evolutionist and activist"³⁰.

Linked to this, is Irvine's view of society as an organism "developing in harmony with the laws of life, and not as something which politicians have put together, as it were with hammer and nails".³¹ His description of society was essentially dialectical. "Society like the individual, is part of all it and has met with part of all it has experienced; imbedded in its being is all of the past, and the past, combined with the present, determines its future".³² Just as in physical science, no substance can be destroyed; destruction within society is not possible because changes are merely manifestations of new forms.

The pivotal force driving the development of societal institutions, according to certain immutable natural laws, is the basic instinct of self-preservation.³³ Competition, according to Irvine was a natural extension of the instinct of self-preservation, which was soon replaced by cooperation as the operative form of behavior. "By and

by dawning reason. A new directive agent took charge of men's destiny. It looked upon his struggle and suggested cooperation. The result was the tribe. Competition focused on the tribe until "collective reason taught them without the struggle all that they were competing to attain. Tribes then became people and the people became a nation. In every case competition led to cooperation on a higher plane, competition being given up only when the existence of the individual or tribe was threatened by its retention"³⁴.

Irvine's belief, shared by Woodsworth, in both the inevitability and benevolence of social laws rendered him blind to the contradictions inherent in his views on revolution. Although Irvine constantly warned Canadians of the extent to which the Canadian economic system was entrenched through the control by financial interests, of parliament and the press he consistently rejected violent revolutionary action. Although Irvine disliked violence, it was Woodsworth's thought which demonstrated complete abhorrence to violence while admitting, at times, that violence might be necessary due to the intransigence and entrenchment of the ruling class. Woodsworth, the pacifist,

rejected violence because of the human toll it would exact, while Irvine's writings reveal abstract Spencerian arguments that the evolutionary process, unless thwarted, negated the necessity of violence.³⁵

To Irvine, knowledge of the movement of natural laws was the panacea for violent revolution. True to Canadian social democratic tradition, Irvine was a firm believer in education as both his writings and life attest. A new social order must be created through a 'mental revolution'. "Not a revolution which smashes systems with bomb and sword but one which bursts the fossilized forms of the past from the mind".³⁶

According to Irvine, knowledge of natural laws through education, or probably more aptly revelation, must be matched with action:

Revolution to my mind is the way of distress and ignorance, but it is inevitable if we are going to have a class of people who will persist in maintaining that there is no need of any modification. If we are going to effect the change from the competitive system by evolutionary process, it is necessary that we recognize responsibility in the evolutionary process...we must first come to the conviction that modifications of the present system are inevitable, and then we must plan on how to make these modifications with the least possible dislocation and the least possible human suffering.³⁷

Attempts to hinder the natural progression of society, according to Irvine, tempts revolution³⁸. These warnings, evident in the above quote, were particularly numerous during the depression of the early 1930's but also during the last half of the 1910's with the Winnipeg General Strike and the spectre of the Russian Revolution. In a number of articles in the Alberta Non Partisan, Irvine referred to the Bolshevik revolution as the inevitable response to exploitation, repression and autocratic government.

Revolution is never brought on by revolutionists it is brought on by those who are the most stern and brutal opposers of human liberty...The Canadian people like the people of Russia want to govern themselves, they want freedom of speech and press. If this can be secured in Canada without revolution, as we believe it can, then we have attained Bolshevism without the Bolshevik. What is to be feared in Bolshevism is its methods and these methods are forced by conditions.³⁹

Within months of writing the above, Irvine had issued dire warnings that some of these conditions had been reproduced in Winnipeg with the jailing of the Strike leaders. "The Canadian government is following Russia. It is substituting force for a remedy, and machine guns for brains."⁴⁰ The warnings were in one sense political

rhetoric since Irvine's adherence to Fabian gradualism was unshakable and no more evident than in the following quote from Farmers in Politics.

It may take thousands of years to accomplish cooperation. Time is no object to nature. But no matter if it takes a million years, it cannot take place until the proper elements of cooperation have been developed. Their appearance implies the disintegration of the party system, and the formation of a new alignment on a cooperative basis. The farmer's organization is one of the new units...if they are not ready, civilization will have to wait until they are.⁴¹

He believed that the "proper elements of cooperation", abundance and interdependence, were slowly replacing scarcity and individualism. "Since machine production affords enough for all and since all production involves social effort, the competition so inevitable in days of individualism and scarcity has become impracticable and destructive, and cooperation the higher, more human and more intelligent method must be substituted."⁴² Irvine felt that capitalism, while providing the physical means for co-existence, also created circumstances forcing individuals of similar industrial occupation to unite. Manufacturers, workers, and farmers were all forced by economic circumstances into groups, with cooperation

superseding competition as the primary method of self-preservation.

These occurrences accorded with Irvine's perception of the ultimate natural law as that of cooperation. Its highest manifestation was the concept of group government "composed of representatives of industrial groups"⁴³. Irvine's attitude toward this theory fluctuated a number of times throughout his career, varying from initial rejection of it in his early years in Alberta, to enthusiastic acceptance of it in a modified form during the twenties, to final and implicit rejection when he joined the CCF in the thirties.

It is relatively easy to discern a distinct pattern during the years in which he publicly espoused his theory of group government. From 1920 to 1930, although the mechanisms of how group government would function were laid out in ever increasing detail, his view of which group would be the driving force of change became rather muted. Throughout Farmers in Politics there appears ringing endorsements of farmers as "the greatest and most important democratic [industrial] unit in the nation".⁴⁴ This is due to Irvine's perception of the essential position of the agrarian workers in an industrialized nation. "The farmer,

in reality, combines in his own profession, the two antagonists. He is both capitalist and labourer..."⁴⁵ Irvine argued that the farmers unique position has allowed them to realize that the law of cooperation is the only hope for the future of civilization. "While other groups exist by cooperation, they do not see that cooperation must be applied between competing groups"⁴⁶.

In Cooperative Government, however, written only nine years later, and consisting of a compilation of earlier popular lectures, farmers are not accorded special attention as a universal class⁴⁷ but are treated no differently than other industrial groups. Reasons for this are varied yet can probably be reduced to the simple fact that Irvine realized, and to a certain extent, accepted the demise of the farmer as the driving force in a Canada about to enter the 1930's (this view was exacerbated, in part by his complete disillusionment with the Progressives).

One of the underlying factors for Irvine's adhesion to the concept of group government was his distaste for the party system not only as outdated but anti-progressive and corrupt.

Governments take their forms from the economic base upon which they rest and for

which they function. The divine right of kings fitted well with the feudalism of the Middle Ages; and the plutocratic oligarchies of the United States and Canada and the natural outgrowth of an era based on industrial individualism; and these earlier forms have been the reflex of societies of the time, so also must the governments of tomorrow be reshaped to correspond to the industrial democracy which is now in the process of being established.⁴⁸

An increasingly complex society, developing through industrialization, can no longer be justly represented by a two party system. A system which as an outgrowth of an earlier era, responded to outdated needs.

This theme was not as prominent as one might have expected during Irvine's early years in Parliament, previous to the formation of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. He did, however, give full vent to them during his maiden speech where he attacked not only partyism but the British parliamentary system in general. "We have some new political alignments and political expressions that are represented here directly as a result of what we may call a political revolt against the party system. However, the parliamentary system in presupposing two parties, prohibits [other groups] from taking any real active part in the government"⁴⁹. In Irvine's mind each group in parliament represented definite economic groups. The government

and opposition parties represented big financial interests, the progressives acted on behalf of the farmers, and labour members supported the rights of industrial workers. He believed that parliament should be a forum which correctly mirrored group representation based on the principle of cooperation rather than competition.

I want to make a place for cooperation. Let us get over this cantankerous negation of opposites and let us make it possible for everyone to make a contribution and assume responsibility for the deliberation of this Parliament. I believe in cooperation in government because it is already working unconsciously in the industrial field...We have been forced to cooperate through the industrial processes of our time and we are also being forced to cooperate in government by the political necessities of our time.⁵⁰

In his early years, especially before his election to Parliament, he advocated the establishment of a government which was truly of the people. His conception of democracy would have parliamentarians subordinating the dictates of their parties to the wishes of their constituents. Delegate control, proportional representation and recall were all means, espoused by Irvine to which this end could be achieved.

Although his suggestions for change not only fitted

the democratic mold but, in fact, epitomized radical democratic principles. His disillusionment with parliamentary proceedings had led him in a different direction by the end of the 1920's. His concept of group government prompted him, at one point, to reject the commonly perceived British notion of political democracy embraced so dearly by Woodsworth. To Irvine the basis of political democracy was not freedom of speech or the right to vote for parliamentary representation but, rather, the freedom of economic groups to organize and exert their political will outside parliamentary structures.

In Cooperative Government this scathing indictment of the party system went beyond that of Woodsworth. Not only did Irvine feel that the two parties were unrepresentative of society; being concerned with holding onto power through the support of financial interests, he also rejected certain widely held parliamentary traditions.⁵¹ Constituency voting was to be replaced by group representation, and popular elections would no longer be required. The various groups would elect their quota of representatives each to be replaced only upon death.

Irvine's definition of democracy before 1930 deviated from the prevailing notion. "Democracy is in the

becoming".⁵² The organization of the first group based on common economic interest represented the birth of democracy. Democracy will be fully implemented only when group government is established. The key to the workings of group government and, therefore, democracy is that all units think and act as one. Furthermore, "these units or groups cannot be created artificially, the only thing to do is to rely on the natural laws which operate in the creation of these units."⁵³ As noted, Irvine believed that these natural laws have their basis in the "instinct of self-preservation. It is in the best interest of groups to cooperate in order to survive, especially in an increasingly complex society.

Cooperative Government included an interesting positivistic twist with Irvine's discussion of the role of science in governing. He implied that even group government would not be necessary beyond a certain point in the development of knowledge. "The scientific method might be applied to politico-economic affairs with the degree of authority and accuracy which an ever expanding knowledge would warrant." With the establishment of a national bureau of sociologists "it is reasonable to suppose that parliamentary laws would not clash with the natural laws

that govern the actions of men and nations as they often do today".⁵⁴

After his conversion to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation his theory of group government, as well as his views of democracy as found in Farmers in Politics and Cooperative Government, although not completely abandoned, were no longer integral aspects of his political thought. There were, however, aspects of the CCF organization and doctrine which meshed well with Irvine's early political thought. For example, the CCF's early organizational structure as a federation of groups was concomitant with Irvine's views on group autonomy and cooperation, of which the CCF in Alberta, until 1942, was a prime example. Also, the CCF's emphasis on industrial democracy, a theme of Irvine's for quite some time, was adopted unhesitatingly by Irvine. In his speeches and writings relatively little notice was taken of political democracy, instead he emphasized, as did J.S. Woodsworth, that there can be no political democracy without economic justice.⁵⁵

This lack of emphasis on the importance of political democracy probably helped to make his view of Russia less critical than it could have been. Throughout

the years his impression of communism remained favourable, an attitude which culminated in his visit to the Soviet Union in 1956. His thoughts on what he saw there was recorded in Live or Die With Russia, which was published two years later. This act of outspoken support nearly led to his expulsion from the CCF.

Excerpts from a letter to Norman Smith after his trip illustrates Irvine's perception of the Soviet Union especially in relation to his idea of democracy.

I do not wish to become the champion of communist theory. On the other hand I want to show, among other things, that revolution was the only open door from the regime of the Tsar; that democracy or any part of it was unknown to the Russian people; that they do not miss it even now; that the Soviet Union has done one thing for which it must be given credit, something of fundamental importance to human life and basic if ever a democracy is to be built anywhere, and that is that the resources of a nation and the industries built thereon, must belong to the people, rather than to the profits of a few ⁵⁶.

It must be stressed that even given his emphasis on economic matters, his sometimes divergent perceptions on political democracy and parliamentary traditions, and his materialistic view of the development of societal institutions, there is little doubt that Irvine's solution

was ultimately political in nature. For example, in his theory of group government he believed that although the groups would be based on economic interests and would focus on economic injustice, the forum and methods would be political.

Whether the representatives of the various industrial groups meet around the common government table, each with his, or her, responsibility, both to the group and to the nation as a whole, cooperation will open the door to a new era of Canadian liberty. Then and only then will economic problems be admitted, faced, and settled on a basis making for the wellbeing of all...A representative government will save the day. It must represent all classes...it is reasonable to assume that the different political organizations of modern times, which are springing up in response to change in our economic life, will not only lead to a corresponding change in our government, but also that our modern representatives will be as competent to make the necessary governmental adjustments as were the parliamentarians of other days.⁵⁷

Accordingly, changing economic conditions would prompt a major restructuring of political institutions which would, in turn, rectify the major economic injustices of the system. This view placed him comfortably within the social democratic tradition. However, the political forum as it was constituted could not, and would not, make the

necessary economic changes since it was not representative of modern economic groupings. Irvine, in fact, at times cautioned these new groups against utilizing the present political system.⁵⁸ This perception gradually dissipated with his conversion to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, where as a member of parliament and an enthusiastic organizer, he did not hesitate to endorse the House of Commons as a major forum for change.

His view on the structure of capitalism, and subsequently the definition of classes, was also subjected to change over the course of his career. In his early years as editor of an agrarian newspaper, he was very forthright in his views on socialism and capitalism believing, as he did, in the inevitable collapse of the latter and the advent of the former: Irvine alternated between vague slogans calling for industry for service not profit, to detailed descriptions of the degrading circumstances engendered by capitalism and the solutions needed to rectify them. During the Winnipeg General Strike he was to write in an editorial for the Alberta Non Partisan what was probably his most radical statement of those early years regarding the new social order.

The cause of unrest is that the means of life are in the hands of a few. By the power afforded to the few by means of ownership, the masses are existing in a state of enforced slavery, restricted from participation in the fullness of life... The unrest is the natural revolt against a society based on private ownership, and implies a positive and determined effort to rebuild society on the basis of collective ownership. Higher wages, shorter hours, improved conditions for the worker etc., are no longer ends to be sought, they are incidental. Nothing short of collective ownership of the means of wide production and distribution will satisfy the demands of the modern awakening... Labour is asking for life. To ask for higher wages and collective bargaining means that the wage system, and the selling of labour to the highest bidder are accepted as a fixed condition.

Contradictions, however, arise in his view of classes calling into doubt Irvine's understanding of the structure of capitalism as being based on ownership of the means of production. In a 1917 Nutcracker article entitled 'The Future of Socialism', Irvine was unwilling to define socialism beyond being "an attitude toward life based on the knowledge of natural laws which are operating in society." He continued by describing his perception of the Marxian concept of surplus value which he said explained the struggle between the classes as a conflict that would eventually compel the workers to "seize possession of the means of wealth production and transform them into public

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property". Irvine, however, had difficulty reconciling the role of other societal classes. He wrote: "Marx was probably mistaken as to the nature of the development, there being in present day society a large middle class that could neither be considered as Capitalists nor yet as victims of the iron law, but in respect to the relation of the worker to the capitalist, Marx seems to have been correct."⁵⁹

A few years later, in Farmers in Politics his misgivings were even more eloquently enunciated.

It is false to hold to a two class theory of society on an economic basis... The fact is that there are a great many economic classes in society. Let us suppose that capital and labour have had their final struggle, and labour has been victorious. What then? There will still be farmers, miners, transportation workers and a great number of other skilled and unskilled classes in competition with each other over the spoils of capitalism. The farmer would want as much as possible in exchange for his wheat, the miner would want the most he could get in exchange for the coal he mined... The fight, therefore, after the overthrow of capital exploitation, would go merrily on even as before.

Irvine treated the downfall of capitalism as inevitable and therefore, ironically, somewhat incidental. "Capitalism today may be the common enemy of all industrial

groups...Capitalism will fall but not by the efforts of the dispossessed. It will be slain by its own hand. But what concerns us most is the New System that is to replace capitalism...[which]....must recognize the many existing classes and provide self-determination for each."⁶⁰ The end of the capitalist system would not produce Marx's classless society according to Irvine, since determination of classes did not revolve on the ownership of the means of production.

C.B. Macpherson's comments on the above quote by Irvine are rather persuasive. He writes:

This analysis shows the same pre-occupation as Wood's with conflict between groups of producers over the terms of trade for their products; those are the 'real classes' and the real class conflict arises in the exchange of their commodities in the market ...Irvine's socialism was readily assimilated and subordinated to the independent commodity producers' outlook which is found unalloyed in Wood.⁶¹

What Macpherson did not make sufficiently clear is that this is an encapsulation of Irvine's political thought during the 1920's. His theory of group government and his forays deep into social credit territory demonstrated his commodity producer outlook which however, previous and

subsequent to the 1920's, did not figure prominently in his thought. Macpherson also did not take into account the influence of G.D.H. Cole's theory of guild socialism on Irvine's concept of group government. Irvine's only major criticism of Cole's theory was that the central body, which would ultimately control and supervise the guilds, would be elected in the traditional manner, whereas his parliament would be composed of elected representatives from the various guilds.

If the basis of class for Irvine was not ownership of the means of production, but classes seen as producer groups based on functions⁶², then it would follow that alienation arising from specialization was not of particular concern to Irvine. One of the few times that the process of alienation was noted, although not termed as such, was to illustrate the common interests of agrarian and industrial workers. In his pamphlet Is Socialism the Answer Irvine wrote that:

....when labour or professional services are regarded as commodities, the struggle consists in the employee's desire to sell his own brains or brawn for a sufficient price to enable him to maintain a decent standard of living. In this sort of economic welfare, the worker and farmer usually come out less than second best. Of late, workers and

farmers have come to realize that their interests are similar.⁶³

Another aspect of alienation, that is alienation from the fruits of one's labour, was also mentioned rarely and rather indirectly in his writings. In a People's Weekly article, in one of his few references to the theory of surplus value, he noted that surplus value can occur under capitalism or socialism and he proceeded to outline the differences. "Under Capitalism the surplus value passed into private hands and became the private property of the capitalist. Under Socialism the surplus value belongs to the public which created it and used by the representatives of the public in providing new social capital for the communities' planned economy and for increased public services."⁶⁴

As with other elements of his thought, Irvine's view of the virtues of public ownership waxed and waned. During his early years as editor of the Nutcracker, he advocated public ownership as a necessary stage in the establishment of a new social order. Yet with the development of his theory of group government in 1920, state ownership became a very small part of his political thought. For example, in a 1923 House of Commons speech,

he stated that it was not who owned the company that was important, but who controlled it. In the 1930's with the abandonment of the group government theory, public ownership was again accorded greater importance in his political thought. The pattern was not coincidental since his group government theory was rooted in guild socialism with its criticism of centralized state control and ownership as being non democratic. Beyond this, and probably a more important determinant of his perception of public ownership, was his adherence to social credit theory during those years (1920 to the mid 1930's), with its emphasis on distribution rather than production. The clearest example of this connection is contained in his 1924 pamphlet Purchasing Power and the World Problem where he stated that social ownership, even under communism, is a matter of administration and does not touch upon the crucial problem of distribution.

This pre-occupation with distribution remained in evidence in later years, even in his statements advocating public ownership. Some twenty years later, in a House of Commons speech he stated that "everything in this nation which is essential to the life of the people, but which cannot be owned individually by all the people, must be

owned by all the people together". The issue to him was not only one of profits but also of management and decisions regarding production, especially for those enterprises involved in finance, natural resources, or in a monopoly situation. Interestingly, his solution was one of distribution.

....to curtail production wherever they want to, so as to maintain the rate of their own profits. That is the thing that we have to guard against in our distribution. We have to devise a system of equitable distribution which will involve a system of higher wages paid to all the workers, which will involve higher pensions for all.⁶⁵

As illustrated in the above quote, Irvine's critique of society did not always coincide with his suggestions for change, which fluctuated between a belief that changes in distribution was the solution, to the view that modifications in the relationship of production would provide the answer. His confusion on this issue, greater than either Woodsworth's or Smith's, was magnified, in part, by his life long flirtation with social credit.

Irvine's pre-occupation with monetary reform can be traced back to his days as editor of the Nutcracker, when he raised issues such as the gold basis and nationalization

of the banking system. It was not, however, until 1920-21 that he first became exposed to the theories of C.H. Douglas. An analysis of his earliest speeches in the House of Commons demonstrates the extent to which Irvine had embraced social credit theories while not abandoning the social democratic ideological baggage which he had accumulated up to that time. In his maiden speech, for example, Irvine mentioned Douglas' social credit theory as a fruitful source for discussion and inquiry but concluded his speech with a quote from the British Labour party manifesto calling for "a deliberately planned cooperation in production and distribution for the benefit of all who participate by hand or brain".⁶⁶

During the 1920's his espousal of social credit monetary reform as the solution for underconsumptionism intensified with publications such as Purchasing Power and the World Problem in 1924 and Cooperative Government in 1929 where Douglas' A plus B theory was used as the explanation for the root of the economic evils of depression and unemployment in western industrialized nations.⁶⁷

According to Irvine:

....prosperity could be made permanent provided there was a constantly sufficient money supply in circulation to buy out the entire output of production at any given time, or at all times. But since the flow of money into the pockets of consumers through the avenues of wages, profits and dividends, etc., is never sufficient under a profit system to equal the flow into the market, some way must be found to increase the purchasing power of the consumers to equal the flow of goods, or else the profit system, however well it may have served as an efficient producer, must be abandoned....It follows naturally then what is required is an agency of some sort which will regulate the flow of money so as to balance the flow of goods into the market.⁶⁸

Throughout the 1920's Irvine, although not renouncing his social democratic beliefs, certainly curtailed his advocacy of these ideas so that when they were mentioned, the emphasis focused on questions of distribution rather than production. During this period Irvine either did not see or did not deem as important the inherent contradictions between social credit and socialist theories.⁶⁹ The former not only denies that a change in the capitalist system was necessary, but is predicated on the continued existence of the capitalist relations of production⁷⁰. This contradiction in his political thought, which he was to eventually rectify is not surprising considering his surrounding political environment, where

indigenous social credit ideas, rooted in the debt position of the prairie farmer, had permeated the thinking of the various western political parties. Furthermore, although his early political background was rooted in British social democratic thought, he was later exposed to an agrarian environment that lent itself to the development of an independent community producer outlook. Attendant with this perception, emphasis was placed on redistributive mechanisms, rather than changes in the structure of the relations of production.

But by the early 1930's in conjunction with, and probably partly in response to, his acceptance of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Party, one can discern an attempt on the part of Irvine to place his social credit views within the perspective of his social democratic beliefs. Such an exercise was no more evident than in Irvine's contribution to the Regina Manifesto. He apparently had drafted and insisted upon the inclusion' of the second plank of the manifesto dealing with the socialization of finance.⁷¹ This extract reads as follows:

Socialization of all financial machinery - Banking, Currency, Credit, and Insurance, to make possible the effective control of currency, credit and prices, and the

supplying of new productive equipment for socially desirable purposes. Planning by itself will be of little use if the public authority has not the power to carry its plans into effect. Such power will require the control of finance and of all those vital industries and services which, if they remain in private hands, can be used to thwart or corrupt the will of the public authority. Control of finance is the first step in the control of the whole economy. The chartered banks must be socialized and removed from the control of private profit-seeking interests; and the national banking system thus established must have at its head a Central Bank to control the flow of credit and the general price level, and to regulate foreign exchange operations. A National Investment Board must also be set up, working in co-operation with the socialized banking system to mobilize and direct the unused surpluses of production of socially desired purposes as determined by the Planning Commission.

Insurance Companies, which provide one of the main channels for the investment of individual savings and which, under their present competitive organization, charge needlessly high premiums for the social services that they render, must also be socialized.

Irvine now viewed social credit as a necessary step within the overall framework of a new social order.⁷²

.....he placed the former policies [social credit] in the context of an overall plan for a socialist reconstruction of the Canadian economy. By doing so he made clear what had been questionable during the 1920's, that he was, first and foremost, a socialist.

Although he had not resolved the theoretical contradictions involved in an advocacy of both

social credit and social democratic ideology and policies, he had at least placed the two elements in his thought in a more straight forward relationship to one another.⁷³

By the late 1930's, his social credit critique had been, for all intents and purposes, overtaken by his social democratic beliefs as well as the reality of a Social Credit government in Alberta. In a 1939 pamphlet entitled Let Us Reason Together, Irvine noted that although both social credit and CCF members have similar objectives, fundamental differences existed.

It will be seen that the whole analysis of the modern economic problem by Social Credit is financial and the sole remedy proposed is financial. The CCF, on the other hand, while not overlooking the part that finance must play in the rebuilding of an economic system in which poverty will not be known, sees the imperative necessity of going far beyond that if the ultimate objective is to be reached.⁷⁴

The years that followed intensified this belief, placing Irvine squarely within the left wing of the CCF Party.⁷⁵ Although Irvine's exposure to rural life, as well as the various exponents of agrarian populism, colored his political thought considerably, his radical social gospel background cannot be accorded the same effect. Despite the fact that his religious background may have prompted his

concern for social justice, its influence in shaping his criticisms of the existing system as well as his suggestions for a new social order should not be exaggerated.

Irvine's references to religion and church throughout his political career were sporadic at best, and, for the most part, concentrated during his period of spiritual questioning, which culminated in his resignation as Minister. In an Alberta Non Partisan article one finds Irvine freely commenting on his perception of the flaws of institutionalized religion. He wrote: "We find our church improgressive, conservative and demanding the sanction of authority and influence in every issue that involves or necessitates an attitude on their part".⁷⁶ Irvine was, however, willing at times to concede to progress being made within the church such as the report of the Conference Committee on Social Service and Evangelism, and the 1918 General Conference. But such concessions were made only after admonishing the Church in general for upholding evangelism and acting as "the servant of the wealthy class". Irvine welcomed the church's declaration of hope for a new industrial order while noting that it "is much too far behind to take the lead in this world movement for democracy, justice and service....[although] it can still

be of service."⁷⁷

The above quote is a good indication as to his own relationship with the Church. Except for giving sermons in the Labour Church in the months after his resignation, and, infrequently in the Unitarian Church during his tenure as a Member of Parliament, he was not tempted to return to his vocation.⁷⁸ As late as 1940 he refused an offer of a pastorate in an Ottawa Unitarian Church. As he wrote to David Lewis, "my heart is not in the church as you know, but in the CCF. To have to go to church for a living would be unfair and most difficult for me."⁷⁹ Socialism had become Irvine's religion. Irvine did not find this situation contradictory since he believed religion should be socially oriented "closely in touch with humanity" and, conversely, that socialism should be founded on ethical principles to the extent of "becoming the religion of tomorrow".⁸⁰

From the early 1920's to the mid 1930's relatively few examples of social gospel can be discerned in Irvine's speeches and writings. But from the mid 1930's on, social gospel overtones, although not frequent, became evident in Irvine's speeches and writings, especially those of electoral campaigns. Nevertheless, the timing as well as the content of the messages, leads one to the conclusion

that his renewed interest was partly in response to William Aberhart's ascendancy to power and his successful use of religious fundamentalist doctrines for political purposes. Fighting fire with fire, Irvine, in a sense, used religion during this period as part of his theory of political obligation to the extent of implying that the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation would aid in the creation of a true Christian nation. In a 1935 radio address he told the audience:

Your ballot is the means by which you will express your practical religion tomorrow. Capitalism is anti-Christian and anti-human. The CCF is opposed to capitalism and is the only political party that is opposed to it. We stand for the Cooperative Commonwealth in which ethical principles will have a place.⁸¹

While not denying that his religion held an important place in his belief system and played a part in his pursuance of a particular mode of political thought and action, it was not, however, at the forefront of his fight for social justice.

Whatever the motivational factors, his dedication to the building of a new social order remains unquestionable. His definition of the new social order had

changed throughout the years. From a belief in traditional British Fabian socialism Irvine went on, in the 1920's, to enunciate his own version of guild socialism in the form of his theory of group government. By the mid 1930's, his political thought had returned to a more traditional socialist mold mixed with Fabian elements which were manifested in his acceptance of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation doctrine.⁸² Parallel and connected to this pattern was his belief in social credit monetary reform. Climaxing in the 1920's, it slowly faded through the 1930's with the realization that social credit monetary reform with its emphasis on distribution would not bring about the eradication of the evils of capitalism and the subsequent implementation of a Cooperative Commonwealth.

As illustrated above, Irvine's rather eclectic political thought throughout his life epitomizes Canadian political philosophy which has not generally been characterized by complex abstract theories but rather has been closely wedded to the social, political, and economic circumstances of the time. Although the term 'pragmatic' has been used to identify the lack of Canadian political ideology, it can more aptly be utilized as a description of this ideology.

For example, Irvine's views, while presenting perhaps the most sweeping and eclectic philosophical perspective of the Canadian situation of the period, basically emerged from his perception of the reality of early twentieth century Canada. Furthermore, he was not unwilling to modify or discard them when they no longer fitted the circumstances.

His most important piece of work, Farmers in Politics, is an excellent indication of Irvine's ability to apply theories in an original manner. Although the concept of group government was not new, Irvine's application of the theory was as original as was his logic for embracing the concept. As has been noted, the rural petit bourgeois constituted an important, if not the most important potential political force in early twentieth century Canada. This reality had been recognized by other thinkers of the social democratic left of the period, albeit in a somewhat incidental fashion. Woodsworth and especially Smith although sincere in their concern for the rural population considered farmers mostly in relation to industrial workers who they perceived to be the pivotal force for future social change. However, Irvine's thought,

although his background somewhat belies it, encapsulated many of the seminal assumptions of the Canadian rural population of the time.

The importance of Irvine's thought does not lie as much in his solution to the political and economic reality which surrounded him as his grasp of the agrarian world view. Interestingly, the era of the rural population's physical dominance of Canadian society was coming to an end as the book Farmers in Politics was being written. So, although Irvine's premises may not have been as accurate as those of other individuals under study, what is crucial is that Irvine captured the ideological perspective of the independent commodity producer.

His early childhood, as son of a crofter, a coupled with his extensive social gospel experience with the Canadian prairie farmer help produce this outlook. This particular brand of social gospel doctrine which he learned at Wesley, especially from Salem Bland, stressed not only urban but rural secular concerns. This orientation was reinforced by his experiences, while a student, as a rural circuit preacher and his later posting in Calgary, a centre for farm organizational activities during this era.

However, Irvine, at the same time, maintained an exposure to and identity with the urban working class. This duality accounts for his ability in his early parliamentary years to electorally represent both farm and labour constituencies and, more importantly, it helps to explain the great emphasis which he placed on class cooperation between farm and labour.

His adherence to the social gospel, which catalyzed the process of secularization and hence his identification with both the agrarian and labour communities, acted as a major contributor to his separation from the Church. Elements of his Christian belief system lived on to influence his thought. However, the aspect of his social gospel heritage which most affected his thought and which accounted for many of the contradictions contained within, was his ambiguous class position during his tenure as minister, and his subsequent orientation towards both the industrial working class and independent commodity producer class of the Canadian prairies.

CHAPTER IV FOOTNOTES

- 1 A crofter is a farmer who worked the land for rent, a type of feudal serf.
- 2 A. Mardiros, The Life of A Prairie Radical - William Irvine (Toronto - James Lorimer & Company, 1979) P.12 Many of the facts of Irvine's early life were taken from this book.
- 3 Mardiros suggested that it was because of his marriage that he converted. In effect, however, there was no strict differentiation of doctrines between the two sects, in fact the college had a common study program in anticipation of the upcoming union.
- 4 Mardiros, P. 21
- 5 Within the next few years the name was changed to Alberta Non Partisan and Western Independent.
- 6 See Mardiros pp. 56 to 58.
- 7 Mardiros on pp. 59-60 outlines the aims of the LRL and as well as the similarities between the programs of the NPL and LRL.
- 8 According to Allen in The Social Passion during the conscription crisis of 1917 Irvine was fired from his post when "word filtered to Boston headquarters that he was not loyal to the war effort". However Tony Mardiros observed that according to Church policy "Irvine could not be deprived of his pastorate unless the congregation voted to do so. This they did not do and in fact they never even suggested taking a vote on the matter". His salary however, was halted since the congregation could not afford to pay him on their own and, therefore he had to take on a full time job, in addition to his ministerial duties.
- 9 As quoted by Mardiros p. 73 from Alberta Non Partisan Vol. 3 No. 12 p. 5.
- 10 Mardiros p. 74.

- 11 The results were: UFA 39, DLP 4, Liberals 13, Conservatives 4, Independants 2.
- 12 The two parties themselves did not combine platforms. Irvine, however, combined, in his platform, elements from both.
- 13 After his defeat in 1949 he ran unsuccessfully in two more federal general elections (1953 & 1958) and one federal by-election (1955). Even during his years in exile he was extremely involved in organizational work for the UFA in 1925-26 and the CCF from 1935 to 1945, while continuing his secondary occupation as associate editor for the People's Weekly (formerly Alberta Labour News).
- 14 Mardiros p. 118.

By 1925, Irvine's view of the Progressive Party had greatly diminished. In the House of Commons in 1925 he stated: 'I criticize it [Progressive Party] from the point of view of the aims of the party itself, the policy it seeks to enforce in the House, and what I as representative of labour may expect from it if it were returned to power at the next election' (p. 1962).
- 15 Mardiros p. 120 & 132.
- 16 W. Irvine The Farmers in Politics (1921 reprinted Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Carleton Library Series, 1976) Preface by Reg. Whitaker p.xxx - xxxi.
- 17 The People's Weekly by this time had become the official paper of the Alberta CCF. Within a few years it had merged with the Commonwealth, the Saskatchewan CCF paper, taking on its name.
- 18 In Nutcracker, Alberta Non Partisan, Western Independent and Farmers in Politics.
- 19 His book Farmers in Politics, regarded as his most important piece of work, is an excellent indication of Irvine's ability to apply theories in an original manner. This book written precisely when the farmers' movement "overlapped with radical labour politics", will be given special attention

in the analysis of Irvine's thought. (Irvine p. xiii). Even though written as much as a political pamphlet advocating the farmers movement, the book displays the most complete and integrated statement of Irvine's philosophy during this important period in Canadian history.

20 Irvine, Farmers in Politics p. 18.

21 Ibid. p. 132.

22 Ibid. p. 124-125.

The same theme is evident in the House of Commons speech of the 1927-1928 session as well as a radio address delivered October 13, 1935 (Norm Smith papers, Glenbow Institute, Calgary). Furthermore, Irvine pointed out that the United Farmers Movement had produced a synthesis of the two, due in most part to the presence of the women's section of the farmer's movement.

23 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 20-21.

The same theme is contained in the Nutcracker et al in the June 21, 1919, July 6, 1917, July 7, 1918 and May 10, 1918 issues.

24 Irvine, Farmers in Politics p. 94.

25 The theme of J.S. Mill's On Liberty.

26 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 97.

27 Ibid. p. 98-99.

28 Ibid. p. 36. Same theme in Nutcracker April 13, 1917.

29 Mardiros p. 98-99.

30 Ibid p. 99.

31 Irvine, Farmers in Politics p. 89-90.

32 Ibid.

A similar view appears in Western Independent October 1, 1919 as well as ten years later in Cooperative Government on page 35 with the

statement '...the idea that institutions....are not finished products fixed and final, but that they are processes in an apparently endless re-adjustment that has become established'.

- 33 In an Alberta Non Partisan article May 10, 1918 he wrote: 'In a similar manner the whole of society is gradually becoming socially conscious through a corresponding integration which will ultimately result in society directing itself consciously towards self preservation and advancement. When society has arrived at complete consciousness it will act as a unit on matters of vital importance, and all that is destructive to human well-being will be eliminated'.
- 34 Irvine Farmers in Politics, p. 142.
- 35 Woodsworth also used the arguments regarding the inevitability of social laws but his abhorrence of violence for its suffering and death showed through his arguments. Although Irvine was similarly affected, Woodsworth's feelings were more explicit in his writing. Probably due, in part, to his impassioned pacifism.
- 36 W. Irvine Cooperative Government, p. 119.

A number of articles in the Nutcracker et al dealt with the theme of education. One good article is "Signs of the New Social Order: Education and the New Social Order" Alberta Non Partisan, August 17, 1918.
- 37 House of Commons 1931, p. 2736. Also see p. 5921.
- 38 He placed revolution within the overall evolutionary process. When the path of evolution is opposed by conservative forces then revolution is inevitable.
- 39 Alberta Non Partisan January 15, 1919. Same theme was expressed years later in his October 1935 election address.
- 40 Alberta Non Partisan July 7, 1919.
- 41 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 226-227.

- 42 Irvine Cooperative Government, p. 116.
- 43 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 251.
- 44 Ibid. p. 146.
- 45 Ibid. p. 101.
- 46 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 141.
- 47 Ibid. preface p. xxii.
- 48 Ibid. p. 55-56. The same theme can be found in his book Cooperative Government pp. 43 to 48, 80 and 134 as well as in editorials for Nutcracker et al December 29, 1916, March 17, 1920.
- 49 House of Commons 1922 pages 212 & 218.
- Irvine did mention the defects of the party system in other speeches but not in the same depth. See, for example, the 1927-28 session of parliament pp. 718, 1025, 1028, 1029.
- 50 House of Commons 1922.
- 51 This was done to a greater extent in Cooperative Government than in Farmers in Politics where he wrote: 'Group government when established will imply a partnership in power, administration and responsibility. I do not foresee the methods that will be adopted in selecting Cabinets more to outline a system of parliamentary procedures for a group government' (p. 246). He did although, clearly state his commitment to the principle of proportional representation which he felt enhanced 'the British principle of responsible government'. (p. 237-238).
- 52 Irvine, Farmers in Politics p. 165.

This section can be found almost word for word in the Western Independent series of 'Life and Work', February 1920, written by Irvine. During the same period he talked of democracy in other articles in a rather vague fashion. for example, in the September 27, 1918 Alberta Non Partisan he talks more of what democracy is not rather than what it

is, except to say it is 'a spirit or principle of freedom, of self-government and justice that is working itself out in the history of the race'.

53 Ibid. p. 160-161.

54 Irvine, Cooperative Government p. 100.

In a way this could simply be an expression of the farmers movement. As early as 1916 Irvine wrote: 'The idea of two parties in the provincial house is not far short of insane. Many of our leading citizens believe that a strong business administration would be much preferable to the party system. A business administration would not only abolish the farcical debates in the house, the foolish party strife and the patronage system but would do away with much of the waste that is inevitable (sic) under present conditions'. This idea flows quite naturally from his view of natural law and society's need to learn and accept them. When there is only one right way, a business administration is a viable alternative. This concept does not clash with the idea of group government which is the outcome of the natural law of cooperation, since in reality there was only one group, the farmers.

55 See House of Commons 1945, p. 2584.

In the pamphlet Is Socialism the Answer he states: 'To put it another way, the basic aim of socialism is not an abstraction from political democracy, but rather the addition to it of the one vital factor it still lacks - Economic Democracy'. (p. 37).

56 Quoted in Mardiros from the Norman Smith Papers, Glenbow Institute, Alberta.

57 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 252-253.

58 In a discussion in the 1927-1928 session of the House of Commons on the issue of tariffs, Irvine accused the Conservative Party of stirring up propaganda against the farmer. 'The result of the propaganda is that we have class war where there should be cooperation'. Organized farmers and

manufacturers should get together outside the parliamentary forum and '...take the matter into their own hands and settle it as it should be settled. There is no doubt about it that our farmers and manufacturers must learn to work together if Canada is ever to amount to anything, and while we leave this major grievance as a football for political parties we are only inciting strife and driving these classes apart'. (p. 716-717).

59 Nutcracker April 13, 1917.

60 Irvine Farmers in Politics p. 232.

In fact, Irvine did not foresee the disappearance of the capitalist in his new social order. They would 'be called to the higher service of managing capital for national well-being'. (p. 97). A view which is Fabian in origin.

61 C.B. Macpherson Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2nd edition, 1962) page 38.

62 At times Irvine's method of delineating classes is more closely aligned to that of Mackenzie King (in his book Industry and Humanity) rather than that of Marx's. In Cooperative Government Irvine notes that 'various parts of society may be termed functions. agriculture, mining, manufacturing, transportation ...are all functions of society...the individual knows that his life is linked directly and immediately with the single function which his efforts assist...the individual will become cognizant of his relationship to all other functions performed in the same apparently independent way by all the thousands of other individuals with whom he at times has joined in destructive conflict'. (p. 87 to 89).

63 Page 39.

Some twenty years previous, one finds an interesting description of the differences between the farmer and worker. In the Alberta Non Partisan September 12, 1918 issue he wrote: 'There is a decided difference in the outlook of the farmer and

that of the factory worker chiefly due to the influence of the different environments. The farmer is essentially more individualistic in outlook and blinded by a false sense of independence of all others. His comparative isolation and his working alone, accounts for this'.

- 64 April 29, 1944.
- 65 House of Commons 1945 pp. 2583-2584.
- 66 House of Commons, 1922 p. 224.
- 67 As described by Macpherson, the crucial proposition of Douglas' A + B theorem is 'that a part of the costs does not correspond to any income paid out to persons and available as purchasing power...The payments made by a factory or other productive unit in the course of producing goods may be divided into (A) 'all payments made to individuals (wages, salaries, and dividends)' and (B) 'all payments made to other organizations (new materials, bank charges, and other external costs).' Of these, only the A payments create purchasing power available to buy the product. 'The rate of flow of purchasing power to individuals is represented by A, but since all payments go into prices, the rate of flow of prices cannot be less than A plus B. But 'A will not purchase A plus B'. Hence, in order to make it possible for all the product to be purchased, 'a proportion of the product at least equivalent to B must be distributed by a form of purchasing power which is not comprised in the descriptions grouped under A'. This can be done by the creation of new money, distributed as social credit dividends to consumers or as subsidies to producers to enable them to price the product below cost.' (Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System p. 108). The quotes within the above quote are from Douglas.
- 68 Mardiros p. 199-200. This proposal of a central agency is a modification of Douglas' theory which did not favor such centralization.
- 69 He must have realized some aspect of the contradictions since he markedly decreased his emphasis on socialist thought during that period.

- 70 D. Laycock, The Political Thought of William Irvine: A Study in the Development of Western Canadian Political Thought: M.A. Thesis, Department of Political Economy, University of Toronto. p. 140.

Laycock notes that Irvine's political thought "could not have included a clear understanding of the crucial relationship between ownership of and control over the means of production and distribution which exists in any capitalist society. Such an understanding would have led him to reject Douglas' claim that social control of credit and production was possible without any alternation in the system of property relations."

- 71 Laycock p. 166.
- 72 Ibid. p. 167. G.D.H. Cole in his book the Intelligent Man's Guide Through World Chaos espoused the same viewpoint. Also it must be remembered that many of Irvine's colleagues in the UFA espoused similar theories. Irvine was not alone, simply the most prominent and prolific. Even J.S. Woodsworth's thought had some elements, although always within a strong socialist framework. The same of which could not be said for Irvine in the 1920's.
- 73 Ibid. p. 209-210.
- 74 Nearly ten years later, a 1947 House of Commons speech contained the same criticism.
- 75 There are many reasons for Irvine's rejection of social credit theory, not the least is Aberhart's ascendancy to power and his performance. Many speeches and articles by Irvine consistently contained attacks on Aberhart.
- 76 Alberta Non Partisan, December 20, 1917.
- 77 Nutcracker November 6, 1918.
- 78 See Allen p. 85.
- 79 Letter dated October 4, 1940 CCF papers P.A.C. as quoted from Mardiros p. 213.

- 80 Speech to the Trades and Labor Council as quoted from Mardiros p. 80-81. See also Nutcracker April 13, 1917.
- 81 October 13, 1935. Provincial Archives of Alberta - Edmonton.
- 82 His advocacy of state ownership decreased during the 1920's.

CHAPTER V

Although it can be said that Salem Bland helped blaze the trail in the development of social gospel thought in Canada, it was his followers, Woodworth, Smith, and Irvine who eventually surpassed him in the application of radical social gospel to the Canadian secular environment. In the process they progress beyond the doctrine's limits. Frustrated by the failings by the Church as a vehicle for reform, they resigned, while Bland, their mentor, stayed on to fight for his vision of the Church's proper role in society. Even Bland, although not rejecting the Church, realized its inadequacies and adopted the political party as a supplementary instrument of reform. Bland's career decisions, especially his decision to remain within the ministry, is reflected in his political thought. Both his career and his thought are examined in this chapter, the latter is analyzed within C.B. Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist assumptions and from the perspective of determining the influence of Bland's ambiguous class position as well as his religious heritage.

Bland, like J.S. Woodsworth and Irvine, came from a religious family background. His father, Henry Flesher Bland, was a minister who immigrated from Great Britain shortly before Bland's birth in Lachute, Quebec in 1859.¹

Although within the first few years of Bland's ministry he had faced and conquered a charge of heresy on the issue of the state of grace of children, his recollections give the impression of a rather orthodox young preacher.² In notes entitled 'A Contribution to a Possible Sketch of My Life' he recounted of the period between 1880 and 1900:

The first twenty years of my ministry began in the devout and untroubled acceptance of traditional orthodoxy in regard to the message and the method of the Evangelical Churches and the slow creeping in, in spite of honest and resolute opposition of what at first was unwelcome and even sinful doubt.³

Similar sentiments were expressed in the Toronto Star Weekly article 'Fifty Years in the Ministry' when in commenting on difficulty that had been experienced in stationing him in recent years, he admitted deviating somewhat from his original theological beliefs. He wrote:

In my early days I think that the most thoroughly-going fundamentalist would have

recognized me as a brother. There was not, I think, one point of my creed he would have challenged. I was a thorough-going adherent to the creed held in common by the Evangelical churches and believed that Methodism in particular was pretty nearly God's finality in doctrinal statement, usages and institutions. I had been nearly fifteen years in the ministry before it became clear to me that some doctrinal statement was desirable.

His activities in the first two decades of his ministry focussed in Ontario and it was during his Kingston posting, where he interacted frequently with Queen's University intellectuals, that his knowledge expanded beyond his early theological training, especially in the philosophical and political realms. It was also there that his thought took on the distinct markings of the social gospel. During this period he had completed a two year stint as circuit preacher, took up a station at Perth, and moved, two years later to Kingston where he acted as an assistant minister to two Methodist Churches. As Brian McKillop in A Disciplined Intelligence concludes: "It took the Kingston experience and its disturbing intellectual adjustments before Bland was able to confront the unexamined convictions he had held during his first twenty-years."⁴ Although not a student at Queen's, he became involved in campus life and was awarded an honorary

doctorate from the institution. Intellectually interacting with divinity and philosophy scholars such as John Watson and George M. Grant, attending political meetings and Theological Alumni Conferences, and mastering the works of Hegel and Kant among others imbued Bland with the "Queen's spirit of the nineties...[which] continued to give a philosophical basis for his evolving social views."⁵

In 1903, after a two year posting in Ottawa, Bland accepted an appointment as professor of Church History and the New Testament at Wesley College in Winnipeg. By this point, his social thinking seemed to have outstripped his theological views. "By the time Bland left the east for Wesley College, Winnipeg in 1903, he had become an outspoken advocate of extensive state provision of cultural amenities and social schemes to equalize conditions in society. He was a single taxer, a convinced democrat, and a defender of labour's right to organize."⁶ In Winnipeg not only did his involvement with the urban community develop beyond the theoretical, he was also exposed to a politically conscious agrarian sector. Before his posting to Winnipeg his experience had been limited to the cities and towns of central Canada with no contact with agrarian associations. However, as "an eastern radical who moved

west and readily took up its causes..." Bland threw himself into agrarian prairie life.⁷ Although not actually joining rural organizations in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, his path crossed frequently with their members and he participated, throughout his stay in Manitoba, in activities such as speeches to the Manitoba and Saskatchewan's Grain Grower conventions.⁸ Furthermore, he launched a journalism career, to which he was to return after his retirement, by a regular contribution to the Grain Growers Association's official paper, The Grain Growers Guide. His column "A Deeper Life", which he wrote for more than a year, had a social gospel character and was oriented towards an agrarian audience. Articles, although, were often of a pastoral rather than political nature. As Allen has commented of this period: "He [Bland] had been prominent in all major western reform movements from 1907 in the course of which he had worked closely with many leaders of the agrarian movements."⁹

Bland's proclivity towards intensive secular involvement beyond the boundaries of the church also extended into the political realm. He had taken a public stand as early as 1887, on issues such as the graft and corruption of the two traditional parties and on temperance

in the 1907 Manitoba election, and, again, in 1914 on the issues of temperance and women's suffrage.¹⁰ His outspokenness on political matters escalated to personal involvement in the political process with the advent of World War One. Although hesitant at the beginning, his commitment to the war effort intensified, based on the belief that "democracy, liberty and Christianity is at stake."¹¹ As such, conscription of men was acceptable to Bland, but only if an attempt was also made to conscript wealth. Bland, particularly disagreed with the "sudden, unexpected" method of announcing conscription which left "Labour feeling itself deceived and betrayed". He felt that further attempts at voluntary recruitment should have been made, coupled with an effort to inform the public as to the causes of the war, in a manner similar to the educational process used in Great Britain.¹²

Beyond the traditional justifications for supporting the war, Bland had certain millenarian dreams of its aftermath. The war held the possibility of hastening the establishment of a new social order by encouraging the ideals of sacrifice and cooperation. On that hope, Bland's involvement in the political realm intensified with the use of both orthodox and unorthodox methods. He organized,

along with two other members of the Winnipeg Ministerial Association, the First Canada Movement in an attempt to capture the essence of this new 'religious' spirit'.

The following statement on its aims was issued:

The association has no desire to draw up a programme for the movement. It covets no leadership. It simply hopes to be the means whereby men of good will, men who like a square deal, representative of all classes and interests may 'get together' to confer regarding the common good. It believes that there is such a moral idealism in Canada at this great crisis in human history, such a passion to redeem and exalt and unify our young nation, as has never been throbbled (sic) in Canadian hearts - a passion which only needs a proper channel... In such a high and difficult enterprise as this, constructive, national, above all, deeply and humbly and passionately religious, the association sees the surest perhaps the only pledge of a regenerated and united nation.¹³

The movement, failing to capture the imagination of Canadians, died as quickly as it was born.

Bland, in addition to the organization of extra parliamentary movements, considered another more traditional vehicle for political expression, election to the House of Commons. He took his first step towards that venture when he accepted the nomination as the federal candidate for the riding of Winnipeg Centre (which was

eventually to become the fiefdom of Woodsworth). In August of 1917, Bland presented himself as a non-partisan-win-the-war candidate, favoring the immediate establishment of a national government led by Robert Borden. He withdrew, however, a few months later, in favor of a returned soldier.¹⁴

In the years to come, Bland's political activity was to remain at a high level. Using his talent for public speaking, Bland participated in many electoral campaigns. In the early 1920's he supported individual candidates, such as his friend, labour leader James Simpson, in his unsuccessful attempt in the 1921 federal election. In the 1930's he went on the hustings for the newly formed Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Party. In contrast, Woodsworth, Irvine and Smith chose more direct paths of political action. The former two successfully competing in the 1921 federal election, and the latter winning a seat in the Manitoba Legislature in 1920.

Other differences during this period, between these social gossellers and Bland are evident, the major one being their relationship with the Church. Bland often criticized the institution for not only not encouraging but hindering social change in Canada by representing the

interests of the wealthy. Although his clashes with the institution were many, he did not seriously consider resignation as an alternative. This attitude was in marked contrast to that of Woodsworth, Irvine and Smith who, by 1920, had all left the ministry and adopted politics in their new vocation. Their beliefs regarding the war and the Winnipeg General Strike and the extent to which their convictions deviated from those of the Church figured in their resignation. Bland, however, supported the war effort and his position on the strike can, at best, be considered ambiguous with his participation limited to speaking on behalf of the arrested strikers, among whom was J.S. Woodsworth.¹⁵

What really separated Bland from Woodsworth, Irvine, and Smith, and which affected his decision to remain in the ministry, was his unshakeable optimism as to the Church's eventual reorientation towards the social gospel. Bland, upon hearing of J.S. Woodsworth's third and final letter of resignation from the ministry, wrote him the following words, revealing his hopes for the Church's future direction:

I can only bow to your decision. I am sure
you have done what you feel you must do. I

Q

could have wished you could have remained in the church until the regeneration. I think the regeneration is going to come to pass. Perhaps it may involve a division but I hope not and think not. The practical Christians will capture the Church from the sentimental and dogmatic Christians.¹⁶

His optimism was tested under fire, offering him many opportunities to break with the Church. He had already faced and overcome his first charge of heresy during his early years in the ministry, but his most trying test came with his dismissal, along with one other professor, from Wesley College in 1917, after fourteen years of a respected teaching career. The official reason given was the need to cut teaching staff due to financial considerations. This was only partially true. Questions were raised as to the college's choice for the cuts. Some had felt that Bland, because of his outspoken views was an obvious candidate. "Bland had ample reason to feel he was in danger...[and] had warnings from friends who seemed to 'know' or who at least assumed they knew, that certain wealthy individuals in the Methodist community were determined to have him removed"¹⁷. The rather blatant attempt to oust Bland for his radical views was opposed from many sides.¹⁸ Extensive support came from the

students at Wesley, the western press, the Grain Growers Association and the Methodist Conference of Saskatchewan among others, but to little avail. The Court of Appeal of the Methodist Church, although questioning the manner in which Bland and Irwin, had been dismissed, ruled that the Board of Directors of Wesley College had not overstepped its powers.¹⁹

Bland then accepted an offer, late in 1918, to take up the position as pastor of Broadway Methodist Tabernacle in Toronto. Within the first year, however, an attempt was made by some of the wealthier members of the congregation to remove him. The instigators depicted his request for a one month leave of absence to return to Winnipeg to wrap up his affairs, and another month for an American lecture tour, as "a two month holiday to go tour for labour."²⁰ In the end, Bland defeated the charge, winning, at the same time, "the confidence and admiration of the congregation."²¹

Another attempt was made in 1920 to oust Bland from his position as pastor; this time in response to the contents of his newly published book The New Christianity. The book has been described by Allen as being a radical social gospel tract whose "chief significance lies in its intellectual lineage, which is an instructive study in how

the highest traditions of evangelical Christianity came into radical conjunction with the currents of economic change, social reform and political upheaval in Canada in the first decades of this century."²² The book caused great controversy from both religious and secular opponents and added fuel to attempts on the part of some of Bland's parishioners to oust him from his position. They again failed, due, in part to the fact that, however radical his views, they represented a minor yet influential component of the Methodist Church and most of his congregation recognizing this, respected his right to express them. Ultimately, the support of the majority of his parishioners remained constant through his four year appointment at Broadway. Bland's request for an extension of the four year limit per station was denied, but his alternate request for a year's leave of absence was granted. One year later he was assigned to Toronto's Western Congregational Church until his retirement in 1927.

His retirement did not mark the end of an active lifestyle, merely a change in its focus. For the next twenty years he contributed a weekly column to the Toronto Star under the byline "The Observer". Continuing his history of political activism Bland, like Woodsworth and

Irvine, became deeply involved with the CCF, particularly as a platform speaker. Bland described the CCF as "the only political movement of the Anglo Saxon people frankly inspired by Psalm 72...in harmony with the highest teachings of the bible."²³ His tireless efforts for social betterment also continued on other fronts. He accepted many speaking engagements both on and off the pulpit and supported such organizations as the League for Spanish Democracy. He also remained active in Church organizational activities.

Bland died on February 1950 at the age of ninety but as Richard Allen observed "1939 closed the last creative decade of his life"²⁴, a life that was long, fruitful and left its mark on the social gospel movement in Canada. Despite strong opposition from the Church, at least equal to that experienced by Woodsworth, Smith, and Irvine, Bland continued as a minister until his retirement in 1926. His age, specifically the number of years he had already dedicated to the Church, mitigated against his resignation. His belief in the Church's eventual recognition of its earthly task - the implementation of social justice - never wavered. He, nevertheless, was not beyond adopting another instrument, that of the political

party, as a supplement in his fight for equality.

As a social gospeller who plunged into secular activities, both urban and rural, it was natural that he would also involve himself in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, whose aim it was to establish cooperation amongst farm and labour groups in their fight for social justice. However extensive his secular activities, his faith in the Church remained a major influence on his thought, as did his ambiguous class position as a member of the clergy. As with Woodsworth, Smith, and Irvine, Bland's political thought²⁵ will be analyzed within C.B. Macpherson's framework of possessive individualist assumptions which is structured as follows:

- 1- his view of human nature as cooperative or competitive
- 2- his view of societal relations both historical and contemporary: (i) Is society composed of atomistic individuals or organic, interdependent classes? (ii) If society is composed of classes, what constitutes a class? What is the relation of one class to another? Are classes unequal?
- 3- his view as to whether the market relation is the central relation among individuals
- 4- his view as to whether labour is alienable.

An important and central feature of his thought was Bland's concept of human nature and the workings of natural law. Of the individuals under study, Bland's perception of human nature is among the most positive. "Men [are] neither angels nor devils, but a thoroughly kneaded mixture of both".²⁶ The good was inherent while the evil had been induced and developed by the prevailing social environment. Nevertheless, Bland, by his emphasis on the concept of free will, did not allow individuals to abdicate responsibility for their own actions.

It is certain that all human beings we know, save one are faulty, and it seems equally clear to every thoughtful observer of human life that conditions over which man has little or no control do largely determine character. I know that they do not absolutely determine it. No one could see the vital importance of free will more clearly I think than I see it. There is a power of choice in everyone.²⁷

The belief in human perfectibility was a current which ran strong through Bland's political thought, and is connected to his teleological perception of the individual. By slightly modifying Aristotle's famous analogy, Bland conceived of each human soul as a microcosm of the world, in the same way in which an "oak is folded in

an acorn".²⁸ The development of the individual, however, has to be nurtured through education especially with regard to one's ability to distinguish between good and evil. According to Bland, the individual conscience in its natural, uneducated state did not constitute a failsafe guide for differentiating between good and evil.

Crucial to progress was the sensitization of the human conscience to good and evil. Bland reasoned that institutions and activities, such as slavery, gambling, and liquor consumption which were once permitted by society are now slowly being rejected as wrong.²⁹ His view of human perfectibility and the educational process by which this could be achieved possessed a strong religious element. Individuals have a "godlike capacity" to accept or reject teaching and "throughout history God's methods have been those of a teacher, appealing to man's best reason and sentiments."³⁰

There was no doubt in Bland's mind that religion should provide the basis, and the Church, the leadership for the realization of a new social order founded on the natural urge towards brotherhood and service rather than competition and selfishness. It is a natural instinct to be good and "kindly impulses are not confined to members of

the Church". However, individuals cannot remain virtuous for any length of time under trying circumstances without the solace and strength which religion provides. "Genuinely good men are always religious....all true goodness is thus the affirmation of God."³¹

Religion also permeated Bland's conception of happiness, especially as enunciated in his early sermons. Happiness to Bland consisted of the fulfillment of not only the individual's physical, but spiritual and emotional needs. He had been exposed to the various theories of utilitarianism and to the extent to which he embraced the concept, his more closely resembled John Stuart Mill's as opposed to Jeremy Bentham's. He wrote: "men are most happy who clearly recognize and act on the principle that true happiness lies in a man's self, so that civilization in which the spiritual sources of true happiness is recognized as well as the material aids to welfare will minister most effectively to the happiness of men"³². There were points, however, where differences become evident. Bland, for example, did not simply equate happiness with pleasures of the intellect but also with the fulfillment of men's religious dimension. He warned that the pursuit of happiness as a passing mood must not be the immediate

aim rather it is "submission to Christ and acquiescence to His plan."³³

Some of Bland's other sermons as a young preacher illustrated his attraction to utilitarianism as well as his attempts to reconcile the theory with his religious beliefs. "Without embroiling ourselves in the conflict which some are bound to prolong between Christianity and the school which alleges happiness as the end of action and utility as the standard or positively asserting what seems not improbable, that the fundamental ideas of both is one...Utilitarianism suggests that the welfare of society requires restraints but that it should be made pure and generous and just."³⁴

Nevertheless it must be said that Bland's focus during the early years was inward, towards the self and not outward, towards society - a distinction which he often used in later years. There was, as witnessed by the above quotes, an acceptance, albeit reluctant, of the concept and standards of utilitarianism, coupled with a growing realization of the importance of satisfying a person's physical, intellectual, and emotional requirements before the religious dimension can be fulfilled.³⁵ This view was first expressed by Bland in the early 1880's, to be more

fully developed some forty years later by adding to it a condemnation of modern society for not fulfilling man's needs in a Christian manner. In the September 18, 1918 issue of Grain Growers Guide he wrote that human nature desires not only food and shelter but refinement, dignity, and beauty which unfortunately can only be obtained in modern society through money, a situation considered by Bland as 'demoralizing'. The only solution to the dilemma was that "a full life, a rich life, a life that has access to the beauty and joy and glory of the world must be made possible for all." As well, his book The New Christianity, published two years later, contained the same sentiments with the underlying philosophy as well as future implications more fully elaborated.

He believed that happiness is not only dependent on the individual but his/her surrounding environment and that the happiness of humanity is augmented by advances in civilization. Bland, in the manner of Hobbes, stated that one only had to contrast the life of early man with its continual war and savagery to modern society with its relative respect for law, tendency towards cooperation and mutual help and knowledge of the natural and social sciences.³⁶

A corollary to Bland's liberal view of the progressive nature of civilization is his belief in the triumph of truth over falsehood, and good over evil. True to J.S. Mill's philosophy, and in similar language, Bland described liberty as an "indispensible condition of progress". Truth is not endangered by the presence of falsehood, it is in fact ultimately made stronger by it.³⁷

Goodness has a similar destiny. "On the whole goodness succeeds. Ultimately the right side wins. The triumph of evil is never permanent."³⁸

The reason for the ultimate triumph of good over evil was, according to Bland, simply the expression of divine will through the unfolding of natural law. "Natural law is the word of God".³⁹ To Bland, the harsh reality that one's body and mind is subject to laws was softened by the fact that the author of these laws is God "whose tender mercies are over all his works and who makes things work together for good....[and]....freedom [is] found not in adapting laws to us but us to laws."⁴⁰

Bland attributed more independence to the unfolding of natural laws in the physical and social realms, while placing less emphasis on the doctrine of divine intervention than many of his contemporaries in the

Church. For example, he accepted Darwin's theory of evolution with relatively little qualification, pronouncing it "favorable to Christianity".⁴¹ When compared, however, to his fellow social gospellers, Woodsworth, Smith, and Irvine, Bland's emphasis on the religious dimensions of natural law is quite distinct. This predilection was especially evident in his description of the development of the political and economic history of humanity, and the history of Christianity as being but two sides of the same coin.

The dialectical unity of religion and secular civilization had been espoused by Bland previously, but it was not until his book The New Christianity that he fully laid out the ramifications of this thinking. To Bland, the western world of the time (circa 1920) was in turmoil because the two great Christian principles of democracy and brotherhood were in the process of permeating the political, social, and industrial realms of western civilization. Yet, it was for this very reason that a new type of Christianity was required, one "adequate to meet the situation".⁴²

In Bland's opinion, throughout the ages Christianity has been influenced by the dominant social

order of the time which has affected its organizational structure and 'spirit'. The last 1200 years has seen two major phases in western civilization and hence, the Christian Church. They are the feudalistic and capitalistic stages.

During the Aristocratic/feudalistic phase (700-1500 A.D.) semi-savage conditions exacerbated men's basic need for order, peace, and security to the extent that "no other kind of social organization could possibly arise than an aristocratic [and] no other kind of ecclesiastical organization could meet the religious needs than an aristocratic".⁴³ The second phase, the Bourgeois/plutocratic/capitalistic phase (1500-1914 A.D.) was brought about by "the irrepressible trading instinct" which asserted itself once man's instinct for security and peace had already been satisfied by the feudal social order. The rise of the "merchant and manufacturing classes" especially with the Industrial Revolution, and the corresponding increase in towns were the hallmarks of this phase. These changes transformed the political, economic and social environment, with the apparatus of governing changing from an aristocracy to a plutocracy.⁴⁴

Christianity was subjected to the same conditions as the state. "The aristocratic form of Christianity, which fitted into the feudalistic age, which was called for by the social conditions of that age, which was probably the only kind of Christianity that could have existed in that age did not suit the freedom-loving, self reliant, self-asserting, ambitious burghers."⁴⁵ The new Christian movement of Protestantism which developed, had as its main feature "the ascendancy of the bourgeois" and was amply suited to the age, emphasizing as it did the "virtues conducive to business success".⁴⁶

But Christianity, according to Bland, should encompass both individualistic and social aspects. Protestantism simply embraces the former while ignoring the latter. The third phase, however, the labour phase which Bland saw as emerging in the post-war world, would embody both.

Organized labour, prompted by the Christian principles of brotherhood and democracy, was in the process of becoming the dominant class of the post World War One period. To Bland, the three major aims of the labour movement which "represent the triumph of the we-consciousness over the I-consciousness" are:

1. Every person shall contribute to society by working.
2. Every worker shall have a living wage.
3. Workers must unionize.

Out of these demands, a nascent social order is emerging as is a New Christianity - a Labor Christianity rooted in and developing from a Labor movement "profoundly and widely Christian in its insistence on the right of the humblest man or woman to human conditions of life, in its corresponding denial of the right of any human being to live on the labor of others without rendering his own equivalent of service [and] in its devotion to the fundamental Christian principle of brotherhood."⁴⁷

This is to be considered a natural progression, according to Bland, since both Christ and his apostles were workers and "how can He be fully understood except through a working man's consciousness."⁴⁸ Although labour must change somewhat; first by broadening its base "to include all kinds of productive work", and secondly by "recognizing the Christianess of its own principles," it is the Christian Church which must undergo the major transformation in order to better correspond to the prevailing social environment.⁴⁹

In addition to the dialectical interaction between the evolution of Christianity and that of the political and economic movements of western civilization, Bland overlaid yet another dimension - culture.⁵⁰ Bland believed that Christianity had been "deeply affected by the characteristics of each race it has made its home."⁵¹ Jewish Christianity was primitive in nature and simple in creed. Greek Christianity filled the void by emphasizing doctrine, but was eventually torn asunder by doctrinal disputes. Latin Christianity remedied the situation with its genius for organization, although in its wake it sacrificed freedom and progress. In reaction, Teutonic Christianity, the next stage, stressed individualism. I "taught her people to fight for the right and now is helpless before the selfish conflict of her own children that have learned too well her spirit."⁵² American Christianity followed. A social religion, opposing the individualism of its predecessors, it is based on democracy and fraternity and "will live to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth."⁵³

Bland's analysis of Church history from a cultural perspective, separate from the political and economic elements which he outlined in the first part of his book

detracted from his overall message. At the end of the book, there is little attempt to successfully connect the actions of both the cultural, and political and economic trends. Yet Bland did imply, by a similarity of descriptions, that both, Labor and American Christianity were one and the same or, at least, should coalesce in order to set the stage for the advent of the final phase, Great Christianity. This stage would be the result of a marriage of "all the older traditions along with those that were emerging in the new world and out of the African and Oriental missions."⁵⁴

Even Bland's vision of a final form of religion which would incorporate and, in the process, subsume all cultural characteristics illustrates his fascination with cultural attributes as an explanatory factor.⁵⁵ This pre-occupation was also evident in his description of the predominant institutional forms of each age as well as in his choice of 'American Christianity' as the prelude to the final phase - Great Christianity. There is, however, much less emphasis on temperment and more on geographical considerations in Bland's explanation of his choice of the term 'American' as the prefix.

...the word American, is used in its proper continental sense. by American Christianity is meant the new and distinct type of Christianity which is developing in the protestant churches of the United States and Canada and also, though less markedly, in the Roman Catholic. Politically distinct as these countries are likely to remain, socially and religiously they cannot escape the influences of neighborhood.

In some respects as has been noted, the United States, on account of its republican constitution, its political rupture with the old world, and its more strongly developed self-consciousness, has been more favorable than Canada to the growth of that new form of Christianity, yet signs are not wanting, especially in that western section in which the coming Canada seems to be the most clearly discernable, that the younger and smaller and so, perhaps, the more mobile country may outstrip her older and greater neighbor in the formation, out of, at least, the protestant denominations, a national Christianity, simple, yet free and varied, practical, democratic, brotherly, in a word, truly catholic.⁵⁶

He expressed an even more positive role for Canada in the book's preface where he noted that the new social order as well as the new Christianity might first be established in Canada, who although possessing the faults of youth also possesses, its qualities of courage and idealism.⁵⁷ Five years later, in a sermon entitled "The Religious Meaning of Dominion Day" similar sentiments on Canada's historic mission were expressed in even stronger

terms, owing in part to the Church Union which had just taken place. Canada's geography, history, and multicultural mix were among the factors cited by Bland.

In another sermon, two years previous to the publication of The New Christianity, Bland noted that "the real business of religion is not getting ready for heaven, it is bringing heaven to earth. We must generate a passion for Canada. There is no meaning in a passion for the kingdom of heaven, if there is not a passion for Canada."⁵⁸

This statement epitomized Bland's social gospel beliefs as contained in his sermons, lectures, articles, books, and political speeches. Clear and unrelenting from the turn of the century, his message was that religion, or more specifically, the principles of Christianity, would provide both the foundation and the catalyst for a new social order. In fact, the labour movement could not triumph without recognizing and acting upon the essential religiousness of its goal. "Labor must become what it essentially is - a religious movement."⁵⁹ The Labor movement and religion are inextricably linked and for either to triumph both must succeed. "They come into their kingdom together or not at all."⁶⁰

Bland obviously possessed no qualms as to the presence of religion in politics, believing that the lack of such an infusion had led to the present quandry.⁶¹ A Grain Growers Guide article entitled "A New Explosion of Christianity" contains one of Bland's most sweeping and explicit statements on the role of Christianity. Bland wrote that the Christian movement "must gather great industrial councils where leaders of all classes shall discuss reconstruction in the spirit of Christ. It must send men into public life with the same moral urgency which it has sent men into the pulpit or mission field."⁶²

In doing so, it would act in conjunction with labour with whom it shares the common aim of the destruction of the capitalist system and its replacement by a social structure guided by the Christian principles of brotherhood and democracy.⁶³ Capitalism not only neglects the physical needs of the majority but impedes the development of humanity's innate goodness.

Business competition today is, conceivably, as great an evil as intemperance was...it hardens men. It dries up their natural and almost unextinguishable kindliness. It demoralizes them. It almost compels them to resort to crooked methods. It subjects them to temptations sometimes virtually irresistible...It is not always demoralizing. There

are men strong enough to maintain their integrity, even sometimes at great risk. But the strain of it, the feverishness of it, the narrowing influences of it, still fewer men escape.⁶⁴

If capitalism is based on the principle of competition, than Bland's new social order would be founded on its opposite, the law of cooperation which amalgamates democracy with brotherhood and which most closely mirrors the fundamental instincts of human nature. Like his social gospel colleagues, Bland believed that cooperation has played an integral role in the physical and social evolutionary processes.⁶⁵ At the turn of the century, Bland's theories on cooperation were similar to those of Irvine some twenty years later. In a lecture entitled "Four Steps and a Vision", he wrote that "in [the] struggle for life, the Community, the race that knows best how to combine succeeds." Furthermore, cooperation is a natural instinct and human beings are primarily social animals whose development can only be completed in society. People congregate for practical purposes "so that each becomes less independent and get safer and better supplied with comforts and conveniences of life in consequence."⁶⁶ The task at hand, according to Bland, was to ensure that competition, and the social structure which cultivated it,

is destroyed, and that the natural tendency towards cooperation is allowed to assert itself in the economic, political, and social realms of a new social order.⁶⁷

Bland's portrayal of a new social order for the most part was rather vague, heavily clothed in religious visions of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, and rarely expanding beyond the concept of implementing the Christian edicts of brotherhood and democracy. When Bland did divulge details they dealt mostly with the distributive process. One notable exception can be found in The New Christianity which contains his most damning statements of capitalism, and the steps that should be taken to usher in socialism.

He stated that the "profit seeking system...cannot be cleansed or sweetened or ennobled. There is only one way to Christianize it and that is to abolish it". The new social order which is to replace it should be established on the "basis of co-operative production for human needs."⁶⁸ He went on to list a few of the steps, to be taken, in such an endeavor, some of which, ironically, involved the study of business practices. He suggested that:

1. the tendency among industries to circumvent competition through specialization (thus becoming more cooperative) should be studied.
2. the associations which result from competing businesses organizing in reaction to governmental regulation or prices should be noted, although they are detrimental to the public, they "at least attest to the increasing recoil from competition".
3. "the extension of public ownership, municipal, state or provincial and national" should be undertaken.⁶⁹

The third step, considered by Bland as the most important, was definitely the most action oriented and constituted the strongest words of support in Bland's writings for the concept of public ownership - a concept which Bland had baptized a divine movement. In The New Christianity he wrote: "there is no diviner movement at work in the modern world...[and]...to discredit and attack the principle of public ownership is to discredit and attack Christianity...he who doubts the practicability of public ownership is really doubting human nature and Christianity and God."⁷⁰

Bland believed that ameliorative steps such as a reduction in the hours of work, improvements in health conditions, better pay and even profit sharing schemes provide "no permanent resting place".⁷¹ Nothing short of

"a share in the control" is sufficient. Along these lines Bland suggested an arrangement similar to Britain's Whitley Scheme, which he described as the separate organization of all the workers and employers within an industrial area, and their coming together in joint committees which would determine wages and conditions of labor. He cautioned, however, that this was merely a step - the beginning rather than the end which "at least of this phase of industrial evolution, would appear to promise to be the disappearance of the capitalistic control of industry."⁷²

The above is indicative of Bland's questioning of the actual structure of capitalism during this period. His solution was that "so far as industries are not owned and managed by the community, they will be owned and managed by the workers that carry on".⁷³ Bland's emphasis, however, especially in later years, with his acceptance of CCF doctrine lay in partial state ownership rather than worker's self-management. The implicit assumption was that control by the workers was not a requisite since a duly elected social democratic government would direct the productive process in the best interests of all, including those within the industry.

Bland's views on ownership, as he elucidated them in The New Christianity, includes his most comprehensive conception of the new social order, and indictment against the inherent structure of capitalism. Later statements, by Bland however, were more a reflection of CCF thought which placed greater emphasis on redistributive mechanisms rather than relations of production.⁷⁴

In addition, Bland also echoed, at times, the social credit tendencies of some of the other early CCF'ers. In an address to the unemployed in 1932, Bland noted that the events of the Depression had clarified for him that it was "not overproduction but underconsumption" that is the main cause of the Depression. The two steps which must be taken as a consequence are that workers must obtain "a larger share of the product" and that "production must be regulated".⁷⁵

Nevertheless, however scathing Bland's criticism of capitalism, and earnest his call for its destruction, his understanding of the role that the various classes would play was confusing at times, and not always congruent with his unfavorable observations of the capitalist system. Bland, as noted earlier, placed much emphasis on the social environment in the development of character. He perceived

the capitalist class as being just as exploited as the workers but in a moral and spiritual, as opposed to merely a physical sense. In a 1919 New Years Day article in the Grain Grower's Guide, Bland in describing the struggle which would take place in post-war Canada stated that the struggle was not one of class. The dicotomy was not rich versus poor; in fact, "men who have by piranical (sic) methods, acquired, great wealth will enjoy life more and have far more satisfactory relations to God and to their fellow man when they are getting nearer their just share."

Bland's view of the capitalist was more 'conservative' than either Woodsworth's, Smith's, or Irvine's. As long as the capitalist system exists it is only fair that the rules of the market on wages and return of investment prevail; it is the structure itself not the accompanying rules which must be destroyed. "The bitter conflict between capital and labor over the division of the profits will never be settled. It probably never can be settled. It will cease to be. Capital will cease to be a factor; only labor in the broadly inclusive sense of the term will remain."⁷⁶ Managers would desert to the side of the workers and the role of the owners/capitalists would

disappear partly due to the government's usurption of the control of money and credit, thus halting "the fatal fashion money has of breeding money."⁷⁷ Bland rather simplistically deduced that capitalism would no longer have a role to play and therefore "to gain a livelihood [they] will be obliged to develop some productive function."⁷⁸

According to Bland's rather naive scenerio, the capitalist class would not obstruct change once they realized it would be for their own spiritual benefit. Yet Bland did not go so far as to assume that they would be at the forefront of the thrust for change. His perception, however, as to which other group would provide leadership was not a constant, even within a given period of time. Depending on his targeted audience Bland's universal class differed. In addresses to his church colleagues, he called upon the ministry to provide the needed direction.⁷⁹ At Labour Day rallies a different perspective was presented with his statement that victory was dependent on the organization of workers into unions with "wisely chosen leaders", who would pursue alliances with the farmers and middle class. This was, according to Bland, because labour had in the past endured greater suffering than farmers and, as such, possessed a more indepth understanding of the

economic system. Nevertheless, it was essential that both groups unite since both possessed attributes which complemented the other; farmers - stability and conservatism and workers - ambition and idealism.⁸⁰

Bland portrayed yet a different vision of the future in a 1918 Grain Growers Guide article; one which represented traditional social gospel logic in justifying a leading role for the farmers. He argued that the calling of the farmer was just as ordained by God as the Christian ministry. His proximity to nature, the provision of a healthy family environment and his contribution to the wealth of the world could perhaps deem it the occupation most representative of the new age of cooperation. "No class already cooperates so extensively. There is a divine call to farmers to extend the sphere of co-operation to lead the way into the new world of brotherhood and co-operation...The farmer must not be content to feed Canada he must lead Canada."⁸¹

The above logic, without the strong religious dimension, was to be reproduced by Irvine in Farmers in Politics less than a year later.⁸² Irvine, however, in support of this view, presented a complete framework ranging from a theory of social evolution and natural law

to his understanding of the specific mechanisms driving political and economic change in post World War One Canada. Bland's view, on the other hand, did not reveal any such extensive philosophical underpinnings. Furthermore, as noted, he wrote a number of articles and lectures, during the same period, articulating different perspectives as to which class would provide the necessary leadership in the pursuit of a new social order. Bland was not contradicting himself as much as targeting his message to the varied audiences. Stripped of specifics, the message essentially emphasized the necessity of an alliance of the exploited classes, especially the agrarian and industrial workers, whose similarities outweighed their differences.⁸³

Bland's preachings of the gospel of class cooperation stayed steadfast through the years although, as mentioned, the same could not be said of his perception of the universal class. It was the former not the latter which he considered pivotal.⁸⁴ "Farmers and workers should be, not the whole army, but the spearhead of the army of a national and Christian reconstruction."⁸⁵ The middle class, clergy, teachers, writers, doctors, etc...and eventually even managers and owners of the means of

production would participate, or at least, not unduly obstruct the establishment of socialism in Canada. This rather naive view, shared by Irvine in his early years, was rejected by Woodsworth who more realistically foresaw the possibility of a long violent struggle against the beneficiaries of the prevailing economic structure.

According to Bland, a combination of education and revelation would enlighten all to the fact that the economic transformation would ultimately be to their best interest, especially from a moral perspective. This belief neatly disposed of the necessity of violent revolution in the pursuit of change which Bland, with his strong religious orientation, refused to consider.⁸⁶

Violent revolution negated the very social order, based on the principles of Christianity, which he envisaged. In a letter of congratulations written to Woodsworth upon his re-election to Parliament in March 1940, Bland expressed the following sentiments with which Woodsworth must have, upon reading, strongly agreed. "Revolution by persuasion is made slower and more laborious than revolution by force but it is infinitely the more desirable kind of revolution."⁸⁷

Bland, of the opinion that the downfall of capitalism and the advent of socialism was inevitable, considered the only real issue to be whether the revolution would be 'Russian' or 'Christian' i.e. violent or peaceful.⁸⁸ Bland, like Woodsworth, differentiated Russian Communism from his idea of a new just society more by the method than the content. In an address to the unemployed on January 3rd 1932 he stated, "I regard Russia with mixed feelings and make no prophecies, but she has taught us we must substitute national planning for our present anarchy."⁸⁹ It was the violence of her birth and the continued repression of civil liberties and not her economic system which Bland abhorred. "Here is where we part company with Russian friends. We sympathise with many of their ideals, recognise they are in advance of us, but we cannot take their road".⁹⁰ Rather it was the path of political democracy which Bland chose.

Furthermore, the very advance of communism was an indication that Christianity was not sufficiently attuned to the needs of the individual in society. "It was because the Christianity of Europe was not materialistic enough that Karl Marx was moved (and by no evil spirit) to supply the lack, unfortunately not being himself wholly qualified

for the task. If only that exclusively spiritual Christianity that is still considered real Christianity will absorb most of what is considered the godless materialism of Marx, it will sweep the world".⁹¹ Christianity had the potential of fulfilling all of men's needs.

Christianity was not only thought to be the means to individual fulfillment but also the goal. To Bland the gradual, inevitable unfolding of natural law through the dialectical movement of history towards the Christian principles of brotherhood and democracy is the ultimate expression of the Word of God.⁹² This view of history, rather than having the effect of focussing on the spiritual, conversely, led Bland to attempt to 'materialize' religion and its institutionalized forms by trying to convince his fellow clergy to concentrate on the needs of the individual within the context of society.

According to him, happiness, the greatest happiness for the greatest number, was the goal of humanity. Yet happiness was not only defined in Mill's utilitarian terms as the fulfillment of the physical and spiritual needs of the individual, but of the religious dimension as well. Bland's theory of political obligation consisted of the

justification of a new social order as measured by the overall happiness of humankind (as defined above) which could only occur if society is founded on the basic ideals of Christianity i.e. congruence with the Word of God.

Although Bland was extremely secular in his choice of topics, his motivation and ultimate justification for his suggested reforms was religious. The kernel of his belief, unchanging through the years, can be summed up in the following quote from the article "Fifty Years in the Ministry".

I have challenged my views of religion in various points, but the outcome of all the study and the discussion and the varied experience of more than fifty years is a deeper conviction of the supremacy and pre-eminence and all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I still preserve heaps of old sermons that I could not preach today. I believe to-day passionately in some ideas which fifty years ago I never thought of. In some respects my views have been turned upside down, but I never was so sure that Jesus Christ is the supreme hope of the world. Everything good seems to me involved in faith in Jesus Christ, and when men are anchored to him, I am sure that they can swing freely with perfect safety and not only with perfect safety but with unmeasurable advantage.⁹³

Bland never wavered in his commitment to the social gospel movement. Although dismissed from his teaching post at Wesley and faced with opposition from his congregation

for his views, he nevertheless persevered. He was a believer in the "boring from within" theory and maintained his hope that the Church would eventually reform. Yet this hope, did not prevent him from involvement in other mechanisms for social change, such as politics. As with the others, Bland's conversion to social gospel brought about increasing interaction with the secular, especially those suffering social and economic injustice. And with it came the realization that the Church alone was an inadequate tool for amelioration. However, instead of leaving the Church, Bland simply added another instrument, the political party, to his arsenal. Partly because of his age he was unable to abandon the ministry completely. His identification with farm and labour continued within the realm of his ministry and ultimately the solutions remained rooted in his religious experience.

CHAPTER V FOOTNOTES

- 1 Bland grew up exposed to relatively progressive ideas on Methodist doctrine, such as the belief that children were born in a state of grace rather than original sin. It was not, however, only his father's progressive ideas but his mother's which shaped his theological thought. In a June 21, 1933 Toronto Star Weekly article entitled 'Fifty years in the Ministry' Bland revealed that the first district meeting which reviewed his request for entrance to the ministry as a probationer hesitated in its decision, turning down the request at the morning session and reversing it in the afternoon. The hesitancy was due to their fear that his "physical infirmity would restrict [his] range of ministerial service". Faced with such a possibility Bland had resolved that he would seek entrance to either the Church of England or the Congregational Church. Of the former he noted, "certain radical tendencies inherited from my mother would have found less marked development". (Toronto Star Weekly, June 21, 1933).
- 2 Richard Allen, "Salem Bland: The Young Preacher," The Bulletin, No. 26, 1977, p. 76.
- 3 "A Contribution to a Possible Sketch of My Life" Salem Bland Papers No. 726 United Church Archives (UCA).
- 4 A.B. McKillop, A Disciplined Intelligence (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979) p. 220.
- 5 Ibid. p. 219.
- 6 Richard Allen, Introductory comments to The New Christianity p. xvii.
- 7 Ibid. p. xviii.
- 8 See Richard Allen "Salem Bland and the Social Gospel in Canada" (M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1961) pages 95 to 98.
- 9 Ibid. p. 157.

10 Ibid. pages 34, 88, 89, 92.

11 "A Frank Discussion of the Political Situation", September 8, 1917, no. 107, Salem Bland Papers, United Church Archives (UCA).

12 "The Present Political Situation", October 8, 1917, no. 110, Salem Bland Papers U.C.A.

13 "New Canada Movement - 1917" no. 893, Salem Bland Papers U.C.A.

14 Within this period the Borden Union Government was formed. Bland at the beginning, was an enthusiastic supporter of the government, although there were Union Government stances on issues such as the tariff, with which he disagreed.

Bland, as early as 1916, had advocated not merely a coalition but a national government, for motivations which went beyond the successful prosecution of the war and the effective mobilization of reconstructive forces during and after the war. Rather, it was the distrust of the party system and its ties to financial interests as well as his belief that a non-partisan government would constitute the first step out of the quagmire of partyism. He soon realized that many of his expectations of the new government were not to be met, owing in part, to the lack of effective leadership. Yet, ironically, one of his hopes for the new government was partially fulfilled by its very failure. As a result of the Union Government's inability to generate an atmosphere of non-partisanship, the farmers' movement was prompted to plunge into third party politics (a move which Bland had been advocating for years). The goal of breaking down the old two party system was achieved, although not in the manner originally envisaged by Bland.

15 It is difficult to pinpoint the extent of Bland's involvement in and sympathy with the Strike. He took great pains more than a decade later, in response to the accusation that he was flirting with communism by being involved in the Strike, to

situate himself physically outside the city during most of that period. In a letter to the Winnipeg Telegram of January 28th 1931, he wrote that he was not in Winnipeg 'during the Strike, for two months before nor more than a month after' - He continued: 'furthermore for a year and a half prior to my departure from Winnipeg I had been almost continuously absent - that is from the summer of 1917 and as the second or Lenin Revolution did not take place until November of that year my ---- as assistant to labor leaders extends to a time when Soviets had not been heard of in our western world and Bolsheviki were unknown.'

- 16 Letter dated July 15, 1918, vol. 2 Woodsworth Correspondence P.A.C.

Bland's age was also a factor, however minor, in his decision to stay in the ministry. By this time he had been a minister for close to forty years, and was within a decade of his retirement. The Church was his life. Smith and Irvine, on the other hand, were much younger.

- 17 G. Bedford, The University of Winnipeg (Toronto: U of T Press, 1976), p. 130.

- 18 Allen, in his M.A. thesis presented the argument that the dismissal was for political reasons. He, however, skirted the issue in his book Social Passion where he emphasized the fact that the college was in financial difficulty. The view of the Saskatchewan Conference seemed to address that issue rather well. It did not question the financial difficulties of the college but rather the motives for choosing Bland's dismissal as the means of saving money.

- 19 A.E. Smith was on the original Board of Directors and had been persuaded to vote with the rest of the members for Bland's dismissal but subsequently introduced an unsuccessful motion to reverse it.

- 20 Richard Allen, The Social Passion p. 148.

- 21 Ibid. p. 149.

- 22 Salem Bland The New Christianity p. xiv. Salem Bland also wrote another book in 1927; The Life of Rev. James Henderson.
- 23 "The Place of Religion in the New Social Order", October 3, 1933, no. 204, Salem Bland papers.
- 24 Richard Allen "Salem Bland and the Social Gospel in Canada", p. 208.
- 25 The major source of research for his thought was the Salem Bland Papers which have been deposited at the United Church Archives (UCA), University of Toronto. They are almost all handwritten, except for newspaper clippings, and often, because of Bland's script and his unique method of abbreviation, his notes are difficult to understand.
- 26 "Human Nature", a Lecture 1885/1886, no. 1, Salem Bland Papers U.C.A.
- 27 Grain Growers Guide, July 3, 1918.
- 28 "Human Nature", no. 1, Salem Bland Papers.
- 29 Grain Growers Guide July 10, 1918.
- 30 Richard Allen "Salem Bland: The Young Preacher" p. 83.
- 31 "Can a man be good and not be religious?", May 15, 1920 no. 515, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 32 "Civilization and Happiness" no. 796, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 33 "Religion and Happiness", October 16, 1880 no. 241b, Salem Bland Papers.
- 34 "Guardianship of the Heart" no. 2420, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 35 Of course the physical, intellectual and emotional requirements can only be fulfilled within the rules of Christianity. In "Religion and Happiness" happiness is set forth as a view of life and religion as the means.
- 36 "Religion and Happiness" no. 241b, Salem Bland Papers.

- 37 "Two Vital Principles: Freedom and Brotherhood" February 26, 1920, no. 129, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 38 Grain Growers Guide, May 29, 1918.
- 39 "Natural Law in Spiritual World" no. 791, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 40 "Freedom through Truth" no. 250b, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A. See also New Christianity p. 8.
- 41 The Toronto Daily Star reported a lecture by Salem Bland at Weston United Church on August 4th 1923. It stated: "...Dr. Bland thought evolutionists while not without the slightest desire to ban anti-evolution might think the evolutionary theory more favorable to Christianity.
1. Because it makes Christianity at home in the modern world; nothing could be more tragical (sic) than that the educated youth of Christendom should think that they cannot be at once loyal to their intelligence and loyal to Christ. Fortunately we may be confident they will not accept such a ghastly alternative.
 2. It is more encouraging. If a pair fresh from the hands of God, perfect in body and mind, could almost the first day wreck themselves and the race what security ~~is there~~ in heaven?
 3. Evolution kindles a great hope. There has been no fall. It has been a long, slow, hard but steady climb upwards. And no one can look back without feeling the world is in its infancy.
- But all that future, Dr. Bland affirmed, is bound up with Christianity."
- "Can a Christian be an Evolutionist?" Aug. 4, 1923, no. 579 Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 42 Salem Bland The New Christianity, p. 9.
- 43 Ibid. p. 40.
- The aristocratic religious organization of the period was the Roman Catholic Church.
- 44 Ibid. pp. 43-44.
- 45 Ibid. p. 44.

46 Ibid. pages 45 and 49.

47 Ibid. p. 55.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid. p. 54.

50 His use of the dialectic pervaded his thinking in New Christianity. He wrote: 'It is unthinkable that either of these great forms of Christianity (Roman Catholicism and Protestantism) will pass away. They will change. They are already changing, and each, as it changes, moves towards the other. Thought and life move through conflict to unity. Thesis-antithesis-synthesis that is the great law. The great and, perhaps, inevitable stage of antithesis that has divided Christainity for four centuries is drawing to a close.'

51 Ibid. p. 58.

52 Ibid. p. 76.

53 Ibid. p. 73.

54 Ibid. p. x

Denominationalism would of course play no part in this final form. In fact, in the preceding forms, American and Labor Christianity 'clericalism will die out...preachers, teachers, missionaries there will be, but the gulf that has divided these from laity will be closed' (p. 73).

55 This preoccupation with cultural explanations can also be seen in some of his other works with his portrayal of the differences between French and English speaking Canadians, the former described in rather kindly, yet definitely paternalistic terms, the latter possessing superior leadership qualities.

56 Ibid. p. 73.

Bland must have viewed the trend towards the establishment non-denominational sects and Labor Churches in Western Canada as a portent.

- 57 Ibid. p. 6.

One could call this belief a form of Canadian nationalism mixed with an divine calling. This theme is also evident in some of his other works during this period. See the following page of this chapter for the quote from his lecture "The Present Political and Religious Situation in Canada" as an example.

- 58 "The Present Political and Religious Situation in Canada", August 3, 1918 no. 480, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.

- 59 As quoted by the Globe and Mail June 21, 1920. No. 517, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.

- 60 Salem Bland New Christianity, p. 55.

- 61 "A Frank Discussion of the Political Situation", September 8, 1917, no. 107.

- 62 Grain Growers Guide, August 13, 1919.

- 63 To Bland both brotherhood and democracy were "the offspring of Christianity (New Christianity p. 20). Bland defined democracy in religious terms. "Democracy is nothing but the social expression of the fundamental Christian doctrine of the worth of the human soul." (p. 18). Democracy first appeared in the realm of religion, followed by political democracy with 'one man, one vote'. And Bland hoped that the next stage, economic democracy would be 'worked out to the same conclusion - one man, one share of all the conditions of human dignity and well-being' (p. 24).

- 64 Salem Bland New Christianity pp. 26-27.

Bland, however, like Woodsworth, Irvine and Smith gave competition its due in the role it has played in the development, not only of the social but the physical dimensions of the universe.

- 65 In a lecture at the end of the century, entitled "Four Steps and a Vision", Bland outlines four steps in the life of the world. The first step is

one barely above the lowest level of vegetable life, that of the fungi and alga which although is "so lowly a form, has discovered the priceless secret of cooperation" by the use of the waste products of fungi by alga, as an example. The second step is towards a higher level of cooperation in vegetable life, that of plants and their relations to insects for reproductive purposes. The third step is the animal kingdom where it is evident that the social animals predominate. The fourth step is that of 'cooperation among men [which is] not of human origin and has its roots far deeper - [it] antedates men, but [is] most perfectly exemplified and developed among men.' (Salem Bland Papers no. 18).

66 "Four Steps and a Vision", October 19, 1898, no. 18, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.

67 This would also fulfill Bland's other requirements for society, that is, the acquisition of the greatest happiness for the greatest number and the implementation of the will of God through the unfolding of natural law (which is both one and the same).

68 Salem Bland The New Christianity page. 28.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid. p. 16.

72 Ibid. p. 17.

73 Ibid.

74 Some of his articles, near the end of Bland's life indicated an even further softening of his perception of the problem. "What was considered the highest religious life in England a century ago was not the highest. It was lopsided. A Christianity so indifferent to the needs and the glories of the body, so careless of health and grace and beauty, had let the hideous factory towns

deface the beautiful countryside." (Toronto Star, March 13, 1943).

- 75 "Address to the Unemployed". January 3, 1932, no. 192, Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 76 Salem Bland, The New Christianity, p. 18.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 "Defends Ministers Right to Criticize" May 4th 1919 newspaper article in no. 486 Salem Bland Papers, U.C.A.
- 80 "Labor's Great Day" August 13, 1918, no. 115 and "Farmers, Labor, Soldiers and Women Unite in a Democratic Entente" newspaper article September 1921, no. 140, Salem Bland Papers.
- 81 Grain Growers Guide, November 20, 1918.

This was by no means his only justification for his choice of the agrarian class as the leading group. In an article in the November 18th 1931 issue of the Toronto Star entitled "A Mustard Seed that May Become Free" Bland argued:

"Therefore, the least objectionable class movement is a class movement of farmers. As the most numerous class they have the strongest claim for consideration and as the most numerous and most basic class any advantage which increases their purchasing power is diffused most quickly through the whole community. The class, therefore, whose interests should be considered first should be the farmers. Second to them and very near to them should be the workers, because of their numbers and purchasing power."

The above is not exactly a socialist or religious means test of exploitation, the criteria is closer to a social credit perspective. Furthermore, the premise that the farmers were the most numerous was no longer correct by 1931.

- 82 Salem Bland wrote the forward to the book, which included a positive assessment as follows:

"...his [Irvine's] analysis of present economic and political conditions in Canada is keen and not easy to refute. The main contribution of the book however, and, in my judgment, a very considerable one, is the defence of the position the United Farmers of Alberta seem to be taking in regard to political action - that the farmers should not try by association with other progressive and democratic thinkers to form a national party, but should seek entrance into all the legislatures distinctively as a farmers' party, not, however, to secure class groups to work out policies that would be truly national."

- 83 In his November 18, 1931 column in the Toronto Star Bland wrote:

"In general hitherto, farmers and Labor have looked upon each other as natural enemies. Labor men have distrusted farmers as capitalists and the enemies of Labor in its long and difficult and often baffled struggle to secure human conditions. The farmers have been resentful of the added difficulty of obtaining necessary help because of what they thought were the unduly high wages obtained for the towns by Labor organizations and a protective tariff. One of the few not unhappy features of the present distressful conditions is that farmers and workers find themselves for once in the same boat. They are both dissatisfied with things as they are."

He continued by chiding both the agrarian and industrial classes that 'have been considered last by governments' as only having themselves to blame for the situation, since each class had allowed itself to become needlessly divided by trivial issues. Each class, united within itself, 'could probably secure justice. But together they would be irresistible'.

- 84 Gregory Baum's perception of this emphasis is interesting.

"According to Bland, then, it was not class conflict defined in economic terms that moved

history forward: it was rather the conflict between classes in a wider sense, between those who protected the inherited institutions as embodiments of justice and those who, enlightened by the same inexhaustible ideal of justice, recognized themselves as excluded from justice (brotherhood and democracy) and struggled to revolutionize the social order." (Catholics and Canadians Socialism p. 69).

85 Toronto Star, November 18, 1931.

An indication of his view that farmers and workers and other groups would participate jointly in a new social order is his use of the term 'labor' in his book The New Christianity as an all inclusive term, encompassing all productive classes.

86 His aversion to violence and his belief that the goal can be obtained by other means is not the whole story. Some of his thoughts on the Winnipeg General Strike illustrate the belief that the workers are not yet ready. In an address before the Toronto's People's Forum Bland remarked that, in general, strikes were unpleasant and deplorable but it is the comfortable classes who are responsible for them not the men who make them. He continued by commenting that strikes were sometimes needed to dispel apathy and act as a warning of a potentially explosive situation, however, any 'immediate seizure of power' would result in disaster setting back the progress of labour considerably. ('Outlook for Labor', May 25, 1919, no. 120).

It is worth noting that Bland's strong expression of millennialism as contained in The New Christianity was not in evidence in his utterances on the strike just a year earlier. His aversion to general strikes revolved around his fear of violence, social disruption and potential anarchy; a perception which contradicted his belief that good generally emanates from chaos and unrest (a theory which pervaded his views on the two world wars).

- 87 Letter dated March 27, 1940 Woodsworth Correspondence Vol. 2, Public Archives of Canada.
- 88 'Movement for Christian Social Order', October 16, 1933, no. 205.
- 89 'Address to the Unemployed' January 3, 1932, no. 192.

In a more definitive statement a year later, he held Russia as an example of 'a land administered in the interest of the common people - first time in human history...' ('The Present Crisis', April 1933, no. 201).

- 90 'The Place of Religion in the New Social Order', October 3, 1933, no. 204. Bland also criticized Russia for its lack of belief in God. (March 14, 1943).

- 91 Toronto Star, March 13, 1943.

- 92 As Baum expressed it: "He [Bland] argued that in Western history two great inter-related ideals are at work--"brotherly love," derived from the biblical experience, and "democratic intent," drawn from the classical and European, especially British tradition--ideals that men have embedded in institutions and that then, by a phenomenon he called "overspill," stand in judgment over these very institutions as inadequate and make people work for their reconstruction. Christian brotherhood created the church: but as soon as it was organized the same ideal of brotherhood stood in judgment over it and made people eager for structural changes. Similarly, the impulse toward democracy expressed itself in political institutions, but soon after their establishment the same impulse toward democracy made the excluded people recognize the elitist and oligarchical character of these institutions and reach for social revolution. The ideal always reaches beyond the institutions it brings forth; it achieves historical power through the section of the population inspired by this ideal that suffers from the contradictions of society and finds itself at the bottom." (p. 68).

- 93 Toronto Star Weekly, June 21, 1930.

CHAPTER VI

J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem Bland were all products of a country experiencing vast industrial transformations and upheavals of an unprecedented nature. At various points in their lives, they were stationed in Western Canada and specifically in pre-war Winnipeg, a city in which the processes of industrialization and urbanization were unusually intensified and which, as the gateway city to the prairies, was also prone to the vagaries of the wheat economy. It was a city where the poverty and social injustices suffered by both urban workers and prairie farmers were in stark evidence, as was the organizational response of these groups based on the increasing consciousness of exploitation.

Due to the very nature of their vocation as social gospel clergymen and the ambiguous class position and subsequent interaction with farm and labour which that entailed, these four men were heavily influenced by Winnipeg's volatile environment as well as that of the surrounding prairies. As students or teachers, all had attended Wesley College, which was the major repository for

the social gospel in Western Canada. Wesley's brand of social gospel was imbued with pragmatism in its focus on the secular environment; an environment in which social unrest prevailed. Characteristic of this philosophy was an orientation towards the secular, which tended to further draw out the natural limitations of the social gospel, limitations both theological and sociological in nature.

In addition to the desire to circumvent ecclesiasticism, the preoccupation of the social gossellers with the secular, illustrated the doctrine's internal weakness with regard to the attainment of its social goals within the confines of the organized Church. The greater their interaction with the secular environment, the closer Woodsworth, Smith, Irvine, and Bland came to the realization that the social gospel's call for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth necessitated detailed programs of social reform and committed individuals dedicated to their implementation.

Although both the Methodist and Presbyterian churches were at their most radical during and immediately after World War One, at least in terms of their public pronouncements, limits were placed on the radicalism allowed of its members. Despite the Church's sincere

thrust for reform, the four social gossellers under study, encountered substantial opposition from both the Church hierarchy and its membership. Consequently, Woodsworth, Smith, and Irvine left the ministry while Bland was relieved of his teaching position at Wesley. All perceived that the Church had rejected them because of their increasingly radical views and secular activities. All, excluding Bland, in turn rejected the Church for its inadequacies as a tool for social reform. All, including Bland, turned to the political party as the vehicle for radical change. For these men the process of secularization of thought and action was slow and gradual, and motivated both by the internal dynamics of the social gospel itself and especially by the particularly volatile surroundings of pre-war Winnipeg.

However, it was the war and the expectations of a post-war social reconstruction as well as the Winnipeg Strike of 1919 that acted as the final catalysts for the departure of J.S. Woodsworth, A.E. Smith, and William Irvine from the ministry and their subsequent entry into the political arena. A.E. Smith was elected to the Manitoba Legislature in 1920 and J.S. Woodsworth and William Irvine captured seats in the federal Parliament in

1921. These individuals remained dedicated to politics both inside and outside the legislature for the remainder of their lives. Even Salem Bland, who did not resign the ministry, became deeply involved in the politics of the CCF in the 1930's.

Politics became their new vocation, a conversion, which upon reflection, was quite natural given their particular background. What had started as a strong concern for the injustices of Canadian society, motivated by the religious aim of establishing a Kingdom of God on Earth, gradually became transformed into the goal of founding a new social order based on the premise of social, political, and economic equality.

Naturally their political thought was affected by their experiences. While their new choice for reform - the political party - began to influence the focus and direction of their thought, elements of both their religious and class backgrounds continued to act as important determinants. What remained of their social gospel convictions in particular, and their religious background in general, was a deep respect for the dignity of the individual - man and woman²-made in the likeness of God. This drove them to fight for social change and provided the

zeal and dedication with which they pursued it. What remained of their former vocation was a general habit of reflecting on the world, coupled with the ability to communicate their beliefs to the populace whether from a pulpit or a platform. Political life to them became a secularized version of the ministry, which gave them the opportunity to proselytize their particular version of society.

These individuals, however, have been analyzed here not as politicians but as political thinkers with a comprehensive world view encompassing not only a critique of society and suggestions for change, but the assumptions of human nature and societal relations which underlay it. C.B. Macpherson, among others, has brought into relief the importance of analyzing these assumptions (which are for the large part, rooted in an individual's social, political, and economic environment) in order to better understand what constitutes the basis of a person's assessment of society and conceptualization of a new social order.

Woodsworth's, Smith's, Irvine's, and Bland's postulates of human nature were affected by their religious background. Although difficult at times to draw out, these

postulates were easier to determine than those of many other radicals of the period. This was partly attributable to their adherence to social gospel theory but, more importantly, to their original vocations as members of the clergy. They not only possessed deep religious convictions, but had to confront these convictions often in an attempt to explain the human condition to their congregations, who looked to them for guidance, solace, and comfort. They constantly challenged religious doctrine on the state of humanity, measuring the extent to which it corresponded to the realities surrounding them. Their preoccupation with the concept of utilitarianism can be explained, for the most part, by their strong desire to imbue the religious concepts of human nature and societal relations with relevance to the individual. For these men, religion was relevant only in so far as it enhanced the life of the individual on earth.

Their social gospel convictions, however, defined this, not in terms of placating people with expectations of a better life hereafter, but rather in terms of ameliorating their earthly existence. The implication of the latter is that the goal of society is the greatest happiness for the greatest number, which becomes attainable

if assumptions as to the nature of the individual correspond with reality. The definition of what the greatest happiness for the greatest number constitutes rests on an individual's perception of human nature and, generally, Woodsworth, Irvine, Bland, and Smith, to a lesser extent, were in agreement that humanity craved not only fulfillment at the material level, as consumers of commodities, but also at the spiritual and emotional levels. As a consequence, they questioned the ability of the capitalist system to fulfill the needs of the community.

Woodsworth, Smith, and Bland rejected some of the possessive individualist assumptions while remaining ambiguous on others. As a result, although their critique of the capitalist structure was as emphatic as it was unwavering, their solutions for change did not always contain a rejection of the market relationship that is central to capitalism.

It was clear that these political thinkers possessed a very positive perception of human nature. The individual was either considered as innately good or a tabula rasa. Either way it was the social environment which imprinted the human spirit with any evil tendencies

which it did possess. Among the unhealthy traits developed was the tendency towards competition which, although serving its purpose in the development of society, was ultimately destructive to the future of humanity and, therefore, had to be eradicated. Woodsworth, Irvine, Smith, and Bland all blamed capitalism for perpetuating competitive behavior among individuals. As a consequence, they called for its replacement with a new social order based on the ideal of cooperation, an ideal which they had elevated to the status of a natural law.³

As with their perception of human nature, their view of societal relations also bears evidence of their religious heritage, as well as their ambiguous class position. A pivotal aspect of their view of societal relations is the concept of class. Woodsworth, Smith, Irvine, and Bland believed that capitalism had produced, not a grouping of atomistic individuals competing with each other in the market, but rather one of classes that were unequal as a consequence of the prevailing capitalist relations of production. Yet inconsistencies arose in their analyses as to what constituted a class or, rather, to what extent was the determination of class based on the relationship of the individual to the means of production.

J.S. Woodsworth, in his early years, came closest to defining classes in these terms and consequently called for the common ownership of all the means of production. Similarly, he was the only one who perceived the problem of alienation both in terms of the relationship of the workers to the fruits of their labour and in terms of the dire consequences of the division of labour and specialization on the workers. To him, the essence of the individual was not defined simply as a consumer of commodities but as a producer. Over the years, however, less was said by Woodsworth either on the subject of alienation or the division of classes into propertied versus non-propertied. Capitalism was still condemned and solutions proffered, but more in the realm of realigning the means of distribution as opposed to structural changes in the means of production. Socialization of the means of production was advocated only in cases "essential to social planning"⁴.

Woodsworth had emphasized that while he had accepted the general goal of communism he could not accept the means of achieving it as demonstrated in Russia (especially during Stalin's reign). He was precluded from doing so, because of his strong adherence to the concept of civil liberties and the principle of non-violence.⁵ This

explains, in part, his increasing emphasis, through the years, on re-distributive solutions, which was prompted by the realization that modifications in the mechanisms of distribution were less likely to produce societal violence than were changes to the prevailing relations of production.

In contrast, A.E. Smith's political thought was a model of consistency. In joining the Communist Party of Canada, Smith made a conscious choice to suppress individuality of thought. As a member of the party, Smith adhered to the view that ownership of the means of production was the main determinant of class, and the implementation of common ownership was the only method of abolishing the class system with all its inequities. Indications are, however, that Smith's view on this subject was more a product of his adoption of the complete ideological package of the Communist Party than a painstaking thought process based on his assumptions about human nature and society. In fact, Smith's adherence to the party line, in the interwar period, especially its crude economism, caused him to miss some of the subtleties of Marx's philosophy. For example, Smith, in contrast to Marx, defined the individual primarily as a consumer and

emphasized the satisfaction of material wants to the practical exclusion of the concept of the individual as a producer and creator. Yet his solution encompassed changes in the structure of capitalism rather than mere modifications in the mechanisms of distribution.

Irvine's thought was much more complicated and, at times, rather convoluted. His exposure to and inculcation with the commodity producer outlook of the prairie farmer led him, in his early years, to espouse the theory of cooperative government with its correlative view of classes as functional groups divided by occupation, rather than by relations to the means of production. He also advocated social credit reforms with their emphasis on redistribution through the control of the country's financial machinery. It was only in the 1930's, when he joined the C.C.F., that his social credit views waned, and he began to place greater focus on the inadequacies of the economic structure of capitalism. Irvine's political thought, eclectic and changing through the years, came to rest in the 1930's squarely within the left-wing of the social democratic camp.

Salem Bland's views on the constitution of classes within society were also unclear. In his early years, he

called for public ownership, but not based on the presumption that it would be the only method able to end the antagonistic division of classes along the lines of ownership of the means of production. Rather his justification was that it fulfilled the Word of God, i.e. the natural law of cooperation, based on the Christian principles of brotherhood and democracy. According to Bland, classes would eventually cooperate simply because it was in their moral interest to do so.

Broadly speaking, therefore, inconsistencies existed in the views of J.S. Woodsworth, William Irvine, and Salem Bland as to whether the main determinant of classes was ownership of the means of production. These ambiguities were transferred to their suggestions for change. Yet it is also clearly evident that they did not consider the existing property relations to be sacrosanct and, therefore, to be maintained at all costs as the central relationship in any new social order. All had recognized that the relations of exchange had helped produce a subservient and a dominant class. Their assumptions of human nature and societal relations neither upheld the market relation as an immutable fact of life, nor did they presume that its abolition was the only method of ending economic injustice.

Much of the ambiguities found in their perceptions of class can be, in part, explained by their religious and class backgrounds. The extent to which Woodsworth, Irvine, and Bland believed in the cooperative nature of the individual and the natural law of cooperation muted the emphasis they placed on class structure and existing property relations. To them, class differences could be overcome without violent revolution if the basic 'cooperative' nature of humanity was nurtured and the process of social evolution left unhindered. Their religious background and especially their early vocation as Protestant clergy can account, in part, for their preoccupation with the various facets of human nature. In reacting against the traditional concept of human nature as evil, they emphasized the idea that goodness is innate in humanity and that given the right environment all obstacles are surmountable. This presumption, fortified by their belief in the Fabian concept of social evolution, influenced their perception of class differences as non-antagonistic.

In addition, inconsistencies in Woodsworth's, Irvine's and Bland's concept of classes abounded partly because of their ambiguous class position. Their exposure

to a large, politically conscious agrarian sector negated a clear cut vision of classes based on ownership of the means of production. They realized, in Irvine's words, that "the farmer, in reality combines in his own profession the two antagonists. He is both capitalist and labourer"⁶. The farmer is owner of his own means of production yet he is caught up and detrimentally affected by the prevailing capitalist mode of production.

Farmers perceived their exploiters not as the owners of the means of production but as a broader, more nebulous ruling elite, which included and mostly focussed on financiers and traditional party politicians. This rather fuzzy dichotomy did not lend itself to a neat delineation of classes into owners versus non-owners of the means of production. J.S. Woodsworth, Irvine, and Bland as political pragmatists realized the need to incorporate the agrarian perspective into an ideology of radical protest in Canada in order to ensure success. But more important is the fact that the commodity producer outlook actually became part of their belief system. It is not, therefore, surprising that their definition of classes and the suggestions for reform and social reconstruction which flowed from it did not fit into a neat ideological package.

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Social gospel radicalism and its major theoreticians have left a lasting imprint on the Canadian social democratic tradition. The political thought of J. S. Woodsworth, Albert E. Smith, William Irvine, and Salem G. Bland, steeped in the early twentieth century Western Canadian experience, provided a firm foundation for the development and acceptance of alternatives to the existing structures and institutions of the era. They expanded social gospel theory beyond its limitations towards a temporal philosophy rooted deeply in economic, political, and social reality. Yet the roots of their social gospel experiences lived on to nourish their later thought and action. In addition to the religious legacy, their vocation as members of the clergy during this era placed them in a rather ambiguous class position which allowed them to identify with both the urban working class and independent, commodity producer class. The perspective which they gained from this experience bore fruit in their new careers.

While Smith embraced the ideology of communism, Woodsworth, Irvine, and Bland lent their considerable talents to establishing a social democratic alternative. These men possessed the necessary insight to both recognize

and mobilize the support of the various components of the radical protest movement in Canada. They helped bridge the theoretical and organizational elements of the farm and labour movements, the interplay of which forms the very basis of Canadian social democratic tradition. Therefore, the pivotal role which these four individuals have played in the politics of radical protest makes an analysis of their thought a necessary element in the understanding of the history of socialism in Canada.

CHAPTER VI FOOTNOTES

- 1 The cut was not complete, however. All became involved for a short period in Labour Churches. Originally of British origin, the first was founded in Canada in 1918 by William Ivens.
- 2 Woodsworth, Irvine, Smith and Bland were all supporters of the suffragette movement, believing, in the Nellie McClung tradition, in the moral superiority of women.
- 3 The theory of social evolution based on certain immutable laws of nature was held by all four men. Also in common was their tendency to utilize the concept of the dialectic in their explanation of history.
- 4 Regina Manifesto.
- 5 As did Irvine and Bland, and, in fact, the C.C.F. as a whole.
- 6 W. Irvine, Farmers in Politics, p. 101.

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