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SOCIAL CREDIT AS A NATIONAL PARTY IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

A study of the Canadian Social Credit party in its national aspects lends itself to historical analysis. The repeated failure of the party to expand outside of the two westerly provinces can be understood only when one notes the electoral blundering and political misalliances which blighted the period between 1936 and 1940, the time when chances for expansion were most obvious.

Doctrinal differences within the movement from 1939 forwards created additional havoc. The extreme views held by some supporters led to confusion both within and without the party as to the policies, principles and organization of the party. Conflict over Social Credit doctrine led to a rupture between the western wing and an influential Quebec wing. The evolution of more orthodox policies won few new supporters before the party was threatened and then virtually exterminated by the Conservative revival of 1957.

Over the years the party expressed little more than the local demands and prejudices of western Social Crediters. Its real leadership was exercised by the provincial parties in Alberta and British Columbia. The federal organization offered little to the able or the ambitious. Its federal officials, desperate to attain some independent stature, finally squandered their meagre resources in 1956-57 during the course of a desperate campaign to win widespread electoral support.

The durability of the party as a splinter, however, was the result of a delicate political balance in Alberta and British Columbia. Once that balance was disrupted Social Credit was certain to suffer. In 1958 the whole system of political parties in western Canada was altered by the overwhelming Conservative victory which ended the dream of a national Social Credit party.

P R E F A C E

In many ways the Social Credit movement has been one of the most thoroughly discussed of Canada's political phenomena, with such writers as Professors W.L. Morton, J.A. Irving, C.B. Macpherson and J.R. Mallory¹ providing detailed accounts of the background and development of Social Credit in Alberta. The federal aspects of the movement, however, have invariably been ignored or treated as being of secondary importance. Such an approach overlooks the fact that Social Credit candidates have contested every federal election since 1935, and that at various times Social Credit MPs have been elected from four provinces. It also ignores the fact that by 1957 the movement had so developed and expanded that it was able to attract 436,663 votes, of which more than half were from provinces other than Alberta and British Columbia.

The presence of such support for Social Credit candidates in a federal election raises three major questions. The first is, why did Social Credit not achieve greater success? The second is, how was it able to survive in federal politics for so long? The third is, why, after so many years, was it abruptly wiped out in 1958?

¹W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto 1950); J.A. Irving, Social Credit in Alberta (Toronto, 1959); C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta; Social Credit and the Party System (Toronto 1953); J.R. Mallory, Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada (Toronto 1954).

Three primary aspects of the movement require attention: ideology, organization and leadership. The first deals with the principles and attitudes which governed the party in its approach to political organization and the practical questions discussed in Parliament. The second concerns the structure of the party and the attempts to broaden the basis of support for the movement. This also includes the relations between the national association and the Social Credit MPs on the one hand and the provincial Social Credit Leagues on the other. The third is the elusive question as to how well the efforts of the national organizers were directed and inspired by the leaders of the Social Credit movement, and the impact of leadership on persons and organizations both inside and outside the Social Credit movement.

The term "federal politics" as applied to this study does not mean the relations between the provincial Social Credit governments and the federal government. This topic has been discussed by Professor Mallory. What it is intended to mean is the attempt by Social Credit supporters to develop a party which was national in scope, with support drawn from all regions, capable of becoming the official Opposition in Ottawa, and after that, the government. The fact that the attempt failed does not lessen the importance of the subject, for by its presence the Social Credit movement affected the fortunes of the other political parties which existed, including the CCF.

One subject which is not discussed is the feasibility of implementing the monetary reforms which constituted so large a part of the program of the party. This topic is a question for

economists. For a study of the movement's political development it is necessary to consider only what people believed when these proposals were discussed. Thus, the Social Credit theories of credit and finance might be financial lunacy, but this would not be important if the people of Alberta believed them to be sound. On the other hand, these theories might be the final solution to economic problems, but this would mean nothing if the populace of other regions were to associate Social Credit with "funny money".

The Social Credit movement invites comparison with the CCF. Both were vehicles of protest against the established order of the Depression, and both grew largely from the Progressive revolt of a decade before. As protest movements they shared much in common, but this similarity resulted in fierce competition. It is necessary at times in this study to note how the CCF succeeded to a greater degree than Social Credit in establishing itself as a national rather than a regional party. The factors which restricted Social Credit at periods when its opportunities were greatest are of particular importance, for at a time when the CCF was expanding in Ontario and thus expanding its image beyond that of a party of agrarian revolt, Social Credit, through its own weaknesses, was failing to secure the eastern, Quebec-based wing which might have assured it greater prominence.

The approach selected to describe the ideology, organization and leadership is primarily descriptive rather than analytic. Thus, the work is primarily a historical account of the attempts by Social Credit supporters to develop a national organization and to obtain national support. The decentralized nature of the movement

nevertheless makes it necessary to consider certain developments within the provincial organizations, as well as particular political events in the provinces. The most important of these internal developments involved the Alberta Social Credit League, but as that organization has already been studied in detail, the analysis of its actions by the writer has been minimal. The fate of Social Credit as a national party was decided in provinces other than Alberta. With this in mind, and realizing that the Social Credit movement elsewhere has been scarcely considered by political analysts, the writer has stressed the development of Social Credit in the other provinces. If certain provincial movements are ignored, it is because they have never attained any importance in the national organization of the party. The New Brunswick Social Credit League is significant only insofar as attempts to aid it led the national organization to bankruptcy. The Ontario League was so ineffectual that attempts to gather material on it have proved futile.

The difficulty inherent in such an approach is that it becomes necessary to study provincial organizations only insofar as they affected or were influenced by the national goals and national leaders of the movement. No reader will find here the full history and complete analysis of any provincial Social Credit League. Such a task must be left to other writers at this time.

The events involving Social Credit outside of Alberta have not hitherto been related. It has been necessary, therefore, to provide more purely narrative material than would otherwise be necessary. Few people have ever heard of Louis Even or W.D. Herridge yet it is probably safe to say that these two men did more than any-

thing else to destroy the national basis of Social Credit, or rather to prevent such a basis from being created. The intervention of the Alberta Social Credit League in the affairs of its Saskatchewan counterpart must be described if one is to understand why the party in that province was so weak after 1938. The movement has frequently been accused of harbouring dictatorial and anti-semitic elements, but the charges and the rebuttals to them have seldom been explicit, and in many instances both have been only partially accurate. It has thus proven essential before analyzing the development of the party to describe for the first time much of the essential historical background of the movement.

The years 1935 and 1958 have been selected as the terminal dates of this study. Prior to 1935 there was no attempt to implement Social Credit in any province, and no movement existed which systematically expounded it on the national stage. Social Credit was then a movement gaining momentum under Mr. William Aberhart in Alberta, and this period has been studied exhaustively. At the other extreme, the extinction of the federal Social Credit movement in the Conservative landslide victory of 1958 provides a logical point to conclude this study. While Social Credit MPs have since been elected to Parliament from British Columbia and Alberta, the broad base of the electoral support for the movement throughout the west has not yet been recovered, and in view of the rural bias of the Conservative party at present, this support may never be recovered. Moreover, the relations between the prairie Social Credit movement and the Quebec-based Ralliement des Crditistes in the period 1960-65 were so complex that they require a separate study in themselves.

While some aspects of the federal movement have been inadequately documented, the author has nevertheless gathered much primary source material on the party that has not hitherto been published. Much information was gathered from persons active in Social Credit, particularly Orvis Kennedy, who is now President of the Alberta Social Credit League, Armand Turpin, Lionel Garneau, The Honourable Lyle Wicks, John P. Gillese, L.D. Byrne, Louis Even, Wilbert Tinkler, Salome Halldorsen, A.H. Mitchell, John Blackmore and Victor Quelch. To all of these people, named and unnamed, the writer owes much for their cooperation in documenting and interpreting a movement which has been greatly misunderstood by almost everyone outside of it and many within it.

Newspaper accounts of particular events provided much material, but because of the scope of the subject, both in terms of geography and of time, the writer found it possible to study only a few papers covering limited time periods, generally the four to six weeks prior to a federal or provincial election or the dates when an event such as a political convention was being held. A clipping file in the Alberta Provincial Library proved useful in studying the individual performances of many of the MPs from 1940 to 1949.

Another important source of information was the literature published by Social Crediters themselves, particularly the newspapers Vers Demain, Voice of the Electors, Today and Tomorrow, Social Credit, The Canadian Social Crediter, The Alberta Social Credit Chronicle, and Focus. These not only described events concerning the movement, but published articles which enabled the writer to draw conclusions concerning the nature and evolution of the ideology of Social Credit.

The Reports of the Debates of the House of Commons for the years 1936 to 1958 proved to be equally important in determining the ideology of the movement as well as in assessing the effectiveness of the Social Credit MPs as representatives of their constituencies and as exponents of Social Credit.

Undoubtedly the most valuable source material for the period 1945-57 were the private papers of Solon Low, now held by the Glenbow Foundation in Calgary. These proved to be so extensive that the writer was compelled to concentrate on only a segment of them, chiefly that correspondence which passed between Low and the principal organizers of the National Social Credit Association. This study could not have been done without the cheerful cooperation of the staff of the Glenbow Foundation.

The writer also wishes to express his appreciation to Professor Michael Stein who supervised the study and provided suggestions, information and advice. A special tribute is also owed to Elaine Halliday, who proved to be a tireless worker for her brother-in-law by becoming a one-woman research staff in Winnipeg, despite such obstacles as housework and three small children.

From all of these sources, and the assistance of these countless persons, the writer has drawn the material for a work which hopefully fills a serious gap in the existing literature on the Social Credit movement.

D E D I C A T I O N

To Professor Norma E. Walmsley, BA, MA,
whose success as an educator may be measured
by the fact that in her students she implanted
a sense of curiosity concerning the political
process.

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SOCIAL CREDIT AS A NATIONAL PARTY IN CANADA

CHAPTER I

A NEW FORCE IN OTTAWA

On February 6, 1936 the First Session of Canada's Eighteenth Parliament opened. The first business of the House of Commons was the election of a speaker, the traditional reading of Bill No. 1, the hearing of the Speech from the Throne, and the first step towards establishing the standing committees of the House. The next day the House met to address messages of loyalty and sympathy to King Edward VIII. Presently, the MP for Lethbridge, Mr. John Blackmore, rose to pay tribute to the monarchs dead and living. In part he quoted the late King George V as follows:

"It cannot be beyond the power of man so to use the vast resources of the world as to ensure the material progress of civilization. No diminution in these resources has taken place. On the contrary, discovery, invention and organization have multiplied their possibilities to such an extent that abundance of production has itself created new problems."¹

Mr. Blackmore then added his own interpretation of these words:

"I submit, sir, that in these words our beloved monarch...recognized the great struggle (for economic liberty) which was then commencing and expressed his sympathy with the toiling millions of us who are striving upwards towards economic freedom. And I rejoice that our new sovereign, Edward VIII...has already manifested on several occasions similar vision...Speaking before the international congress on commercial education

¹Official Report of Debates, House of Commons (hereafter referred to as Hansard Debates), 7 February 1936, page 25.

in July 1932, he said, 'Our urgent task is to bring consumption and production into proper relationship - not a simple but a quite possible task.'²

Thus began the activities of the Social Credit Party in federal politics. It was a curious beginning for what was, and has remained, a curious party. In spite of the occasion, the leader of the federal group was not above attempting to call the late king as a witness to the noble aims of social creditors. Other members of the group followed the lead of Mr. Blackmore, and the speech of King George was quoted twice more, on February 13th and 20th, before Mr. Speaker ruled such references out of order.³ Other authorities cited to support social creditors in those first few days included the Dean of Canterbury and Albert Einstein.⁴

It was inevitable that the Social Credit members would appear in Parliament once William Aberhart and his disciples had swept out the United Farmers of Alberta in the provincial election of 1935. The two-party system had been virtually destroyed by the UFA triumph of 1921, and once the Social Crediters had undermined the UFA there were none but themselves to fill the vacuum.

The decision to enter federal politics was taken almost on the morrow of Aberhart's triumph in Alberta. On August 23, 1935, it was announced that the social creditors in East Edmonton were entering a candidate.⁵ Five days later it was announced that Mr. A.B. Hickox would run in Peace River under the banner of

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 13 February 1936, p.163; 20 February 1936, p.360.

⁴Ibid., p.189, 13 February 1936; p.253, 17 February 1936.

⁵Edmonton Bulletin, August 23, 1935.

Social Credit. At the same time Mr. Hickox called for Mr. H.H. Stevens, leader of the Reconstruction Party, to join Mr. Aberhart.⁶

These events were welcomed by the Reconstruction Party organizers.⁷ Stevens declared that the Alberta election had shown disillusionment of the electorate with the established parties, but he was wary of any talk of a merger.⁸ However, the declarations emanating from East Edmonton and Peace River had not been sanctioned by the only recognized leader of the Alberta group, Mr. Aberhart. The issue was settled at a meeting of all 63 Social Credit candidates who had run in Alberta which passed the following resolution:

"That we suggest to the Social Credit League that they do not link up with any political group, but do all they can to encourage any western Federal constituency where the local committee have a good chance of winning a seat, to place a Social Credit candidate in the field and that they lend their support and cooperation to such a candidate so far as it is possible."⁹

It would appear that this decision was made with both ideology and practical politics in mind. The Alberta electorate had been thoroughly indoctrinated with the theories of Social Credit over the previous two years, and the leaders of the movement had spread its doctrines with burning zeal. In view of this degree of conviction, it is doubtful that the Social Crediters would have supported a Liberal or Conservative who gave little visible support to their own views on economic reform. Moreover,

⁶ Ottawa Journal, August 28, 1935. It will be recalled that Stevens had been a member of Bennett's cabinet before breaking with his party late in 1934.

⁷ Edmonton Bulletin, 28 August, 1935.

⁸ Ottawa Journal, August 24, 1935.

⁹ Edmonton Bulletin, 29 August, 1935.

the provincial victory had been viewed as a triumph over party politics; to abandon the agent of that triumph on the federal field would be a negation of principle.

At the same time it was recognized that Stevens' movement consisted of little more than Stevens himself. A.H. Mitchell for example came to that conclusion after a meeting with the Reconstruction leader.¹⁰ Moreover, Stevens was suspect, and there were hints that he had in some way allied himself with high finance when he had helped to form the Bank of Canada as a privately-owned organization.¹¹ In the end, Reconstruction ran no candidates in Alberta.

The task of organizing for the federal campaign was placed in the hands of Fred Anderson, MLA, a close friend and confidant of Premier Aberhart. Previous moves by local groups to nominate candidates were voided, and in some areas an unusual method of nomination was adopted. Constituency organizations nominated three or more candidates, but the final choice was made by a selection committee chaired by Mr. Anderson and including the MLAs whose provincial constituencies were included in the federal ridings, together with the Social Credit directors from the provincial constituencies.¹² This was a variation of the system used earlier to select the candidates for the provincial election.

¹⁰ Interview with A.H. Mitchell, 8 February 1966. Mitchell, Social Credit MP for Medicine Hat from 1935 until his defeat in 1940, pointed out to Stevens that Reconstruction would be a major political force only if Stevens would run in every constituency.

¹¹ Edmonton Bulletin, 2 October 1935

¹² Ibid, 17 September 1935

In the provincial election Aberhart, together with a small advisory board, had personally selected the final candidates.¹³ The system varied in its operation during the federal campaign. According to Orvis Kennedy, a leading member of the movement from 1938 onwards, the choice was made by the local directors, numbering about ten in all, and Anderson and the MLAs participated only when the first group's votes were tied or nearly tied.¹⁴

However, this scheme was not universally applied. In at least three instances candidates were chosen by conventions without reference to any board.¹⁵ These examples, together with the lessened control of the Alberta Social Credit League officials in the cases where a board was employed, would seem to indicate that the leaders in Alberta were not so interested in activity in the federal field for its own sake. They were more concerned with silencing the Ottawa voice of their old foe, the U.F.A., and preventing any Social Crediters opposed to Aberhart from gaining a public platform. Indeed, the federal nominees included several persons who had been rejected previously by Aberhart as provincial candidates, or who had been defeated in the provincial election. The selection of candidates by a board generated at least one noisy and embarrassing argument among the three initial candidates

¹³C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta : Social Credit and the Party System (Toronto, 1953), pp.147-8

¹⁴O.A. Kennedy to the author, 22 December 1965.

¹⁵Victor Quelch to the author, 8 March 1966; interview with John Blackmore, 5 February 1966. E.J. Poole was nominated in Red Deer, see Alberta Social Credit Chronicle, 13 September 1935. The same paper reported A.H. Mitchell as being selected by a board, but in the interview of 8 February 1966 Mitchell stated that he was selected by convention, Anderson attending as the representative of the Social Credit League. It is worthy of note that all four ridings were in the extreme south and west of Alberta.

in Edmonton East as to which one should have been chosen.¹⁶

In the meantime Social Credit groups were organizing outside of Alberta, eventually running six candidates in Manitoba, twenty in Saskatchewan, and two in British Columbia. In the latter province they were handicapped by lack of preparation, where a B.C. Social Credit League was not formed until 18 September 1935.¹⁷ Saskatchewan was the most fertile field outside of Alberta; not only was it similar in its social and economic pattern to Alberta, but it had long been exposed to the religious and political broadcasts of Mr. Aberhart.

The campaign in Saskatchewan was confused by the strength of the CCF. Unlike Alberta, where the UFA members had hesitantly embraced the CCF, the Saskatchewan socialists were not identified with a discredited "establishment". For that reason they represented a greater threat to Social Credit. The two groups took an immediate dislike to each other. Both T.C. Douglas and M.J. Coldwell claimed that the Liberals and Conservatives were running false Social Credit candidates to split the reform vote, a claim which was to be repeated several times in the next few years, and which Mr. Coldwell maintains to this day.¹⁸ There is little evidence to support these charges, and it would appear that they grew out of rumours circulating in the heat of election campaigns, compounded by the confusion in the minds of many people concerning the differences between the two radical parties.

¹⁶Edmonton Bulletin, 19 September and 2 October 1935.

¹⁷Ibid, 19 September 1935.

¹⁸The Leader Post, 10 October and 12 October 1935

Despite personal opposition to Social Credit, Douglas at one point declared that Alberta should be given the opportunity to attempt its implementation, a statement which won him endorsement by the leading Weyburn Social Credit group. At least one other CCF candidate went even further, endorsed Social Credit per se, and was censured by the party.¹⁹ The papers, generally hostile to both groups, surveyed the scene with gleeful scorn, and either in haste or out of malice painted a picture of total, abject and utter confusion. The Leader Post commented:

"CCF supporters and Social Credit people appear to be getting into a worse jumble than ever.

"Many CCF members appear to know so little about what their own organization stands for that they have no hesitation in running off with another crowd who have adopted a system that has no use for socialism.

"On the other hand certain Social Credit supporters are far from sure what their own group's system is all about. There is the record of the Social Credit candidate in Saskatchewan who told the meeting that he did not know much about Social Credit but he would read it up for a few days and then get going.

"It may not be unfair to draw the conclusion that a great number of persons in these two newer groups have very little idea about the theories to which they have given their enthusiasm.

"All that is needed is for another group to come along offering to bake gold bricks into kitchen stoves and they will hail it as a great idea and wonder why someone had not thought of it before."²⁰

The opposition in Alberta was in disarray. The Liberal and Conservative parties had been shattered in 1921, and the U.F.A. was completely discredited in its own province. On 14 October Social

¹⁹Ibid, 1 October, 3 October and 10 October 1935.

²⁰Ibid, 8 October 1935.

Credit drew negligible support in Manitoba and B.C., but in Alberta the party captured fifteen seats and retained deposits in the remaining two. In Saskatchewan, contesting every riding but one, they won two, ran second in six more (though in two cases the candidates lost their deposits) and in two other places, though placing third and fourth, still managed to retain their deposits.²¹ An analysis of Social Credit strength in Saskatchewan is given in detail in Chapter II. For the moment it is necessary merely to point out that Social Credit won most of its votes in that province in a block along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Such a concentration of votes represented both great potential and great danger for the party. The core of support might prove to be a useful base for expansion, but it also indicated that support for Social Credit was regional rather than general.

These gains were made largely at the expense of the U.F.A. whose nine candidates were defeated by Social Crediters. The Conservative party also suffered, losing four seats to the newcomers. The Liberals lost one seat in Alberta and one in Saskatchewan to Social Crediters, and the remaining seat was taken from a Saskatchewan Progressive.

Following this victory the M.P.s-elect held a caucus in Edmonton on November 20, attended by thirteen Alberta members (the two from Saskatchewan were unable to attend). The meeting chose Mr. John Blackmore (Lethbridge) as leader of the federal group, with the Rev. E.G. Hansell (Macleod) as secretary, and Mr. A.H. Mitchell (Medicine Hat) as Whip. The meeting coincided with a

²¹Howard A. Scarrow, Canada Votes (New Orleans, 1962), pp. 99-100. See Appendix "A" for details of federal election results as they affected the Social Credit Party.

caucus of the Social Credit MLAs and from time to time Alberta cabinet ministers, including Mr. Aberhart, dropped in on the meeting.²² The group held another caucus in Edmonton on January 8, 1936 before heading east for the opening of Parliament.

The Social Credit members immediately set about expounding the economic theories of Major Douglas in the House of Commons. The chief object of their fire was the Bank of Canada, but as the Speech from the Throne had included a provision for eventual government control of the Bank, their initial words were generally in support of the government.²³

The Social Credit MPs were initially undistinguished and seldom took part in the debates, as might be expected of new members. When they did speak, it was generally on constituency matters, such as local parks, the sugar beet industry, or grain marketing. In the budget debate they expanded into social credit theory, advocating the three items which Aberhart in Alberta had emphasized, viz. a national credit account, the just price and a national dividend.²⁴ The chief spokesman for the group was Hansell. On May 11 he moved an amendment in the budget speech which stated that increases in wealth should be accompanied by increases in purchasing power, that the distribution of wealth be less dependent on employment, and that the regulation of the issue and recall of money be in accordance with economic need. Only the Social Crediters voted for it,²⁵ but thereafter the group began to draw a surprising amount of support from the CCF.

²²Edmonton Bulletin, 21 November 1935.

²³Hansard Debates, 11 February 1936, p.115 and 13 February 1936, p.163.

²⁴Hansard Debates, 7 May 1936, p.2618 and 11 May 1936, p.2687.

²⁵Ibid, 11 May 1936, p.2688 and 12 May 1936, p.2764.

When the government introduced a bill to provide for government control of the stock and board of directors of the Bank of Canada, both the CCF and Social Credit groups attacked the measure as not going far enough (both voted in favour of a CCF amendment calling for nationalization of all the banks), but finally voted for the bill, saying that it was at least an improvement on the old privately-owned central bank. Although the subject was one dear to them, the Social Credit members had little to say in these debates beyond a speech by Hayhurst.²⁶

The group was not as cohesive as other parties. In one vote, calling for a measure which would have eliminated French on bank notes, the group split 7-6 in favour of the motion.²⁷ An even more dramatic demonstration of the stresses within the party came early in 1937 in a series of debates on foreign policy and defence spendings. Most of the members of the group took the line generally held by the CCF, that Canada should hold aloof from any World War, regardless of the participants, or at best should hold a plebiscite on whether or not to enter any war. Some members stated that war was but an extension of the activities of financiers, while others objected less to defence spending than to the normal method of financing Canadian defences. The note of realism was sounded by Blackmore, who pointed out the realities of international politics and called for support of the

²⁶Ibid, 1 June 1936, pp. 3287 and 17 June 1936, pp. 3802.

²⁷Ibid, 16 June 1936, pp. 3793-4

Liberal government's policy of expanded defences as being a matter of self defence. In a vote on a CCF motion, ten of the Social Credit members supported the CCF but Blackmore, Hansell, Mitchell and Poole sided with the government.²⁸

The Progressives and UFA before them had been spokesmen for the Prairies in the battle against exploitation through the National Policy which operated to the general benefit of eastern manufacturers. The Social Credit members carried on this tradition, declaring that the eastern provinces had reaped considerable profits from the West while at the same time the farmers had been forced to buy machinery in a market protected by tariffs.²⁹ Here too they drew support from the CCF, whose members were equally the heirs of the Progressive revolt.³⁰

Their views on the tariff led the Social Credit members into several debates on trade policies and international commerce. In this matter they tended to downgrade the value of international trade in maintaining domestic prosperity, despite Canada's position as a primary producer. The international market was regarded as a place where goods should be sold only after domestic demand was exhausted, rather than as a market to sustain home industries whose produce could not be sold in Canada under prevailing conditions. Joseph Needham, MP for the Battlefords, declared that the unemployed in Canada represented the nation's best potential market.³² International economic rivalry, it was maintained, led

²⁸Hansard Debates, 15 to 19 February 1937.

²⁹Ibid, 9 March 1937, pp. 1639-41; 10 February 1938, pp. 335; 5 May 1938, pp. 2595; 22 February 1939, pp. 1334-47; 24 March 1939, pp. 2234-40.

³⁰See for example Hansard Debates, 22 Feb. 1939 pp. 1347-54.

³¹Ibid, 1 February 1938, pp. 69.

³²Ibid, 22 February 1938, pp. 1218-20.

to war. Economic nationalism was therefore desirable, and, so it was maintained, possible when applied with Social Credit monetary policies.³³ This followed directly from the arguments of the English Social Credit writers.³⁴

During this time the Social Credit views began to develop more in accordance with the writings of Major Douglas in fields other than economic theory. In particular they developed a conspiratorial theory of history. They began to analyse events and problems more in terms of external elites operating in opposition to the will of the people, rather than to consider issues as arising out of human weaknesses and social conditions. At the same time, they turned more to the Douglas theory of democracy, which rejected the concept of Parliamentary responsibility in favour of administrative responsibility for the welfare of the nation. While both themes had existed in his writings prior to 1935, it was only after the elections of that year that they appeared to have been fully absorbed by the Alberta Social Crediters, many of whom were now temporarily freed of campaigning and lecturing and were in a better position to study the latest ideas of Douglas.

Initially in describing the troubles of Western Canada and of the economy, the M.P.s were inclined to ascribe the blame to technological development giving rise to unemployment. However in the 1937 session they narrowed their attacks to the

³³ Ibid, 24 February 1938, pp. 1297-99

³⁴ See for example Maurice Colbourne, The Meaning of Social Credit (Edmonton, 1935), pp. 265-67. This is a revised version of Economic Nationalism, the book that won Aberhart to Social Credit.

financial community. Norman Jaques (Wetaskiwin), for example, claimed that the Banker's Association in Britain had subscribed \$25,000,000 in an effort to suppress the writings of Major C.H. Douglas and had bought the British Press.³⁵ Blackmore declared that the government of virtually every country was controlled by financiers, and that democracy was thus passing away.³⁶ They were apparently spurred on by the refusal of the federal government to assist Alberta in its financial difficulties on other than federal terms and interpreted this as a direct attack upon Social Credit and its proponents.³⁷

It was in the 1938 session, however, that the Social Credit members ran into bitter opposition and they returned the bitterness. Increasingly they were taunted with shouts of "What about the \$25.00 dividend?" and the like. The Social Crediters in turn accused the Liberal government of interfering in the internal affairs of Alberta and of thwarting Aberhart's attempts to introduce Social Credit.³⁸ The debates involving Social Crediters on occasion became extremely acrimonious sessions with charges of "Fascist" being hurled from both sides.³⁹ The CCF also indulged in attacking Social Credit, suggesting that in Saskatchewan's provincial election the Social Credit campaign had been used by the Liberals to split the reform vote and bolster Liberal strength.⁴⁰

³⁵Hansard Debates, 21 January 1937, pp. 163.

³⁶Ibid., 20 January 1937, pp. 129.

³⁷It will be recalled that Aberhart's Social Credit legislation of late 1937 was immediately disallowed by the federal cabinet.

³⁸Hansard Debates, 1 February 1938, pp. 95-96; 15 February 1938, pp. 460; 29 April 1938, pp. 2399.

³⁹Ibid., 2 May 1939, pp. 2339-40 and 2444-45.

⁴⁰Ibid., 14 June 1938, pp. 3826.

It was in this session that the government took steps to obtain 100% ownership of the Bank of Canada, a move supported by the CCF and Social Credit as being a step in the right direction, though both also declared that it was not all that was required.⁴¹ It is interesting to note that this legislation was introduced shortly before the Saskatchewan election. It had not been mentioned in the Throne speech, and although the CCF took credit for forcing the legislation, it was more probably due to the influence of a Liberal, G.G. McGeer, who, on May 20, openly came out for monetary reform and attacked Dunning, the Minister of Finance and a fellow Liberal. Although disavowing any Social Credit theories, his speeches nevertheless were just as scathing.⁴²

The M.P.s also brought to the forum of Parliament the expression of C.H. Douglas' conception of democracy, namely that members should represent the will of the people in general terms but that they were unsuited to pass detailed legislation. This in turn meant that the legislature should appoint experts to achieve a stated end, and remove them if they failed to achieve these ends. Although this view was eventually rejected in Alberta, the M.P.s pressed it occasionally in debates. Poole, for example, declared;

"Parliament is supposed to be composed of a body of men who have received instructions from the people of Canada to bring about certain results. The results demanded by the people at the last election was prosperity. It was not the business of the people to go into details as to how this prosperity

⁴¹Ibid, 23 June 1938, pp. 3182-83.

⁴²Ibid, 20 May 1938, pp. 3113; 20 June 1938, pp.4060-68

should be brought about; it was the duty of the Government to make use of these experts who knew just what to do."⁴³

Norman Jaques, the member for Wetaskiwin, gave an example of how this would be done:

"I would say to those who control the finance of the country: Gentlemen, we have received a mandate from the people of Canada to end poverty and unemployment. We believe it is mainly a question of finance. You claim a monopoly of knowledge of money, and certainly you enjoy a monopoly of creating it. We are going to give you the job of financing the provision for unemployment which, by your very policies, you have mainly brought about. We will give you reasonable time to do this, and meantime we will sharpen your wits. We propose to license financial institutions, all branches and branch managers, accepting at first a nominal license fee. But if at the end of, say a year, you have not arrived at a solution we shall multiply that fee one thousand times, and will use the money to take care of the unemployed."⁴⁴

Mitchell (Medicine Hat) claimed that this had been the goal of the Alberta Government, and that the legislation subsequently disallowed was necessary because the bankers refused to accept responsibility.⁴⁵

In context, however, it should be noted that this theory was still in vogue in Alberta, despite Aberhart's de facto rejection of it. The Alberta League's newspaper defined democracy in much the same terms.

"1) All questions of policy - that is, what results are required - should be decided democratically.

⁴³Ibid, 27 February 1936, p.612.

⁴⁴Ibid, 4 March 1937, p.1478.

⁴⁵Ibid, 9 February 1938, pp. 301-02.

"2) All questions of administration - that is, how it shall be done or what methods shall be employed to gain the democratically decided results - should be determined under centralized organization by administrators who are equipped with the knowledge and who will be held responsible for results.

"3) Control over administrators should be exercised democratically to the extent that if they do not produce the results desired, they can be removed in favour of those who will."46

All of this, of course, was in accordance with the views of C.H. Douglas, which were repeated in Colbourne's books.

"That democracy consists in empowering a set of pseudo-experts, elected by majorities of non-experts at stated intervals, to pass highly technical laws which are ultimately enforceable by all the tremendous powers of the state, and become effective upon those institutions and organizations which perform the positive functions of production and distribution - institutions which do, in fact, provide the primary excuse for the existence of the state itself - is, and must be, an illusory conception...

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

"It is concerned with impressing the will of the people upon the institutions of industry, agriculture, and commerce, and that will can only be concerned with results. Methods are for experts, and popular election is an unsound method to appoint an expert."47

The 1939 session saw the Social Credit members tiring under the attacks of their opponents. Unable to convince the Liberals of the value of Douglas's monetary theories, the Alberta members declared that their proposals for increased quantities of "debt-free money" were being distorted. Victor Quelch, for example, accused Dunning of misrepresentation.

⁴⁶Today and Tomorrow, 1 December 1938. See also G.F. Powell, "A Sovereign People Demand Results", Ibid, 27 January 1938.

⁴⁷C.H. Douglas, The Alberta Experiment (London, 1937), pp. 48-49 and 55-56.

"It is a strange thing that it is only necessary to support in this house the issue of money by the government for the Minister of Finance to become positively delirious on the question. He immediately starts seeing things. He conjures up the spectacle of printing presses running day and night and inundating the country under a deluge of paper money... But when on that subject he always fails to tell the house of the insidious disease of deflation... It is a strange thing that, when orthodox gentlemen attack monetary reform proposals, they invariably resort to the weapon of attempted ridicule or misrepresentation."⁴⁸

The attacks upon the Social Credit proposals continued, often on two levels. On the one hand, the ever-reasoning Dunning attempted to prove the proposals to be impractical, arguing that the government's policy was more flexible, more akin to a scalpel, and that the Social Crediters proposed taking an axe to the economy. This form of action won no converts. Far more damaging, in the political sense, was the ridicule heaped upon them. The phrases of R.J. Deachman were to haunt them in many elections - "the script tease artists of Canadian politics... You cannot settle the problem with currency issued on the unshot buffalos of Canada."⁴⁹

Indeed, the Social Credit members had become increasingly isolated. In 1935-36 it had seemed that they had allies in the ranks of the Liberals. These, however, were gone. W.R. Motherwell had retired; G.G. McGeer and Arthur Slaughter were busily involved in a Parliamentary inquiry on defence contracts. They had also incurred the wrath of other Prairie reformers, and had suffered the first serious rupture in their ranks. The break had been directly related to events in Alberta, and reflected how much a part of the province's body politic the Parliamentary group was.

⁴⁸Hansard Debates, 11 April 1939, pp.2669.

⁴⁹Ibid, 13 April 1939, pp.2770.

In the spring of 1937 a bloc of Social Credit backbenchers in Alberta had revolted and demanded that Premier Aberhart take steps immediately towards the institution of a Social Credit system in the province.⁵⁰ Even before this, however, a federal M.P. had publicly attacked Aberhart and his colleagues in the House of Commons.

Late in 1936 John Hargraves, leader of the English Social Credit movement, or "Greenshirts", arrived in Alberta, ostensibly to assist the government in drawing up plans for the institution of a financial system based on Social Credit.⁵¹ Aberhart was non-committal on the adoption of these plans.⁵² Suddenly, in January 1937, Hargraves left the province, declaring that he had lost all confidence in the Premier.⁵³

While some Social Credit M.P.s were unperturbed, the member for Athabaska, Percy J. Rowe, was indignant. In a letter to Dr. G.C. Ghostly he protested, writing, "What does the latest press despatch mean? H. (Hargraves) not retained by Government? Does it mean that MLAs have again been flouted? If so, M.P.s are ready to go into action."⁵⁴ The letter condemned the whole conduct of Aberhart's government, for he declared that Alberta was not advancing towards Social Credit, and that Aberhart's policies had resulted in economic chaos.⁵⁵

⁵⁰For a more detailed account of these events, see Macpherson, op.cit., pp.169-79.

⁵¹Ottawa Journal, 31 December 1936.

⁵²Ibid, 13 January 1937.

⁵³Edmonton Bulletin, 25 January 1937.

⁵⁴Ottawa Journal, 11 February 1937.

⁵⁵C.H. Douglas, The Alberta Experiment (London 1937) pp.90.

Without mentioning the author, Ghostly released the contents to the press. Rowe, discovering that his statements were being published, admitted his authorship. According to one writer, he was disgusted with the passive role of the federal group vis-à-vis the provincial government. On 13 February 1937 he was expelled from the caucus.⁵⁶ Subsequently his motives were attacked in Today and Tomorrow. He was accused of harbouring resentments against the Alberta Social Credit League arising out of an alleged business transaction which would have involved use of public funds, save for the government which supposedly did not cooperate.⁵⁷

The party was fortunate in losing only one member during these events. It would appear that Rowe was personally unpopular with his fellows and this probably discouraged some from joining him. On the other hand, the caucus came close to losing Norman Jaques, who was most anxious to declare his support for the Alberta rebels. It was with great difficulty that he was persuaded not to go to the press with his views.⁵⁸

The view of the bulk of the federal group was expressed by Mr. Blackmore when he declared,

⁵⁶ Ottawa Citizen, 13 February 1937.

⁵⁷ Today and Tomorrow, 3 June 1937.

⁵⁸ Interview with A.H. Mitchell, 8 February 1966. The attitude taken by Jaques may be related to his association with the New Age Club which had existed prior to 1935 and had disagreed with Aberhart on the interpretation of Social Credit theories. See J.A. Irving The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto, 1950), pp. 83-85. Irving states that the New Age Club threatened to run candidates in the federal field but were outmanoeuvred by Aberhart. The presence of Jaques in Parliament suggests that the moves to silence the New Age Club were not entirely successful.

"Major Douglas has declared that the Social Credit Government must put Social Credit into effect by strategy...He (Mr. Aberhart) is intelligent enough to know that it will never do to divulge his strategy before he applies it.

"Mr. Aberhart's strategy cannot possibly be known to Mr. P.J. Rowe, let him be as wise as he may possibly be...

"The only thing they (the people) can possibly do is to give Mr. Aberhart authority and support sufficient to enable him to discharge that responsibility to the utmost degree of his ability."⁵⁹

The Ottawa Journal dismissed the whole affair as an indication that the MPs were abject followers of Aberhart.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, they were in a difficult position. Unlike the MLAs, they were far from their constituents, and were consequently handicapped in ascertaining the degree of disaffection which existed in their home areas. Aberhart was the recognized leader of Canadian Social Credit and the Alberta Social Credit League, to which they owed so much. There might have been a greater willingness to join the revolt had the members had reason to believe that they might have support from places outside of Alberta. No such support existed. On the contrary, they were surrounded not by friends but by partisan opponents. In such a situation the natural tendency would be to close ranks, regardless of personal feelings, rather than expose themselves and their fellows to ridicule inside and outside the House.

The example of Rowe was instructive in showing the fate of political rebels in Canadian politics. He subsequently joined the CCF and contested Athabaska for that party in the general election

⁵⁹Ottawa Journal, 13 February 1937.

⁶⁰Ibid.

of 1940, running third, behind a Liberal and a Social Crediter.⁶¹ However, he may have been happy with the result, for Social Credit also lost the seat, and to this day it has never been recovered.

However, it would be dangerous to draw too great a generalization from this incident. In 1940 three other seats were lost which were never retaken, although two of these were the Saskatchewan ridings of Kindersley and The Battlefords. As will be seen later, the 1940 setback was due to more complex factors, and the Rowe incident of 1937 probably had little bearing on events three years later.

At this point it might be well to survey the general performance of the MPs and explain the pattern of their behaviour more fully during their first four years in Parliament. Overall, they were probably no better and no worse than any other group of seventeen members in the House of Commons. While they did not, as a rule, speak on such a variety of topics as the CCF members, it must be remembered that they also lacked a spokesman with the experience of J.S. Woodsworth. In addition, they had no contacts with organized labour, as had the CCF, and scant support from the academic world, many of whose members, such as F.R. Scott, were in close contact with the socialist MPs. Nevertheless, they were able to contribute a great deal to discussion of problems close to

⁶¹The Canadian electorate has a tendency to reject men who have abandoned one party for another. Witness, for example the case of Hazen Argue and the MPs from Quebec who abandoned the Ralliement des Creditistes in favour of Robert Thompson, and then abandoned Thompson for the Conservatives.

home, such as agriculture and soldier settlements. Some were unabashed constituency men, and let few opportunities go by to expound on the potentialities of their regions. Despite the limitations of their experiences they nevertheless did touch on a number of subjects not directly related to the Prairies, sometimes with a great deal of common sense.

As Parliamentarians they were not particularly effective, having few men who could win the attention of the House. An exception was Blackmore, a former school teacher who frequently lectured the House and dealt with questions in a fashion which often reduced his opponents to the appearance of being his students. Towards the end of the Eighteenth Parliament, Hansell and Quelch displayed a growing talent for repartee, enabling them to poke fun at their opponents. When a Liberal member was so injudicious as to quote a Biblical passage, "The poor ye have with ye always", Hansell, a fundamentalist minister, retorted with scripture and the caustic remark;

"While that great teacher was the greatest prophet who ever lived, the Liberal party must be under the impression that in looking into the future He thought we would always have a Liberal government administering the affairs of this country."⁶²

On the other hand, some of the Social Credit MPs proved to be less than effective. In some cases they were apt to waste valuable time expounding on pet ideas. W.F. Kuhl, for example, several times attempted to prove that the British North America Act was invalid, contending that the statements in the preamble were a misrepresentation of the facts, a contention which Blackmore refused to support.⁶³ There was a tendency for the members

⁶²Hansard Debates, 18 April 1938, p.2905.

⁶³Ibid, 8 April 1938, pp.2183-84 and 2192.

to relate all problems to the financial system, which led naturally into lectures on economics and social credit. Increasingly it became necessary for Mr. Speaker to draw their attention to the fact that their speeches were unrelated to many of the topics under discussion.

Some Social Crediters spoke frequently, some rarely; some spoke gravely, others foolishly; some were serious members; others neglected their duties. Even had they all had the conviction and eloquence of Blackmore, the erudite abilities of Rowe, or the passion of Jaques, no seventeen men could indoctrinate Canada with the ideas of Social Credit nor sway a government which held such a commanding majority. Much more than that was required, and during this time a number of developments were taking place in an effort to reinforce the voice of Social Credit in Canada.

CHAPTER II

ATTEMPTS AT EXPANSION 1936-40

Social Credit in Alberta had begun as a crusade, and it continued as such. Despite some vague statements made by Mackenzie King in the 1935 campaign promising greater control over credit it could hardly be expected that the Liberals were planning to embrace the policies and techniques of C.H. Douglas, nor that the seventeen Social Credit MPs could force any government in that direction. This was tacitly admitted even before the 1935 election when Fred Anderson had declared that Social Credit MPs would serve as missionaries of the cause in Parliament.¹ As missionaries they would presumably band together with other monetary reformers, some of whom were in the Liberal party, and attempt to persuade other MPs to join their ranks, thus weakening the power of the Liberal cabinet.

The crusading nature of the movement remained alive thereafter, and the MPs were exceptionally active in Eastern Canada addressing groups and preaching the "new economics". They were, however, virtually unaided in this work, receiving no financial assistance from the Alberta Social Credit League. Even a paper which they published, Mr. Speaker, was printed at their own expense and mailed to their constituents using their Parliamentary mailing privileges.²

¹Alberta Social Credit Chronicle, 13 September 1935. At the same time he predicted 50 federal seats for Social Credit, though it is doubtful if this was taken seriously even by Anderson and Aberhart.

²Interview with A.H. Mitchell, 8 February 1966.

Western Canada was the most fertile ground for Social Credit and indeed the party made a good showing in Manitoba in the 1936 provincial election when it secured more than 23,000 votes and elected five MLAs. In this case a fair amount of preparatory work had been done in the formation of Social Credit study groups. Moreover, the timing of the election enabled several MPs to campaign in the province on behalf of the provincial candidates. The Bracken government, losing support in the midst of the depression, emerged with a majority of one seat, and Social Credit came within sight of holding the balance of power.

The Social Credit seats were all gained from Bracken's Liberal-Progressive followers. The returns indicated that Social Credit represented a channel of protest for the Ukrainian communities, who dominated Roblin, Ethelbert and Gilbert Plains. Only in Ethelbert did Social Credit win in a straightforward two-way race; in the other two ridings, the party won by substantial margins in three-cornered contests. The Ukrainians represented a group which did not assimilate readily with other groups, as did the Icelandic people in St. George who also returned a Social Creditor. Clearly, the movement gained its greatest support from those less committed to traditional parties.

Elsewhere, however, the organization of groups lagged. The Alberta Social Credit League might have provided inspiration for such groups, but in 1936-37 Aberhart and his colleagues were preoccupied with the task of establishing a stable government and setting Alberta's house in order. Their job was further complicated by the crisis in the legislative ranks in 1937, the all-out attempt to establish Social Credit in Alberta in the same year,

and the subsequent disallowance by the federal government of these measures.³

By the early part of 1938, however, Aberhart was able to apply his energy elsewhere. He was now able to launch his crusade along a new avenue - an attack on the Liberal government and eastern financiers for having frustrated his program. As it was apparent that no help would come from the central government it appeared that the best means of exerting pressure was to capture the provinces one by one. Saskatchewan was holding its election in June 1938, and it became the object of unprecedented Social Credit activity.

There was, however, no premeditated plan of seizing the provinces in turn. Indeed, the experience of British Columbia the previous year may have served as a warning. Despite vigorous campaigning by ten MPs on behalf of 18 provincial candidates, Social Credit had garnered only 4,812 votes or 1.2% of the popular vote. In the Alberta view, this was chiefly because the movement in B.C. was so fragmented.⁴

Saskatchewan was a different case, not only in organization but in timing. The party already had a toe-hold in two federal ridings. However, no organizing had since been carried out, and it was reported that the Saskatchewan movement was partly financed by the Liberal machine to attract disgruntled Liberals who might otherwise stray into the Conservative or CCF camps.⁵ This seems unwarranted, but the belief appeared to influence Aberhart and a number of voters.

³See Macpherson, op.cit.

⁴Today and Tomorrow, 3 June 1937.

⁵"Ottawa Letter", Saturday Night, 7 May 1938.

As the election approached, the Alberta League received numerous requests for assistance from Saskatchewan. It was these requests, rather than any preconceived plan, which led Aberhart to decide upon his subsequent actions. He was, however, reluctant to campaign in Saskatchewan in his role as Alberta premier, and sought some means of entering the contest in another capacity.⁶

One might ask why it was expedient for Aberhart to enter the campaign. The fact was that the Saskatchewan group not only lacked organization but a leader as well. There was no outstanding figure in the Saskatchewan Social Credit League. Its president, Joseph Needham, was M.P. for the Battlefords, a job which kept him occupied in Ottawa. Lacking a firm hand, the Social Crediters were drifting into various factions based largely, it would seem, on personalities. It was this situation which probably spurred Aberhart on.

To provide a front for the premier, the Alberta Social Credit League invited delegates from all four western provinces to attend a convention in Edmonton. The meeting, held on 28-29 April 1938, was by invitation extended to the provincial executives. One unfortunate result was that it focused attention on some of the splits existing. The matter of recognition of delegates forced the Convention committee to choose between the Manitoba Social Credit Association, represented by Mr. A.C. Benjamin, and the Manitoba Social Credit League, whose spokesman was Miss

⁶Interview with O.A. Kennedy, 31 January 1966.
See also Today and Tomorrow, 14 April 1938.

Salome Halldorsen, MLA. The former won out.⁷

Nevertheless, out of the meeting emerged the first extra-provincial Social Credit organization, the Western Social Credit Association, with Aberhart as "Leader". It was dominated by the Albertans, and all four major executives were Aberhart lieutenants: Solon Low as President, Lucien Maynard as secretary, Ernest Hansell as treasurer and E.C. Manning as chief organizer. Each province was to provide a vice-president, an assistant treasurer and a provincial organizer, which in effect gave Alberta three more voices on the Association's council. Hopes were expressed that this would become the basis for a national organization which would be formed by joining a proposed eastern organization. These ambitious plans were never realized.⁸

The Saskatchewan delegates used the occasion to extend another invitation to their Alberta counterparts to participate in the forthcoming election, and the invitation was promptly accepted. There was, however, one incident which gave the opposition ammunition to use against Aberhart almost immediately. The provincial organizer selected for Saskatchewan was M.J. Haver, a man favoured by Aberhart, but who had been removed from this office by the Saskatchewan League executive only a week before the formation of the WSCA.⁹

⁷This is the first time Miss Halldorsen was in conflict with the Alberta organizers, and far from the last. The Manitoba movement had split over the question of whether or not to support the Bracken government. While Aberhart had sided with the MLAs in 1936, favouring cooperation, he now turned on Miss Halldorsen who was a devoted follower of C.H. Douglas.

⁸This account is based largely on reports in the Edmonton Journal, 27-30 April 1938.

⁹The Leader Post, 21 April 1938.

The editorial writers opened their attacks on Aberhart almost at once. In Regina, The Leader Post wrote:

"Despatches bearing on the western Canada Social Credit conference that has been proceeding at Edmonton would seem to suggest Mr. Aberhart as a quite high-handed and domineering individual, if new evidence along this line were needed.

"The Edmonton conference saw the formation of a western Canadian Social Credit council which, a hope^{is}, will emerge into a national Social Credit party. Mr. Aberhart was named leader of this national Social Credit party that it is hoped to get going.

"Mr. Aberhart's evident 'bossiness' came in when he undertook, according to despatches, to select Saskatchewan representation on the western Canada Social Credit council. He selected a man who apparently has been dropped by the Saskatchewan organization as one of its officers, decreed that this and that Saskatchewan Social Crediters could not have a place on the council, and also seems to have laid down the law just as sharply about representation from Manitoba. It is also indicated from Edmonton that if Alberta Social Credit MLAs get into the Saskatchewan election their campaign must be handled from Alberta, not by Saskatchewan Social Credit circles. On top of all this it is indicated that selection of Social Credit candidates in the Saskatchewan election will rest with Mr. Aberhart. How is that for dictatorship?

"Altogether, there seems to have been quite a show of bossing at the Edmonton gathering. The Social Credit delegation from Saskatchewan seems to have gotten rather blunt treatment."¹⁰

Shortly afterwards Aberhart and Manning visited Saskatoon to map out plans for the forthcoming campaign in their respective capacities as Leader and Chief Organizer of the WSCA. The entry of Social Credit, and particularly the intervention by the Alberta League, threw provincial politics into a turmoil. The CCF had been

¹⁰Ibid, 2 May 1938.

attempting to run "Unity" candidates against the entrenched Liberal machine, and now saw themselves in competition with the other major "protest" party. Some supporters of Social Credit were in agreement with the "Unity" movement. J.B. McLeod, president of the Social Credit-Farmer-Labour League and a director of the Saskatchewan Social Credit League was eventually driven to describe Aberhart's tactics as "an unscrupulous dictatorship" and to claim that the activities of the Albertan assistants was demoralizing the grass-roots organizations.¹¹ The campaign rapidly developed around Social Credit, which Premier Patterson described as a "mystery element".¹²

It is doubtful that much of a grass-roots organization existed in Saskatchewan. After surveying the situation the Albertan organizers announced that nominating conventions would be delayed as long as possible while an intensive educational campaign was carried out.¹³ At least one political observer declared that Social Credit, though presently weak, could be built up.¹⁴ It is uncertain just how much these statements influenced the Liberal government. In any case, they were immediately followed by the announcement that Saskatchewan would go to the polls on 8 June, and Aberhart in turn denounced the election as being premature.¹⁵

The Saskatchewan election proved to be one of the most bitterly fought in Canada, with outbreaks of violence towards the end. Cabinet ministers from Ottawa, led by J.G. Gardiner, descended

¹¹The Leader Post, 21 May 1938.

¹²Edmonton Journal, 11 May 1938.

¹³The Leader Post, 13 May 1938.

¹⁴B.T. Richardson, "Vote Delay Favours Aberhart", Ibid.

¹⁵The Leader Post, 16 May 1938.

on the province, along with Conservative and CCF MPs. Several Social Credit MPs also campaigned in Saskatchewan, but as Parliament was still in session, the brunt of the work fell to the Alberta MLAs. Almost the entire cabinet from Edmonton took part, and many lesser MLAs as well. This gave rise to the cry of "invasion" and Premier Aberhart, never popular with the press, was subjected to a new round of attacks.¹⁶

There was a considerable element of truth to the charge of invasion, for Aberhart came not as a partner to assist an equal but as the master of the Social Credit movement throughout the West. The absence of a local leader was so glaring the Albertans felt called upon to justify the situation. It was therefore stated that a leader would be chosen from the MLA's elected.¹⁷ This was no assurance for the voter, however, who could have no idea what manner of man would be called on to lead the movement or even the province.

The most divisive aspect of the campaign was the use of the Alberta-style advisory board to select candidates and the presence on the board of Aberhart, Manning, Maynard and Low. This procedure had three principal results - all detrimental to Social Credit.

¹⁶The newspaper campaign against Social Credit was almost universal. See, for example, the Edmonton Journal, 14 May and 18 May 1938. A hostile editorial from the Windsor Star was quoted in the Journal on 19 May 1938. The Leader Post, a Liberal paper, was hostile towards Social Credit in general and Aberhart in particular, and on some days its entire editorial page was taken up in attacking these enemies through editorials, indignant letters to the editor, and cartoons. Of particular interest were the cartoons of Arch Dale, reprinted from the Winnipeg Free Press. Even in the East the press was interested in the campaign sufficiently to comment editorially. See the Montreal Gazette, 7 June 1938.

¹⁷Today and Tomorrow, 19 May 1938.

It divided the Social Crediters, alienated some voters, and shortened the time available for campaigning. As had happened in Alberta in 1935 there were charges of undemocratic procedure. In Rosthern the Rev. P. Peters was chosen by convention, then told that his nomination was invalid and that he would have to go before an advisory board to have his candidacy approved. To this he refused to submit. Aberhart stood by the system, declaring:

"It is absolutely essential if this election is to be carried out in an orderly manner with the usual efficiency of the Social Credit organization, that every convention must be carried out in accordance with our principles.

"Furthermore it should be generally understood that if the association (i.e. the WSCA) is to have anything whatever to do in this election, the people of Saskatchewan must be assured that a vote for the Social Credit candidate will be a vote for economic freedom.

"We regret therefore, to have to announce that unless Rev. Mr. Peters submits to a properly called convention he has no right to represent himself as the regularly appointed candidate for Rosthern."¹⁸

The procedure was subsequently defended as preventing the old-line parties from resorting to trickery and running false Social Credit candidates.¹⁹ There appears to have been too great a time lapse before this explanation was issued. In the interval the damage was done; throughout the province the impression grew that Aberhart was guilty of brash meddling in the affairs of another province. The situation was not helped when the Social Credit slate was announced in Edmonton rather than in Regina.²⁰

¹⁸Edmonton Journal, 10 May 1938.

¹⁹Ibid, 20 May 1938.

²⁰Ibid, 31 May 1938.

An unexpected development was the invasion of Saskatchewan by the opposition from Alberta. Politicians and unemployed workers from that province appeared to heckle and denounce Social Credit candidates and their Albertan supporters. The whole record of Social Credit in Alberta for the previous three years was hotly debated by William Aberhart on one hand and William Irvine, the CCF leader in Alberta, on the other. In addition, former members of Aberhart's cabinet also appeared, denouncing him for not honouring his promises of 1935, and the campaign degenerated into a battle over Alberta's government. One can imagine the adverse effect this had on the fortunes of the Social Credit candidates.

A total of 41 official Social Credit candidates entered the fight. The Alberta speakers attracted huge crowds. Blackmore, for example, drew 800 in Regina on 3 June and Aberhart attracted as many as 5000 persons in Melville on 7 June. Inevitably the most bitter exchanges were between the CCF and Social Credit supporters.

Yet it was in vain. Mass rallies could not win votes unless they were supplemented by an effective campaign to convince voters on a door-to-door, farm-by-farm basis. Rallies might attract the curious and the convinced, but it had not been rallies which had won converts in Alberta. This had been done by means of local study groups conducted by prominent citizens in the community. On election day, voters returned 36 Liberals, ten CCF, and only two Social Crediters. In Melville the victor, a past-president of the United Farmers of Canada and a former CCF candidate, carried the seat for Social Credit by a margin of only four votes. In Cutknife, Social Credit won by 43 votes.

Overall Social Credit had not done well. In 1935 the party had attracted 61,505 votes, and in 1938 it had drawn 69,720. Put another way, in 1935 Social Credit had gained nearly 18% of the total vote, while in 1938 its strength represented slightly under 16% of the vote. This, however, is not entirely accurate. In 1935 the party ran candidates in almost every constituency, but this was not the case in 1938. In the provincial election Social Credit obtained 22% of the vote from the constituencies which it contested. Statistics, however, were small comfort when one looked at the gains - a meager two seats.

The campaign was such a disaster that it bears closer examination. Many of the organizational difficulties have been mentioned. In assessing the strength and failings of the movement, however, it is necessary to ascertain where Social Credit gained its support.

The most striking fact is that the support came from virtually the same region as in 1935. In thirteen ridings Social Credit won at least 25% of the vote.²¹ For the most part these were concentrated along the Alberta boundary and in the northeast corner of the province. Ten constituencies fell into this category.

²¹The Battlefords, Cutknife, Hanley, Kerrobert-Kindersly, Maple Creek, Meadow Lake, Melville, Moose Jaw, Redberry, Rosthern, Shellbrook, Turtleford, Wilkie. This analysis is based on returns as published in Directory of Saskatchewan Ministries, Members of the Legislative Assembly and Elections (Regina, 1954). For the purpose of analysis Melville is excluded. It was an unusual riding, where the Social Credit candidate was not only exceptionally influential but also the sole opponent of the Liberal.

Moreover, these constituencies coincided closely with the federal ridings of The Battlefords, Kindersley and North Battleford, which in 1935, had given Social Credit respectively 34.5 per cent, 34.6 per cent and 28.2 per cent of their vote. In the north the party had increased its strength, notably in Shellbrook and Prince Albert. Elsewhere, Social Credit lost ground from its 1935 position notably in Gravelbourg and Notukeu-Willow Bunch. These two ridings, situated in the heart of the Saskatchewan dust belt, gave Social Credit a vote of slightly more than 24 per cent, as compared to the 30 per cent given the party in Wood Mountain federal riding in 1935.

The Social Credit wave was halted in such western ridings as Rosetown, Biggar and Elrose (which the CCF won), and in the northern ridings of Torch River and Kinistino (where the Liberals won, but with strong showings by both CCF and Social Credit). The northeast, consisting of Melfort, Tisdale and Wadena rejected Liberals and Social Credit alike in favour of the CCF.

From this pattern it may be seen that large segments of the electorate in the north and west of Saskatchewan had risen against the Liberals, with the CCF leading the revolt in some places and Social Credit in others. Three questions arise from this conclusion; why was there such a revolt? Why did different sections turn to different parties? Why was there no similar revolt in the south?

The last question is probably the easiest to explain. In terms of economic hardship, the south, southwest and southeastern regions were the most destitute. This was due to a combination of

drought and low prices for wheat, neither of which could be blamed on the provincial government. Moreover, as S.M. Lipset has pointed out, social revolt generally occurs not among those who have nothing to lose, but among those who, having something, fear to lose it or wish to have a larger share.²² It was in the regions less burdened by drought that the revolt took place.

The northern regions were those where extensive settlement had taken place after Palliser's Triangle had been filled, and indeed settlement was continuing as thousands fled from the south. Census Division 14, in the northwest, showed a population increase of almost 30 per cent between 1931 and 1941, and other divisions showed smaller increases.²³ As frontier areas, with problems different from the south, they were more susceptible to dissatisfaction. Relative prosperity merely freed the malcontents to express this dissatisfaction. The question became merely one of choosing which party should be the vehicle for such expression.

The choice was simplified by the collapse of the Conservative party, which ran only 26 candidates. Of the thirteen ridings where Social Credit did well, only three were contested by Conservative candidates. In Hanley and Moose Jaw the Conservative vote was scarcely changed. Those who had voted CCF in 1934 appeared to vote Social Credit in 1938, as the CCF did not contest these two seats in the latter election. In Turtleford, however, the CCF, Liberals and Conservatives all lost support to the Social Credit candidates.

²²S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (Los Angeles, 1959), pp. 175-77.

²³Queen's Printer, Report of the Eighth Census of Canada, 1941 (Ottawa, 1947) Vol. 1, p.21.

A pattern was clear; in the west and northwest Conservative votes and some CCF votes went to Social Credit; in the central part of the province and in the northeast the CCF gained more votes.²⁴

It has been suggested that this was primarily due to the ethnic and religious composition of the various regions. At this time the Catholic church was openly hostile to any form of socialism and was particularly opposed to the CCF, which was only beginning to lose its militant character. The Conservatives had alienated many Catholics in 1929 by criticism of denominational schools. Thus, in Catholic areas, a protest vote against the Liberals would tend to go to Social Credit, a movement to which the church took a neutral attitude at this time. In areas where Catholic voting strength was not so powerful, the CCF would tend to draw more sup-

²⁴ As an example of what was happening, one might compare the results of two elections in one region. The ridings of Cutknife, The Battlefords, Meadow Lake and Shellbrook all saw three-cornered contests involving Conservatives in 1934; in 1938 the Conservatives had withdrawn in all four.

	<u>Total 1934 Votes</u>	<u>Total 1938 Votes</u>	<u>Change in Vote</u>
Liberal	14,913 (49.6%)	11,615 (43.4%)	- 3,298
Conservative	6,198 (20.7%)	-	- 6,198
CCF	8,915 (29.6%)	5,413 (20%)	- 3,502
Social Credit	-	9,649 (36.6%)	- 9,649
	<u>30,026</u>	<u>26,677</u>	

In these four ridings Social Credit therefore gained at the expense of both the Liberals and the CCF, but also absorbed the bulk of the Conservative vote. Further east and south however, the CCF losses were less serious. In Biggar, for example, the Conservative vote of 1934 went to both the Liberals and the CCF (the latter winning) with Social Credit scarcely showing. In Tisdale the Conservative vote was almost completely eliminated and was divided in approximately equal proportions between the CCF and Social Credit.

port. Statistics bear out these conclusions.²⁵

The conclusion that Social Credit attracted the Catholic vote which was seeking to protest against existing conditions appears valid, and is supported by other writers.²⁶ A corollary of this, of course, is that once the church withdrew its opposition to the CCF, a great many supporters of Social Credit might then turn to the socialist movement. This in fact happened in 1943-44 at a time when the Social Credit organization in Saskatchewan was in ruins.

The voting pattern in 1938 differed from that of 1935 in that the Liberals drew a higher proportion of the votes than in the federal elections, as the following table indicates.

Votes Cast in Saskatchewan Elections, 1934-38

	1934	1935	Change from 1934	1938	Change from 1935
Liberals	47.9%	40.8%	- 7.1%	45.5%	+ 4.7%
Conser- vatives	26.7%	18.8%	- 7.9%	11.9%	- 6.9%
CCF	24.0%	21.3%	- 2.7%	18.8%	- 2.5%
Social Credit	-	17.8%	+17.8%	15.8%	- 2.0%
Others	1.4%	1.3%	- .1%	7.9%	+ 6.6%

²⁵ Census Division 16, containing the ridings of Redberry, Shellbrook and The Battlefords, was 31 per cent Catholic (vs. 27.5 per cent in Saskatchewan as a whole). Census Division 17, containing parts of Cutknife, Turtleford and Meadow Lake, was 28.6 per cent Catholic. Census Division 13, containing Kindersley-Kerrobert, Wilkie and the remainder of Cutknife, was 37 per cent Catholic. By contrast, Census Divisions 12 and 14, which included CCF strongholds, were respectively 16 and 21 per cent Catholic.

²⁶ See Lipset, op.cit., p.165 and Andrew J. Milnor, Agrarian Protest in Saskatchewan 1929-1948: A Study in Ethnic Politics (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1962) pp.146-150.

These trends were accentuated in the northwest, where the Liberals succeeded in undermining some of the Social Credit support which had existed in 1935. While this was offset in the northeast by increasing CCF strength, it does give some idea of what attitude motivated the people of Saskatchewan in the two elections.

It is difficult to compare federal constituencies with provincial ones, but for purposes of illustration the federal riding of The Battlefords may be compared with the provincial ridings of The Battlefords, Cutknife and Redberry.

Votes Cast in 1935 and 1938 Elections
in Selected Ridings

	1935	1938
Liberals	32.7%	41.6%
Conservatives	15.1%	-
CCF	17.7%	25.2%
Social Credit	34.5%	33.2%

The revolt of 1935, it may be concluded, was one primarily against the traditional federal parties, with many voters going over to the parties of protest. The federal Conservatives of 1935 however, may be regarded as the most traditional of voters, and once their party had collapsed, they turned for the most part to the Liberals. Thus, the decline of the Conservatives prior to the general election of 1935 assisted the minor parties in both 1935 and 1938. The further disintegration of the party assisted the Liberals and operated against the electoral revolt. It might then be concluded that when the Conservatives remained active, Social Credit would fare at least as well as in 1935. Such a situation existed in 1938 in Prince Albert and Torch River. With four parties contesting these two ridings, the party standings were almost iden-

tical with those in the federal returns of 1935 for Prince Albert constituency.

The foregoing, however, does not fully explain why Social Credit gained only two seats in an election when the CCF won ten. The movement which had swept Alberta in 1935 had suffered a severe defeat. The reasons lay primarily in the differences between the Alberta and Saskatchewan organizations and between the CCF and Social Credit movements in that province.

One factor was the difference in roles played by the government and Social Credit movements in the two provinces. In Alberta, the government of the UFA had been discredited by the twin blight of scandals and depression, while Social Credit had been a growing, dynamic movement. In Saskatchewan Social Credit confronted a well-entrenched machine ably supported by a government in Ottawa which not only provided some of its leading campaigners but also timed important policy statements to coincide with the election. Moreover, the role of third parties had been different. In Alberta the Liberals had not exerted themselves until the last moment, confident that the destruction of the UFA would favour them. In Saskatchewan the CCF was far from passive.

Social Credit in Alberta had built its organization over a two year period and Aberhart, a master organizer, had also provided charismatic leadership. Both these factors were absent in Saskatchewan and though the Alberta premier may have impressed many who heard him, it was not he who was up for election.

Another important factor was the fate which had befallen Aberhart's Social Credit programme. In 1935 there had been some hope in the minds of the voters that Social Credit might be intro-

duced at the provincial level. By 1938 it was apparent that the courts and the federal government would permit no such action, and the positive appeal of the programme was subsequently lessened.

It should also be noted that the economic problems of Alberta and Saskatchewan, though similar in kind, differed greatly in degree. In discussing the two provinces, the Rowell-Sirois Commission subsequently pointed out that Saskatchewan suffered greater destitution, partly because of its greater dependence on wheat, partly because of falling wheat prices, partly because drought conditions were far more severe in that province. None of these could be blamed on the administration. Alberta's chief problem, according to the Commission's report, had been one of excessive public and private debt charges and high overhead costs, financial problems which could, in the public mind, be dealt with by a financial solution - social credit.²⁷

In the long run the election results operated to the detriment of the Social Credit movement. Eventually the strength of the Liberal machine and its opposition to social legislation provoked so much resentment that many people became anxious to find an alternative, or at least to strengthen the opposition.²⁸ In votes the CCF had fared only slightly better than Social Credit, but the distribution of those votes had given it ten seats, a core which

²⁷ Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations (Ottawa, 1954), Book I, pp.169-71.

²⁸ For a description of the Liberal political machine, see Escott M. Reid, "The Saskatchewan Liberal Machine Before 1929", The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol.II, No. 1. Following the departure of J.G. Gardiner the Liberals appear to have operated in a less ruthless fashion, something which left them open to attacks on grounds of political morality without leaving them the protection of manipulating offices freely as might be desirable from a political viewpoint.

clearly marked it as the alternative for all persons opposed to the Liberals. In the next six years the Social Crediters saw their followers slipping away. The Social Credit study groups were not sustained, and the divisions which had appeared in 1938 widened. It was not until 1945 that a strong hand attempted to rebuild the party in the Wheat Province; by that time it was too late.

The WSCA virtually died thereafter, even though the federal MPs spoke hopefully of extending that organization throughout Canada.²⁹ The eastern counterpart of the WSCA which was to have been formed, did not materialize. The idea was put forward at a meeting of La Ligue du Credit Social in May 1938 and on the formation of the Ontario Social Credit League in June of the same year. At a meeting in Drummondville in mid-August executives of the two organizations adopted a constitution and elected officers. The officers, however, already held positions in their respective provincial organizations, and though the federal MPs met this executive at least once, it is apparent that their importance was more in their capacity as provincial organizers than as members of the executive of the Eastern Social Credit Association.³⁰

The failure of the party to make any significant inroads into Saskatchewan led it next into ill-advised alliance with the Honourable W.D. Herridge and his New Democracy movement. Unlike the efforts of 1936-38, this represented an attempt at direct federal organization rather than at using provincial citadels to apply pressure on Ottawa. If anything, it was the greatest disaster ever

²⁹Ottawa Evening Citizen, 13 August 1938.

³⁰The Quebec organization had as its secretary Louis Even and Louis Dugal as president. In the Eastern Association these two changed positions. Major J.C. McCorkindale, president of the Ontario League, was vice-president of the ESCA.

to befall Social Credit until the débacle of 1958.³¹

Herridge was one of the most unusual individuals ever to appear on the political stage of Canada. A distinguished soldier during the First World War, he was known throughout his career as Major Herridge. During the 1920's he became a wealthy and successful lawyer. A Liberal until 1926, he turned to the Conservatives following the King-Byng crisis.

In 1931 he married the sister of R.B. Bennett, and shortly afterwards was named Canadian Minister to Washington. The appointment raised charges of patronage and nepotism, but in fact Herridge proved to be a distinguished diplomat, and had many contacts with the "Brain Trusters" of President Roosevelt. In a very real sense he was able to observe the inner workings of the New Deal. He became particularly interested in the tremendous personal leadership shown by the American President. There can be little doubt that he was the prime influence in Bennett's programme of radical economic reform, launched early in 1935.

Following the defeat of the Conservatives in 1935, he attempted to steer that party on the course of reform on which Bennett had embarked. At the same time, in speeches across Canada he advocated economic nationalism, economic planning and "a new enfranchisement of consumption."³² He also expressed concern at the control over Canadians which was wielded by a vague, alien financial power. His campaign gained the support of C.A. Bowman, editor of the Ottawa Citizen and an exponent of Social Credit. As

³¹For a complete description of this short-lived movement and its central figure see Mary E. Hallet, W.D. Herridge and the New Democracy Movement, (unpublished MA thesis, Queen's University, 1964.) The writer has drawn heavily on this work and its sources.

³²Ottawa Citizen, 16 November 1936.

time passed, Herridge moved to advocating that the electorate should unite for the results it desired, leaving the planning of the economic reforms to engineers and accountants.³³ In his mind there began to evolve the idea of a New Democracy, a return to democracy in which all classes would unite in their efforts for the common good. He was particularly concerned that capitalists should throw in their lot with the people and cease to be (as he described them) agents of international finance.³⁴

Following the retirement of R.B. Bennett from public life, and the refusal of the Conservative party to adopt his programme of reforms, Herridge turned his back on the party, declaring it to be reactionary. He began to attack all parties, and the bitterness in his statements, culminating in his conclusions that the parties were a negation of democracy, provoked an angry outburst in the House of Commons.³⁵

The New Democracy movement arose not from a public protest against the political system of the day but from the rejection of the system by Herridge himself, an individualist who was willing to take drastic action in accordance with his personal opinions. The movement was launched in early March 1939. Its aim was to unite all persons interested in reform, including the CCF, to make war on the old line political parties.³⁶ It was, in fact, a failure, attracting few groups outside the western wing of Social Credit.

Although Herridge appeared to be talking about the same ends to which Social Credit aspired, he was vague as to what speci-

³³Ibid, 13 April 1937.

³⁴Ibid, 28 September, 1937.

³⁵Hansard Debates, 2 March 1939.

³⁶Edmonton Bulletin, 25 July 1939.

fic actions he wanted. Aberhart was annoyed at his refusal to state any programme or to come out in favour of Social Credit monetary schemes. For some months he held aloof from the movement while carrying on correspondence and meeting infrequently with Herridge. When the prospects of a union were raised initially, the Alberta premier declared:

"No such union has been broached or even founded. but now that the papers have raised it, I should like to see Mr. Herridge come out as leader of a monetary reform movement which would sincerely determine to remedy the present financial system...

"I would be delighted to give as much support as I have to aid such a movement by Mr. Herridge. I do not think that Mr. Herridge has adopted Social Credit principles by any means but he is certainly on the right track regarding monetary reform and should have the support of every thinking man in Canada."³⁷

Events appear to have forced Aberhart towards the New Democracy movement, as Social Credit groups in Ontario and in Alberta began passing resolutions favouring the movement. A number of Women's Social Credit Auxiliaries in southern Alberta urged Herridge to run as Social Credit Leader of Canada.³⁸ Aberhart remained aloof however, and while generally supporting Herridge he refused to commit himself until a platform was produced.³⁹ For Herridge, however, a platform with definite proposals would have wrecked his hopes for organizing all reform groups from left to right under one banner.

Precisely what led Aberhart to ally himself with Herridge finally is uncertain. The fact that a caucus of Social Credit MPs supported New Democracy at the end of June 1939 before Aberhart issued any statement might suggest that the caucus influenced the

³⁷Today and Tomorrow, 10 November 1938.

³⁸Ibid, 27 April 1939.

³⁹Ibid, 15 May 1939.

premier, but the recollections of the surviving MPs are inconclusive. The most important thing is that at the end of June Aberhart declared himself wholeheartedly behind Herridge and urged all Social Crediters to support him.⁴⁰ At a political picnic and rally in July he introduced Herridge to a crowd of 1,500 and declared, "You have heard our leader."⁴¹

Precisely why this step was taken is uncertain, but it is more than probable that New Democracy represented an opportunity for Social Credit to be extended in the federal field. Even if Herridge did not come out in favour of Douglas social credit, any victory that New Democracy might gain would result in the Social Credit organizations having a voice in some national body. The prestige of a man like Herridge could have a beneficial result on Social Credit. Moreover, it was possible that by his presence Herridge might attract money to a movement sadly lacking finances for anything outside of Alberta. Blackmore in particular has stressed the financial aspect.⁴²

Attempts to unite the reform groups failed when the CCF, whose stronghold was in Saskatchewan, discovered that Herridge's organizers were trying to undermine them in that province. The leader's vagueness when any concrete proposals were discussed alienated some. Herridge showed little interest in organization, believing that the movement must be a spontaneous outburst by the people. Social Crediters continued to have mixed feelings, and Aberhart made it clear that the Alberta Social Credit League would brook no interference in Alberta.⁴³ In Ontario Social Crediters

⁴⁰Ibid, 6 July 1939.

⁴¹Ibid, 27 July 1939.

⁴²Interview with John Blackmore, 5 February 1966.

⁴³Hallet, op.cit., p. 105.

were uneasy at the refusal of Herridge and his lieutenants to adopt Social Credit proposals. In Quebec La Ligue du Credit Social held back on ideological grounds, for its leaders distrusted political parties which imposed any discipline on individual legislators.

The Quebec organization was then committed to a programme of propaganda and showed little interest in any form of political action, feeling that reforms would come when the electorate was indoctrinated with the social credit ideology. Although the term "New Democracy" found favour with the Quebec leaders, it had no relation to Herridge's conception of the words.

Briefly, La Ligue du Credit Social interpreted the problem of achieving reforms as consisting of two approaches. The first was the definition of ends by a free Parliament (Social Credit); the second was the presentation of a means to achieve a free Parliament, with the ends being secondary (their view of Herridge's movement). Advancing from this hair-splitting, Louis Even, chief organizer and theoretician of La Ligue went on:

"Personnellement, nous préférons la première manière; car si le moyen précède la fin dans l'ordre du temps, la fin précède le moyen dans l'ordre du raisonnement...L'exposé des moyens devient un jeu. Il n'ya pas un créditiste qui ne sache ce qu'il faut faire pour instaurer le Credit Social.

"Herridge vient plus tard, c'est plus pressé. Il a moins de temps à donner à l'éducation...

"Les circonstances forcent Herridge, que jusqu'ici nous croyons sincère et droit, à agir comme il fait. Nous plus heureux, avons eu l'opportunité de faire oeuvre éducationnelle plus profonde....

"...un peuple a les représentants qu'il mérite. Un peuple éclairé aura nécessairement des représentants éclairés."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Cahiers du Credit Social, August 1939.

In stressing the importance of education over political action, and in considering New Democracy as an ideal which would follow naturally from such education, Even was expressing a view which, except for a few aberrations, was to hold Social Credit in Quebec back from the mainstream of politics. In this instance, it cut the movement off from any affiliation with New Democracy as Herridge and Aberhart saw it. It made no difference, for within a short time the western Social Crediters also found their association with New Democracy a serious handicap.

On the outbreak of war Herridge lost no time in making known the fact that he favoured universal military conscription.⁴⁵ The first outcome of this extraordinary stand was a behind-the-scenes tug-of-war between Aberhart and Herridge for control of the federal MPs on this issue.

Before leaving the west to attend the special war session of 1939, the Social Credit MPs met with Aberhart in Edmonton to discuss their policy. The resolutions passed were released almost immediately by the Premier. After calling for support of Great Britain they outlined what was, in essence, Aberhart's stand on wartime policy. They asked that the war be financed with a minimum of borrowing and with credit and currency created by the government, price controls, steeply graded income and profits taxes, "an embargo on capital and capital assets as at the date of declaration of war", and a declaration that all financial institutions and corporations should reveal their reserves. The final resolution was the most crucial, for it held that "conscription of material and financial resources...shall be introduced before

⁴⁵For a history of his statements from the outbreak of war, see the Ottawa Citizen, 14 May 1940, 2 July 1941, 28 March 1942, 27 November 1944.

the conscription of manpower"⁴⁶

These resolutions thus placed particular emphasis on the conscription of wealth (a vague idea, though a stand taken by the CCF as well) and social credit monetary proposals while attempting to de-emphasize military conscription. Herridge, however, met with the caucus in Ottawa, and succeeded in having the emphasis and nature of the policy changed. When Parliament met, the Social Credit MPs supported conscription of wealth, resources, and manpower together and without distinction.

An analysis of the stand taken by the MPs is complicated by the fact that their interpretation of certain terms differed from the accepted meaning of those terms. Thus, in speaking of "universal service" they tended to stress that service was to be rendered by finance and industry as well as manpower. Blackmore, aware of the explosive implications of conscription, attempted to lay particular stress on the financial aspect of the problem, but he did not deny support for military conscription as well. In his keynote speech he declared:

"A good deal has been made of the fact that the Social Credit organization in Edmonton and the Social Credit organization here, with New Democracy, have announced that they support conscription. I have noticed, however, that all too few have observed that the conscription is of three distinct elements of our national life. The first is finance...the second is industry...and the third is manpower. The three must go together. Each of these is as necessary to the other two as is the third leg of a three legged stool....

"Conscription is the poor man's friend. He does not realize it...but when he now goes and enlists because he has not a job, he is being conscripted indirectly..."⁴⁷

⁴⁶Today and Tomorrow, 7 September 1939.

⁴⁷Hansard Debates, 8 September 1939, p. 48.

He was seconded by other members of his party who maintained the theme of conscription of all resources. René Pelletier (Peace River) was more explicit:

"The only way whereby we can have justice and fair play is to bring about the conscription of manpower. We are insisting on that, but we are not insisting upon it anymore than we are insisting upon the conscription of financial and industrial power."⁴⁸

A.H. Mitchell (Medicine Hat) repeated this stand with even more emphasis.⁴⁹ Thereafter, the Social Credit members centered their attention on the War Appropriations Bill, using the debate as another opportunity to discuss financial policy. They received no support, however, not even from the CCF which had supported them in so many past protests. When the special session ended, the MPs returned to western Canada to face the whirlwind which their statements had created.

Precisely how much persuasion was required to bring about these changes is uncertain. It would appear that several MPs were in such a frame of mind as to make such persuasion easy.⁵⁰ Blackmore has stated that some argument was required, however, and that he was reminded of Aberhart's public statement declaring Herridge as leader. The policy as outlined in Parliament clearly did not meet with the approval of Aberhart, and Today and Tomorrow did not even report the speeches. Subsequently, Aberhart re-emphasized the secondary importance of military conscription.⁵¹ He also disapproved of Herridge's attempt to impose policies on the New

⁴⁸Ibid, 9 September 1939, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁹Ibid, 11 September 1939, p.76.

⁵⁰Hallet, op.cit., p. 137. This is supported by interviews with A.H. Mitchell and John Blackmore.

⁵¹Edmonton Bulletin, 15 September 1939.

Democracy movement, and in correspondence delivered a pithy lecture on the role of the people in political policy formation.⁵²

The Social Crediters subsequently repudiated the conscription stand and reverted to the policy of conscription of wealth before that of manpower.⁵³ Although O.B. Elliot resigned his seat in Kindersley to provide one for Herridge, it is open to question whether the group would have accepted his leadership.⁵⁴ In any event, though Herridge was nominated, no by-election was called.

A further instance of the breach between the Social Credit group and Herridge was the formulation of a platform for the general election of 1940. A meeting was called in Edmonton in December 1939 with Aberhart and the MPs attending. Herridge, though urged to attend, was not present, though he wrote protesting that a platform with a specific policy was premature.⁵⁵ Going on alone, the Social Crediters drew up a draft programme and submitted it to their constituency organizations. After some revisions it was released to the press in February 1940.

The programme as approved included a call for lower interest charges on borrowing, provincial autonomy, financing of the war "by the creation of debt-free currency", price regulation, re-

⁵²Hallet, op.cit., pp. 160-61.

⁵³Edmonton Bulletin, 23 October 1939. Later Aberhart stated that conscription of manpower had never been proposed by the Alberta supporters of New Democracy and that Herridge's stand had placed him outside the movement. Ibid, 1 May 1940.

⁵⁴Hallet, op.cit., pp. 145-48.

⁵⁵Ibid, p. 150.

form of the Senate and the courts, a national transportation programme, and a national conservation and irrigation scheme. It also reiterated the idea that "the conscription of finance, without expropriation of the individual's property or money, should precede the conscription of manpower."⁵⁶

In Alberta the Social Crediters virtually ignored Herridge during the 1940 campaign, though they could scarcely denounce him or the name of New Democracy which they had adopted without serious embarrassment. Some papers noted this with particular glee, and ascribed it to the movement being taken over, pirate-fashion, by Aberhart.⁵⁷ In fact, Aberhart, Blackmore, and the others were more akin to passengers who, having boarded a ship, now found the vessel to be sinking and were searching for the life-boats.

In Saskatchewan the efforts of Herridge and his organizer, C.H. Barr, were successful in bringing together a number of Conservative and New Democracy groups, sometimes under the label of New Democracy, sometimes to run "Unity" candidates. An unexpected result was the complete disruption of what was left of the Social Credit organization. Apparently the Alberta League made no effort to intervene, probably fearing any further involvement with Herridge.

In eastern Canada the impact of events was even more disastrous. Whatever links or confidence which had existed between the Prairie Social Crediters and La Ligue du Credit Social were now gone. On the outbreak of war the latter had issued a statement opposing Canadian participation.⁵⁸ Despite this, two Social

⁵⁶Today and Tomorrow, 7 March 1940. Emphasis supplied by the writer.

⁵⁷Ottawa Journal, 19 March 1940.

⁵⁸Ottawa Citizen, 11 September 1939.

Credit candidates in Quebec found themselves facing hostile audiences and were even threatened with violence.⁵⁹ Louis Even once again took up his pen to disassociate La Ligue from Herridge and Blackmore, not merely on their conscriptionist statements but also because their political activities were irreconcilable with his views on parties.

"Nous continuons de soutenir qu'une véritable démocratie... doit exclure l'idée de partis en opposition systématique les uns contre les autres, de caisses électorales liant tacitement en servage les membres des partis.

"La guerre européenne... nous a fourni l'occasion de constater que celui qui brandissait le drapeau d'une nouvelle démocratie sans parti agit exactement comme si la nouvelle démocratie était un cinquième parti sous sa (Herridge's) direction. C'est une prostitution des termes."⁶⁰

Despite the handicaps imposed by the situation, Armand Turpin, running in Hull, drew 31.8% of the vote (vs. 50.6% for the Liberal), a showing so respectable that one can only wonder what the result might have been under peace-time conditions. Even, running in Lac St. Jean-Roberval, took only 17.3% of the vote. He withdrew thereafter from all electoral contests, and his own defeat probably reinforced his prejudices against electoral action. In later years this attitude made

⁵⁹Interview with Armand Turpin, 7 November 1965.

⁶⁰Unidentified, undated clipping obtained from Mr. Armand Turpin, probably from L'Action Catholique or Le Devoir, late 1939.

relations between Quebec and Prairie Social Crediters almost unworkable.⁶¹

New Democracy gained virtually no support in Ontario, and in western Canada it ran candidates only in Alberta and Saskatchewan, although as has been shown the Alberta campaign was entirely in the hands of the Social Credit organization. The party lost five seats in Alberta, a loss which was probably due in part to the early adherence to an unpopular programme of conscription which the newspapers frequently recalled. The setback cannot, however, be wholly related to the New Democracy alliance. A provincial election the same year reflected a general decline in support for Aberhart, who emerged victorious but with a decreased majority.

More damaging was the disorganization in Saskatchewan and the loss of the two Social Credit ridings in that province. Herridge met personal defeat in Kindersley, and only one "Unity"

⁶¹Turpin was a rare individual, a personal, popular candidate with political savoir-faire. In three federal elections he ran as a Social Crediter (1940), Independent Social Credit (1945), and Conservative (1962). In each case he took about 30% of the vote, each time when the party of his choice was subjected to unfavourable circumstances. His vote would appear to have been largely a personal triumph in each case, unaided by current political trends.

Even's running in 1940 was not, as might be expected, a negation of his principles. Though he opposed political parties, and particularly opposed any notion that Social Credit should be organized along such lines, he nevertheless favoured independent candidates, free of what he regarded as the undemocratic controls of organized parties. In 1940 he considered himself to be an independent. In an interview on 5 November 1965, however, he also mentioned that in running for office he was moved by the need for money to finance his campaigns on behalf of Social Credit.

candidate was returned, the Rev. George Brown in Saskatoon.⁶²

The surviving Social Credit MPs continued to sit in Parliament as New Democracy members, but they soon asserted their independence of Herridge. His leadership was effectively repudiated following a meeting of the caucus which announced that henceforth he would be considered merely as an interested member in the New Democracy movement. The statement went on to say that he was not, and never had been, leader of the movement, as no convention had bestowed that title on him.⁶³ Aberhart re-defined the situation when he declared;

"New Democracy is a national political movement - not a party in the recognized sense. New Democracy is a movement of the people across Canada, who realizing the urgent need for sane and orderly reform, are united to assert their democratic sovereignty by demanding the results they want...A social credit order and new democracy are co-relative terms. Social Credit aims at the establishment of a functioning economic democracy; New Democracy is the political organization in which the philosophy of Social Credit can be most readily developed."⁶⁴

⁶² Brown had been elected in a by-election in December 1939, travelled to Ottawa for the January session of Parliament, and ~~was~~ ~~assurprised~~ as anyone else when the session lasted only one day. Re-elected in 1940, he died before Parliament re-convened. As a man who won two elections, yet sat in the House of Commons for but a single day, he was probably unique in Canadian Parliamentary history. The absence of any public statements by him makes it impossible to determine whether he was a Conservative, Social Crediter, or something else under the badge of "Unity".

⁶³ Ottawa Citizen, 26 April 1940.

⁶⁴ Today and Tomorrow, 9 May 1940.

Having abandoned the ship, the Social Crediters, were content to paint the name "New Democracy" on their lifeboats, and to wait for time and events to wash away even that. It had been a disastrous experiment.

The events of 1936-40 proved that if Social Credit were to gain national acceptance, it would have to be built by a national organization. It was not enough for a provincial body to attempt to influence other provinces; the technique aroused hostilities and rivalries, and as a consequence it was self-defeating. On the other hand, an alliance with another reform organization had done irreparable harm, committing Social Crediters to a nominal leader and programme over which they had exercised no control. Henceforth, attempts to bring Social Credit to Ottawa drew heavily on the experience of previous failures. A general buttressing of provincial organizations, together with the formation of a national agency to focus on national efforts, were the logical results of the Saskatchewan and New Democracy experiences.

CHAPTER III

FROM NEW DEMOCRACY TO A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

The episode with Herridge had been a fiasco, and although it did not appear to shake the confidence of either Aberhart or the federal M.P.s, it was obvious that some steps would have to be taken to keep Social Credit alive outside of Alberta. This was recognized by the Alberta Social Credit League which passed a resolution at its Fifth Annual Convention sanctioning the formation of a nationwide Social Credit organization.¹ This was the first in a series of steps leading to direct federal organization, although Aberhart had previously shown little interest in any field outside of the western provinces.²

Early in July 1941 the federal MPs met in Edmonton, and issued a statement that a national convention of monetary reformers was to be held, adding that conscription of money was necessary for the efficient prosecution of the war, and that conscription of wealth still should have precedence over conscription of manpower.³ As secretary of the group, Hansell attempted to bring other Social Credit sympathizers into the movement. His efforts, however, were rebuffed by Social Crediters in Quebec. While sympathizing with efforts to coordinate the work of monetary reform-

¹Harold J. Schultz, William Aberhart and the Social Credit Party: A Political Biography (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1959) p.410.

²Although as early as 1936 Blackmore had expressed the hope that Aberhart would some day become Prime Minister, the latter had expressed his lack of interest and noted that any national campaign would require ten years of preliminary work. Ibid, pp.226-7.

³Today and Tomorrow, 10 July 1941.

ers, Armand Turpin pointed out that insofar as Quebec was concerned, the Albertans were tarred with the brush of conscription.⁴ Thus, for the time being the nation's second most powerful Social Credit organization stood aloof.

The convention was held in Winnipeg on 27-29 October, 1941, but it was obvious that there was no intention of enlisting Liberal monetary reformers like G.G. McGeer or Arthur Slaughter. Delegates attending signed a declaration which, besides stating opposition to monopoly control of credit, included the statement, "That under financially dominated political parties Canadian citizens can never hope to secure the reforms which are so vitally needed."⁵ For the moment the new group was to be a closed shop, despite the statement by Solon Low, Alberta's provincial treasurer, that "it is a movement for all those who believe in monetary reform principles regardless of their political affiliations."⁶

The 87 delegates from six provinces produced the Democratic Monetary Reform Organization, with Aberhart as President, Paul Prince of Manitoba as Vice-President, and Solon Low as Treasurer. In addition five regional deputies were envisaged, plus a director from each province. The executive had no organization of its own to direct, the unit of organization being the Province. The executive, however, could replace provincial directors between conferences, while a deputy could be replaced by the President meeting with the other regional deputies.⁷

⁴ Turpin to E.G. Hansell, 23 July 1941. Copy loaned to the author by Mr. Turpin.

⁵ Today and Tomorrow, 16 October 1941.

⁶ Ibid, 30 October 1941.

⁷ Ibid, 6 November 1941.

In theory this gave the executive tremendous power over the provincial leaders, and it is doubtful if such a system would have been acceptable to Quebec had she sent any delegates, even considering the limited objectives of the DMRO. Its activities were non-political in the sense that no electoral action was taken, and reports that such action might be taken were vigorously denied by Aberhart. His views on the function of the DMRO were quite explicit. Once, having attacked political parties for dividing people on the issues when they should be united in demanding results, he went on to explain:

"Therefore, had the Democratic Monetary Reform Organization entered the political field as another party, it would merely have created another division, it would have been just one more party which would have enabled the money manipulators to keep the people divided and thus retain control.

"Contrary to reports which have appeared in the press the Democratic Monetary Reform Organization is not entering the political field as a new party. Its purpose is to enable the people, irrespective of party, to unite in a demand for the results they want in common, to insist on the sovereign power of money control being transferred to their Parliament and managed in obedience to their wishes and to organize themselves so as to insist on their will being obeyed by any government in office or alternatively getting rid of a disobedient government and electing their own non-party representatives.

"'But how does that square with Social Credit?' it may be asked. These principles of democracy are fundamental to Social Credit philosophy. The financial proposals of Social Credit are but a means to an end - namely, the establishment of a fully functioning economic as well as political democracy.

"If the Social Credit financial proposals are the best - as we claim - then they will be the means which will have to be used to produce the results demanded by the people. But if some other means are devised for doing so, Social Crediters will be the last to object. It is the results we want in common with everybody else."⁸

⁸Ibid, 1 January 1942.

Over the next two and one-half years no better measures were accepted by the various Social Credit groups, for there was no lessening of Social Credit propaganda emanating from the DMRO. Indeed, it was little more than a platform from which Aberhart continued to preach his economic doctrines across Canada. The newspaper Today and Tomorrow which once had noted that it was approved by Premier Aberhart and the Alberta Social Credit League, now noted it was approved by Aberhart and the DMRO. Members in the DMRO received Today and Tomorrow and additional leaflets. It is doubtful, however, that anyone joining the DMRO was not already in receipt of these publications.

A year later, in December 1942, Aberhart called a Reconstruction Conference in Edmonton to consider post-war problems. Since delegates had also to be members of the DMRO, the conclusions of the conference were predictable, and most of the resolutions passed were identical to those passed two months earlier by a joint caucus of provincial MLA's and federal MP's.⁹ The unusual outcome was the formation of a committee consisting of Aberhart, Kirkham Lee of Cardston, Alberta, Blackmore and Mrs. R. Berry of B.C. Their aim was threefold; to form a representative national committee, to arrange educational work (on Social Credit lines), and "To take such steps as may become needed to secure effective action to the end that the will of the Canadian people with respect to reconstruction shall be implemented without further delay."¹⁰

⁹Ibid., 5 November 1942 and 24 December 1942.

¹⁰Ibid., 8 January 1943.

This committee assumed the name of Canada Social Credit League. Following its first meeting it concluded that Social Credit was still the only thing in sight to bring about economic justice, and publicly stated that all hope that the old-line parties would see the light was now exhausted.¹¹

Kirkham Lee urged through Today and Tomorrow that people across Canada should begin to collect information and money, to start organizing study groups, and to send a dollar a month to Aberhart.¹² Aberhart himself appealed for 500 honest men to come forward and to build such study groups about them.¹³ Evidently the national organization was to be built in much the same manner as the Alberta Social Credit League had been developed. The appeal for 500 honest men was but a slight variation of a similar call made in 1934, which had given Aberhart the names of many respected citizens who became prominent in the formation of the League.¹⁴

Aberhart's death in the summer of 1943 shook the movement. The Presidency of the DMRO passed to Paul Prince. Except for a quarrel between Prince and Low concerning the leadership, the organization passed from sight, but the trend which Aberhart had started in the direction of national political action gained

¹¹Ibid, 28 January 1943.

¹²Ibid, 11 February 1943.

¹³Ibid, 4 March 1943.

¹⁴John A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto, 1959), pp. 111-12.

momentum. At a joint caucus of the Social Credit MLAs and MPs, joined by the Alberta Social Credit Board, the decision was taken to hold a national convention early in 1944. The organizing of this convention was left in the hands of the federal members.¹⁵

The goals towards which Aberhart and his colleagues were striving were never clearly defined. No ringing manifesto was issued, no formal crusade launched. However, there was a growing concern for the post-war Canada, and many of Aberhart's speeches had dealt with reconstruction. The federal government and the courts had refused to permit Social Credit to be put into practice in Alberta, and while Aberhart's government had survived on the basis of solid administrative achievements, its members still believed in monetary reform. In the federal government's policy of wartime finance they saw what they felt to be some aspects of Social Credit being applied. At the same time, the tremendous growth in the powers of the federal government seemed to threaten the powers of the provinces. The increasing influence of the CCF seemed to herald the advent of socialism. Within Alberta, Aberhart and his government were secure. The move towards federal action could only be the result of a genuine desire to implement Social Credit at the federal level, and to prevent a post-war return to economic orthodoxy.¹⁶ Drawing on their experiences of

¹⁵Today and Tomorrow, 30 September 1943, and letter from O.A. Kennedy to the author, 2 December 1965.

¹⁶These conclusions are based largely on the speeches of the federal MPs. See for example, Hansard Debates, 5 June 1942, pp.3110-12 and 16 July 1942, pp.4304-10, when it was argued that the Liberals had, in fact, adopted some Social Credit policies; 2 March 1943, pp.826-29 regarding the fear of the CCF; Aberhart's stand opposing the implementation of the Rowell-Sirois Commission's recommendations should also be considered as indicating the concern over the power of the central government.

1934-35, the Alberta Social Crediters turned their efforts towards the establishment of a truly national organization.

Above all else, it was essential that the Quebec Union des Electeurs should participate in the convention if there was to be any appearance of a national organization. Then, as now, the western and eastern wings shared a basic belief, the economic views of Major Douglas. At that time, too, the social and political ideas of the founder were a common heritage, though this was to change. Between them, however, stood the shadow of New Democracy and Herridge's stand on conscription.

The first opportunity for the western wing to clear itself of this stigma was seized by the federal MPs, and particularly by Blackmore. In 1942 a plebiscite was held to determine whether or not the electorate was willing to release the Liberal government from its pledges of 1940 that there would be no military conscription for overseas service. The majority of English-speaking Canadians favoured releasing the government from its prior promises, and it would have been political suicide for the Social Credit MPs to have opposed such a release. On the other hand, they neatly straddled the issue by attacking the terms of the plebiscite. The debate on the Plebiscite Bill was used to criticise the government for not having conscripted finance.¹⁷ While it was made clear that the individual members supported conscription for overseas service, the official attitude as expressed by Blackmore was that the Social Credit group would recommend only that people vote according to their own lights.¹⁸ Subsequently, Blackmore made

¹⁷Hansard Debates, 9 February 1942, pp.415-23 and 26 February 1942, pp.874-7.

¹⁸Ottawa Journal, 23 April 1942.

much of this stand in corresponding with Quebec Social Crediters.¹⁹

This stand, which was essentially negative, was given further weight by the actions of the Alberta legislature, which passed a resolution expressing much the same ideas as what Blackmore had announced. Aberhart refused even to speak on the issue, for in 1940 he had been criticised as a conscriptionist by the same Liberals who now sought to obtain a mandate for conscription.²⁰ The policy was a clever one, for it lessened the danger of the Social Crediters being identified with a programme which was unpopular in Quebec. On the other hand, once the plebiscite had been held and conscription for overseas service had been approved, the Social Credit MPs were able to vote for conscriptionist legislation on the understanding that they were acting in accordance with the will of the people, a will which had been freely expressed without pressure from the MPs.²¹

By late in 1943 a dialogue had begun between the federal MPs and certain Alberta MLAs on one hand (notably Lucien Maynard and A.V. Boucier) and the Quebec leaders on the other. The moves leading to a national convention attended by all groups are obscure, but by the spring of 1944 the Quebec Social Crediters had been persuaded to overcome their fears and had consented to attend such a meeting.

This, however, did not signify an end of their misgivings. The Quebec leaders were determined not to be trapped in any political party, a stand in conformity with both the fundamental

¹⁹Blackmore to Armand Turpin, 9 November 1943, reprinted in Vers Demain, 1 January 1944.

²⁰Today and Tomorrow, 12 February and 23 April 1942.

²¹Hansard Debates, 19 February 1943, p.571.

ideology of Even, based on the theories of Douglas, and the knowledge that any stand taken by the westerners which did not conform with the opinions of French-Canadians would rebound on the Quebec Social Crediters (or Union des Electeurs). The experience of New Democracy had shown how difficult it was to dissasociate one's self from a related organization, regardless of how tenuous the links might be.²²

The convention opened in Toronto on 4 April 1944 with about 150 delegates present. The Quebec group were especially strong, with 42 voting delegates. Alberta had only 39 delegates, and less than half were entitled to vote. Moreover, the Alberta delegates were pledged to bringing about a national social credit organization with a view to fielding candidates in every federal riding. The main resolution introduced called for the formation of a National Social Credit Association "for the purpose of organizing the Dominion of Canada for definite political action to the end that Social Credit candidates, pledge to the Social Credit principles of true political and economic democracy, will contest all federal constituencies where the electors desire an opportunity to elect such a candidate."²³ In other words, the association would be dedicated to getting Social Credit MPs into Parliament.

A Quebec delegate, Armand Turpin introduced an amendment which defined the role of the Association as "preparing and helping the electorate of Canada to support only such candidates as will be pledged to Social Credit principles of true political and

²²Louis Even to Armand Turpin, 18 March 1944. Copy loaned by Mr. Turpin.

²³Edmonton Bulletin, 5 April 1944.

economic democracy." This was attacked by Alberta delegates who declared that no candidate of another party could be trusted to implement social credit, even though he might be pledged to it.

The amendment was finally defeated and the main motion carried, but before this was done the Quebec leader, Louis Even, received assurances that a majority vote would not bind a minority, that electoral action in any region was not mandatory, and that approval of the resolution would not commit any delegation to a particular platform or candidate for national leader.

In view of these feelings the convention could not go far in outlining any platform without running the risk of having an open break between the western and Quebec wings. At an evening session on April 5 the convention approved a general statement of policy which had been suggested by a platform committee. It had few specific proposals, however, doing little more than reaffirming faith in the economic principles of Major Douglas and opposing the formation of political machines. A clause supported the "local sovereignty of the people of Canada...in their respective national, provincial and municipal spheres" (a very vague statement) and another urged that the press and radio make their services available to disseminate social credit ideas.

The position of National Leader was one which combined the political, ceremonial, and organizational leadership of the Association. Logically it should have gone to John Blackmore, the Parliamentary leader, or to Paul Prince, the acting President of the DMRO. Prince, however, was little known outside of Manitoba.

Blackmore, for his part, was regarded by his fellow Albertans as rather narrow, having little interest in any subject other than monetary matters.²⁴ Moreover, the Quebec group considered him as "too British", and indeed he had placed a number of statements on record which were startling in their advocacy of closer ties with Britain.²⁵

The convention elected Solon Low, the popular provincial treasurer of Alberta, as National Leader. A candidate from B.C. withdrew from the contest for the vice-presidency and Mr. J.E. Gregoire, a professor at Laval and former mayor of Quebec City, was chosen as vice-president. The Quebec delegation appeared to support the new association wholeheartedly. The only sour note was struck by Paul Prince who walked out after declaring that the Alberta delegates had sought and obtained too much power in the new organization.²⁶

The Social Credit Association as constituted then was a fragile organization, with virtually no national structure and wholly dependent upon the provincial Social Credit Leagues. The national headquarters was located in Edmonton rather than Ottawa. In view of the fact that the party drew most of its strength from Alberta this was understandable, but it was not favourable to the future growth of the association elsewhere in Canada.

²⁴Interview with O.A. Kennedy, 31 January 1966.

²⁵Interview with Raymond Berthiaume 28 March 1966. See also Hansard Debates, 20 May 1940, pp. 55-56.

²⁶The account of the 1944 convention is based largely on reports published in the Toronto Globe and Mail and the Edmonton Bulletin for that period and Vers Demain, 15 April 1944.

The Association could hardly even be called a political party, since it had no platform other than the monetary reform proposals. On all other matters there could be no binding platform. It was agreed that there should be disagreement. The Union des Electeurs in Quebec was most vocal in this view, and in a speaking tour in the west Mr. Gregoire emphasized why the Quebec groups generally opposed a party organization and electoral action. It was only in this way that the Association was able to weather the conscription storm of 1944. When Low publicly supported conscription while Gregoire was on the same platform, he was compelled to note later that on such an issue he could speak only for himself, and not for the Association.²⁷

Based as it was on the provincial organizations, the National Association was in no position to force itself unilaterally on any social credit grouping. Any attempt to introduce a federal organization would have been vetoed in Quebec, where Even opposed even such items as federal membership cards, because they would entail a bypassing of the provincial organization.²⁸ The Association, then, was constructed in a manner quite in accord with the wishes of the Union des Electeurs, a fact which led Even to write,

"Nous sommes enchantés du resultat du congrès de Toronto....C'est, je crois, la seule formation politique du genre dans le monde entier. Une politique nouvelle, pour amener une économie nouvelle."²⁹

²⁷Interview with A. Turpin and L. Even, 7 November and 5 November 1965.

²⁸Louis Even to A. Turpin, 11 April 1944. Copy loaned by Mr. Turpin.

²⁹Ibid.

It might be argued that the rule by which a majority could not bind a minority intensified disagreements by removing an incentive to compromise, and simply drove opponents to extreme positions. However, the choice had been clear: an association on Even's terms or none at all. Looking at men who might possibly displace Even, the Albertans accepted, hoping for better things to come.

While the arrangements agreed upon in Toronto were to all appearances a set-back for the Albertans, it could be argued that they themselves were not dogmatically determined to form a political party. The fact that Low ran again in the Alberta election of 1944 indicated that he retained an interest in provincial politics and as late as September 1944 he expressed doubts about the advisability of his seeking election to Parliament, expressing the feeling that he would be freer to help the national cause by keeping clear of active politics.³⁰ In the end he chose to run for a federal seat, and the 1945 election was the first test of the National Associations with its ally, L'Union des Electeurs.

The development of L'Union des Electeurs is complex. Because it confined itself largely to provincial politics, and intervened only intermittently in the federal field, a full discussion of its organization and tactics must, of necessity, lie outside the scope of this study. It is perhaps sufficient to note that in August 1944 Even abandoned his fears of electoral action sufficiently to consent to having twelve candidates run in the provincial election. All were defeated, which was not unexpected in an atmosphere so highly charged with issues that drove the Liberals from office be-

³⁰Low to Turpin, 2 September 1944. Copy loaned by Mr. Turpin.

fore the Nationalist offensive of Maurice Duplessis. It was, however, the first step towards electoral action on the part of L'Union des Electeurs.

Precisely why this step was taken is difficult to determine, for although it was defended in accordance with the concept of non-partisan politics, the candidates supposedly being independents, directly responsible to their electors, it nevertheless represented a departure by Even from his previous policy. In interviews he has tended to put it down to a "ginger" group of younger men in L'Union des Electeurs, but Réal Caouette has ascribed it to Even himself.³¹

The answer perhaps lies somewhere between the two, for L'Union des Electeurs and its predecessor, La Ligue du Credit Social, had never attempted any action at the polls save in two ridings contested by La Ligue in 1940 and in a few municipal elections. Over the years it would be natural for some pressure to build up within the body to express itself. It is apparent, however, that the stimulus for electoral action came from within Quebec and not from any outside organization. This reached its peak when L'Union des Electeurs contested every seat in the provincial election of 1948, though without electing a single member.

Between the formation of the National Association in April 1944 and the federal election fourteen months later prominent Social Credit leaders were busily engaged in making speeches across Canada. Their primary goal appears to have been that of explaining the Alberta Social Credit League to persons in Quebec while J.E.

³¹Interviews with Louis Even, 5 November 1965 and Réal Caouette, 6 April 1966.

Gregoire spoke in Western Canada, discussing L'Union des Electeurs and its particular interest in "pressure politics" - the bringing to bear of pressure on elected representatives. Both groups were very much in need of such explanations, but organization continued much as before, with the provincial leagues operating independently. An exception to this was New Brunswick, where the MP for Jasper-Edson, Walter Kuhl, cooperated with representatives of L'Union des Electeurs in the northempart of the province.³² Such cooperation when practiced, was effective, and for some two or three years the Social Credit groups in Madawaska appeared to take root. In the general election of 1945 a Social Credit candidate captured ten per cent of the vote in a four-cornered contest.

In the election of that year Social Credit entered an unprecedented total of 94 candidates in seven of the nine provinces.³³ During the campaign Low spoke primarily in Western Canada and in Ontario, assisted by at least three cabinet ministers from Alberta.³⁴ The Liberals attempted to discredit the Social Credit candidates in Alberta, and Mackenzie King accused them of being as protectionist as the Tories and as reactionary as any international banker.³⁵ Low retorted that he was primarily concerned with the preservation

³²Vers Demain, 15 November 1944.

³³By provinces the party ran the following number of candidates: New Brunswick, 1; Quebec, 43; Ontario, 8; Manitoba, 8; Saskatchewan 9; Alberta, 17; British Columbia, 9. Scarrow, Canada Votes, p. 120.

³⁴Edmonton Bulletin, 8 May 1945, 16 May 1945; Ottawa Citizen, 21 May 1945.

³⁵Ottawa Citizen, 19 May 1945.

of Canadian sovereignty, and complained bitterly that Social Credit had not been given a fair share in the allocation of free radio time on the CBC.³⁶

The election was one of the most confusing in Canadian history. Primarily it was a peace time election fought on the issue of the Liberal's wartime activities. The results were neither encouraging nor discouraging for Social Credit. In some places the party ran well where it had never before shown any strength. In other places the magnitude of its defeats was humiliating.

Ontario was undoubtedly the worst part of the campaign. Despite ambitious campaigning by Low and the Alberta ministers, no candidate in Ontario polled more than three per cent of the vote. Manitoba was more encouraging, but the party polled only eight per cent of the vote in the constituencies where it ran. On the other hand, Springfield gave the party 10.6 per cent of the vote in a five-way contest and in Provencher, a rural French-Canadian seat, Paul Prince (who had rejoined the party) took 17 per cent of the vote, also in a five-way contest. Saskatchewan was much the same, with the party taking about eight per cent of the vote where it chose to enter a candidate, but nowhere showing any concentrated strength. British Columbia was worse; only four per cent of the vote went to Social Credit in its chosen ridings, and no candidate drew more than 7.6 per cent of the vote.³⁷

³⁶Edmonton Bulletin, 24 April 1945, 30 April 1945.

³⁷This analysis of voting is based on Scarrow, op.cit., pp.116-129.

It was in Alberta and Quebec that the party was most successful. The ten sitting Social Credit MPs from Alberta retained their seats and three others were regained from the Liberals. This, however, did not result from a resurgence of Social Credit strength; it was actually the outcome of the general decline in the Liberal Party's popularity and a protest against the manner in which King had procrastinated when faced with conscription.

Throughout the province Social Credit's share of the vote had increased only two per cent, and in eight constituencies the party actually declined in relation to its combined opposition. The Liberals, on the other hand, lost even more, with its vote being divided between the Conservatives and the CCF. Thus, in Edmonton East Patrick Ashby won despite a slight decline in Social Credit strength, the Liberal incumbent's vote dropping from 43.7 per cent to 21.5 per cent of the ballots cast. On the other hand, Social Credit made substantial gains in Peace River and Medicine Hat which almost assured victory in the presence of a revived Conservative party. Overall, however, the party was fortunate that events had so favoured it by dividing the opposition. The Social Crediters were now on the defensive, running very hard to maintain their position rather than expanding.³⁸

³⁸The degree to which the Liberal decline assisted Social Credit may be seen when comparing the 1940 returns in Peace River with those of 1945. In 1940 a Liberal won with 41.3 per cent of the vote vs. 34.3 per cent for Social Credit. By 1945 Social Credit was able to increase its percentage to 41.1, but the Liberal had dropped to 23.1 per cent, Scarrow, op.cit.

The situation in Quebec was confused by the presence of no fewer than 118 candidates not allied with any of the four main parties. These included Independents, Bloc Populaire candidates, and a bewildering array of other office-seekers. In the province as a whole the party gained 7.6 per cent of the total vote, but in eleven constituencies candidates polled ten per cent or more. In Beauce, Chapleau, Levis and Quebec-Montmorency the vote ran to 20 per cent or better in favour of Social Credit. Louis Even's long years of campaigning, and the conscriptionist sins of the Liberals and the Conservatives, were reaping dividends for Social Credit. No Social Credit MP was elected from Quebec, but clearly there was a great deal to be gained in the province. The future of Social Credit as a national party could be assured if the party would strengthen its Quebec wing without endangering its western strongholds. Unhappily, the doctrine of Social Credit contained the seeds of destruction for any such hopes, and it is this doctrine which must now be considered.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL CREDIT TAKES A STAND

The National Social Credit Association, for all its weaknesses, represented an important step in the movement's efforts to attain national importance. Allied with an eastern wing, the western Social Credit organizers could now pose in their own province as representatives of a national party rather than as members of a provincial organization. On the other hand, once the passions of the wartime period had died down, the Quebec Social Crediters could also identify themselves with a militant association which had representatives in Parliament.

Yet when the delegates at the Toronto convention had endorsed the principles of C.H. Douglas, there was little inkling that those same principles might also divide Social Crediters. Social Credit doctrine was not a unitary force. Within Alberta the interpretation of the ideas of C.H. Douglas had resulted in a series of disputes between those who followed the English founder of the movement and disciples of William Aberhart.¹ These disagreements had their counterparts within the National Association. On the one hand the majority of the Alberta Social Crediters were devoted to Social Credit as interpreted by Aberhart and his chief lieutenant Ernest Manning. On the other hand, L'Union des Electeurs was dedicated to Douglas. However, more than three years were to pass before these disagreements came to a head.

¹See J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto, 1959) pp. 171-72; and C.B. Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta, pp. 169-79.

Major C.H. Douglas had begun his career in political-economy with an analysis of the economic system. Having done this he proposed to remedy what he regarded as a deficiency in consumer buying power by increasing the amount of currency and interest-free credit in the hands of consumers. By doing so he hoped to break what he regarded as an economic monopoly operated by banking interests. He proposed to carry out these reforms by having the electors of the nation devote their undivided attention to demanding results from their representatives, who in turn would rely on financial experts for the implementation of these policies.

At this point, about 1932, Aberhart had learned of the Social Credit theories and had adapted them to suit the Alberta situation.² While some people in Alberta continued to follow the Douglas creed, the majority of Albertans learned of Social Credit through Aberhart and his study groups. This did not apply to Social Crediters in Quebec, who considered Aberhart as nothing more than a student of Douglas. Louis Even and his followers maintained direct links with the Douglas Social Credit Secreteriat in England.

Thus, the Alberta League and L'Union des Electeurs followed different paths. For a time these two courses ran parallel to each other. Douglas, however, did more than formulate economic theories; he also developed a political theory and an interpretation of world events from his earlier theories and later experiences. L'Union des Electeurs, unburdened with responsible political power and operating in a hostile political environment, freely followed Douglas.

²For a discussion of the differences between Aberhart and Douglas, see J.A. Irving, "Psychological Aspects of the Social Credit Movement in Alberta", Canadian Journal of Psychology, March and June 1947.

The Alberta Social Credit League, on the other hand, was stamped with Aberhart's own outlook, and was associated with an active government which demanded compromises in the face of political and administrative realities. These differences aggravated the problems which one might find in any association having a substantial French element. However, the National Social Credit Association had been formed on the basis of an agreement to the effect that a minority could not be bound by majority decisions. This encouraged doctrinaire stands and drove opponents to argue points of difference rather than to seek compromises. At its first test the internal structure of the National Association proved to be unequal to the strains imposed upon it.

The earlier writings of Douglas had included references to a financial oligarchy exerting overwhelming power. Thus, in Social Credit we find him declaring,

"The financial system is a centralizing system; it can have only one logical end, and that is a world dictatorship. There seems to be little doubt that the temporary headquarters of this potential world dictatorship have been moved from country to country several times during the last five or six centuries. At one time it was in....Genoa, then in the Low Countries and Lombardy, from whence came the Jewish Lombards who gave their name to Lombard Street."³

In England the Social Credit movement went into decline and as it did so Douglas and his followers drew out the ideas of the earlier Social Credit writings and followed them to their logical conclusions.⁴ The resulting doctrine included: 1) the attribution

³C.H. Douglas, Social Credit (London, 1933) p.160.

⁴For an analysis of the later trends in Douglas's theories, see Macpherson, Democracy in Alberta, pp. 179-92.

of the world's faults to a conspiracy by international financiers who controlled the world's political, economic and communication systems, 2) a form of anti-semitism which identified the conspiracy with Jewish bankers, 3) the ultimate rejection of the secret ballot and of majority decisions being binding on dissenters.

These ideas, gradually evolved by Douglas, were disseminated through his English magazine, The Social Crediter and publications such as The Big Idea.⁵ As they developed, the Canadian Social Credit bodies absorbed and broadcast them, and each succeeding step in Douglas' thinking was mirrored in Canada. As early as 1940 a writer using the pen-name "Spitfire" published a tirade in Today and Tomorrow, then the organ of the Alberta Social Credit League which was probably the most blatant piece of anti-semitism ever published in that newspaper.

"It is significant that, hatched in Germany by a particular section of that nation - the financial Jewry - the Money Power has since been a constant and growing menace to everything decent and worthwhile in civilization....Rothschild; Meyer; Buruch; Schuster, Warburg; Kahn; Kuhn; Guggenheim; Neimeyer; Schriff; Sief. As a sample these names should suffice. Can it, then, be an accident that the poisoned teaching from which has sprung the various Socialist totalitarian doctrines - Nazi-ism, Fasc-ism and Bolshevism - can also be traced to the same source. Karl Marx was not only German, but he was of the same racial origin as Meyer Amschel and Company."⁶

Few declarations were so explicit, but the fact remains that the publications of the Canadian Social Credit movement frequently attempted to link international finance and Jews with Hitler, Communism, Socialism, the CCF and international bodies such

⁵C.H. Douglas, The Big Idea (KRP Publications, Liverpool. No date, copy held by Glenbow Foundation, Calgary).

⁶Today and Tomorrow, 26 September 1940.

as the World Bank. Significantly the official publications of the National Association, Vers Demain and The Canadian Social Crediter, and the Alberta Social Credit Board, which also disseminated Douglas theories through its annual reports, were far removed from involvement in day-to-day politics. The Canadian Social Crediter frequently reprinted material originating with the Douglas Social Credit Association and the Social Credit Board with little comment. While the paper was explicit in its outlining of the world financial conspiracy, its anti-Semitism was veiled behind attacks on "Political Zionism" which was generally associated with pressure on Britain to create a national home for Jews in Palestine. The editor from 1945 until 1947 was J.P. Gillese, who has commented on his role in The Canadian Social Crediter.

"I was young and too immature for such a job. I had too little help: the results, even in terms of make-up of the paper, still make me wince. However, I did have an excellent grasp of Social Credit principles - though time has matured these views. I was idealistically ignorant of the venom of opposition politics (and at that age reacted with an acid pen) and equally convinced SC politicians were a breed apart. I know now, of course, that all politicians are moulded by their pursuits and that, in most parties, there are probably more decent politicians than ruthless ones."⁷

The essential point to remember when discussing the relations with the Douglasites is that, regardless of how disagreeable some of the ideas may have been, they nevertheless were pro-

⁷Letter from J.P. Gillese to author, 16 February 1966. Gillese has stated that it was not until later that he realized where the Douglas theories led, a view probably shared by many who followed Douglas without attempting to criticize or analyze his writings.

pounded by men who honestly felt that the man who, in their view, had divulged the secrets of finance and the economic system must also be right in other matters. For the few the guiding light was Douglas. Their blundering after him disrupted the National Association and made it a target for other parties, but for the most part it was not bigots who followed Douglas, but ideologues.

Undoubtedly, the tinge of anti-semitism was the most shameful blot on the Social Credit movement. Not all members apparently realized the significance of Douglas' writings and were surprised when the public branded them as bigots. Solon Low, for example, spoke of the terror of international financiers, mentioned many of the persons listed in Today and Tomorrow, and suggested that they should be tried for treason.⁸ Yet Low later backed away from these statements and eventually won considerable personal respect in the Jewish press.⁹ When he died, the Ottawa Citizen editorialized,

"Mr. Low was never branded with the racial intolerance displaced by some of his followers in the House of Commons. Unfortunately he was unable to remove that stigma on his party, and to that extent his effectiveness was reduced. Yet he himself retained the goodwill of most members of the other parties in the House."¹⁰

Yet once anti-semitism had crept into Social Credit literature it was difficult to root out and though Low and his colleagues frequently denied anti-semitic sentiments and denounced anti-semitism, they took no action to publicly censure those in their

⁸ Ottawa Citizen, 6 July 1944.

⁹ Low Papers, Low to Allen Bernfeld, 31 May 1955; Bernfeld to Low, 3 June 1955. Bernfeld, a writer for the National Jewish Post, had accused Low of anti-semitism. Low was able to persuade him that this was not accurate, and received an apology.

¹⁰ Ottawa Citizen, 26 December, 1962.

ranks who were undoubtedly anti-semitic. Their failing was most pronounced in the case of Norman Jaques, the MP for Wetaskawin. Jaques was the most extreme follower of Douglas, and his public statements did more than anything else to embarrass the Social Credit movement. On the floor of the House of Commons he indulged in the most violent anti-semitism, and even read into Hansard excerpts from the spurious Protocols of Zion.¹¹ To compound the damage, he wrote dozens of letters to newspapers throughout Canada and also addressed right-wing organizations in the United States. Eventually his activities tarred the whole movement with the brush of anti-semitism. Though he was long supported by his local newspaper, even this became exasperated and repudiated him in 1947.

Jaques had always been a prime target for newspaper editorial writers. A measure of how far he went can be gained from the fact that eventually C.A. Bowman, whose Ottawa Citizen had long supported Social Credit, also expressed exasperation with him.

"Before Norman Jaques became obsessed with the Communist bogey - with the International Jew behind, he used to be a lucid propagandist of Social Credit....the member for Wetaskawin has strayed so far off the beam, he has apparently lost the Social Credit perspective....Mr. Jaques could be reminded, as he has been by other pioneers of Social Credit, that he has done more to bring discredit on the Social Credit movement in Canada than any other forthright opponent in Parliament or outside."¹²

Undaunted, he blundered on. These activities were opposed by the majority of his fellow MP's who criticized him strongly in private.¹³ Jaques, however, was not completely alone.

¹¹Hansard Debates, 24 March 1943, pp. 1530-34; 9 July 1943, p.4571; 12 July 1943, pp.4660-63; 24 July 1943, pp.5397-98.

¹²C.A. Bowman, letter to Ottawa Citizen, 30 April 1946.

¹³Low Papers, Low to L.D. Byrne, 15 May 1947.

When the Saskatoon Star Phoenix accused the party of anti-semitism Dr. J.N. Haldeman replied with a letter more damaging than the editorial which provoked it.¹⁴ As will be seen, efforts were eventually made to halt this dangerous and negative approach to events and after 1948 it was largely stamped out, but echoes of it persisted within the movement until the early 1950's.¹⁵

The most blatant anti-semitism was practised by L'Union des Electeurs, and its activities did much to discredit the National Association. Thus, Réal Caouette, the only MP ever elected by L'Union des Electeurs, on two occasions asked the Minister of Finance to state the nationality of an employee of the Bank of Canada, Louis Rasminsky.¹⁶ Vers Demain made matters worse by indulging in the most extreme form of anti-semitism.¹⁷

Before turning to other aspects of Douglas's later ideas, it should be pointed out that L'Union des Electeurs exhibited certain unique characteristics which were related directly to its Quebec environment. The environment included the Catholic Church and the Union Nationale. Most important was their attitude towards communism.

It will be recalled that the Catholic Church had a strong aversion to communism and socialism. This led many French-Canadians to attach particular significance to the attitude of

¹⁴Canadian Social Crediter, 2 January 1947.

¹⁵Ibid, 9 September 1953.

¹⁶Hansard Debates, 11 February 1948, p.1093; 24 March 1948, P.2564. The answer provided was "Canadian".

¹⁷See for example, "Planisme et juiverie", Vers Demain, 1 November 1945; "B. Baruch, Vedette Mondial", Ibid, 1 May 1945; "Finance Juive et Bolchevisme", Ibid, 15 July 1945 and issues from 1 January 1946 to 15 August 1946 publishing the "Protocols of Zion".

politicians towards communism, and at the same time to sympathize with those elements outside Quebec who might side with the Church against communism. Thus, as H.F. Quinn has written, the Spanish Civil War was seen as "a holy war" and the defender of Catholicism was General Franco. The Union Nationale, in power from 1936 to 1940 and 1944 to 1960, was able to capitalize on a strong anti-communist stand and to attack opposition groups for being supposedly communist. It was aided by an exaggerated concept among Catholics of the dangers of communism after 1946.¹⁸

The organizers of L'Union des Electeurs, particularly Louis Even and Mme. Gilbert Cote, appreciated the need for the support of the Church if they were to make any significant progress. Through the early efforts of Armand Turpin and René Pelletier, MP, the movement won some support from Father Georges-Henri Levesque as early as 1936. From 1939 to 1941 the movement was alternately attacked and defended by various clerics. During this period Vers Demain published a number of articles which attempted to prove that Catholicism and Social Credit were not only compatible but complementary.¹⁹ Then, on 25 November 1941 Cardinal Villeneuve denounced the movement, suggesting that it was dangerous and revolutionary.²⁰ By implication this meant that Social Credit was regarded by the Church as akin to communism.

¹⁸Herbert F. Quinn, The Union Nationale (Toronto, 1963) pp. 123-129.

¹⁹See, for example, "Credit Social et doctrine catholique", Vers Demain, 15 December 1940; "En marge d'une declaration", Ibid, 15 November 1941.

²⁰Dossier Creditiste (1945), a rebuttal published by Louis Even.

In order to ward off attacks by the Church and by political opponents, L'Union des Electeurs adopted an attitude in Vers Demain of militant Catholicism, attempting at every opportunity to identify itself with the Church. In doing so, however, the Quebec organization went so far as to eulogize persons whom it regarded as Catholic martyrs and heroes. These eventually included Franco and Marshal Pétain.²¹ By then, however, both men were regarded in English Canada as fascists, allies of Hitler and the charge of fascism clung to L'Union des Electeurs and its ally, the National Association.

Another aspect of the Douglas philosophy was a mistrust of all international organizations, which would, according to theory, be dominated by financiers for the purpose of world domination. Furthermore, these financiers were associated with socialists and that most hated of all institutions, the London School of Economics which, it was claimed, was but a training ground for international financiers and bureaucrats.²² These ideas were discussed in the annual reports of the Alberta Social Credit Board from 1940 onwards.

Some, though not all, MP's carried these notions into Parliament. When a book was published advocating a federal union of the democratic nations,²³ its appearance was claimed to be part of a diabolical plot and it became the object of bitter attacks.²⁴

²¹Vers Demain, 15 March and 15 June 1946.

²²Hansard Debates, 4 March 1943, pp. 969-71; 25 March 1943, p.1533; 9 May 1944, pp.2782-85.

²³C.K. Streit, Union Now (New York, 1940).

²⁴Hansard Debates, 13 June 1940, p.763; 25 November 1940, pp.354-8; 24 March 1942, pp.5037-8.

The League of Nations was described as "anti-democratic" and "a league of central bankers."²⁵ When B.K. Sandwell remarked at a meeting of the Ottawa League of Nations Society that international authorities might require a lessening of loyalty to the Crown his remarks were denounced by Hansell and Jaques as treasonable.²⁶

Their chief objections, however, were to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations which arose out of the conferences at Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks in 1944 and the Parliamentary group waged a bitter campaign to delay the ratification and implementation of these agreements by Parliament. In doing so they showed a serious misunderstanding of the nature of the organizations involved. John Blackmore declared,

"The Social Credit movement believes that the proposals for the centralization of economic control on a world scale through a world monetary authority backed by armed forces of overwhelming strength and involving the centralization of political power on a world scale, which was formulated at the Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks conferences, and which is to form the basis of the forthcoming San Francisco conference, would, first, involve the surrender of every vestige of national sovereignty; second, destroy Canada's democratic constitution; third, place this nation at the mercy of an alien-dominated international power; fourth; render Canadians helpless to effect a democratic reconstruction of the national economy in accordance with their wishes; and fifth, establish an armed world dictatorship wielding absolute power."²⁷

Meanwhile, the Social Credit Board in Alberta continued to publish the latest ideas of C.H. Douglas. When Douglas advocated the abolition of the secret ballot and of political parties, subject

²⁵Ibid, 25 March 1941, p. 1026.

²⁶Ibid, 7 April 1943, pp. 1941-43.

²⁷Ibid, 23 March 1945, p. 152. See also 27 November 1940, pp. 6630-31; 8 December 1945, pp. 3141-42; 11 December 1945, pp. 3286-87; 14 December 1945, pp. 3513-14.

to certain conditions, the board followed suit.²⁸ The board, of course, was a provincial body, and its recommendations were not binding on the Alberta government. However, the federal group, speaking for the National Association, was so closely tied to the Alberta Social Credit League that it could not escape any criticism arising out of events in Alberta. The report of 1947 provided newspapers and opponents with more ammunition to attack the Social Credit MP's. Low, finding himself and his colleagues under attack while he himself had no copy of the controversial document, complained to Premier Manning about the situation, though he was concerned less with the content of the report and more with its publication before he could see a copy.²⁹

It was, in fact, Manning who moved to stifle the Douglasites, first by attacking their views in the Alberta Social Credit League, then by disbanding the Social Credit Board, The Canadian Social Crediter however, was a different matter, as the paper was owned by the National Council. This problem was disposed of at a meeting of the Council in Calgary in November 1947 when the management and policy of the paper was thoroughly discussed. This was done largely at the insistence of Manning, who claimed that the policy of the paper was too vague at a time when many people considered its statements to have the approval of the provincial government. An editorial policy was subsequently laid down, declaring, among other things, 1) that the paper be militant, informative, timely and constructive, 2) that in identifying the enemies of the people it should hold no creed or race up in ridicule 3) that

²⁸Canadian Social Crediter, 24 April to 22 May 1947.

²⁹Low Papers, Low to Manning, 29 March 1947.

it be free to attack Political Zionism, 4) that it should reflect the principles and tenets of Social Credit as enunciated by Major Douglas in November 1924, 5) that there be no public defence of causes or characters such as Franco who were in ill-repute (this an obvious reference to Vers Demain), and 6) that there be no destructive criticism of the Alberta government or any official Social Credit organization.³⁰

While Premier Manning played a prominent role in the meeting, the minutes do not convey the impression that he dominated it. Indeed, some members who might be considered Douglasites in respect to some matters contributed greatly to the discussions. Major A.H. Jukes, the President of the British Columbia movement and Second Vice-President of the National Association, was a man who favoured political action in accordance with the non-partisan proposals of Major Douglas. This did not prevent him from proposing that the Association should accept as its policies the ideas of Douglas only insofar as they have been stated up to 1924. This would have made the economic doctrines acceptable without in any way approving the later social and historical views of Major Douglas. On the other hand, most of the federal MPs attending were reserved, with the exception of Hansell and Low.

Some but not all of the men who could be considered Douglasite on the basis of their writings and speeches split with the party. Norman Jaques, though invited to write for Voice of the Electors, a paper following Douglas Social Credit, did not accept the offer. It should be pointed out, however, that Low did little to discipline his erratic colleague. Though an effort was made locally to keep

³⁰Ibid, Minutes of the National Council Meeting, 29-30 November 1947.

the nomination from Jaques in 1949, the durable member for Wetaskawin won out and was warmly congratulated by his leader.³¹ He died, however, before the close of the 1949 session of Parliament.

If one considers the actions of the MP's only in relation to their stands on issues where Douglas had held extreme views, one might imagine the Social Crediters as little more than a lunatic fringe in Canadian politics. This, however, would be a caricature and men who conform to a caricature simply do not continue to win elections. The federal MP's could, in most cases, point to a long list of speeches which they had made urging increased agricultural benefits and projects such as dams in southern Alberta. Moreover, their conservatism did not always lead to speeches on high finance. Hansell, for example, in showing concern over the powers of the CBC, suggested that democracy and justice would be better served if the regulatory powers of the CBC were given instead to an independent body.³² He was, in fact, suggesting something resembling the present Board of Broadcast Governors.

Such work helped to maintain the MP's in office. However, the National Social Credit Association had not been formed to sustain the MP's but to spread Social Credit in Canada. The later theories of Douglas, being politically unacceptable to the Alberta wing, were nevertheless endorsed by L'Union des Electeurs. The tensions within the Association were thus accentuated. One further development in Douglas theory brought the two into an open clash. This was his later views on political organization, and it is to the organization and the pressures within it that we must now turn.

³¹Low Papers, Low to Jaues, 12 January 1949.

³²Hansard Debates, 23 August 1946, pp. 5301-07.

CHAPTER V

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION - 1945-49

The National Social Credit Association reached its height in the immediate post-war era, a period in which the CCF also proved most successful in the federal field. Following the 1945 election the new National Leader settled down to the overwhelming task of attempting to build a national organization. He was, of course, handicapped by the fact that the Association was made up from provincial organizations. Thus, the national executive could operate in a province only with the tacit consent of the local group. Conflicts within the various provinces, plus a serious quarrel over doctrine, was eventually to tear the Association apart, but that lay in the future.

Following the 1945 election the party faced a severe financial problem with a deficit of \$3,000 at the head office alone. Moreover, it was felt that any attempt to confine activity to western Canada would be unwise in view of the fact that Ontario was potentially greater as a source of campaign funds.¹ This question loomed large at a meeting of the National Council in Ottawa that fall, when it was pointed out that Alberta should be relieved or at least supported more heavily in financing the Association on a national scale.²

¹Low Papers, Solon Low to S.J. Fisher, 30 July 1945.

²Ibid, Minutes of Meeting of the National Council of the Social Credit Association of Canada, 10-11 September 1945.

Despite appeals in The Canadian Social Crediter funds sent directly to the national body were a mere trickle. Occasionally the English paper published a list of contributors and the amounts given to the "On to Ottawa" Fund (known in 1946-47 as the Victory Fund). Unhappily the figures are not complete and serve only to illustrate how little came in from this source. Between 7 November 1946 and 31 July 1947 the paper recorded a total of only \$840.52 in contributions, although the figures for February and April 1947 were not recorded. More than half this money came from persons or groups inside Alberta. Even the casual observer realized the dependence of the National Association on Alberta. Indeed, at the second National Convention, held in Regina in April 1946, it was noted that Alberta practically financed the movement, though the hope was again expressed that the other provinces would increase their contributions.³

A financial statement for the period of 1 July 1946 to 31 October 1947, while not agreeing completely with the foregoing concerning the "On to Ottawa" fund, shows how the organization operated. It gives the following figures:

Receipts - Alberta Social Credit League -	\$ 4,332.17
Sask. " " "	118.00
Ontario " " "	941.50
Manitoba " " "	100.03
B.C. " " Association	135.10
Literature and Buttons	46.00
Union of Electors, Pontiac Account	32.40
Donations	22.25
Victory account	<u>800.00</u>
	\$ 6,527.45

³Low Papers, Report of Second National Convention, 4-6 April 1946.

In other words, the Alberta movement financed two-thirds of the budget, with only Ontario providing any meaningful assistance. The largest expenditures were for organizers and officials. Ron Gostick, national secretary, received \$1,254.91 and O.A. Kennedy, acting national organizer was paid \$1,200.00, or more than one third of the budget. Radio, printing, buttons, telephones, telegrams, postage, express charges, stationary, secretarial work and typewriters accounted for a further \$2,547.32. This left less than one-quarter of the budget for items such as social credit schools (\$150.00), the National Leader's expenses (\$450.38) and other officials. The most significant figure, however, was that which indicated the hand-to-mouth existence of the association - cash on hand as of 31 October 1947 was only \$50.10.⁴

Much of the attention of the national executive was taken up in reviewing progress in the other provinces. The case of Manitoba provides a good illustration. Its organization was akin to a house of cards, and as an example of the material available it shows one problem which harassed "the national".

From 1936 onwards Manitoba had been the scene of intermittent warfare among a number of rival Social Credit organizations, with a series of alliances and misalliances taking place between the Social Credit Association of Manitoba, the Manitoba Social Credit League and the Social Credit MLAs elected from 1936 forward. A disagreement over the MLA's support of the Bracken Ministry in 1936 had been resolved by the mediation of Aberhart, but the characters on the stage continued to show no inclination to form

⁴Low Papers, Minutes of National Council Meeting, 29-30 November 1947.

a tightly-knit organization. The Bracken coalition proposals drove another wedge into their ranks with four of the Social Crediters supporting the idea while one opposed it. Three coalitionist Social Credit MLAs won re-election simply because there was scarcely any opposition (one MLA withdrew voluntarily in favour of a Liberal-Progressive coalition candidate) and thereafter their organizations disintegrated. Active Social Crediters re-grouped into a number of other associations. The Manitoba Social Credit League, having drummed the coalitionists out of its ranks⁵ became largely dormant and the Manitoba Social Credit Association under Paul Prince was finally able to assert itself as the legitimate group in the province.

Shortly before the 1946 National Convention the Manitoba organization fell to pieces as Paul Prince withdrew, charging a breach of pledges concerning recognition of his organization.⁶ It fell to the national executive to try to salvage something from the wreckage.

After meeting a few loyal Manitobans, the National Council decided to hold its next meeting in Winnipeg to coincide with a provincial convention in October. While the meeting was concerned with national organization, the presence of many leading Social Crediters in the city was obviously intended to bolster the morale of the Manitobans. At the same time, a series of organizers from Quebec and Alberta toured the province. When the Manitoba Social Credit League was re-established, the convention subsequently came out in favour of a Union of Electors in Manitoba.⁷

⁵Winnipeg Free Press, 27 November 1940.

⁶Ibid, 1 April 1946.

⁷Vers Demain, 25 October 1946.

The use of such a formula was later to become an issue between the French and English wings of the national association, and the quarrel was re-enacted on the provincial stage. When the Douglas Social Crediters broke off in 1948 to form the Douglas Social Credit Council, the Manitoba executive was once more split.

This preoccupation with provincial organizations was hazardous in that it frequently forced the National Association and its official to take sides in the feuds which raged within the local leagues. Moreover, funds were so limited that they had to be concentrated in one field or another rather than being spread around. This aggravated differences between provincial leagues. In 1948, for example, the leader of the British Columbia branch charged the National Council with having unwisely promoted a provincial drive in Saskatchewan during an election at the expense of the "On to Ottawa" drive, and that such support had never been accorded to the B.C. group.⁸

In one way or another each of these problems of warring factions was to aggravate the problems of finances, propaganda and lack of public support in each province. All efforts to obtain a popular following seemed to meet with failure in the face of entrenched political parties.

Many Social Crediters who had been closely following the writings of C.H. Douglas felt the answer to lie with the idea of a Union of Electors, such as was propounded by the Quebec organization, notably J.E. Gregoire, and by such men as L.D. Byrne, advisor to the Alberta Social Credit Board. Basically, the concept was the result of mistrust in political parties as being undemocratic. In a paper on the subject, Byrne wrote:

⁸Low Papers, A.H. Jukes to Solon Low, 25 November 1948.

"The party system is a denial of the principles of genuine democracy. It is based on the obviously false premise that a part is greater than the whole. It divides the people into conflicting political camps and precipitates continual strife in the political sphere. However, a more serious criticism against the party system is that it concentrates control of policy in the party organization, and the electorate had no effective control over its legislative bodies, except to a limited extent for one day every four or five years when electors have the choice of voting for one of several party candidates. Once elected, the people have no more control over their 'representatives' until the next election."⁹

After restating the Douglas theory of political action, that it is the responsibility of the people to demand, through their representatives, specific results from the administration, he went on to discuss how continuous control over the representatives was to be exercised. To do so, he pointed out, it would be necessary to circumvent a political system dominated in all its aspects by a sinister force working against human freedom and welfare, a force which could be expected to fight back with every means at its disposal.¹⁰ The organization required had to be proof against sanctions, capable of countering with sanctions of its own, capable of negating the policies and activities of the world conspirators, flexible and at the same time be in accordance with the ends to be attained - a Christian and democratic society.¹¹ He added:

⁹L.D. Byrne, Action - Policy, Strategy and Tactics, undated paper, circa 1943, page 5.

¹⁰Ibid, p.7-9.

¹¹Ibid, p.9-10.

"The key to such action lies in the systematic destruction of all concentrations of temporal power. This can be achieved only by the diffusion of all such power among the people as a whole; in other words, the transfer of power from the few in whose hands it is centralized at present to the people as a whole."¹²

He then sketched a proposal for a Union of Electors by which the people would first be made aware of their potential power. During or following this they would organize into groups of tens and hundreds, each with a chairman who would be responsible and removable at will. As councils were built up for districts, constituencies and regions, the chairmen would continue to be removable, regardless of how high the level of organization and no party official or legislator would be able to sit on such councils. Finances would be controlled at the level of the "Hundred"; any council higher up would be dependent on the lower echelons for its funds. All decisions made at the councils would be referred back to the lower groups.

The purpose of all this was to have the electors unite in formulating their demands and in assessing the results obtained by their legislators. Discussion as to methods would be accepted only when it pertained to the method of disciplining the legislator. Membership was to be open to all who were willing to pay dues at the group (that is, the group of ten) level.¹³

These ideas were aimed at producing an organization not unlike a trade union. Once instituted, such a system would have swept away political parties, but the problems of organizing such

¹²Ibid, p.10.

¹³Ibid, pp.22-26.

a union on even a regional scale are apparent. The idea was slanted towards the maximum of individual and local control. Attempts at a regional, much less a national, consensus would be frustrated by the insistence of the local groups who would be in favour of their own proposals but who would be in no position to hear argument from other regions, as would the MP.

Of course, it can be pointed out that the nature of the proposals to be put forward, without reference to methods, would be so general that a consensus could readily be arrived at. Everyone would be in favour of increased services, lower taxes, honest advertising, greater freedom, etc. This, however, avoided the basic question of methods: how were such results to be achieved in an area with so many cultural and economic patterns? The original proponents of the Union of Electors would be forced either to refuse to discuss the matter or to be drawn into discussion of their own ideas - the Douglas Social Credit system. From the outset the Union of Electors - claiming to be a non-party organization - would be associated with a political party, though many of its members claimed that it was not.

In any case, the idea was never put into practice, though the Quebec wing under Louis Even claimed to be organized along non-partisan lines. In practice, the Union of Electors was dominated by l'Institut d'Action Politique (I.A.P.) a self-appointed educational body which held no elections. Its organ, Vers Demain, was to provide a guide for the members of the I.A.P. who might otherwise err. Owner, editor and chief contributor to Vers Demain was Louis Even.¹⁴

¹⁴Vers Demain, 1 March 1944.

Nevertheless, the concept was widely publicized in Social Credit circles. John P. Gillese, editor of The Canadian Social Crediter, gave his support to the idea, as did Ron Gostick, who for a time served as secretary to the National Association, and then to the Ontario Social Credit League.

The chief difficulty was how to reconcile a Social Credit League with the Union of Electors. The latter, by avoiding a discussion of methods, was to draw support from all groups and thus undercut the political parties. On the other hand, Leagues similar to that in Alberta were already dedicated to a specific line of action - the economic doctrines of C.H. Douglas. By being tied together the Union of Electors became identified with a party. Such an uneasy alliance could end only in dissolution.

Gostick, an admirer of Even, criss-crossed the country in 1946 promoting the idea of electoral unions. The sight of organizers settling back into orthodox activity only spurred him on. In a letter to Solon Low on the Alberta situation he wrote:

"I am, however, somewhat struck by the lack of organization and 'sit-back-and-take-it-easy' attitude of some of our provincial members. Believe me, a real live Union of Electors up in Alberta would make life miserable for some members I know. I really believe that the dynamic drive will come from the East to carry Social Credit on to Ottawa."¹⁵

Elsewhere he stated that even a Social Credit administration would require a Union of Electors "to keep them heading straight for the objective and fighting for it every minute of every day".¹⁶ These statements, and the open manner in which they were expressed were not conducive to harmony in the movement.

¹⁵Low Papers, Gostick to Low, 19 August 1946.

¹⁶Canadian Social Crediter, 1 August 1946.

The electoral union proposals were favoured by some MPs. Patrick Ashby, who represented Edmonton East from 1945 to 1949, and who had been led to Social Credit through his own readings rather than through the Alberta Social Credit,¹⁷ was vocal in urging his constituents to submit their demands to him and to exert pressure on the government.¹⁸ He also expressed these views on the floor of the House of Commons.¹⁹ Walter Kuhl, MP for Jasper Edson from 1935 to 1949, also subscribed to these ideas. In the House he quoted from the Buxton speech in which C.H. Douglas had criticized the political system insofar as parties were concerned. Proceeding from this, Kuhl went on to describe and defend the concept of unions of electors.²⁰

In spite of the presence of men like Gostick, Ashby and Kuhl in the movement, the idea had little force behind it. On the other hand, few exponents of the Social Credit League organization were inclined to argue. To do so would have threatened the unity of the movement at a time when the national organization had sufficient problems. Moreover, there seemed to be no reason why the two systems could not be used in the same national association. There can be no doubt too, that the idea of Social Credit being a movement rather than an ordinary party carried some appeal to the rank and file and the idea that electors should have direct control over their representatives was officially supported for

¹⁷Austin F. Cross, "Parliamentary Personalities", Western Business, September 1946.

¹⁸Canadian Social Crediter, 11 April 1946.

¹⁹Hansard Debates, 13 September 1945, pp.143-45.

²⁰Ibid, 20 May 1947. Kuhl was the party's spokesman on constitutional matters. It was never stated that this concept would nullify the ideas expressed by Edmond Burke in his Address to The Electors of Bristol.

several years.²¹

The second national convention of the Association, meeting in Regina in April 1946, considered the best means of organizing the movement. At this time the conflict between the two views was not apparent. J.E. Gregoire, one of the most outspoken advocates of "pressure politics" on local issues and of political (i.e. Social Credit) education, voiced a fear of the growing power of the old political machines (not without reason) and urged that more candidates should be placed in the field before it was too late.²² In the same vein he introduced a motion calling for non-party electors action groups to be formed in as many polling divisions as possible.²³

The complete resolution as adopted and published in Vers Demain appeared to give the national association's stamp of approval to the advocates of electors unions. It was, in fact, so detailed that it worth quoting in full:

"Il est resolu:

"1) Que les principaux efforts du mouvement, soient désormais orientés vers l'établissement de groupes d'action, sans couleur de partie dans autant de divisions électorales que possible.

"2) Que ces groupes d'action unissent et mobilisent les électeurs dans leurs divisions électorales respectives pour réclamer les résultats qu'ils désirent.

"3) A mesure que dans un comté une majorité des électeurs se trouvent organisée selon les lignes ci-dessus, que des mesures soient prises pour placer le représentant élu de ce comté sous le contrôle effectif de l'électorat.

²¹See for example, The Canadian Social Crediter, 20 February 1952 and 2 July 1953.

²²Edmonton Bulletin, 5 April 1946.

²³Regina Leader Post, 6 April 1946.

"4) Que le Conseil National soit autorisé à préparer un programme détaillé d'action en conformité avec cette politique et à le soumettre aux organisations créditistes provinciales et autres organisations non-créditistes pour consideration et execution.

"5) Que rien dans ces propositions ne soit interprété comme interdissent l'organisation de groupes créditistes pour l'action politique direct electorale la où l'organisation creditiste provinciale juge à propos de le faire."²⁴

The last section of this resolution, which in effect approved the continuing activities of the Alberta Social Credit League and others like it, was proposed by the Quebec delegates themselves and so the resolution appeared to be a workable compromise. The essential thing was that the form of action taken was to be decided by the provincial organization. This lessened the authority of both the National Association and the local constituency groups. There was little likelihood that both forms of organizations could operate in a province without the provincial executive being split. At such a juncture the National Association would have to choose which faction (and which form of action) it endorsed.

The electors unions became more prominent when the Quebec organization, forced to take more direct action on the urging of some of its younger officials, suddenly appeared as a real threat to the older parties. This occurred in dramatic fashion in two by-elections. On 16 September 1946 Réal Caouette won the constituency of Pontiac. Three months later l'Union des Electeurs won 30% of the vote in Richelieu-Verchers. Although the Liberal candidate won in the latter, the election was in many ways a victory for Even and his I.A.P., for the actions of the Liberals exempli-

²⁴Vers Demain, 1 May 1946.

fied the worst of what the rising new group was trying to destroy. The election was marked by thefts of electoral lists, beatings, and the kidnapping of Union des Electeurs officials.

Many papers played down these events. Canadian Forum, practically the mouthpiece of the CCF, did not. Facing the same bogey in Quebec which had frustrated the socialists in Alberta, the magazine took a long look at Social Credit. In four articles the magazine launched stinging attacks on the Social Credit Party, particularly l'Union des Electeurs, which H.F. Quinn gloomily judged to be capturing the vote previously held by the Bloc Populaire, and to be a major threat if prosperity failed.²⁵

Even then, however, Low was not particularly happy in his relations with l'Union des Electeurs, feeling that they had left much to be desired in their campaign in Pontiac. In particular he complained that much of the campaigning and financing in Lower Pontiac had been left to the Parliamentary group.²⁶

Much more disruptive, though less apparent at the time, was the distinction between those who stressed the two concepts. The members from Alberta had found by trial and error the difficulty of uniting people on a non-partisan basis, and their successes had been gained by establishing themselves as a de facto political party. The Quebecers, however, had initially entered politics in municipal elections where party labels were not an issue. More-

²⁵H.F. Quinn, "Social Credit in Quebec", Canadian Forum, March 1947. See also Doris French, "What's Happening to Social Credit?", Ibid, January 1947; D.C. MacDonald, "The Three P's and Political Trends", Ibid, December 1946; "Social Credit in Parliament", Ibid, March 1947.

²⁶Low Papers, Low to Gostick, 21 August 1946.

over, the Quebec leaders, divorced by the structure of the I.A.P. from responsible political action, were inclined to push their ideas with particular fervor. In doing so they laid themselves open to the charge of interfering in other provinces. They were able to have the electoral unions approved in principle at Regina and at the Manitoba convention in October 1946, after Quebec organizers had been active among the French communities. Geography prevented any follow-up in that province. Ontario, however, was a different case, and there the two ideas came into open conflict. The manner of the confrontation aggravated the problem.

At the convention of the Ontario Social Credit League held in November 1946, numerous exponents of the union scheme were present, notably Even, Caouette and Gostick. The convention suspended the constitution of the League and replaced it with a two-man executive empowered to appoint all committees and officials. Membership in the League was to be restricted to those who had sold five or more subscriptions to either Social Credit paper, and the League was directed to establish a union of electors in accordance with the policy laid down at Regina.²⁷ What was envisaged was obviously an organization similar to that in Quebec, with the League having the organizational and directive functions of the IAP.

The complete overhaul of the party did not come without some misgivings on the part of the rank and file members and junior executives who had hitherto run the party on admittedly orthodox and unsuccessful lines. Particularly annoying was the appointment of local officials.²⁸

²⁷Canadian Social Crediter, 5 December 1946.

²⁸Doris French, "What's Happening to Social Credit?", Canadian Forum, January 1947.

If the rank and file were uneasy, the I.A.P. was jubilant, and declared that the convention marked the end of red tape and the beginning of real activity.²⁹ In northern Ontario a few energetic organizers from Quebec began touring the French communities. Shortly afterwards Ron Gostick resigned as national secretary and joined the executive of the Ontario Social Credit League.

The events which followed were to tear the National Association in two. While many questions were involved, the matter of organization loomed large. The importance of the Ontario experiment was that it marked the end of electors unions as a national concept.

Gostick, aided initially by J.J. Fitzgerald, president of the Ontario Social Credit League, and by the Quebec officials, set about establishing supposedly non-partisan groups in Northern Ontario, though it is doubtful that these contained anyone other than Social Credit supporters. There soon developed a difference of opinion between Fitzgerald and Gostick, the latter taking the organizing of electors unions into his own hands while Fitzgerald favoured establishment of Social Credit schools. These schools, which were then enjoying some success in Western Canada, were directed jointly by national and provincial officials. From the standpoint of anyone forming a non-party union, however, they would be a means by which the opposition could identify the local groups with a party. Moreover, in his paper Ballot Power, Fitzgerald identified himself as being President of the Ontario Union of Electors. Such a claim was a contradiction of the union idea, as L.D. Byrne was quick to point out.

²⁹Vers Demain, 15 December 1946.

"...the Union of Electors is merely a policy and not an organization. There is no Union of Electors yet, and certainly no such organization ever elected him President. Heaven forbid, when such an organization is formed, it should have a President.

"The confusion shown in the first issue of 'Ballot Power' is carried into the second issue. Far from it being a non-technical publication devoted exclusively to policy and a clarification of the means by which electors can unite to obtain the results they want in common, it cannot fail to give the impression that its purpose is to boost the Social Credit group in the House of Commons, the Social Credit proposals for reform and Mr. J.J. Fitzgerald. It seems impossible to get over to Fitzgerald that at the Ontario Convention, the Social Credit League of Ontario elected him President with directions to place the Social Credit Organization at the service of the electors of Ontario for the purpose of mobilizing them in non-party action as a union of electors."³⁰

Events had by this time precipitated a break. Gostick severed connections with the League, established his own organization, and began publishing a newspaper, Voice of the Electors. His Quebec organizers assisted him in these actions.³¹ For a time an attempt was made to patch things over, and Ballot Power voluntarily ceased publishing, leaving the field to Gostick's paper. The Canadian Social Crediter suggested the dual organization was deliberate in order to give people the choice of action they wished, but this was a feeble excuse uttered at a time when it served only to highlight the problem.³²

The situation might well have been confined to Ontario had not Even injudiciously written to Ontario subscribers of Vers Demain supporting Gostick. The assistance given by his subordinates was also an intrusion into Ontario, and as such it became a problem for the National Association.

³⁰Low Papers, L.D. Byrne to Low, 7 May 1947.

³¹Vers Demain, 15 May 1947.

³²Canadian Social Crediter, 17 July 1947.

³³Low Papers, Low to Byrne, 15 May 1947.

Within Ontario the climax came in October when a provincial convention established a constitution patterned after that of the Alberta Social Credit League. Going further it was declared that any publication was to be sanctioned by the provincial executive and that Voice of the Electors could no longer be considered an official paper. The presence of Low and Orvis Kennedy, acting national organizer, indicated the approval of the National Association.³⁴

This terminated the relations between the League and the proponents of the electors unions. They had, in fact, been like the blind men attempting to describe an elephant, each side having a different concept of Social Credit, though using the same terminology. For Gostick and his supporters Social Credit had meant political action in accordance with the principles of C.H. Douglas. His opponents interpreted Social Credit in terms of the economic doctrines of Douglas, with little reference to his later political theories. Probably for them the electors unions had meant nothing more than another name for social credit study groups. The clash of personalities only heightened the dispute.

Low himself was disturbed by increasingly hostile reports in the Quebec press concerning the extreme Douglas views and the undemocratic structure of the I.A.P. in its dominance of the so-called Union des Electeurs. In a letter to Even he expressed his concern and gently chided him for building a party organization more monolithic than any of the older parties.³⁵

³⁴Canadian Social Crediter, 9 October 1947.

³⁵Low Papers, Low to Even, 5 September 1947.

Events now rushed to a conclusion. A meeting of the National Council held in Calgary in November 1947 marked the turning point in the development of the movement. The Ontario League was represented by Fitzgerald, whom Even did not recognize and the Quebec leader used this as his excuse for not attending, though he also declared that the decisions taken at such meetings were not sufficiently important to warrant the time taken.³⁶

During the meeting, L'Union des Electeurs and the concept behind it came under heavy fire, notably from Fitzgerald and Dr. J.N. Haldeman, president of the Saskatchewan Social Credit League and chairman of the National Council. Premier Manning pointed out that it was useless to consider the movement as other than a party and remarked that much valuable time was being wasted "trying to convince the public that we are not something which we are." When some objections were raised to this Low drew a distinction between parties and party machine rule. The most contentious item was the prospect of rival organizations operating and demanding representation in national affairs. Haldeman compared L'Union des Electeurs to a Communist organization and at last a motion was carried that "only delegates duly elected at a Provincial convention...be recognized at any National Convention." The break was complete. Only the recrimination remained to be made.

On January 11, 1948, addressing a meeting in Quebec City, Even attacked the movement in other provinces. The papers reported a particularly extreme speech, and quoted him as saying, among other things,

³⁶Ibid, Minutes of the National Council Meeting of the Social Credit Association of Canada, November 29-30, 1947. Source used for account.

"Je suis degouté, et plusieurs autres avec moi, des ligues qui dominent le Credit Social."³⁷

The same report went on to say:

"Auparavent, M. Even s'était lancé à l'attaque des députés créditistes fédéraux et des créditistes de l'Ouest, déclarent que les deux tiers des députés créditiste au Parlement d'Ottawa sont des francs-maçons' et que la franc-maçonnerie est 'contrôlée par les Juifs' sur lesquels il a repris sa diatribe les accusant d'être la cause de l'incohérence économique mondiale."³⁸

The tirade went on against members of the western and Ontario leagues, Premier Manning and those instrumental in the recent change in the management of the Canadian Social Crediter.³⁹ Haldeman subsequently took this as a declaration of independence and refused to send l'Union des Electeurs a copy of the minutes of the November council meeting.⁴⁰

Haldeman subsequently attacked Even and the Union des Electeurs for making false statements and running an organization along undemocratic lines.

"Evidently (he wrote) this attack of Mr. Even on the true Social Credit organizations in Canada (recognized and affiliated with the Social Credit Association of Canada with Mr. Solon E. Low as National Leader) and its officers is a defensive measure. It was decided at the meeting of the National Council in Calgary last November that the representatives at the National Convention this year must be elected at Provincial Conventions. The Union of Electors do not hold conventions or elect officers."⁴¹

³⁷ Le Soleil, 12 January 1948. See also Canadian Press despatch of the same date.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See above, page 86.

⁴⁰ Low Papers, Haldeman to Low, 5 February 1948. It is striking though that even by the end of December the minutes had not been sent.

⁴¹ Canadian Social Crediter, 22 January 1948.

In a letter to Haldeman Even rebutted these charges, pointing out, quite rightly, that the former's letter had been the first indication of the National Council's decisions. Such decisions, he added, were a flagrant contradiction of the resolutions passed in Toronto in 1944 regarding autonomy of provincial organizations. Again he was on firm ground, and the resolutions of the 1946 convention in Regina could also have backed him up had he chosen to cite them.

But his speech of 11 January could not easily be explained away, and though he tried to present himself as a man badly misquoted by a hostile press, it was apparent that his statements had been quite enough. If anything, his letter with its admissions only widened the breach:

"I did mention the existence in Ontario of a Social Credit League, a body which was dormant for about four years, and which gave some signs of awakening only to try to stifle the movement launched by Mr. Gostick, when he decided to shove aside the sleepy gentlemen and start things moving. And there, I said I could not approve Mr Low, who, thus far and in public at least, had ignored the fighters and committed himself with the sleepers.

"I mentioned several times Premier Manning's name. I said that, as reported in The Social Crediter of England (Douglas's Secretariat), Mr. and Mrs. Manning were won to Zionism...

"And there, mentioning Jewry, I was careful to make a concrete distinction between the Jews who work, struggle, labour, sweat, raise families, just like ourselves and the organized sect which aims to rule the world. This sect, did I say, is behind or on top of free-masonry...

"I declared - and Douglas many times before me has hinted if not used the same terms - that a real freemason and a real Social Crediter cannot flock together.

"The reporter claims I said that two thirds of the Social Credit MPs in the House of Commons are masons. This again is not accurate. I mentioned that at least two of them are masons, adding that perhaps two-thirds of the rest are lenient to masonry."⁴²

In the correspondence between Even and Haldeman there was a note of more than mere disagreement between two points of view; there was reflected also a note of personal animosity. The break was inevitable, but the circumstances could not have been worse, and the continuing bad relations between the National Association and l'Union des Electeurs reflected the bitterness of the parting.

If there were any elements of pathos in the sorry affair they were supplied by Low and Gregoire. The former played little part in the events leading to the break, although Le Soleil, in the same story concerning Even's speech of 11 January, had quoted Low as saying that the alliance with l'Union des Electeurs would be terminated if the latter had any fascist elements in its organization.⁴³ During January 1948, however, he was reduced to the role of a spectator, making one feeble attempt in a letter to Gregoire to mellow the bitterness if he could not heal the breach. In it he took some blame for not having consulted Gregoire more often on national affairs and suggested a meeting to discuss the causes of the split.⁴⁴ It was, however, too late. Three days later he received Gregoire's resignation as Vice-President of the National Association.⁴⁵

⁴²Low Papers, letter from Even to Haldeman, 30 January 1948.

⁴³Le Soleil, 12 January 1948.

⁴⁴Low Papers, letter from Low to Gregoire, 28 January 1948.

⁴⁵Ibid, Gregoire to Low, 29 January 1948.

Gregoire, if anything, was a tragic figure. A quiet, courtly, and distinguished professor of law at Laval University, a former mayor of Quebec City and a prominent Action Liberale member of the provincial legislature, he had seen his political career destroyed by his association with the I.A.P. Caught in a nutcracker between the two factions, he had been placed in an untenable position. He was to taste ashes once more, as L'Union des Electeurs, nominally under his leadership, went to a crushing defeat in the provincial election of 1948.

It was Haldeman who wrote the epitaph for Gregoire and for the electors unions when he published a few further notes on the episode in The Canadian Social Crediter:

"Mr. Gregoire...would lend prestige to any movement, but unfortunately that is exactly what he was used for. The Union of Electors quite frankly and openly admitted that Mr. Gregoire was a 'front'. One of the main reasons why they put the 'heat' on Mr. Fitzgerald... another man who would lend prestige to any movement, was because Mr. Fitzgerald would not be used as a 'front'...

"It has become obvious...that the Union of Electors which professes to be non-party is actually a typical one party machine, just as dangerous to democratic people as any communist or fascist movement. The Social Credit Association of Canada and its member leagues are all for non-party action and only enter the political field because others will not support Social Credit...

"On several occasions parts of the Social Credit movement have been led away from Social Credit. There was the New Democracy Movement, the Democratic Monetary Reform League, and now the Union of Electors. Each time this has proven disastrous. Let us all get back to Social Credit and stick to it. There is room in the Social Credit League for every true Social Crediter. We will consistently fight communism and fascism, political party machine politics, monopoly and international finance wherever we find them. We must uphold the Christian way of life and work to make governments and

and the money system serve the people. The situation is truly urgent. Let us unite in our fight for Social Credit."⁴⁶

The breakup of the National Association was a severe blow in many ways. The party lost its national character and it became increasingly difficult for Low to present the party as one deserving such benefits as free radio time on the CBC.⁴⁷ L'Union des Electeurs also commanded large blocs of votes. In the 1948 provincial election, running a full slate of candidates, it won more than 140,000 votes, although it won no seats. Such support could be potentially useful and might have been expanded had the National Association been able to exert pressure on the leaders of the Quebec movement. In addition, Quebec organizers could have proved useful in parts of Western Canada, where the movement gained considerable support outside of Alberta in the mid-1950's. All of this was lost in the rupture and thereafter all efforts by Low and his colleagues to establish a political movement in French Canada were met with opposition from Even.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that continued association with L'Union des Electeurs was proving to be embarrassing in view of Even's attitudes. In coming years charges of anti-semitism and fascism were directed at the National Association on the basis of statements and actions by L'Union des Electeurs. Whether the Western wing might have been able to influence Even and to bring a sense of moderation to his organization is questionable. L'Union des Electeurs was destroyed only when its "Young Turks" revolted in 1957-58.

⁴⁶Canadian Social Crediter, 15 July 1948.

⁴⁷Low Papers, Low to Even, 15 December 1949.

The National Association suffered more than the loss of its Quebec wing, for the split also extended to the provincial leagues. In March 1948 the Douglas Social Credit Council was formed in Canada composed of those persons who disagreed with the National organization on points of doctrine and methods of procedure. It was formed, according to one of its members, merely to publicize the break and the reasons for it.⁴⁸ Though the Council was recognized by the English Social Credit Secretariat, its members had little talent for organizing and no money.⁴⁹ This was understandable, for with few exceptions the bulk of its members were ideologues, men and women more or less removed from responsible political organization or administration.

Despite these weaknesses the Douglasites were able to further disrupt the orthodox political movement for a short time. The Manitoba Social Credit League was shaken when one of its key members, Salome Halldorson, adhered to the Council. A number of Alberta MLAs who joined it were barred from caucus. In Ontario, Gostick's organization supported the Council, then ran twelve candidates in the 1948 provincial election. Fearing confusion, the Ontario Social Credit League was forced to refrain from participating in the campaign.⁵⁰ The recriminations arising out of these incidents served only to highlight the chaos.

At least two federal MPs appear to have followed the Council line. Voice of the Electors continued to write glowingly

⁴⁸Interview with L.D. Byrne, 9 February 1966.

⁴⁹J.P. Gillese to the writer, 16 February 1966.

⁵⁰The Canadian Social Crediter, 10 June 1948.

of Patrick Ashby, though it all but completely ignored the National Association. A Douglas Social Credit group was organized by his son and created enough stir to be attacked by The Canadian Social Crediter.⁵¹ W.F. Kuhl was also aligned with the Douglasites. On 20 February 1948 he publicly endorsed a Union of Electors in the presence of Ron Gostick at a meeting in Walkerton, Ontario. Significantly, the meeting was mentioned in Voice of the Electors but not in The Canadian Social Crediter.⁵²

Neither man was re-elected in the next federal election. Ashby, a colourful, independent and forceful individual, ran as an independent Social Crediter in Edmonton East, and with the Social Credit vote split a Liberal won the seat.

The divisions within the party had caused enormous damage, and left the party with its representation in Parliament reduced to ten. It appeared that the National Social Credit Association had reached its lowest ebb. The election of 1949, which also saw CCF strength drastically reduced, seemed to herald the end of the third parties. However, the split had purged the National Association of its most disruptive elements. The continued survival of Social Credit as an active political party on the federal scene can be attributed to many factors, both ideological and organizational in nature. In the next eight years the party gradually revived until once more it appeared to be on the verge of becoming a truly national party. Its apparent strengths and inner weaknesses must now be discussed.

⁵¹Ibid, 26 February 1948.

⁵²Voice of the Electors, 10 March 1948.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL CREDIT GAINS SOME GROUND

The break within the National Social Credit Association shattered the morale of its officials. Prior to the 1949 election Low expressed misgivings about holding a national convention, for he felt that with no guarantee of strong representation from Quebec or British Columbia such a meeting would only demonstrate the weaknesses of the Association to the public.¹ Continuing setbacks made even Hansell despair of ever making progress on the national field.²

The National Association was, in fact, drifting aimlessly. Its hopes lay in a revival of the movement by the provincial organizations. This was recognized by Low, who sought greater assistance from both Alberta and the other provincial leagues.³ These, on the other hand, tended to look to Alberta for assistance and direction, and showed little inclination to undertake local financing and organizing.⁴ The degree to which the National Association was overshadowed by the Alberta League eventually weighed heavily on its leaders. Late in 1952 Low expressed this frustration in a letter to Hansell:

"Up to this time, your position and mine has been constantly overshadowed out of all proportion by the dominance of the powers in Alberta....the position of National President and National Leader have got to be made to take on a new and more effective meaning to the

¹Low Papers, Low to E.C.Hansell, 15 January 1949. In that year Hansell took over the position of National President in order to ease the burden on Low, who retained the title of National Leader.

²Ibid. Hansell to Low, 21 November 1950.

³Ibid., Low to Hansell, 25 November 1950.

⁴Ibid., J.J. Fitzgerald to E.C. Manning, 19 March 1948.

people of this country. We constantly stress that the financial reforms of Social Credit cannot be applied under present circumstances in the Provincial field and that therefore all organizational and promotional work should point towards Ottawa. That being the case, the National acceptance of our Movement has got to be made to carry a new and more dynamic significance. But to do it, you and I have got to step into our real places in the picture and make some bold and well-thought-out moves."⁵

It was apparent, however, that Low had few ideas as what "bold and well-thought-out moves" were necessary. He was hampered by the fact that within the National Association much of the work was done by a few officials and that the MP's were generally complacent. This caused some comment in the ranks of the Alberta Social Credit League, and Low reluctantly agreed that remarks about some MP's "not cutting the mustard" were fully justified.⁶

The continuing lack of funds was a source of worry and embarrassment to the Association. It was compelled to rely on the Alberta Social Credit League for assistance while compelling local organizations to raise as much of their own money as possible. The Canadian Social Crediter continued to list donations to the "On to Ottawa" Fund, but though the lists appeared impressive by virtue of their length, they were not encouraging when the figures were totalled. In the period from January 1950 to September 1952 the fund raised only \$2,830.89. Late in 1952 appeals for money became more insistent and it was pointed out that at least \$20,000 was needed to finance a national drive.⁷

⁵Ibid, Low to Hansell, 3 September 1952.

⁶Ibid, Hansell to Low, 31 December 1952; Low to Hansell, 5 January 1953.

⁷The Canadian Social Crediter, 24 September 1952. This paper did not at all times list the addresses of donors. However in the period from 20 December 1951 to 30 September 1952 donations totalled \$920.48. All of this came from Alberta sources with the exception of \$68.80. Ibid, 26 April and 22 October 1952.

The Alberta Social Credit League provided substantial support. Prior to the 1949 election it assisted with grants from its Education Fund and also provided \$1,000 to cover the expenses of the National Organizer for two months. It was understood, however, that these payments would cease after the 1949 election.⁸

Ironically, the great wealth of Alberta as derived from oil revenues operated to the detriment of the National Association. Provincial Leagues occasionally suggested that the oil revenues should enable the Alberta Social Crediters to provide greater assistance to the movement outside of Alberta.⁹ They failed to realize that such revenues were provincial in nature, and that their diversion to political ends would have been the most blatant form of corruption.

The Alberta League, for its part, showed some impatience with its continuing commitment to "the national". Orvis Kennedy was loaned to The Canadian Social Crediter to serve as managing editor, in addition to his duties as National and Provincial Organizer, and it was suggested that the "On to Ottawa" Fund contribute \$1,000 annually to pay a portion of his salary,¹⁰ something which was obviously impossible. The Alberta League also undertook to print literature, particularly manifestos and constitutions, for the National Association.¹¹

⁸Low Papers, Manning to Low, 20 May 1949.

⁹Ibid, J.J. Fitzgerald to Manning, 19 March 1948. The same idea was mentioned in a letter to the author from J. E. Bouchard, 18 March 1966.

¹⁰Low Papers, Manning to Low, 20 May 1949.

¹¹Ibid, Manning to Low, 18 October 1949.

The most conspicuous failure of the National Association was its inability to establish any Quebec organization. When L'Union des Electeurs finally withdrew from electoral action, Hansell was optimistic, assuming that the field would now be open for the National Association to run candidates in the province.¹² The problem, however, was far more complex. Louis Even was so dedicated to the non-partisan approach to politics that he refused to support any of his followers who might attempt to act in cooperation with a party. His Union des Electeurs had a virtual monopoly on the Social Credit movement in Quebec, a monopoly which he guarded jealously.

Consequently the National executive took an ambiguous attitude when dealing with Quebec. At times when it was attempting to establish an alliance with friendly elements it dissasociated itself from L'Union des Electeurs, and made it clear to such bodies as the CBC that L'Union was not entitled to free radio time because it was not a part of a recognized political party. When they were thus excluded from participation in public affairs broadcasts, the leaders of L'Union complained bitterly to Low, charging him with bad faith and declaring that he was showing a callous disregard for the only active Social Credit movement in Quebec.¹³ On the other hand, when attempts to establish a new organization failed, Low was not averse to turning to L'Union des Electeurs to carry out radio broadcasts.¹⁴

¹²Canadian Social Crediter, 27 December 1950.

¹³Low Papers, Even to Low, 13 December 1949; Caouette to Low, 15 December 1949; Low to Even, 15 December 1949; Even to Low, 3 January 1950.

¹⁴Ibid, Low to Even, 1 March 1952.

This situation continued until late in 1952, when contact was revived with La Ligue du Credit Social, the forerunner of and rival to L'Union des Electeurs. The initiative came from J.E. Bouchard, a man who had long been interested in Social Credit and who had broken with Even years before. When it became obvious that L'Union des Electeurs had withdrawn from electoral politics altogether, he called a meeting of La Ligue du Credit Social which approved a limited attempt to run candidates in Quebec. Bouchard wrote to Low, informing him of these events and requesting \$5,000 to enable the organization to become established.¹⁵ Though the National Association was unable to help financially, Low eventually took the opportunity to establish a relationship with a Quebec wing which, however weak, would nevertheless be less troublesome than L'Union des Electeurs. It was hoped that any organization running candidates in that province would be able to capitalize on the educational work already done by L'Union des Electeurs.¹⁶

The National Association however, was slow to affiliate with La Ligue du Credit Social, and once the association had been established it did little to help. In view of Louis Even's increased hostility there probably was little that could be done. La Ligue du Credit Social had been vilified for years in Vers Demain; its realignment with a national body was not enough to draw any support from Even's followers. In Quebec nothing was changed, apart from the fact that the National Association had at last been relieved of L'Union des Electeurs, which had previously clung like an albatross to the federal party.

¹⁵Miscellaneous correspondence between Low and Bouchard, 27 June 1952 to 30 December 1952.

¹⁶Blair Fraser, "Social Credit Feels its Oats", Macleans Magazine, 15 April 1953.

The most spectacular gain for Social Credit was, of course, its victories in British Columbia in 1952-53. Many factors were involved in this; the existence of a coalition government which for years had sapped the strength and initiative from the provincial Liberals and Conservatives, the presence of a CCF party which was at once so strong and so doctrinaire that it inspired fear among many voters and robbed it of its potential to expand, the breakup of the coalition amid considerable bitterness, the confusion of the Liberal government in its administration of a chaotic hospital insurance plan, and finally the introduction of the alternative ballot, a device intended to keep the CCF out of power, but which actually aided Social Credit to gain it. All of these factors led many former Conservatives and Liberals to abandon their parties in favour of Social Credit, without in any way accepting Social Credit monetary theories.¹⁷

Yet when all of these factors are considered, one further point must be considered. People do not abandon their traditional parties unless there is a strong alternative to which they can turn. When two former Conservative MLAs announced their support of Social Credit they were not joining an obscure and struggling sect but a growing, flourishing movement. Such was the achievement of the B.C. Social Credit League between 1948 and 1952.

¹⁷The doctrinaire nature of the B.C. CCF was such that it might be considered to be an unwitting ally of Social Credit. See D.G. Steeves, The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest E. Winch and His Times (Vancouver, 1960). This biography of a CCF founder indicates how inflexible the CCF was, in marked contrast to its counterpart in Saskatchewan. See also J.D. Harbon, "Social Credit in B.C.", Canadian Forum, August 1952, and H.F. Angus, "The B.C. Election, June 1952", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, November 1952.

This change in fortune was not accomplished without changes within the B.C. movement. In the immediate post-war period the leading West Coast Social Crediter had been Major A.H. Jukes. Although not a strict Douglasite, Jukes tended to favour non-partisan political activity. Moreover, his military background was so imbued in him that he tended to direct the movement along military and autocratic lines.¹⁸

The manner in which the movement was directed led to some dissatisfaction, which came to a head in 1948 when no provincial convention was called. When Lyle Wicks, Vice-President of the B.C. movement, attended a meeting of the National Social Credit Council without the consent of Jukes, a split in the movement resulted. Dr. J.N. Haldeman, chairman of the Council, became involved in a dispute with Jukes as to the propriety of correspondence between Haldeman and Wicks,¹⁹ and eventually Wicks appealed to the National Council, explaining the situation, and pointing out that Jukes had demanded his resignation.²⁰ This he refused to submit until a convention of the B.C. League had been called. Early in 1949 such a meeting was, in fact, called with some 50 persons attending, and Wicks was expelled from the B.C. association.²¹ Wicks eventually secured the support of the National Council in his fight with Jukes and, having won recognition of his own British Columbia Social Credit League, took steps to protect the name. Under his presidency the movement began to prosper.

¹⁸Letter from The Hon. Lyle Wicks to the writer, 21 February 1966 and 4 March 1966. Wicks was elected Vice-President of the B.C. Social Credit organization in 1947.

¹⁹Low Papers, Jukes to National Council Members, 25 November 1948.

²⁰Ibid, Wicks to National Council Members, 2 December 1948.

²¹Ibid, Wicks to Low 23 March 1949.

Both the B.C. Union of Electors and the Social Credit League contested the provincial election of 1949, and drew negligible support. Although the former soon withdrew from formal activity, some confusion persisted. The Social Credit organization devoted considerable effort to campaigning in the interior of the province, and made a point of contacting former Albertans who had settled in the province.²² The disintegration of the Coalition government in 1951 and the introduction of the alternative ballot provided additional incentive for the Social Crediters. It was recognized that a political vacuum was appearing. Moreover, the party leaders suspected that the new ballot might help Social Credit which could win few first choice votes but might attract many second-choice votes. Shortly afterwards many Conservatives, including W.A.C. Bennett, abandoned their party in favour of Social Credit.

The B.C. Social Credit League entered the 1952 election campaign with no chosen leader, although a convention of the League had selected E.G. Hansell, the National President, as campaign leader. This was interpreted by some as a price for the support of the Alberta Social Credit League.²³ While some elements in the Alberta League definitely hoped to influence their counterparts in B.C.,²⁴ others were more realistic, and Low made it a point to stress that leadership for the provincial Leagues should not be sought from amongst the MPs.²⁵

²²M.Reynolds, "How Social Credit Took B.C.", Macleans Magazine, 1 September 1952.

²³Robert Collins, "Remarkable Rise of Smiling Cece Bennett", Ibid, 15 February 1955.

²⁴Interview with O.A. Kennedy, 31 January 1966. See also Paddy Sherman, Bennett, (Toronto, 1966), pp.104-8.

²⁵Low Papers, Low to Hansell, 1 June 1951.

The election campaign of 1952 was confused and hard-fought, with many voters apparently more certain as to what they did not want than who they did want. There was considerable stress laid on fundamentalist religion, injected both by local Social Crediters and men like Hansell. Social Credit appeared to lag behind the CCF in the initial balloting, but as votes were transferred from other candidates the party gained strength. Curiously, CCF voters gave many of their second votes to Social Crediters, apparently in the hope that this would prevent Liberals and Conservatives from regaining power and possible re-introducing Coalition government.²⁶ The counting required one month. From it emerged a minority Social Credit government, while the Liberals and Conservatives went down to humiliating defeat.

Social Credit won its first successes in the rural ridings of the interior; only three of its 19 seats were in Vancouver. Shortly afterwards the MLAs elected Bennett as their leader. Having proven that his party was strong enough to keep the CCF from power, Bennett had only to prove himself a capable administrator, before returning to the polls in 1953. This he did and he was able to win a resounding victory. Having discovered a political vacuum, Social Credit moved easily into power, and has remained there to this day.

The victory of Social Credit had almost immediate results on the federal fortunes of the party. In the federal election of that year British Columbia returned four Social Credit MPs. The voting resembled the provincial pattern of 1952 in that it showed

²⁶Steeves, op. cit., p. 181.

a rural bias for Social Credit. Although one seat included the city of New Westminster, the Social Credit victor had a majority of only 35. Moreover, the city vote favoured the Liberal candidate, while the rural vote in the same constituency was heavily Social Credit. Social Credit apparently drew its support from all parties, but from the Conservatives more than others.²⁷

The voting indicated that in the cities Social Credit drew most of its support from the older parties - the Liberals who had been in power for 18 years, and the Conservatives who had no outstanding leaders and no provincial organization. In rural areas it also gained at the expense of the CCF, presumably because it represented a non-socialist protest against the urban-oriented parties.

Social Credit gained more than four seats and a provincial government in 1952-53. The victories relieved the National Association of a commitment to assist in campaigning and freed it for activity elsewhere. They provided incentive for Social Credit organizers throughout the West. At the same time, the B.C. Social Credit League was able to provide funds and workers to assist the National Association, and these soon made themselves felt in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

²⁷ Throughout the province the Conservative vote fell from 128,620 in 1949 to 66,426 in 1953. In New Westminster the CCF vote remained almost constant, but the Liberal vote declined by almost 3,500 and the Conservative vote by more than 5000. In Vancouver-Burrard the Conservative vote declined by 5,700 while the CCF lost 3,295. The Liberal winner also lost about 1,900 votes, while Social Credit gained 7,063 votes. In Cariboo and Fraser Valley (both won by Social Credit) no Conservative had run and both the CCF and the Liberals lost heavily. Statistics drawn from Scarrow, Canada Votes, pp. 143-44 and page 159.

Unhappily, the national leaders of the party overlooked certain factors in the B.C. campaigns, particularly the breakdown of the older parties prior to the 1952 election. At first cautiously and then more ambitiously, they committed the Association to a concentrated drive on other provinces. In doing so, they overextended their resources and strained relations between the Alberta and B.C. Social Credit Leagues.

Even while the National Association was splitting with L'Union des Electeurs, the Social Credit movement in Saskatchewan and Manitoba was undergoing a series of profound changes. At a time when the situation appeared most bleak to Low and Hansell, the provincial Leagues were gradually building and regaining their positions of the late 1930's. The National Association, however, played little part in these events; the resurgence of Social Credit must be attributed directly to its provincial leaders.

Saskatchewan had been the first province to show any encouraging signs. Late in 1945 the Saskatchewan Social Credit League was revived by Dr. J.N. Haldeman, an ambitious chiropractor with tremendous energy, whose lack of tact had been so apparent in relations with Even and Jukes. Under his direction the movement experimented with Social Credit schools, lasting a few days and financed by those attending. The object of the schools was to indoctrinate a core of persons in various constituencies, to give them advice on effective public speaking, and to inform them on the rudiments of political organization.²⁸ These proved to be highly

²⁸Low Papers, J.N. Haldeman to Orvis Kennedy, 5 March 1947. The first five schools were directed by Kennedy, and trained 95 students. Total costs were \$422.23, and income was \$429.50.

successful and were soon copied by other provinces using speakers from the National and Alberta organizations as well as local talent. In the Saskatchewan election of 1948 the party attracted more than 40,000 votes (eight per cent of the total vote) while contesting 36 of the 52 constituencies in the province, though no seats were won.

The party was fortunate, however, in that the Saskatchewan political scene had developed into one in which the opposition to the CCF was extremely fluid. The Conservatives had ceased to exist as a party, and the Liberal party was haunted by a corrupt history and a continuing leadership problem. In these circumstances, the Social Crediters were able to regain a number of pockets of support. Their achievement in 1948 was no mean feat when one realizes that the party itself had been almost completely destroyed between 1938 and 1944. In 1948 the Social Crediters showed that in the north they still retained some of the strength which they had possessed in 1935 and 1938, particularly in Humboldt, Meadow Lake, Maple Creek and Rosthern.

On the other hand, the party failed to win a seat. With the economy buoyant and the CCF still vigorous and popular, there was little opportunity for Social Credit to lead any free-enterprise crusade. Its future depended largely on whether or not any of the other opposition parties could consolidate itself before the Social Credit League had built up its organization and developed strong, widely-known leaders.

In 1952 the Saskatchewan Social Crediters ran fewer candidates and their voting strength was cut in half. The reasons for this are obscure, though the loss of Haldeman, who had gone to South Africa, may have been a factor. The preoccupation of the National Association's executive with British Columbia at that

time may also have affected the outcome. The 1953 federal election generally followed the trends of the previous year, with both Social Credit and Liberal strength declining in the face of a CCF campaign.

The next three years were spent in attempting to build up support. Reports from local organizers to the National Association were encouraging, but on closer examination many of the reports proved to be exaggerated, which moved Hansell to comment,

"I agree that we should think big and on the public platform we should talk big, but when we are among ourselves we have to be factual and face realities."²⁹

Late in 1955 the situation in Saskatchewan was examined by Solon Low and Premiers Manning and Bennett. What they saw was a League with a substantial vote almost guaranteed by previous experiences. On the other hand the movement had only half an organization and no leader. The Saskatchewan officials recognized this themselves, and once again pleaded for outside assistance. A further defeat for Social Credit might reinforce existing prejudices by the voters against voting for the party. On the other hand, any gains which could be registered would create an impression of "Social Credit on the March". By that time it was apparent that the Liberal party throughout Canada was losing support. As yet, however, the Conservatives were still led by George Drew, a veteran of two massive defeats. The likelihood of a political vacuum made it imperative that Social Credit should contest and win every possible provincial election.

It therefore became the avowed objective of the National Association to enter the Saskatchewan field and provide the Saskatchewan League with the maximum possible support. Organizers were

²⁹Ibid, Hansell to Low, 8 September 1955.

assigned to the province, and the B.C. Social Credit League undertook to provide \$1,000 monthly until the Saskatchewan election, with the money being sent through Low. The manner in which the money was to be spent was suggested by Bennett. The premier was able to do this because, in the words of Hansell "our present organization program pretty well strained our finances to the limit."³⁰

The Saskatchewan election of 1956 showed the results of such assistance. The party secured 118,498 votes and elected three members, the best showing Social Credit ever secured in that province. The results might have been even more favourable had the Social Crediters gone into the campaign with a recognized leader. In the event they deliberately refrained from choosing one, believing that this should be postponed until after the election, when a leader could be chosen from among the elected MLAs, as had been done in B.C.³¹

The gains in Saskatchewan were general throughout the province, but were most marked in the region north and northwest of Regina. Both the CCF and the Liberals lost votes to Social Credit but in the northern areas the Liberals tended to lose more than the CCF, while in the south the reverse was generally the case. Social Credit made its most substantial gains in the cities, where it went from two per cent of the vote in 1952 to 23 per cent in 1956, with the CCF and Liberals losing almost equally. The Social Credit party had become a party of protest for the more prosperous areas against the socialist CCF which now constituted a rural establishment.

³⁰ Ibid, Hansell to O.A. Kennedy, 5 November 1955. At that time the Alberta League was providing \$750 per month to the National Association, while the B.C. League was regularly paying \$2400 a month. However, the Alberta League assisted with many items whose value is difficult to compute, e.g., publications.

³¹ Interview with O.A. Kennedy, 31 January 1966. See also Regina Leader Post, 7 June 1956.

Certain ethnic groups, particularly the Menⁿonite sections around Rosthern, were apparently attracted to Social Credit, which retained its emphasis on fundamentalist religion, thus giving the party its most pronounced support in the north.

The election, however, virtually bankrupted the Saskatchewan Social Credit League, and by September it was being threatened with legal action for non-payment of accounts.³² Low came to the rescue and arranged for the B.C. Social Credit League to advance \$5,000 to its Saskatchewan counterpart.³³ The campaign demonstrated that enthusiastic followers were not enough.

While the campaign of 1956 had produced its share of tactical victories, it was nonetheless a strategic defeat. The Social Credit vote retained a regional bias within the province and the expenditure in time, money and efforts was out of all proportion to the number of men elected. A small number of MLAs might hope to make a great impression only if they constituted the sole opposition group (as was the case in Saskatchewan in the period 1934-38, when five CCF members formed the entire opposition). The Social Crediters, however, were a splinter opposition group, which the Liberals and CCF were able systematically to ignore.

Manitoba followed a pattern similar to that of Saskatchewan. The local League had had many splits and clashes, and after 1949 no Social Credit MLA sat in the legislature. The leading supporters of the movement had either lost interest, joined the Douglas Social Credit Council, or were as demoralized as the National Executive.

³²Low Papers, J. Thauberger to Low, 24 September 1956.

³³Ibid, Low to Thauberger, 6 November 1956.

Social Credit gains in British Columbia provided some encouragement. Early in 1953 Hansell, Kennedy and some B.C. organizers toured southern Manitoba and held a series of meetings. Some were poorly attended, but others attracted considerable crowds who were probably curious about this party which had so recently created such a stir on the west coast.³⁴ The Social Credit schools were used to attract other supporters.³⁵

Manitoba was then in a state of political flux. The old Liberal-Progressive-Conservative coalition had recently broken up, and the Conservative leader, Eric Willis, found it difficult to criticise the government in which he had so recently been a minister. Moreover, the Conservatives themselves were divided between former Coalitionists and a younger element, led by Duff Roblin who had forced the break-up of the Coalition in order to preserve the identity of the Conservative party. On the other hand, the government was still popular and had a good record of sound, if unimaginative administration. The situation was regarded by Social Crediters as a test case, and they entered the provincial election of 1953 with hope of becoming at least a major opposition party.³⁶

The assistance rendered by the National Association to the Manitoba League in the 1953 provincial election was not so great as was given to Saskatchewan later on. The British Columbia League was still preoccupied with consolidating itself and with the second B.C. election which eventually was to give the party a majority.

³⁴These impressions are confirmed by Mr. B.R. Leboe, MP for Caribou, who stated in an interview with the writer on 4 May 1966 that the attitude of crowds which he addressed was one of curiosity rather than commitment.

³⁵Canadian Social Crediter, 25 February and 8 April 1953.

³⁶Fraser, op.cit.

The Alberta League and National officials provided speakers, while the B.C. League provided one of its most successful organizers and MLAs, P.V. Paynter.

The Social Credit campaign drew considerable criticism from the Liberals, which perhaps indicates that it was effective, despite its late beginning. Premier Campbell declared that the movement was more interested in building a national organization than in the welfare of Manitoba.³⁷ His remark was given added weight when Social Credit candidates concentrated on monetary and financial proposals with little reference to local issues. When one Social Crediter stated that Social Credit would abolish consumer liquor licenses and would support more liberal liquor legislation, he was overruled by Paynter, which led to charges of outside domination - the same charge which had been used in Saskatchewan in 1938. On the whole, however, Social Credit was attacked on the basis of its legislative record in Alberta in the late 1930's with particular reference to the enactments which had been disallowed or declared ultra vires.³⁸

Despite a lack of issues and organization, Social Credit was able to capitalize on a weakened opposition. The party won 35,750 votes (13.3 per cent of the provincial total) and elected two MLAs. The party had been able to run 43 candidates, but support in the urban areas was so meagre that in the federal election of that year the Social Crediters did not contest the constituencies in Winnipeg.

³⁷Winnipeg Free Press, 3 June 1953, 5 June 1953.

³⁸Ibid, 6 June 1953. The resemblance between the 1938 and 1953 campaigns was heightened by common factors, including the biting cartoons of Arch Dale.

The Manitoba League fought no general elections between 1953 and the federal campaign of 1957. Left to itself, with some financial assistance from the National Association, it quietly continued to win supporters throughout the province. In some areas, it did little to improve on its 1953 standings, but in other areas, particularly in southeastern Manitoba, it succeeded in establishing a strong base of support. Unlike Saskatchewan, Social Credit did not have to fight the CCF in all rural areas of the province.

The campaign to consolidate and expand the movement in Canada led the National Association into the New Brunswick election of 1956. A depressed province is, in fact, poor battleground for major political revolts, a fact which the Saskatchewan campaign of 1938 had shown, and New Brunswick was one of Canada's most backward and underdeveloped regions. Moreover, the province had no tradition of political revolt, such as existed in the western provinces, and the Conservative and Liberal parties were deeply entrenched. Yet in these circumstances the local league expressed confidence in its changes and four prominent Social Crediters - the National Organizer and three MPs, including Low - expressed cautious optimism in Social Credit's chances.³⁹

The National Association immediately advanced \$500 to the New Brunswick League and offered to underwrite ten broadcasts. The decision to enter the campaign was taken less than two months before the election, and in the interval the National Association financed a series of tours through the province by Social Crediters from Ontario, MPs and executive officials.

³⁰Ibid, Social Credit Caucus Minutes of 2 May 1956, with attached report submitted by the National Organizer, O.A. Kennedy, on the situation in New Brunswick.

The election was a disaster. Numerous candidates withdrew at the last minute and on election day only 18 candidates were available.⁴⁰ The party won 11,828 votes (1.6 per cent of the provincial total) and went down to crushing defeat. Once again it had been proven that a movement cannot be transported from one area to another without a strong political organization and electoral base in the recipient region.

The defeat might have had little consequence had it not been so expensive. The travelling accounts accumulated during the campaign totalled in excess of \$5,000. The Saskatchewan and New Brunswick elections destroyed the financial base of the party, and by the end of February 1957 the National Association had a deficit of \$569.77 and bills outstanding totalling \$9,176.17.⁴¹ With a federal election not far off the National Association was crippled. It is indeed ironic that a party so involved with monetary policies, which was so proud of the financial administration conducted by two provincial Social Credit governments, should find itself in such straits.

⁴⁰Mr. B.R. Leboe, in the interview with the writer on 2 May 1966 stated that 18 candidates withdrew under pressure from employers. Low made the same charge following the election (Regina Leader Post, 19 June 1956). Such a situation would merely underline how weak the local movement was, in that so many candidates could be compelled to forego political activity. Similar pressure was exerted on CCF candidates in Saskatchewan in 1934. There the movement was sufficiently strong that it could support some of its officials without their seeking regular employment.

⁴¹Low Papers, Financial Statements for the Social Credit Association of Canada, November, December 1956 and February 1957.

The gains which the party had been able to make in some areas were attributable to many factors, many of them of a local nature. Local factors also operated to the detriment of the party elsewhere. Throughout Western Canada, however, the party had begun to be more responsible and more orthodox. In 1953 the Winnipeg Free Press had filled its editorial pages with attacks on Social Credit as being synonymous with "funny money". Such charges were not so frequent in 1956. While it might be argued that the change was due to the fact that the elections in question were provincial rather than federal campaigns, there was another factor. The public attitudes of the Social Credit party had changed in many respects. The party was becoming respectable in some quarters. The depth of these ideological changes varied, however. The extent to which the National Social Credit Association had accepted the world and acted within its political environment is one of the more difficult factors to gauge. It is this problem to which we now turn.

CHAPTER VII

THE DECLINE OF IDEOLOGY

In the nine years preceding the federal election of 1957 the Social Credit party underwent a series of changes. One of the most important was the transformation of the party's ideology from that of the late 1930's and early 1940's into one which was more moderate. Nevertheless, it was recognizable as having sprung from the earlier ideas of the party. Many factors played a part in mellowing the stand of Social Credit, and these were both causes and reflections of the improving fortunes of the party.

The most important event in the changed ideology was the unprecedented wealth which flowed into Alberta as a result of the oil boom. As early as 1946 it was apparent that the province would need capital to exploit these resources, and the strident stand taken by Douglas Social Crediters was not one which would provide a favourable atmosphere for investment. From 1947 onwards, through the Alberta Social Credit League, Premier Manning sought to moderate the tone of the movement and Low, as has been shown, did much the same. Once investment had begun, capitalists and financial interests assumed a new role in Alberta, that of partners rather than exploiters.

The federal group was slower than the provincial Social Credit caucus to develop a moderate approach to politics. The federal group, of course, had none of the responsibilities of its provincial counterpart. Moreover, the small group of MPs included a large proportion of Douglasites, including Blackmore, Jaques, Ashby and Kuhl. These men were not subject to the day-to-day in-

fluence of Manning and his cabinet ministers, and their numbers were not reduced until 1949.

Most of the MPs, however, realized that there could be no conflict between the federal and provincial voices of the party. There appears to have been no effort on the part of the majority of the MPs to retain the harsh outlook of C.H. Douglas. In any case, the old attacks on financiers would not only have been impractical but also ridiculous. Such attacks were credible only in the days when Alberta was a "have-not" province which suffered from tariff and railway policies imposed for the benefit of Ontario and Quebec. The assaults on banking policy were altered so that the government policies came to be described as mistaken rather than perverted.

The Parliamentary group was influenced in its moderation by the increasing proportion of new members. Following the 1953 election the party had fifteen MPs. Of these five had been elected in 1935, one in 1940, two in 1945, one in 1949 and six in 1953. The new members were augmented in 1954 when the veteran Robert Fair died and another Social Credit MP was elected in a by-election. These men represented the second generation of Social Credit leaders. Though none had any experience in the provincial legislature or government of either Alberta or B.C., they nevertheless were aware of the needs and policies of those governments. They had witnessed the rise of Social Credit in the 1930's, but had not been participants in the party's initial organization. In the 1940's they had risen in a party which was supported by the business community, rather than opposed by it, as had been the case in the period 1935-43.

Most of the old "hard liners" were gone, and among the four survivors from 1935 C.E. Johnson was scarcely distinguishable as a Social Crediter. The newer members spoke most frequently on constituency matters. Being less entrenched than some of the older MPs, they were more attuned to their provincial political climates and realized that the political advantages of protest were declining.

The frustration resulting from the failure to make any gains outside of Alberta between 1938 and 1952 also represented a major factor in the revised ideology of Social Credit. The movement had been founded on the basis of monetary reform, and yet this subject was so complex and so subject to ridicule that it was difficult to gain supporters on any basis other than that of one man attempting in conversation to convince another individual. Such a cumbersome method could not succeed in national politics. It has already been pointed out that by 1951 Low and Hansell, who were primarily responsible for federal organization and activity, were extremely confused and disappointed, with vague ideas that new and dynamic moves were needed on their part, but with no conception of what form these moves should take.

On the other hand, the Alberta government was proving to be efficient and honest, and this fact in itself was valuable on the public platform. The records of the Alberta government, and after 1952, that of the B.C. government, were frequently cited as indicating the soundness of Social Credit principles and their effects on Social Credit legislators. The fact that good government had nothing to do with the validity of Social Credit monetary theories

was conveniently overlooked, as were the 1956 scandals in the B.C. Department of Forestry. This new approach to campaigning enabled the leaders and many voters to support the Social Credit party without reference to Douglas Social Credit theory.

Another factor appears to have forced the party to decrease its emphasis on monetary reform and to concentrate on other aspects of the Social Credit philosophy. This was the changing attitude of the public. Although the monetary theories of the party had frequently been attacked by economists and members of the older parties, these theories had at one time been the subject of much public curiosity. Initially the Social Credit MPs had been able to attract crowds and to provoke debates on monetary policies, and Liberal ministers had felt themselves to be obliged to answer the Social Crediters with reasoned rebuttals. By the late 1940's however, continued anti-Social Credit propaganda, and the undignified and unpopular statements of many Social Credit officials, had firmly established the view that Social Credit was impractical and that Social Crediters were extremists, preaching fundamentalist religion and advocating unlimited amounts of printing press currency. By the 1950's the government felt that it could ignore the Social Credit MPs, and such attacks as were made on Social Credit theories were delivered by Liberal backbenchers whose remarks were sarcastic rather than substantive.¹

¹One would not have gained such an impression from reading the party newspaper. Accounts of Parliamentary proceedings published by Social Crediters attempted to convey the impression that in the House a band of brilliant Social Credit MPs were expounding the most refined economic theories and offering the most advanced proposals to a Parliament packed with orthodox members who were exceedingly stupid. The Canadian Social Crediter of 12 April 1950 stated that "Mr. Blackmore completely disarmed the Liberals and Conservatives when he showed the absolute futility of their thinking." See also The Canadian Social Crediter 25 June 1952.

Another factor, though probably of lesser importance, undoubtedly dampened the fervour of the Social Crediters. This was the fact that many of their gloomy predictions concerning post-war depressions and world dictatorships had failed to materialize. Increasing familiarity with the facts of the post-war world led to partial acceptance of it. Thus, following Low's first visit to the United Nations in 1947, the party in general took a more favourable attitude towards the international organization.

The result of this was a changed view of the economic system, and particularly of the role of the financial community. The financial oligarchy remained a real factor in Social Credit thinking. Although it was seldom mentioned in the House of Commons, high finance remained an object of attacks in the literature of the movement, and this financial oligarchy continued to be associated with a totalitarian international scheme. Thus, as late as 1955 a correspondent for The Canadian Social Crediter was writing that,

"There is a world Money Power controlling all monetary systems and through these the economic lives of all countries - and this international Money Power is organized on 'centralized' or 'totalitarian' lines.

"...this world totalitarian power of International Finance has been able to use money to gain control in one country after another. It could have been achieved only by deliberate and conscious planning... The only objective can be to establish a world dictatorship under which all humanity would be enslaved to this international Money Power."²

It should be noted, however, that the Money-Power had lost its meaning and definition, and was a pale ghost of what it had been in the first ten years of the movement, when the Social Crediters had given names and specified those institutions which were identified with the powers of international finance. Low himself

²Canadian Social Crediter, November 1955.

retained a belief in a financial oligarchy which controlled MPs and parties, but he did not define its members.³

In these circumstances the stands taken by the MPs and party officials frequently became confused as the old ideology mixed with current realities. An example of this confusion was the attitude taken with regards to the cornerstone policy of the movement, the monetary reforms of Social Credit.

The importance of these proposals gradually declined, both in the minds of the public and of Social Crediters themselves. Although the younger members made passing references to the subject of financial reform, and although the MPs from B.C. had declared that they stood with the older members on all the principles and policies of Social Credit,⁴ the discussion of this subject was left more and more to the veteran Alberta members. In the period from 1953 to 1957 only Blackmore, Low and Hansell discussed monetary reforms at any length in the House of Commons. During discussion of the Bank Act in 1954 only Low, Hansell and Quelch spoke.

This does not mean that the MPs were merely paying homage to theories in which they no longer place any faith. Had that been the case the party would undoubtedly have abandoned the monetary theories altogether, for the theme of monetary reform was both difficult to convey and difficult to defend. The mere fact that the

³Low Papers, Low to F.W. Mardock, 4 January 1957. Mardock was an Ontario Social Creditor.

⁴See for example the remarks by A.B. Patterson, Social Credit MP for Fraser Valley from 1953-58 and 1962 to the present, Hansard Debates, 24 November 1953, p.298. Premier Bennett provided the example by excluding any talk of monetary reform from his 1953 campaign and urging Low and Hansell not to participate in the B.C. provincial election and the federal campaign in that province. Low Papers, Bennett to Low, 19 June 1953, Bennett to Hansell, 24 June 1953.

party continued to support these politically embarrassing ideas was an indication of the deep respect which the party leaders had for these financial reforms. Thus, both in the House of Commons and in The Canadian Social Crediter, the proposals for compensated prices, monetary regulatory authorities, and dividends continued to be expounded.⁵ However, it was recognized that these could not be instituted immediately, and that in certain instances the inauguration of dividends might be inflationary and dangerous.⁶ This led the party into further conflict with L'Union des Electeurs. When a demonstration on Parliament Hill was organized by Even with demands for increased family allowances, Hansell found himself arguing with the demonstrators, insisting that in a period of increasing economic development and full employment such a measure would be unwise.⁷

The international outlook of the party had moderated only in part. As has been noted, Low was impressed by the United Nations, and though it did not fulfil all his hopes, he recognized its worth as a forum of expression. The performance of the UN in Korea resulted in his defending that organization.⁸ His greatest concern was the danger of a world government, which he felt would be dictatorial, and in his view the UN permitted countries to express and fortify their nationalism. In his view this gave no opportunity to "one worlders" to work secretly and underhandedly within the various countries.⁹

⁵Ibid, January to March 1956.

⁶Low Papers, Low to Manning, 21 January 1950; Canadian Social Crediter, March 1956.

⁷Blair Fraser, "How the Social Credit Blitzkrieg Failed", Macleans, 4 August 1956.

⁸See for example, Hansard Debates, 3 March 1950, pp.440-41, and 29 June 1950, pp.4376-77.

⁹Low Papers, Low to A.C. Coates, 25 May 1954.

If Low had been able to overcome his initial misgivings about the United Nations, some of his followers had not. At one point the party appears to have a contradictory policy, with Low supporting the UN while Hansell maintained the old Douglas idea that the international body was inspired by Communists and international financiers, most of whom had Jewish names.¹⁰

It should also be pointed out that although Low and the more moderate elements in the party accommodated their thinking to acceptance of the UN, they had mixed feelings on some of the specialized agencies of that body. While the Food and Agricultural Organization found support from the MPs,¹¹ UNESCO did not. The latter body was subjected to a savage attack in 1957 by old and new members alike. Hansell described it as "the instrument used by intellectual socialists in their planning to indoctrinate the minds of men in order that they may expedite...a new world socialistic order",¹² while Low spoke of it as "an instrument of subversion and brainwashing".¹³ This line of reasoning was apparently influenced by extreme right-wing literature originating in the United States which was used in the course of these debates.

The context of these remarks is worth noting. They were made during the debate on the establishment of the Canada Council in accordance with the recommendations of the Massey Commission. The Social Credit MPs, supported by two Quebec Independents, were the only ones to oppose the establishment of the Council.¹⁴ While

¹⁰E.G. Hansell, "Intrigue in High Places", Canadian Social Crediter, 27 December 1950.

¹¹Hansard Debates, 14 July 1955, p. 6139.

¹²Ibid, 5 February 1957, p.1000.

¹³Ibid, 18 January 1957, p.409.

¹⁴Ibid, 12 February 1957, p.1291-92.

supporting grants to universities they attacked the principle of a central government giving direct assistance to the arts. Their remarks included eloquent support of folk culture and a considerable anti-intellectual bias which reflected the mutual antipathy between the movement and the intellectual community..

The Parliamentary group also maintained its critical stance on international monetary bodies, and frequently discussed the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank under the general description of the Bretton Woods Agreements. Victor Quelch, MP for Acadia and spokesman for the party on international trade, was particularly vocal on this topic. His criticism was based on arguments to the effect that the agreements favoured creditor nations, that they made trade more difficult for Britain, and that they were particularly favourable to the United States, which needed assistance least. While it was no longer stated explicitly that the Bretton Woods agreements were part of a Communist or financial plot, few opportunities were missed to point out that the earliest supporters of the agreements had been the Canadian Labour-Progressive Party and the alleged American Communist, Harry Dexter White. In this general stand Quelch was supported by older members such as Low and Hansell and by newer MPs, notably Charles Yuill of Edmonton East.¹⁵

The more extreme statements on international affairs, particularly those of Hansell on the UN, became ammunition in the hands of critics who argued that Social Credit had not altered its discriminatory stands of 1944-47.¹⁶ Low frequently was compelled

¹⁵Ibid, 23 February 1950, pp. 191-2; 28 February 1950 p.311; 14 July 1955, pp. 6140-41; 12 January 1956, p.59; 17 January 1956, p.221; 9 August 1956, pp. 7286-87.

¹⁶See for example, Leslie Roberts, "Social Credit Means Dictatorship", New Liberty, August 1953, and the remarks of M.J.Coldwell, Hansard Debates, 11 December 1952, pp.558-6

to defend his party, some times pointing out that the statements in question were made by organization which, though advocating Social Credit monetary policies, were no longer associated with the national movement,¹⁷ and sometimes declaring that the statements of some MPs were personal opinions which were not endorsed by the party as a whole.¹⁸ The first defence was necessary when propaganda circulated by Ron Gostick and L'Union des Electeurs threatened to smear the party. The second defence was necessary to protect the good name of the party when Blackmore or Hansell made any outrageous statements, as when Blackmore defended Senator McCarthy on the floor of the House of Commons.¹⁹

Despite such defensive measures the party was vulnerable to attacks of this nature, and Low must be blamed in part for this. His inability to discipline his colleagues was a serious failing. Moreover, he and other leaders of the movement frequently refused to repudiate extreme statements and on occasion attempted to give innocuous interpretations to indefensible pronouncements.

Insofar as theories on the democratic process of government are concerned, Social Credit appears to have accepted the idea of a party system and to have abandoned the ideas of the '30s and '40s which had grown out of Douglas's writings. The principles of the party were reduced to political slogans, indistinguishable from

¹⁷Low Papers, Low to Allen Bernfeld, 31 May 1955.

¹⁸Statement made by Low on the CBC program "Press Conference", 5 April 1954. Transcript loaned to the writer by Mr. B.R. Leboe.

¹⁹Hansard Debates, 27 November 1953, pp.437-41; 30 November 1953, pp.444-46; 3 December 1953, pp.598-604. Blackmore by this time had become almost a party within a party, and was such a liability that the movement attempted, unsuccessfully, to have another person nominated in his constituency in 1956. Winnipeg Tribune, 10 December 1956.

those of other parties and devoid of ideology.²⁰

This, however, explains only the outward appearance of the party, which had ceased to preach that people should unite only for results. The leaders of the party nevertheless retained some of their suspicions concerning the party system. Thus, it was frequently stated that Social Credit was a movement, rather than a party.²¹ The implication of such expressions was that the aims of the organization were moral rather than political. The party newspaper occasionally published resolutions passed by the Eastbourne Social Credit League in England which stated that representatives should be directly under the control of the people without reference to parties; these were not however, accompanied by any editorial comment, and the reason for their publication is unclear.²² Publication of the Eastbourne resolutions may have been permitted for no other reason than to suggest that the Canadian movement was still in close contact with the British organization.

The rather ambivalent sentiments of the party were expressed in public by The Canadian Social Crediter, and in private by Low.

²⁰ As described by "Race" in The Canadian Social Crediter the philosophical principles of Social Credit were 1) that the individual is the most important of all God's Creations on this earth, 2) that the major function of government is to give people the results they want, 3) that man must have freedom and security to enjoy his freedom, and 4) that what is physically possible should be financially possible. The Canadian Social Crediter, 20 February, 5 March, 19 March, and 2 April 1952. See also Low's remarks in the House of Commons, Hansard Debates, 2 April 1957, p.2995, in which he listed 13 principles of Social Credit, all of which appear quite orthodox.

²¹ Canadian Social Crediter, 29 July 1953.

²² Ibid, 20 February 1952 and 2 July 1953.

The former attacked party-machine rule, which it was contended, flouted the will of the people. On the other hand, the paper stressed that the best antidote to such abuses was a well-organized and well informed electorate. Social Credit, it was pointed out, had no intention of abolishing parties. Its struggle was against oligarchies.²³

In private Low agreed with this line of reasoning, but he also carried his ideal somewhat further. In a letter to an Ontario organizer he suggested that when one-party machine rule had been eliminated and MPs were able to vote according to their conscience, the need for general elections might disappear, and elections in constituencies might be necessary only to test the attitude of the people towards their representative or to replace a representative who had lost their confidence. He still thought of the people as having some control over the MP, but he failed to state to what degree this was to be exercised.²⁴

The party had not lost all of its crusading zeal, but much of what remained was now directed at the CCF while Social Credit looked upon itself as a party of conservatism and private enterprise. Such attitudes had been present in the movement from its inception, but they became more pronounced in the 1950s, not merely by the insistent manner in which they were presented but also by the decreased emphasis placed on other aspects of the party's ideology. This was

²³Ibid, July 1953.

²⁴Low Papers, Low to Fred Mardock, 4 January 1957. This letter is the only evidence which the writer was able to find on Low's later political philosophy, and it is difficult to say whether this was put forward as a practical goal or an ideal. It is easy to criticize this stand from a practical point of view, but read in conjunction with the views on party-machine rule it has a certain appeal.

hardly surprising, for the two parties were each other's worst enemies, competing for the votes of those who were disenchanted with the older parties. Thus, practical politics reinforced the ideological differences between the two.

As a result, attacks on the CCF multiplied, and the CCF retaliated in kind. The Social Crediters frequently attempted to link the socialists with communism, while the CCF branded the Social Crediters as fascists. Thus, when Coldwell attacked the party in B.C. for having dictatorial tendencies, Low declared that the attack was an illustration of the communist spirit which animated a portion of the CCF.²⁵ When Coldwell pressed his attacks in the House, the Social Credit leader retaliated by reading some of the more radical speeches of Harold Winch, J.S. Woodsworth, and Ross Thatcher.²⁶ The CCF, it was claimed, was "communism in short pants",²⁷ and the Winnipeg Manifesto of 1956 was "the same near-communist programme that requires the people to surrender their liberty to the all-powerful planning of an all-powerful state."²⁸

Probably the most extreme and startling assertion made in Parliament was in connection with the debate on the Northern Ontario Pipeline Corporation in 1956. At that time Hansell declared that in attempting to delay the passage of the bill establishing the corporation the Conservatives and CCF were "playing into the hands of the communists".²⁹ As shocking as this may seem, it was mild

²⁵Hansard Debates, 25 November 1952, p.65.

²⁶Ibid, 11 December 1952, p.572-74.

²⁷Canadian Social Crediter, April 1955.

²⁸Ibid, September 1956.

²⁹Hansard Debates, 28 May 1956, pp.4399-4403.

compared to the sentiments expressed in caucus, where it was agreed that the delaying tactics of the CCF were "for the purpose of being able to say that Communist Russia is outstripping us."³⁰

The corollary of this anti-socialist attitude was the conservative viewpoint of the MPs, ranging from William Wylie's reasoned attacks on pornographic literature³¹ to the most outspoken defence of private enterprise and criticism of governmental activities. This view was propounded by old and new members alike. The Liberals were looked upon as "socialists in low gear"³² and Crown corporations such as the CNR and TCA which competed with private corporations were attacked as a form of "creeping socialism."³³

Private enterprise was not, of course, the monopoly of the Social Credit party, but the frequency with which it was advocated set the Social Crediters apart. Moreover, it was not uncommon to mix fundamentalist religion with the ideology of the party, and it was suggested that the famous Parable of the Talents indicated divine approval of the profit motive.³⁴

Private enterprise was not to be unregulated, however. The need for limited controls was conceded, and government enterprises were supported provided that they offered a special protection of the public interest or competed freely with commercial firms.³⁵

³⁰Low Papers, Minutes of Caucus, 9 May 1956.

³¹Hansard Debates, 30 June 1951, pp.5028-31.

³²Ibid, 17 January 1955, p.243.

³³Ibid, 6 March 1956, pp.1844-46.

³⁴Ibid, 26 November 1953, p.385. For another example of the influence of religion on policy see Hansard Debates, 14 July 1955, when Low suggested that anti-communist literature which was distributed to members of the armed forces should contain more "inspirational" material.

³⁵Ibid, 17 January 1953, p.243 and 6 March 1956, p.1856.

Moreover, government assistance to private companies was supported in many instances. In the case of the Northern Ontario Pipe Line Corporation, Hansell argued that the federal government had insisted on an all-Canadian route and had thus prevented the Alberta firms from being able to sell natural gas on the lucrative American market until the needs of Eastern Canada had been met. In such an instance the federal government was duty-bound to aid the company until such time as private enterprise could support the venture on its own.³⁶

Other aspects of the conservatism of the party was opposition to socialized medicine,³⁷ compulsory military training in times of national emergency,³⁸ distrust of centralized government in cultural affairs,³⁹ and a critical attitude towards the CBC which was considered "leftist"⁴⁰, and which, it was maintained, should withdraw from the field of broadcasting and concentrate on the production of a few high-quality programs for distribution through commercial outlets.⁴¹

In international affairs this conservatism led the party to maintain economic nationalism,⁴² a pro-British bias in discussing trade and the Suez crisis of 1956,⁴³ and a concern over the continuing Canadian control of troops committed to UN operation.⁴⁴ How-

³⁶Ibid, 15 March 1956, pp.2187-92.

³⁷Ibid, 26 November 1953, pp.367-71; 1 May 1953, pp.4698-99.

³⁸Ibid, 13 February 1951, pp.337-39.

³⁹Ibid, 14 February 1957, pp.1280, 1289-91 and 1298.

⁴⁰Ibid, 29 March 1957, p.2835.

⁴¹Ibid, 2 April 1957, pp.2993-4.

⁴²Ibid, 5 February 1951, p.90.

⁴³Ibid, 26 November 1956, pp.33-34; 21 January 1957, p.472.

⁴⁴Ibid, 28 November 1956, p.119.

ever, in view of the fact that Social Credit has often been portrayed as being almost jingoistic in its pro-British attitudes it should be pointed out that during the Suez crisis the Social Crediters and CCF both supported the Liberals while the Conservatives, under the temporary leadership of Earl Rowe, took a pro-British stand which harkened back to the days of Arthur Meighen and his "Ready, aye ready" speech.⁴⁵

Yet in spite of this ideology, with its different priorities from former days, the party was being undermined by events. National prosperity made it increasingly difficult to talk of "poverty in the midst of plenty". In fact, the party had long been captivated with the slogan "What is physically possible should be financially possible", and now found a Liberal government which embarked upon a series of projects which suggested that such a slogan had been matched by facts. The MPs had long talked of pipelines, a national highway, and a national transportation system. The boom years of the mid-1950's robbed the party of many of its best platform planks.

This led the party into the curious position of mediating between the Liberals and the Conservatives. During the 1955 debate on the Department of Defence Production Act, when a stalemate appeared certain over the issue of the powers to be held by C.D. Howe, it was Solon Low who, without moving any amendments, persuaded the government to limit the period of time that certain ministerial emergency powers would be effective.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ibid, 26 November 1956, p.18.

⁴⁶Hansard Debates, 4 July 1955, pp.5645-46. See also Blair Fraser, "How C.D. Howe was Humbled", Macleans 20 August 1955.

The primary concern of the party members was now that of representing their constituencies and provinces, and in the early 1950's, they spoke out frequently in favour of subsidies for education, pipelines, local agriculture and public works. In the short run this enabled them to attain and retain their popular standing in their communities, but it had a negative effect on Social Credit as a whole. Throughout the many years that the party had representatives in Parliament only Solon Low attained national prominence. The Parliamentary group had no counterpart of Stanley Knowles, Clarence Gillis, or Alistair Stewart. The only other Social Credit MPs who gained any notice were those who attracted headlines with notorious statements.

Social Credit, then, had degenerated into a negative movement, devoid of ideology other than its strong anti-communist and pro-capitalist sentiments. On these points its responsible leaders tended to appear very similar to the Conservatives and even to the Liberals. With no clear ideology the party drifted through debates contributing little more than suggestions and some information on specific matters. On large issues the party was submerged in the opposition. Its members were spokesmen for Alberta and, to a lesser degree, for B.C. As a party with national aspirations it had lost its driving force. Even as an agrarian protest movement it was muted.

It may be argued, of course, that no national party has any dogma, and that parties must approach political and administrative questions with a pragmatic rather than a dogmatic view. It may also be said that the past failures of Social Credit were due in part to

its rigid approach to questions in the period from 1935 to 1950. Once the party had cut itself loose from its fundamental doctrines, it was able to appeal to a broader section of the country.

Such a situation did help the party, and by 1957 it had begun to achieve greater electoral successes. However, the party was also more vulnerable. Once it began to appear more orthodox and respectable, it was faced with the problem of survival in the very place which had given birth to Social Credit. As a party which increasingly resembled the Conservatives, it was able to compete with them outside of Alberta, but within its home territory it was also subject to greater competition. It was on this rock that Social Credit floundered in 1957-58.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM THE HEIGHTS TO THE DEPTHS - 1957-58

In retrospect it appears accurate to say that the last chance of the Social Credit party to achieve importance in federal politics was in 1957. It also would appear that the seeds of defeat were sown in 1956 in Ottawa, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Quebec.

During the famous Pipeline Debate, which a year later was to be the central issue in the general election, the Social Credit caucus formulated its policy in line with the interests of Alberta and British Columbia, and even had the Premiers of these two provinces in attendance at caucus meetings, an indication of how much the federal group was overshadowed by the provincial governments.¹ The Liberal government did not need the support of the Social Credit MPs, yet the latter supported the Liberals in every division. Like the Liberals, they failed to see the political and constitutional implications of the heavy-handed use of closure, and in the process of voting with the government they deprived themselves of a useful plank in 1957.

The stand taken by the party was in accord with its belief in free enterprise. However, the nationalistic outlook of the party might well have led the MPs to oppose a government which was assisting an American firm to build the gas pipeline through North Ontario. This was, in fact, the attitude of the Conservatives.

¹Low Papers, Minutes of Caucus, 7 March 1956, 10 March 1956.

The Social Crediters, however, were concerned with a regional matter, a pipeline to provide a market for Alberta's natural gas, and the government was attempting to make financially possible that which was physically possible. The closure device used was of secondary importance.

The provincial campaigns of 1956 were also a contributing factor to the party's failures in the following year. The national organization emerged from these campaigns virtually bankrupt. Not only did it owe large sums to private creditors, but it also owed much to the British Columbia Social Credit League. This debt, owed to a provincial organization, eventually became a disruptive factor in relations with the B.C. League.

Additional problems made it difficult for the party to embark on any nationwide campaign. Organization had lagged so greatly in Ontario and liaison between the caucus and the national headquarters in Toronto had been so haphazard that Low conceded the impossibility of fielding a full slate of candidates. He proposed, therefore, to concentrate on western Canada.² A further burden was placed on Low in the fall of 1956 when Hansell resigned as National President for reasons of health.³

Despite these problems the party laid ambitious plans early in November 1956, and even hoped to have 40 candidates in Quebec and 16 in Nova Scotia.⁴ This, however, did not materialize. Indeed, the plans were so ambitious that they may have appeared unrealistic to Premier Bennett. Shortly afterwards Low sensed that the B.C. leader was losing interest in the campaign.⁵

²Low Papers, Low to Manning, 31 August 1956.

³Ibid, Hansell to Low, 22 October 1956.

⁴Ibid, Minutes of National Executive Meeting, Social Credit Association of Canada, held in Vancouver, 8 November 1956.

⁵Ibid, Low to Orvis Kennedy, 20 December 1956.

The National Social Credit Association nevertheless undertook to provide extensive support to the candidates who were nominated, including 500 program booklets, three campaign manuals and 50 posters for each nominee. However, Low hoped each constituency organization would be able to raise at least \$150.00 for additional program booklets, though he suspected that these might not be used.⁶

The party entered the election with many serious handicaps. One of these was its old feud with L'Union des Electeurs. By this time the two organizations had drifted so far apart that they were engaged in open warfare.

This stemmed partly from the attitude of L'Union des Electeurs in the Quebec election in 1956, when it had backed the Liberal party in return for a vague platform plank that the physically possible should also be financially possible.⁷ Low for his part accused the Quebec organization of perfidity, which in turn provoked attacks on the National Association.⁸

Low subsequently attempted to secure support for Social Credit candidates in Quebec. According to Vers Demain, he met L'Union des Electeurs officials in February 1957 and secured from them a promise that they would not hinder Social Credit candidates. However, they intimated that they favoured independent candidates pledged to Social Credit to candidates running for the Social Credit Party.⁹

Such a truce was quickly broken when the National Leader found himself confronted with a book Salvation Island, an anti-

⁶Ibid, Low to Martin Kelln, President of the Saskatchewan Social Credit League, 20 April 1957.

⁷Vers Demain, 15 April 1956.

⁸Ibid, 1 June 1956.

⁹Ibid, 15 April 1957.

semitic work then being distributed by The Social Credit Service (Gostick's then most recent organization). In dissassociating himself from the book he again attacked L'Union des Electeurs in press conferences of 22 and 27 March.¹⁰ Meanwhile Premier Bennett criticized the concept of Social Credit independents and L'Union des Electeurs,¹¹ which in turn provoked new counter-attacks from Louis Even, culminating in an outright refusal to support the National party.¹²

These events were the final exchanges in the intermittent warfare which had continued for nine years. They reflected the basic tenet of L'Union des Electeurs, the rejection of party organization. The Quebec organization finally identified the National association with the hated party system. Madame Gilberte Côté-Mercier drove the point home when she wrote:

"Les parties politique sont ainsi l'armure politique qui protège la dictature financière. Tout les parties sans exception. L'attitude de Solon Low est là pour le prouver aux créditistes.

"Demolissons les parties. Exigeon des députés pour les électeurs - des 'indépendants' comme on dit - on plutôt des 'grands serviteurs' du pays à la place des accroupis des partis."¹³

Against this unremitting and hostile force the National Association could make no headway. Precisely how much this antagonism hurt the National Association is difficult to judge, for nowhere did a Union of Electors "independent" oppose a Social Credit candidate. Yet it should be pointed out that Réal Caouette, running as an independent in Villeneuve, won more than twice as many votes as four regular Social Credit candidates in the province.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid. See also L'Action Catholique and La Press, 23 April, 1957.

¹²Ibid and 1 June 1957.

¹³Ibid, 1 May 1957.

Even's supporters, had they been led towards some form of cooperation with Low, might have given the party sufficient voting strength to give it an image as a truly national movement. Caouette's substantial vote emphasized the failure of Social Credit to gain an effective Quebec wing.

During the campaign the party made extensive use of billboards, radio broadcasts, and mass rallies, and the MLAs from B.C. and Alberta, including the two Premiers, campaigned vigorously on behalf of the party.¹⁴ Precise figures concerning the financing of the campaign are not obtainable. The Alberta League spent large sums for the printing of material, and also paid for election issues of The Canadian Social Crediter and for advertising in the Toronto Telegram.¹⁵ The B.C. League paid for billboards, though some candidates felt that the money would have been better spent if it had been distributed to the constituency organizations.¹⁶ Even in western Canada it was necessary for candidates to raise substantial funds on their own, though in many cases their deposits were paid for by the National Association.

The Social Credit campaign, once it gained momentum, became an administrative disaster. The party eventually placed 113 candidates in the field. In many constituencies candidates withdrew be-

¹⁴For a detailed account of the election campaign, see John Meisel, The Canadian General Election of 1957, (Toronto, 1962) and particularly pp.220-231.

¹⁵Low Papers, Financial Statement of the Social Credit Association of Canada, Alberta Office, July 1957. Income is given as \$5,784 from the Alberta League Educational Fund and \$222.94 from other sources. Election expenditures included \$510.08 for printing of the June issue of The Canadian Social Crediter, \$4008.49 for platform printings, \$60.50 for posters, \$75.00 for symposiums, \$508.00 for Ontario broadcasts, and \$420.00 for the Telegram.

¹⁶Interview with Raymond Berthiaume, 28 March 1966.

forelection day. A planned "blitz" of Manitoba by Alberta and B.C. cabinet ministers failed to materialize, and only a B.C. contingent took part. The Manitoba organization was badly split in a local dispute in which a former provincial organizer was suspended by the party and two members of the provincial executive resigned. A disagreement was reported between Low and the B.C. Social Crediters when the latter supposedly prepared a platform for presentation at a rally in Toronto. The dispute, according to Meisel, concerned the lack of emphasis placed on monetary reforms, and the platform had to be redrafted only hours before the rally.¹⁹

The platform of the party was said to be based on the thirteen principles of Social Credit as outlined in the House of Commons by Low. These principles, however, had been vague and in only a few instances had suggested any continuing faith in Douglas's economic theories. That the physically possible should also be financially possible was still expounded. Other principles, however, such as that men should be bound by law, and that every person should be free to manage his own life insofar as this did not infringe on the rights of others, were indistinguishable from the general views expressed by other parties. In drawing up the platform the party also expressed itself in generalities. There was little to indicate that Social Credit had any specific policy for particular problems. The most notable example was the failure to stress means by which Canadian agricultural surpluses might be reduced, although the platform included a general statement that this problem should be dealt with through two-price systems, barter

¹⁹Meisel, op.cit.

deals, and the acceptance of foreign currency. In failing to emphasize this program the party reduced its potential impact in western Canada, where the problem of wheat surpluses, marketing and financing of grain storage had alienated many rural voters from the Liberals.

In the general election of 1957 Social Credit came close to achieving the status of a western party, though it again failed to come close to becoming a national party. The party won 466,663 votes, and for the first time in its history more than half of its voting strength was in provinces other than Alberta and British Columbia. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan Social Credit won more than 20 per cent of the vote in five constituencies, although it won no seats in either of these provinces.

The election returns demand special analysis. Overall, the party won only 6.6 per cent of the national vote, although, of course, its proportionate share of the vote was much greater in western Canada. The party vote in 1957 was greater than that of 1953 by 131,112, and its national share of the vote of 1.2 per cent better. However, this did not indicate as great an increase in support as one might initially suppose. The number of candidates was greater in 1957 than in 1953 (115 as compared to 72 five years before), and more than 58,300 votes for Social Credit candidates were gained in constituencies where the party had not run in 1953.¹⁸ Moreover, in a few ridings no Conservative candidate was entered, and Social Credit appeared to win votes which would otherwise have gone to that party.

¹⁸In 1953 the party contested four ridings where no candidate was entered in 1957. The vote in 1953 in these four constituencies totalled 4,755.

In Alberta the party won 13 seats, and the party vote increased. On the other hand, in relation to other parties Social Credit declined in strength from 40.8 per cent to 37.8 per cent of the popular vote. Eleven of the twelve rural seats in the province fell to Social Credit, and in Athabaska only 2.4 per cent of the popular vote separated the winning Liberal from the Social Crediter. On the other hand, only two of the five urban seats in Alberta fell to Social Credit. In Edmonton East only 284 votes separated the winning Social Crediter from a Liberal. The riding of Edmonton-Strathcona favoured Social Credit more heavily, and indeed the party did better in the urban polling divisions than in rural ones. This would appear to be related to the fact that the bulk of the ethnic vote, mainly Ukrainians, was centered in the east end of Edmonton.

Overall, however, it would appear that the party had reached its saturation point in Edmonton, and could expect no more than 13 or 14 seats in the province. In the two Calgary ridings and in Edmonton West (the three most populous constituencies in Alberta) the party could make no headway.

British Columbia resembled Alberta in many respects, with Social Credit increasing its total vote while its relative strength declined. This, however, did not hold true in all constituencies. In Burnaby-Coquitlam, Caribou, Kamloops, Kootenay West, Nanaimo, New Westminster, and Okanagan-Revelstoke, the party gained in relation to others. In rural constituencies such as Okanagan-Revelstoke, Caribou, Kamloops this appeared to be at the expense of the CCF, while in the urban ridings the two older parties tended to suffer more.

Outside of the two provinces mentioned the party made its most spectacular gains in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Once again the party was badly beaten in the cities and in most rural constituencies where the CCF had rooted itself. Yet in some regions the party showed remarkable strength. One of the more curious aspects in the election was the fact that the Social Credit movement had secured the support of the Western Mennonites. In Provencher, and Lisgar, Manitoba, and Rosthern, Saskatchewan, the Mennonite communities abandoned the Liberals for Social Credit.¹⁹

The Mennonite vote in Eastern Canada may also have been directed towards Social Credit. It is significant that the party

¹⁹ Social Credit had shown some strength in these ridings in the 1953 federal election, and carried a few polls in Mennonite areas. However, Mennonite support for the party was scattered. This was not the case in 1957, when large blocks of Mennonites in every Western Constituency went over to the party. The following figures, based on the 1951 Census reports and the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer will point this up.

Constituency	Town	Total pop.	Mennonite pop.	S.C. vote	Total vote for other parties
Provencher	Steinback	2,155	1,837	534	568
"	Gretna	608	444	177	225
"	Altona	1,438	1,287	227	361
Lisgar	Plum Coulee	467	366	263	132
"	Winkler	1,331	1,129	519	420
Rosthern	Rosthern	1,183	505	271	378
"	Dalmeny	308	257	190	63
"	Waldheim	476	418	114	91
Humboldt-Melfort	Drake	229	182	158	34

attracted many votes in those Ontario constituencies which included large groups of Mennonites, particularly in Lincoln and Waterloo South. However, the Social Credit vote was so small in relation to the total vote, and the Mennonite population was so submerged in the larger population of the region, that it would be difficult to determine the relationship between the Social Credit vote and the Mennonite community without a study of the ethnic composition of each individual poll.²⁰

The Mennonite swing to Social Credit was, in fact, the most significant gain for the party, for in other constituencies such as Churchill, Marquette, Portage-Neepawa, Kindersley, Yorkton and Saskatoon the party's standing remained almost unchanged from 1953. The Mennonites, in the opinion of some, were favourably impressed by the religious content of the Social Credit movement.²¹ Moreover, the party further identified itself with fundamental Christianity by running a clergyman in Provencher. In Manitoba the party had been organizing for five years. This had won such deep-seated support that even in 1958 Social Credit carried polls in Mennonite areas, and in 1959 a Social Credit MLA was to be elected in a Mennonite riding. It might also be noted that the Mennonite communities are highly conservative and socially isolated. Political movements originating within these communities would be dif-

²⁰With one exception, Cochrane, the best Ontario showings were Elgin (1,407 votes, 5.7% of total), Grenville-Dundas (1,072, 7.4%), Hastings Frontenac (1,941, 10.4%), Kent (1,792, 6.7%), Lincoln (2,233 votes, 4.6%), Waterloo South (1,532, 6.2%), York North (1,653, 5.5%). Large Mennonite communities may be found in the counties of Lincoln (4,410 out of a populace of 89,366) and Waterloo (10,220 out of a total of 126,123).

²¹Discussions with W.G. Dinsdale over several years, and letter to the writer from J.F. O'Sullivan, 25 March 1966, who was a Liberal candidate in Brandon-Souris in 1957.

difficult for other parties to defeat, while at the same time parties based on elements outside of these communities would have difficulty in establishing themselves.

Immediately after the election the party leaders entered into discussions as to how to learn from their experience. The organization was now worse off than ever, and a disgusted B.C. League ceased to contribute to the National office. This in turn meant that the grants of \$100 which had been made monthly to the provincial leagues were halted. When Low drew attention to the fact that the B.C. organization was approximately three months in arrears (\$7,500) he was reminded that the National Office had obtained \$5,000 the year before to assist Saskatchewan's League, and that this had not yet been repaid.²²

In the meantime the National Council had studied the campaign and produced a list of 35 points which were regarded as weaknesses in the Association. These included lack of coordination, need for more work between elections, more organization required, a more specific platform with special emphasis on monetary proposals, financing on a national basis and a platform with more proposals aimed specifically at Western problems.²³

The party leaders realized, however, that another election could not be far off, and the Saskatchewan League President frankly admitted that a full slate of candidates could not be entered without completely destroying his provincial organization.²⁴

²²Low Papers, Low to Martin Kelln, 16 August 1957.

²³Ibid, Minutes of National Council Meeting, 22 July 1957.

²⁴Ibid, Martin Kelln to Low, 2 December 1957.

The end now came quickly. Early in 1958 Low attempted to organize regional Social Credit Conferences as a way of "bringing the national convention to the people".²⁵ Mr. B.R. Leboe, MP for Caribou, was appointed acting President of the Association. The first of the regional conventions was held in Ottawa in January 1958 and the second in Vancouver on 14-15 February 1958. By then, however, Prime Minister Diefenbaker had dissolved Parliament and Canada's second election in nine months was underway.

The party in 1957 had found itself fighting in circumstances altogether different from the heady atmosphere of 1956. The Liberal decline had been expected; what had not been expected was the resurgence of the Conservative party. The Conservatives had been strengthened by the presence of definite issues and the leadership of Diefenbaker. If anything had checked the Conservative revival, it was probably the continued if lessened suspicion that the Conservatives were still a party of the eastern establishment. By 1958 Diefenbaker, by his appearance, his speeches, and his actions, had effectively destroyed that image. In so doing he gained additional support for his party and virtually destroyed the last justification for the presence of western radical parties. Moreover, his evangelical method of delivering speeches undermined the religious appeal of Social Credit candidates.

It must be remembered that to the people in their homes the growing national support for Diefenbaker was not apparent. It therefore became necessary in the minds of many to vote for Diefenbaker to ensure that he might have even a slim majority. Canada had not had a minority government for more than a generation, and

²⁵Ibid, Low to Martin Kelln, 12 December 1957.

the dangers of it appeared more real than the dangers of lopsided majorities such had sated the Liberals.

It may be seen, then, that the circumstances in which Social Credit fought the 1958 election were different from those of a year before. In 1957 Diefenbaker had defeated the Liberals in the West. In 1958 he destroyed them, together with the Social Credit and CCF parties. Even had Social Credit been able to retain its voting strength of 1957 it would have suffered substantial losses, for the delicate balance between Conservatives and Liberals which had existed since 1940 had been disrupted. The final blow to Social Credit was the desertion of its own followers.²⁶

²⁶The difference between 1953, 1957 and 1958 is best illustrated by the use of a few statistics to illustrate first the decline of the Liberals and then the destruction of all the other parties by the Conservatives. Thus, in Edmonton-Strathcona the trend may be traced as follows, using percentage of votes gained by each party in three elections.

	PC	Liberal	CCF	SC
1953	16.8%	37.3%	9.2%	36.7%
1957	28.6	29.1	6.6	35.6
1958	61.3	17.1	4.4	17.2

In New Westminster the comparable figures were:

	PC	Liberal	CCF	SC
1953	8.9%	30.9%	26.6%	31.0%
1957	21.3	18.1	23.8	35.5
1958	41.7	9.0	26.0	21.4

Thus, in the general election of 1958 Social Credit candidates, reduced in number to 82, lost almost all of the support which they had retained in 1957. In Alberta the party lost 64,556 votes, and in B.C. 83,383. Every Social Credit candidate, including the MPs, was defeated. In only three ridings did the party succeed in retaining more than 30 per cent of the vote. These were Vegreville, Red Deer and Medicine Hat, the latter two held by particularly outstanding individuals. To date, only these last two have been recovered in Alberta, both by outspoken men who defeated back-bench Conservative non-entities in 1962, 1963 and 1965. The best showing of the party in B.C. was in Caribou and Fraser Valley, which in 1962 and 1963 were the only B.C. seats recaptured by the party. On the morrow of the election The Canadian Social Crediter remarked bitterly "We did it".²⁷ The party which nine months before had proclaimed its goal as "On to Ottawa" had been finally beaten.

²⁷Canadian Social Crediter, April 1958.

CHAPTER IX

REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

Few parties have had more obituaries written for them than the Social Credit Party, and few have shown such remarkable abilities to survive. The 1958 defeat, however, was more than a temporary reverse. The fortunes of the party in Western Canada were largely confirmed in 1962-63 and again in 1965. There has been little evidence of Social Crediters returning to their party. It is conceivable that this may change once the leadership of the Conservative party changes, but with each passing year Conservative MPs grow more entrenched, and it is now Conservative MPs who fight for their constituents. Moreover, the election of 1958 robbed the Social Crediters of an essential element in their previous victories - the myth of invulnerability.

The revival of the party, such as it was, between 1958 and 1962, is probably too contemporary for analysis at this time, and certainly too complex for this study to describe adequately. What is necessary at this point is to look back and survey by what means the Social Credit party advanced, and why it did not achieve more in the 22 years following its initial appearance in Parliament.

The provincial victories in Alberta and B.C. were both the greatest achievements and the primary weaknesses of the national party. Aberhart's dramatic victory in Alberta led many opportunists to join the Social Credit movement. In Alberta these were examined for their sincerity before being permitted to run as candidates. Elsewhere, however, no such policy was applied. Thus, in the period

-- from 1936 to 1946 a promising movement in Manitoba was split between those who believed wholeheartedly in Social Credit and the bulk of the MLAs who supported Bracken and eventually joined his coalition government in order to retain their seats.

On the other hand, the Alberta and B.C. victories gave the party a strong base from which it might have been expected that it would expand. It meant, however, that the leadership of the party was given by the premiers of these two provinces. Thus, when Aberhart became engaged in a prolonged quarrel with the federal government the MPs were forced to act as provincial spokesmen in the House of Commons. This enabled them to maintain their standing in Alberta, but it also identified them as being members of a parochial movement which threatened national unity.

At the same time, the members were so largely dependent upon the provincial premiers up to and including 1958 that they could do little to formulate policies and ideas without consulting the premiers. This sometimes resulted in embarrassing reverses of policy, such as the volte face performed by MPs over conscription. Their national outlook was circumscribed, and their attempts to build organizations outside of Alberta were interpreted as being attempts by provincial governments to extend their influence through political puppets. This impression was given further weight by the fact that when the Western Canada Social Credit Association was formed all of its officers were from Alberta. When the National Social Credit Association was formed in 1944 most of its officers were from Alberta. Its Vice-President, a Quebec Social Crediter, was seldom consulted.

Finally, from 1949 until 1958 all the major executive positions in the National Association were held by Albertans.

By contrast, the CCF was forged from a diverse group of rural and urban socialists, and had spent ten years in building a national organization before it captured Saskatchewan. Consequently, the provincial stronghold of the CCF never overshadowed its national parent in the manner that the provincial Social Credit parent dominated its federal offspring.

This domination by the provincial governments meant that ideology was also formulated to conform with the requirements of the provinces. It may be argued that the Douglas theories as developed by 1947 could only have led Social Credit to destruction, but the fact remains that these doctrines were de-emphasized at a time when they were embarrassing to the Alberta government. In abandoning these doctrines the Western Social Crediters were led inevitably into conflict with the Quebec wing of the movement.

The leadership of the provincial parties was emphasized by the fact that only one MLA, Low, ever left the provincial field for the federal. This not only indicated where the greatest source of power lay, but also deprived the party of men who might otherwise have given effective leadership in the national organization.

The doctrines of Social Credit were themselves responsible for much of the failure of the party. Highly individualistic and non-partisan in nature, they led many believers, particularly those in Quebec, to take a negative view of electoral activity. This retarded the development of the Quebec movement until it was too late. A political vacuum in that province which might have been filled by

L'Union des Electeurs was filled in 1943-45 by the Bloc Populaire. When the latter broke up L'Union des Electeurs faced the impossible task of attempting to defeat the federal Liberals led by Louis St. Laurent.

The radical nature of Social Credit, injected with the evangelical fervour of its leaders, frequently led the leaders into situations which proved disastrous. The invasion of Saskatchewan in 1938 split the local movement, the destruction of which was completed by the New Democracy party in 1940. Convinced that Social Credit indeed held the key to solving the problems of the economy, Aberhart sought ways of spreading his ideas and thus made the mistake of allying the Alberta Social Credit League with Herridge's movement. This not only associated Social Credit with a leader who showed no interest in the monetary theories of C.H. Douglas but also led to the Quebec movement being alienated from that of Alberta. This same belief in the cause of Social Credit led the National Association into participation in elections where no basis of support existed. The New Brunswick election of 1956 was the most important of these, but the large number of candidates who ran in Ontario in the 1957 election might also be cited as an example.

Moreover, the doctrines laid down by C.H. Douglas proved divisive in other ways, and made cooperation between a Quebec and a Western wing impossible. The extreme views of Douglas, faithfully repeated by many of his followers, made the problem of winning additional support almost impossible. The CCF, with its radical Regina Manifesto, encountered much the same problem. However, in the crucial years 1943-44 the CCF was moderating its attitudes and gaining wider support, with the prospect of election victories in B.C., Saskatchewan,

and Ontario. Social Credit, on the other hand, was then turning to hard, doctrinaire Douglasism. There would appear to have been several reasons for this. One was the fact that at that time the movement had virtually no organization outside of Alberta, and thus no outside influence to compel a more reasonable policy. Another was the sudden removal of the Alberta movement's founder and chief policy maker, Aberhart. It was not until 1946-47 that Manning realized that Douglasite doctrines could not be tolerated without damage to the reputation of himself, his party and his government. By then, the CCF was firmly rooted in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, while the doctrinaire Social Crediters had secured for themselves a most unsavory reputation which required ten years to live down.

In each province where Social Credit has shown some strength it has begun as an anti-establishment movement, the object of its scorn being at various times and various places the UFA, the CCF, the Liberal party or simply urban-centered political controls. Once established in Alberta and B.C. the movement tended to become conservative. In Alberta, however, Social Credit, though conservative in its administration of the province, retained a radical outlook with regards to national affairs, although this radicalism was not emphasized between 1950 and 1958. In B.C. the movement lost its radical nature almost immediately on coming to power and was strengthened by large Conservative groups supporting the party. In 1958 the movement confronted a radical Conservative in Diefenbaker, with the results that both groups of supporters were able to identify themselves with a new movement and a new leader.

In essence the Social Credit MPs lost their seats because they were deemed expendable. The Social Credit movement had lived for years on the isolationism of the western farmers who had looked upon Ottawa as almost a hostile capital. The prosperity of the 1950's had made it clear that this was not necessarily true. The failure of the Liberals to solve the problem of wheat marketing in the mid-'50s discouraged westerners from turning to that party. On the other hand the oil boom had shown westerners that outside influence was not entirely detrimental to their welfare. This in itself weakened the position of the Social Crediters. Their ideology, when modified, hardly differed from that of the Conservatives. Thus, only a tenuous cord held the Social Credit movement to the electorate. Given a compelling reason to vote for something the electorate might easily abandon Social Credit. The lure was John Diefenbaker.

In retrospect it can be seen that Diefenbaker appealed to both aspects of the contradictory radical-conservative views of the western community. As a man from the West who defended the rights of individuals against governments and businesses he represented the radical side of the Westerner. As one who equally defended private enterprise and the small entrepreneur, he appealed to the conservative side. His policy of northern development was the final blow for it captured the imagination of the voters who were fascinated by the prospects of untold wealth in the north of which they knew so little.

It is the view of this writer that the national Social Credit movement has ceased to exist. Only since 1960 has the party been able to formulate a reasoned, lucid policy respecting national

affairs. It now stands for conservative government; its radicalism has virtually disappeared. Yet if Mr. Diefenbaker should retire, the Conservative party would probably revert to a form of conservatism similar to that now held by Social Credit. Unless the party could once more win support through radical appeals there would be no reason for the electorate to return to Social Credit. Should this be the case, it will be but another instance of this most interesting party formulating new policies long after the opportunity for them to be effective has passed.

Appendix "A"

Social Credit Standing in Canadian Federal Elections1935-58British Columbia

Year	No. of Candidates (in brackets ()) - No. of seats won	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	2	1,796	.6	7.2
1940	1	506	.1	2.0
1945	9	9,890	2.3	4.1
1949	2 ¹	2,109	.5	3.3
1953	18 (4)	123,278	26.1	26.1
1957	21 (6)	143,145	24.2	24.8
1958	22	59,762	9.6	9.6

¹Excluding one Independent Social Credit candidate.

Alberta

Year	No. of Candidates (in brackets () - No. of seats won	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	17 ² (13)	111,249	46.6	46.6
1940	17 (10)	93,023	34.5	34.5
1945	17 (13)	113,821	36.6	36.6
1949	17 ³ (10)	126,409	37.4	37.4
1953	17 (11)	138,847	40.8	40.8
1957	17 (13)	161,697	37.8	37.8
1958	17	97,141	21.6	21.6

²Excluding one Independent Social Credit candidate.

³Excluding two Independent Social Credit candidates.

Saskatchewan

Year	No. of Candidates (in brackets () - No. of seats won	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	20 (2)	61,505	17.8	18.8
1940	5 ⁴	12,347	3.3	15.8
1945	9	11,449	3.0	7.8
1949	4	3,474	0.9	4.8
1953	14	18,810	5.3	8.1
1957	16	40,830	10.5	11.1
1958	1	1,745	0.4	0.4

⁴New Democracy.

Manitoba

Year	No. of Candidates	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	6	5,751	2.1	4.1
1940	4	5,831	1.8	11.1
1945	8	10,322	3.2	7.9
1949	-	-	-	-
1953	8	17,260	6.3	14.7
1957	14	45,803	13.1	13.1
1958	6	6,753	1.8	5.6

Ontario

Year	No. of Candidates	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	-	-	-	-
1940	1	786	0.1	7.3
1945	8	3,906	0.2	1.5
1949	5 ⁵	3,225	0.2	3.3
1953	9	5,427	0.3	2.4
1957	40	38,418	1.7	3.6
1958	18	8,386	0.3	1.4

⁵Plus four Union of Electors candidates who polled 2,036 votes.

Quebec

Year	No. of Candidates	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Votes in Constituencies Contested
1935	-	-	-	-
1940	2 ⁶	7,610	0.6	24.5
1945	43 ⁷	63,310	4.5	7.8
1949	41 ⁸	80,990	5.1	9.5
1953	-	-	-	-
1957	4	3,877	0.2	3.1
1958	15	12,858	0.6	2.6

⁶Not associated with New Democracy.

⁷Union des Electeurs.

⁸Union des Electeurs.

New Brunswick

Year	No. of Candidates	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	-	-	-	-
1940	-	-	-	-
1945	1	2,300	1.1	10.4
1949	-	-	-	-
1953	1	931	0.4	5.4
1957	2	2,420	1.1	4.7
1958	3	1,711	0.7	2.2

Nova Scotia

1957	1	473	0.1	2.2
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Yukon and N.W.T.

1953	1	998	13.8	26.5
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Canada

Year	No. of Candidates (in brackets () - No. of seats won	SC Vote	% of Total Vote	% of Vote in Constituencies Contested
1935	45 (17)	180,679	4.1	19.2
1940	30 (10)	123,274	2.7	15.9
1945	95 (13)	214,998	4.1	10.9
1949	78 (10)	216,207	3.7	11.7
1953	72 (15)	305,551	5.4	17.8
1957	115 (19)	436,663	6.6	12.5
1958	82 (0)	188,356	2.6	6.1

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