

*The Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 2, June 1949: 123-143.  
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Volume 3, Number 2, septembre 1949

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/801565ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/801565ar>

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Publisher(s)

Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française

ISSN

0035-2357 (print)

1492-1383 (digital)

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Cite this review

Rothney, G. O. (1949). Review of [*The Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 2, June 1949: 123-143. MC NAUGHT, K.W., "J. S. Woodsworth and a Political Party for Labour, 1896 to 1921"]. *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 3(2), 281-283. <https://doi.org/10.7202/801565ar>

**REVUES DES REVUES**

*The Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 2, June 1949: 123-143.

Mc NAUGHT, K.W., "J. S. Woodsworth and a Political Party for Labour, 1896 to 1921".

Considerable interest in the late J. S. Woodsworth, M.P., has been expressed in French Canada. He was for a time the desk-mate in the House of Commons of Henri Bourassa, and between the two there developed,

not merely friendship, but a good deal of mutual admiration. In 1940, when Mr. Woodsworth was elected to Parliament for the last time before his death, René Doussin wrote in *L'Action Nationale*:

On avait craint que la dure lutte menée contre M. J. S. Woodsworth n'ait eu raison du vieux parlementaire. Il n'en est rien. Sa grande voix, souvent accusatrice, se fera encore entendre aux Communes; de nombreuses vérités elle devra se faire l'écho persévérant. Dans les circonstances alarmantes de notre temps, il est bon qu'il y ait encore des hommes qui sachent raison garder<sup>1</sup>.

This estimation has not changed with the passing of time. André Laurendeau, contrasting the present policy of the C.C.F. on external affairs, with the views of Mr. Woodsworth, wrote in *Le Devoir*, on July 19, 1949:

On se souvient du témoignage que le fondateur de la C.C.F. rendit contre la guerre à la session de septembre 1939. Il le faisait avec un courage et une vision que personne après lui ne paraît avoir retrouvés.

How did it come about that one English-speaking member emerged in Parliament with views such as these? How did a man manage to be repeatedly elected in the distant city of Winnipeg whose views attracted so much attention among those French-Canadians who described themselves as being most vigorously "national" and "Canadian" in their outlook? Some of the answers to these questions are to be found in this able article by Mr Mc Naught.

The author is a graduate of the University of Toronto, and is now Assistant Professor of History in United College, (formerly called Wesley College), Winnipeg. He is therefore very familiar with the two institutions of which Woodsworth was himself a graduate. "This article is an attempt to analyse J. S. Woodsworth's philosophy against the background of the major influence in his life between 1896 and 1921". Those who have not read Professor F.H. Underhill's pamphlet, *James Shaver Woodsworth, Untypical Canadian* (Toronto, 1944), will be surprised to discover what these major influences were. He was the product of untypical experiences.

"Woodsworth's family background was not such as might be expected to produce a radical in any accepted sense of the word. Yet somewhere between the time that he was elected senior stick of Wesley College, Winnipeg (1896), and his theological training at Victoria College, Toronto (1898), questions began to arise in his mind concerning the traditional family approach to social and religious problems. These resulted in an increasing interest in the "social gospel" of Christianity". But he found his experience in the Methodist Church "frustrating to his basic humanitarian impulses", and he developed a "scepticism of organized religion as a vehicle for social

1. René Doussin, "Apostilles politiques", *L'ACTION NATIONALE*, XV, 4: 288-89, Montréal, avril 1940.

reform". His final break with the Methodist Church came in June, 1918. It was precipitated by his belief that a Christian minister must preach peace. "The churches", he wrote, "have been turned into very effective recruiting agencies".

The Winnipeg general strike of 1919, says Mr. Mc Naught, "assumes a position of critical importance in Woodsworth's development". Comparisons between this event and the recent troubles in the asbestos region come readily to one's mind. When the strike finally collapsed, Woodsworth was in the provincial jail, but in 1920 the Crown dropped its proceedings against him. In 1921 he was the candidate of the Independent Labor Party in Winnipeg Centre, and was elected to the House of Commons of Canada. He remained a member of Parliament, without interruption, for the rest of his life.

By 1921, "his attention had already been clearly directed toward the problem of establishing an effective labour party", the article concludes. "He was convinced that if misuse of the police and the military were to be effectively prevented, and if the social relationships within Canada were to be fundamentally and peacefully reconstituted, labour must direct its major effort toward a political victory at Ottawa".

Gordon O. ROTHNEY