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WHAT, THEN, IS THE MANITOBAN, THIS NEW MAN? or THIS ALMOST CHOSEN PEOPLE

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Ottawa

I must acknowledge at once that I have no right to appear on a program such as this, in which a society of historical scholars pays its respects to the Province of Manitoba as the Province reaches its hundredth birthday. I have never lived in Manitoba or done any special historical research on the Province, its people or its social and political institutions. I have no particular claim to express opinions about it or about the role it has played in Canadian life. So I apologize as a mere amateur performing before an audience which must be full of professional experts.

I don't suppose that you younger people really expected anything very original or illuminating from a couple of aged, weather-beaten liberals like Arthur Lower and myself, with our antiquated nineteenth-century ideology. But he has the advantage over me of knowing a great deal about the Province which is the subject of this afternoon's session. Whereas I, as an amateur, keep thinking of irrelevant themes – such as that Lenin was born in April 1870, at almost exactly the same time as the Province of Manitoba – and wondering what the connection of those two historical events might be. And a friend of mine informed me, a couple of days ago, that Standard Oil was born in 1870. Lenin, Manitoba, Standard Oil – that's the sort of combination that is likely to start a journalistic amateur like me off on all sorts of reflections inappropriate for a ritualistic ceremony of celebration like the present meeting. But they would certainly lead to the conclusion that the Almighty must have intended Manitoba to live in the very centre of the modern world.

I felt that I might at least try for a little superficial originality in my contribution, by thinking up a good special title for this paper about Manitoba.

The first is "What, then, is the Manitoban, this new man ?", which is a slight variation on a once famous sentence of a French settler in 1782 (Crèvecœur) writing what he called *Letters from an American Farmer* and expounding ecstatically on the advantages of living in the new Western world over living in the old world of the European establishment. The second is "This Almost Chosen People", which

is the title of a very good book about the development of the political ideas of his fellow Americans by a friend of mine, Professor Russel Nye of Michigan State University, who took his title from a speech by Abraham Lincoln.[1]

But Manitoba worries me somewhat at present. My sole sources of information about this Province these days are the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *Canadian Dimension.* And as I read these authorities of the far Right and the far Left, and try to get it clear in my head that they are both talking about the same Province, I stumble helplessly toward the conclusion that soon the only thing left to do will be to dissolve the Manitoba people and elect a new one.

I get a little worried, also, about the movement which seems well under way here to elevate Louis Riel into a Mozartean hero, the stone statue Commendatore who pursues Don Giovanni Macdonald of Ottawa and at last drags him down to hell amid appropriate flames and choruses. But I don't want to come here as an Ontario Leporello, consoling virtuous Manitobans by singing a Catalogne song to them about how many other maidens our Canadian Don Giovanni seduced politically or tried to seduce, "Ma, in Canada, son gia mille etre".

What is my excuse, then, for appearing on this program? My only excuse is that some fifty years ago, when I was learning how to be a professor of history, in the years 1914-1927, I lived in the University of Saskatchewan next door to Manitoba. And since my main interest was the study of politics, Winnipeg became for me, at that critical stage in my personal intellectual development, the intellectual capital of Canada, because it was the home of John W. Dafoe and James S. Woodsworth.

Manitoba, the Province, was also at that time the home of Arthur Meighen, but I wasn't enlightened or educated by him. In fact I reacted against him. Away back in the eighteenth century when the American colonies were on the eve of revolution, the men of the Left of those days had a definition of a Tory. "A Tory", they said, "is a man whose body is in America, whose head is in England, and whose neck should be stretched." Mr. Meighen's body was in western Manitoba, his head was in southern Ontario, and I thought his neck should be stretched – figuratively, I mean.

But just let me ask you to reflect, those of you who belong to a younger generation, what Manitoba must have meant in Canadian politics in those days of the 1920's when I was young and when

[1] Speech to the Senate of New Jersey, February 24, 1861.

Dafoe, Woodsworth and Meighen were all alive. They had all come from Ontario, but they had all reached maturity in Manitoba.

Well, it is chiefly about Canadian politics in the 1920's and 1930's that I want to talk today. And I want to talk about the Prairies at large and their part in Canadian politics, rather than about Manitoba in particular. It was then that Canadian politics fascinated and excited me the most. Now that I am old, I have lived for fifteen years in Ottawa without ever entering the House of Commons or any of its public Committee Rooms; and I doubt if I've missed very much of importance. So you'll have to listen to an old man who has lived on into these unhappy modern days when the prairie wheat-farmers have sunk to being just another not very successful pressure-group at Ottawa, an old man reminiscing about the great days when the wheat-farmers thought of themselves as the creative part of the Canadian political community, engaged in building up a new society, a new politics in Canada. That is what I meant by talking in my title about a chosen people, and asking, "What, then, is the Manitoban, this new man ?"

I had had some acquaintance with Manitoba before those exciting, creative days of the 1920's. Two of my uncles, older brothers of my father, had emigrated to Manitoba in the late 1880's, and had become prosperous farmers with large families out on the Brandon plains. For all I know, they may have been among those Ontario Grit farmer immigrants who shattered Bill Morton's dream of an ideal Manitoba brotherhood of French-speaking Canadians and English-speaking Canadians, living in a Platonic community under university-trained Platonic guardians. They may even have helped to drive him into that deep gloom which has today made "Grit" his favourite four-letter word.

In those boyhood days, also, I acquired another connection with the West, through reading the novels of Ralph Connor. He, I discovered from listening to him speak from the pulpit once, was not an especially good preacher, at least on Presbyterian standards. But he wrote most exciting novels, some of which I read in Presbyterian church journals that reached my home. Let not the scornful intellectual aesthetes of today's universities tell us that Ralph Connor was too superficial, sentimental and optimistic for our present-day sophisticated understanding of the human condition. They have never known what it was to be young at the beginning of the century, the century which our Prime Minister told us was to belong to Canada.

My father's investments (or speculations) in prairie municipal real estate, miles from the centres of several growing prairie towns,

gave me another taste of prairie optimism. I suppose there is still useless wheat or prairie grass growing on those town lots of Weyburn and other future prairie Chicagos on which he once paid municipal taxes.

In 1913-1914, when I was a student at Oxford, I acquired another interest in the prairie. Rupert Brooke, the Cambridge poet, travelled across Canada in the summer of 1913 from Quebec to Vancouver and wrote back letters about his experiences to the *Westminster Gazette*. I read those letters as they came out in the *Westminster* and was delighted by them.

I should like to quote now at some length from his letter about Winnipeg, because it illustrates so beautifully this theme of mine of the difference between eastern and western Canada in the early days of the twentieth century and of the superior potentialities of the civilization of the west. [2]

> Winnipeg is the West . . . The difference between East and West is possibly no greater than that between North and South England, or Bavaria and Prussia; but in this country, yet unconscious of itself, there is so much less to hold them together . . . . Winnipeg is a new city . . . . Her population is a hundred thousand, and she has the biggest this, that, and the other west of Toronto. A new city; a little more American than the other Canadian cities, but not unpleasantly so . . . . The people have something of the free swing of the Americans, without the bumptiousness; a tempered democracy, a mitigated independence of bearing. The manners of Winnipeg, of the West, impress the stranger as better than those of the East, more friendly, more hearty, more certain to achieve graciousness, if not grace. There is, even, in the architecture of Winnipeg, a sort of *gauche* pride visible. It is hideous, of course, even more hideous than Toronto, or Montreal; but cheerily and windily so . . . .
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> There seems to be a trifle more public spirit in the West than the East . . . . One can't help finding a tiny hope that Winnipeg . . . may yet come to something . . . . The . . . timid prayer that something different, something more worth having, may come out of Winnipeg, exists, and not quite unreasonably. That cannot be said of Toronto.
>
> Winnipeg is of the West, new, vigorous in its way, of unknown potentialities. Already the West has been a nuisance to the East, in the fight of 1911 over reciprocity with the United States. When she gets a larger representation in Parliament, she will be still more of a nuisance . . . . It is generally believed in the West that the East runs Canada, and runs it for its own advantage. And the East means a few very rich men . . . .
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> The most interesting expression of the new Western point of view, and in many ways the most hopeful movement in Canada, is the

[2] These *Letters from America* were published in a book in 1916 after Brooke's death (New York, Scribner's, 1916). Other private letters to friends back in England are published in Christopher Hassall, *Rupert Brooke : a Biography* (London, Faber and Faber, 1960) and Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Letters of Rupert Brooke* (London, Faber, 1968).

> Co-operative movement among the grain-growers of the three prairie provinces.... It has gradually attached itself to an advanced Radical programme of a Chartist description. And it is becoming powerful. Whether the outcome will be a very desirable rejuvenation of the Liberal Party, or the creation of a third – perhaps Radical Labour-party, it is hard to tell. At any rate the change will come. And, just to start with, there will very shortly come to the Eastern Powers, who threw out Reciprocity with the States for the sake of the Empire, a demand from the West that the preference to British goods be increased rapidly till they be allowed to come in free, also for the Empire's sake. Then the fun will begin. [3]

Remember that Brooke, in addition to being a promising young poet, was also an active Fabian sociologist. While he travelled across Canada he was writing poems, but he was also studying the state of the civilization of the Canadian people. He could make fun of these people, both in his public and in his private letters, but he also had an eye for what looked like more promising developments than the mere making of money. And he found these signs on the Prairie. He saw that the fun was about to begin.

Here is another brief extract from his public letters to show that he wasn't too much impressed by the money-making aspects of that first great wheat-boom :

> I travelled from Edmonton to Calgary in the company of a citizen of Edmonton and a citizen of Calgary. Hour after hour they disputed. Land in Calgary had risen from five dollars to three hundred; but in Edmonton from three to five hundred. Edmonton had grown from thirty persons to forty thousand in twenty years; but Calgary, from twenty to thirty thousand in twelve.... "Where" – as a respite – "did I come from?" I had to tell them, not without shame, that my own town of Grantchester, having numbered three hundred at the time of Julius Caesar's landing, had risen rapidly to nearly four by Doomsday Book, but was now declined to three-fifty. They seemed perplexed and angry. [4]

Now, as to my own personal reminiscences about the prairie west.

I first saw the prairies at the end of the summer of 1914. I was on my way to start earning my living as a professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan. And I still remember vividly my exhilaration as I stepped out of a C.P.R. sleeping-car in the Winnipeg station early one morning and got my first sniff of that wonderful prairie autumn air. Coming as I did from the hot, humid, stale, end-of-summer, Toronto Exhibition air of my home city, it was as if I had taken not a short step but a gigantic leap. In my imagination I still take that gigantic leap every time I get west of Ontario. After a short stroll down Main Street, where the architecture was

[3] *Letters from America*, Chapter IX, "To Winnipeg", pp. 102-107.
[4] *Ibid.*, Chapter XI, "The Prairies", pp. 128-129.

admittedly not quite worthy of that fresh, crisp, cool, invigorating prairie air, I got back into the observation car with the three Winnipeg morning papers in my hands; and there my second great revelation about the prairies occurred. I read my first Dafoe editorial.

I don't remember whether I had ever heard of J. W. Dafoe before that moment. But that morning his theme was one which was to become familiar and very congenial to me. It was that we Canadians were in this war not as dutiful colonial children of Britain but as grown-up responsible citizens of Canada exercising the international responsibilities of an adult democratic people. I said to myself: "Why, that's just what I believe!" But I hadn't quite realized that it was just what I believed until I read it in Dafoe's magisterial prose. For the next academic year in Saskatoon and for eight years more in the 1920's, after I returned in 1919 from a four-year sabbatical in uniform, I was destined to exclaim constantly to myself, as I read the *Free Press* six days a week: "Why, that's just what I believe!" Dafoe crystallized for me the ideas that were floating about in a vague, amorphous, inarticulate form in my mind. I became an addict of the *Free Press*, and I've never quite shaken off the addiction since. Every now and then I swear off, but I've never quite given the paper up altogether, even after I became conscious that it was with what Mr. Woodsworth was saying that I agreed rather than with what Mr. Dafoe was saying.

Of course, my young friends Murray Donnelly and Ramsay Cook have pointed out various important fields in which the Dafoe liberalism was seriously limited, if indeed it could be considered liberalism at all, especially in his attitude and policies toward the French Canadians, both on local questions such as education and on national questions such as conscription in World War I. I cannot refute their criticisms now, though I agreed with him then about conscription (I was in the Armed Forces then), and I'm afraid I would have agreed with him earlier about education in Manitoba had I been living out here then – which reveals the uncertain quality of my own liberalism. But it is easy for the younger critics in this audience to be liberal about issues and events of the generations before they were born. Try being liberal and magnanimous for a couple of weeks about the United States now.

Dafoe was a creative educator of his generation in his long fight for prairie interests against the imperial economic and political domination of Toronto and Montreal. He fulfilled the same function in his campaign for Canadian national autonomy against the benevolent maternalism of British governments. And he was perhaps the greatest educator of all in his repeated watchful editorials about

international affairs. He made the people of the prairies the most internationally-minded and the least parochial of all the regions of Canada.

It doesn't do much good for me to emphasize these points now. The real test of Dafoe is as to his intellectual and moral stature compared with that of his contemporaries. Let present-day younger historians and political scientists read a continuous batch of his editorials and compare them with the unctuous and ignorant pieties that would have been their sustenance then if they had been readers of such journals as the Montreal *Gazette* or the Toronto *Globe*.

Here, then, is one great reason why the prairie people, in the inter-war years, whether during prosperity or depression, were intellectually and morally in advance of the rest of Canada. Of course, the philosophic historian will point out that the ultimate reason for the backwardness of eastern Canada was that French Canadians in the St. Lawrence valley had been deprived in advance by William Pitt and General Wolfe of the great opportunity of living through the French Revolution; and that the founders of English-speaking eastern Canada were mostly men who deprived themselves of the great opportunity of enjoying the American Revolution. These two Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century were the seminal experiences which created the civilization of the western world in the nineteenth century. The people of eastern Canada, who were descended from men who did not go through these seminal, creative experiences, were bound to live for the next century or more on the periphery of the western civilized world. The people of the western prairies, having recently taken up new homes from all over the western world, got the first chance of discovering, after World War I, that the twentieth century had arrived. As for the far west, British Columbia, the politics of that Province has never risen perceptibly above the level of the politics of a Caribbean banana-republic without generals.

I had the additional good fortune of not merely reading the Dafoe *Free Press* but of becoming a personal friend of Mr. Dafoe, if not an intimate one. Our history students in the University of Saskatchewan ran a history club; and one evening, sometime in the early 1920's, they had Mr. Dafoe to speak to them at quite a big public meeting in the University. I was asked by them to move the vote of thanks to the speaker of the evening. In my little speech I remarked innocently that the *Free Press* was the only newspaper in western Canada which an intelligent man could read regularly without losing his self-respect. This brought down on me the righteous wrath of the *Saskatoon Star*; and I suppose that must have been

the beginning of my own political career, for I had been a meek and mild dweller in the academic ivory tower down to that moment. Anyway, Mr. Dafoe and I remained firm friends for the rest of his life, even though I was later to commit the unpardonable sin of becoming a C.C.F.'er and of saying more and more violent things about Mr. Mackenzie King just when Mr. Dafoe was becoming more and more appreciative of that great statesman, and even of taking an occasional dig in the *Canadian Forum* at Mr. Dafoe himself just to see how he would react.

It was while I lived in Saskatchewan also that I first met Mr. Woodsworth. Sometime in the winter of 1914-1915, while he was still working as a kind of consulting sociologist for the three prairie governments, he came to Saskatoon to deliver some lectures at the University. I was greatly impressed by his lecturing, especially by the main point that I remember, that we should seek to find out what we could learn from the new European immigrants, and not be too insistent on what they must learn from us. He was given a big tea party one afternoon at President Murray's home, which was attended by all the best people in Saskatoon as well as by a good many professors, and I had quite a talk with him.

Shortly after that I went off to the war, and by the time that I got back he was an outcast. We heard about the Winnipeg strike as our troopship was approaching Halifax in the summer of 1919 on the way home. Sometime in the winter of 1919-1920, during my first year back at the University, I got a hush-hush message one day from the Department of Economics, that J. S. Woodsworth, the famous Winnipeg striker who had been put into prison for quoting some seditious verses from Isaiah, was coming up to speak to one of the economics classes next day, and that I would be welcome if I cared to attend. I went, and spoke to him once again after five years' separation. To my surprise, he recognized me, an experience which endeared him to me.

In the spring of 1926 I had a sabbatical half-year, most of which I spent in Toronto and Ottawa reading the Toronto *Globe* of the 1850's and 1860's, along with other historical documents of those decades of the Confederation period, where I made the surprising discovery – surprising to me anyway – that the language of Upper Canada Grittism at that time, as expounded by George Brown's *Globe,* was very similar to the language of the prairie Progressives of the 1920's, for whom I was voting. Their enemies were much the same – big business, the railway and banking interests of Montreal. And Brown's hopes lay in "the intelligent yeomanry of Upper Canada" who looked to me remarkably like the wheat-farmers of

the 1920's, who also, like the Upper Canada Grits, were building up a belligerent agrarian political party. My first professional historical paper was an article on this theme, read at the 1927 annual meeting of the newly-formed Canadian Historical Association, which had a series of sessions in that year to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of Confederation. [5]

In that spring of 1926, in Ottawa, I again met Mr. Woodsworth, who was by this time M.P. for North Winnipeg. He did a great deal to make life in Ottawa pleasant for my wife and myself. This parliamentary session of 1926 was made famous by the Customs Scandal, which I watched day by day, to the momentary neglect of George Brown and the Grits. I got to know most of Mr. Woodsworth's Progressive colleagues, through sitting around with them in the Woodsworth office on the sixth floor of the Parliament Building, discussing the events of the day. They weren't intellectuals except Ted Garland, who was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. But they were a fine, public-spirited lot of men, the products of prairie populism at its best. The C.C.F. was eventually to be launched in the 1930's on the basis of their experience in the 1920's of the many inadequacies, both of the two old parties and of their own Progressive movement which was not quite a party.

Let me emphasize that Canadian socialism, as an effective political movement, was born out of this western Canadian practical experience. The supposedly brilliant professors, who had been at Oxford or Cambridge or the L.S.E., may have applied the articulate language of Fabianism in the Regina Manifesto to this practical experience. But what was of most importance in building up a mass movement was the practical experience of some prairie populists who had profited intellectually from what they had learned in the 1920's. Why could prairie populists of the 1920's and 1930's take wide views of the national interests, and not continue to do so in the 1950's and 1960's ?

Mr. Woodsworth was an intellectual. It was obvious to me that he was the natural leader of that group of Progressive politicians to whom he introduced me in 1926. It was obvious to them also, because he had done more reading and thinking about social and political issues than anyone else among them, and had also, already before the Progressive movement had arisen, shown his willingness to suffer for his principles. I think he was also closer than any of his colleagues to two other intellectuals, John S. Ewart and Henri Bourassa.

[5] "Some Aspects of Upper Canadian Radical Opinion in the decade before Confederation", Canadian Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1927, pp. 46-61.

Mr. Woodsworth was the nearest approach to being a saint whom I have ever known. I can't state too strongly the amount of good that it did to me as an individual, and as a self-conscious university intellectual, to know him as a friend. For, like all university intellectuals, I am so deplorably lacking in the saintly qualities of love and compassion and humility and forgiveness — qualities which are needed if you are to be a genuine democrat as well as if you are to be a saint.

He became not merely the leader but the conscience of the C.C.F. And it was because its first two leaders were a Woodsworth and a Coldwell that the C.C.F.-N.D.P. movement has come to have any significance in the history of Canadian politics. I don't know of any Canadian party which has had two such men in succession as its leaders; as a matter of fact, I don't know of any such political party in any country.

Mr. Woodsworth was the main reason why the C.C.F. remained a movement as well as a party. The only serious criticism that I have to make of Walter Young's recent brilliant book on the C.C.F. is that he applies the new-fangled sociological concept of "charisma" to Mr. Woodsworth. I think that Mr. Woodsworth was too genuinely an English liberal and a North American equalitarian democrat ever to think of developing and exercising that mysterious quality of charisma which Max Weber discovered in the politics of European societies that were neither liberal nor democratic.

I wish that Mr. Trudeau, who grew up in the clerical, Duplessis, atmosphere of a Quebec which also was neither liberal nor democratic, would grow out of his present fascination with the discovery he has made about himself that he has this mysterious quality of charisma, whatever it is.

Mr. Woodsworth had a fierce devotion to his principles, but again I must emphasize that he was too much of a liberal and a democrat to be one of those fanatical, dogmatic "true believers" with whom Eric Hoffer has made us familiar. I remember once when he circulated among his friends some extracts from the first volume of a new work called *The Endless Adventure* on the eighteenth-century English statesman, Robert Walpole. The author, F. S. Oliver, began his work by laying down the doctrine that a public man, to be able to rise to the level of genuine statesmanship, must have two qualities that are likely to be in contradiction to each other. First, he must be inordinately public-spirited and patriotic, willing to devote all his energies, day-in and day-out, to the service of his country. Secondly, he must be inordinately selfish, because otherwise he would never be likely to achieve the power

necessary to carry out his public-spirited ideas. This, of course, is Machiavelli speaking. To my surprise Mr. Woodsworth in his comments showed a remarkable understanding of Oliver's Machiavellian insights.

As for Woodsworth as the charismatic leader imposing his will on obedient, enchanted, mesmerized followers, I have sat in a private Ontario C.C.F. committee meeting, when we were all tired and our nerves were on edge, and listened to Agnes Macphail explode into a tirade of personal abuse of her friend and leader to which he listened meekly, like the Christian saint that he was. And I have watched, in an open C.C.F. convention, when Ted Garland, that perfect Irish chairman of a left political convention, coolly ruled his leader out of order because Mr. Woodsworth was getting too excited and trying to intervene in some too exciting controversy about some one or other of those inconsequential points over which politicians on the left characteristically get too excited.

Well, my point in all these garrulous reminiscences of the 1920's and 1930's is that my generation had a great opportunity for a political education from the teaching of such men as Dafoe and Woodsworth, a better education than is available to the young Canadians of today in spite of the great physical expansion of our Canadian universities. What makes a great educator or leader is his vitality, a commodity that seems to me to have been in more abundant supply then in the West than it is anywhere in Canada today.

One of these two men who were heroes to me then was not a university man at all – J. W. Dafoe. And as a matter of fact the best political education available to Canadians down to a very recent past was that provided by a succession of great newspaper editors and publishers, none of whom was the product of a university – William Lyon Mackenzie, Joseph Howe, George Brown and his brother Gordon, John S. Willison, Henri Bourassa, J. W. Dafoe, Joseph Atkinson.

It was in those days just after World War I that the political life of the wheat economy was at its most intense.[6] It seemed to me, as a young man living in its midst, to have flamed up into a dazzling incandescence. One had the feeling that one was participating in the making of a new civilization. Of course it excited me more just then because I was young and was going through other

[6] What follows in the next half dozen paragraphs is an almost verbatim repetition of some paragraphs in my speech at the fall Convocation of the University of Saskatchewan in 1962, when I received an Honorary Doctorate from the University.

excitements at the same time. I was falling in love with and marrying the lady who is now my wife; and I was learning how to teach university students, which is also an exciting experience in itself. It was only later that I came to understand that no political upheaval is ever quite so revolutionary or creative as its participants think it is, nor are they so original in their political thinking as they fondly imagine themselves to be. But what is the use of being young, as an individual or as a community, if you don't imagine yourself to possess a potentiality for greatness that you may never succeed in making into an actuality in later years?

This was the decade of the Progressive movement. And it was out of that soil that the new parties of the 1930's sprouted. I still think that those new parties contributed greatly to the maturity of Canadian politics, whatever their own deficiencies. But maybe this creative West was only a mirage. Maybe the West, as West, is always a mirage in North America. That is what sophisticated historians in the East would now like us to believe. But where would our contemporary university departments of History and Political Science be if we of the 1920's and 1930's hadn't provided them with so many topics for Ph.D. theses and for learned books?

This was a period in the West of more than mere political ferment. It was the period in which the great Co-ops were built up and the Pools founded. I can still recall vividly the evangelistic fervour of the great mass meeting in Third Avenue Methodist Church in Saskatoon at which Aaron Sapiro launched the Wheat Pool movement in that Province. His speech was the most magnificent to which I have ever listened. And as he led up to his climax about co-operation as a way of life and not merely a way of selling wheat or other commodities, he roused his audience as I fancy Bryan must have roused the populist democracy of the American Mid-West by his famous Cross of Gold speech in 1896.

I used also to go down to the Third Avenue Methodist Church to watch the annual conventions of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers as often as they were held in Saskatoon, and admire the vigour with which the grass-roots delegates on the floor kept the leaders on the platform on their toes. This was "participatory democracy" in a genuine sense, operating as a practical reality in a way in which it had never operated before in Canada and has never operated since.

The West had always been conscious of itself that it was a sort of symbol marking the decision of the Canadian people to become a great continental nation. And now in the 1920's it felt proudly that it was the growing point of this new nation, that it was giving

the lead in a "New National Policy" which was to supplant the old "National Policy" of the 1870's.

The West was a militant dissenter from the old consensus that right-thinking pundits in the East had almost imposed upon the whole of Canada. It was refusing to accept the political framework of the two old Eastern parties. It was refusing to accept for its wheat and other products the old marketing and financing methods of Eastern Canada. It was refusing to accept the private-enterprise myths of the East, and was demanding public ownership of all public utilities and public control of credit. It was taking the lead in the movement for women's suffrage. It was refusing to accept the old Protestant denominational divisions of eastern Canada, and was the centre of the movement for Church Union. I remember the pride I felt when I visited the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada with my mother in 1921 in Toronto and listened to President Walter Murray of the University of Saskatchewan make the motion for Church Union and to Principal Ed Oliver of the Presbyterian College in that University make one of the main speeches in support of the motion.

The Prairie West, in fact, in those days was refusing any longer to remain a colonial prize to be fought over by the rival cultural imperialisms of Ontario and Quebec, the rival economic imperialisms of Toronto and Montreal, the rival political imperialisms of Grit and Tory. It was engaged in achieving Dominion status within the Canadian Commonwealth.

But now we are in the 1970's. What has become of all those prairie aspirations for new national policies, for tomorrow as they saw it? Alas, the prairies of the wheat economy are now yesterday. Tomorrow is Ontario, especially the urbanized, industrialized, and polluted part of Ontario, the so-called Golden Horseshoe, stretching round the western end of Lake Ontario, which seems to me now the nearest approach to hell that human beings have as yet succeeded in creating in Canada.

However, I am now too old to trust my own judgements. And perhaps I was too young to trust my own judgements then, though that never occurred to me at the time. In fact I must have been very much like the young men who get on my nerves today. But I was vaguely aware then that the populist democracy which so stirred me had something lacking in it, and that this something was the absence of the three prairie universities from its political activities and controversies. They were vigorously teaching the wheat-farmers how to grow better wheat and breed better animals, but they kept out of politics as something unclean.

I used to wonder occasionally why the Canadian Progressive movement had not produced something similar to the co-operation between the University of Wisconsin economists, sociologists and political scientists with the LaFollette Progressive politicians of that State. There, the university social scientists had become trusted consultants and advisers to the practical politicians. When the C.C.F. came along in the 1930's it *did* attract a small minority of men from the universities who liked to think of themselves as the brains-trust of the political party. But these were mostly easterners rather than westerners.

I am convinced that in our modern technological civilization no mass populist democracy can successfully operate its political institutions, including its political parties, without making use of an intellectual political elite. What happens to political movements without university intellectuals in them is shown by the history of Social Credit in Canada. Those little anti-intellectual fundamentalist sects which have flourished so greatly in Protestant Canada have been just the Social Credit party at prayer. And if Social Credit has not flourished politically in Ontario, this has been because the Ontario Conservative and Liberal parties have been so fundamentally anti-intellectual that there was no room for an Ontario Social Credit party.

But our political education in Canada, in spite of our experiments with new political parties, is still so backward that we are afraid of this word "elite", and still spell it with an acute accent over the first "e", as if it were a diabolical importation from Paris or some other corrupt part of continental Europe.

Considering this backwardness of our general political education, it is now evident to me as an historian looking backward on past events — though it wasn't evident to me then as a voter — that the so-called Liberal Establishment in 1957-1958 needed a pretty-rough shaking-up — the Establishment needed it and not its newly chosen leader, Mr. Pearson — and that our Canadian populist democracy could only be roused to administer this shaking-up by some extraordinary leadership; in short, if a John Diefenbaker had not already existed, he would have had to be invented. Alas, it was the prairie populism, which I had so admired in earlier days, that produced him. But we don't need a second one.

What we *do* need most in Canadian politics today is a Tocqueville — an intellectual — to do some fresh thinking for us about this problem of the proper relationship between populist democracy and elite leadership — a problem which is never solved but which has always to be tackled afresh. We need a Tocqueville to introduce us to some fresh categories, as the original Tocqueville set out to do in

the 1830's for his contemporaries in Europe and America. We are suffering from a dangerous hardening of the categories. I presume that this fresh thinking must come from our universities, though I can see little sign of it emerging at present. Too many of our most active university intellectuals in the political field, or at least our most loudly vocal ones, seem to be engaged in dreams of how they may succeed in manipulating this populist democracy rather than in thinking how they can educate it.

Another weakness of the politics of the 1920's and 1930's was that the new politicians were trying to launch a great politics in a society that lacked a great culture. I doubt whether this feat is possible. In the 1920's and 1930's I deceived myself too easily into believing that the great politics – i.e., the politics of my friends and myself – could be the basis of a great culture. Perhaps the real hope of Manitoba today lies in the Winnipeg Ballet and in the novels that pour from North Winnipeg, and from Manawaka.

But, as I have said, I am so old now that I no longer trust my own judgements. I can no longer make out the distinctions among conservatives, liberals and socialists, as they present themselves to the Canadian public. The current fantasies which seem to have so bewitched so many of our younger university intellectuals about a coalition between the New Left with its headquarters, I presume, in Toronto, York and Manitoba and the Old Genteel Right in Trent, along with the Old Medieval Right in McMaster, strike me as contributing only comic relief to the general dullness of our Canadian politics.

I think I can still distinguish fairly clearly, among our political leaders, between the public-spirited, responsible, trustworthy politicians on the one hand and the sons-of-bitches on the other. But the polar models which I construct of the abstract absolute public-spirited politician and the abstract absolute son-of-a-bitch seem to have no connection with the admittedly more scientific models which young social scientists have constructed of Right, Centre, Left, Conservative, Liberal, Radical.

So, having given up my claim to be able to make scientific or philosophic judgements, I conclude with some harmless remarks that have little to do with the theme of Manitoba's centennial. Somewhere or other, a while ago, I read a statement made about writers and poets. It was to the effect that the first-rate man, the man of genius, is always trying to reveal his real self to the public, that the second-rate man is always trying to hide his real self from the public, and that both fail. This judgement, I think, also applies to politicians. In 1968 we Canadians elected Mr. Trudeau to manage

our affairs, and our American neighbours elected Mr. Nixon to manage theirs. And by 1972, presumably, both these gentlemen will be running for reelection. I predict that by that time both of them will have failed. Mr. Trudeau will have failed to reveal his real self to the Canadian people, and Mr. Nixon will have failed to hide his real self from the American people.

As for me, while I've wobbled somewhat in my political affiliation in Canadian politics over the last generation, I shall be voting again for Mr. Trudeau. In American politics I have never wobbled; ever since 1936 I have been voting the straight Democratic ticket, and I expect to continue doing so. I am an old man now, but in our Canadian national politics I rather wish I could hang on long enough to be able to vote for Ed Schreyer.