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THE WESTERN PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT, 1919-1921

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THE Progressive Movement in the West was dual in origin and nature. In one aspect it was an economic protest; in another it was a political revolt. A phase of agrarian resistance to the National Policy of 1878, it was also, and equally, an attempt to destroy the old national parties. The two aspects unite in the belief of all Progressives, both moderate and extreme, that the old parties were equally committed to maintaining the National Policy and indifferent to the ways in which the "big interests" of protection and monopoly used government for their own ends.

At the root of the sectional conflict, from which the Progressive Movement in part sprang, was the National Policy of 1878. Such conflict is partly the result of the hardships and imperfect adaptations of the frontier, but it also arises from the incidence of national policies.¹ The sectional corn develops where the national shoe pinches. The National Policy, that brilliant improvisation of Sir John A. Macdonald, had grown under the master politician's hand, under the stimulus of depression and under the promptings of political appetite, until it had become a veritable Canadian System Henry Clay might have envied. Explicit in it was the promise that everybody should have something from its operation; implicit in it—its inarticulate major premise indeed—was the promise that when the infant industries it fostered had reached maturity, protection would be needed no more.

This, however, was but a graceful tribute to the laissez-faire doctrine of the day. This same doctrine it was which prevented the western wheat grower from demanding that he, too, should benefit directly from the operation of the National Policy. That he did benefit from the system as a whole, a complex of land settlement, railway construction, and moderate tariff protection, is not to be denied. But the wheat grower, building the wheat economy from homestead to terminal elevator in a few swift years, was caught in a complex of production and marketing costs, land values, railway rates, elevator charges, and interest rates. He fought to lower all these costs by economic organization and by political pressure. He saw them all as parts of a system which exploited him. He was prevented, by his direct experience of it, and by the prevailing doctrine of laissez-faire, from perceiving that the system might confer reciprocal benefits on him. Accordingly, he hated and fought it as a whole. Of the National Policy, however, the tariff was politically the most conspicuous element. Hence the political battle was fought around the tariff; it became the symbol of the wheat growers' exploitation and frustration, alleged and actual. Like all symbols, it over-simplified the complexities it symbolized.

This clash of interest had, of course, to be taken into account by the national political parties. The Liberal-Conservatives, as creators of the National Policy, had little choice but to extol its merits even in regions where

¹Cf. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of Sections in American History* (New York, 1932), 314.

they seemed somewhat dim. They could stress its promise that a good time was coming for all, they could add that meanwhile the Yankees must be held at bay. When the Liberals quietly appropriated the National Policy after attaining national power in 1896, the task of the Conservatives became much easier. Not only could the Liberals be accused of having abandoned their principles; they could even be accused of unduly prolonging the adolescence of infant industries. A western Conservative, Mr. Arthur Meighen, could indict the Laurier administration on the charge of being maintained in power "behind ramparts of gold"² erected by the "interests." This echo of the "cross of gold" was not ineffective in the West, where the charge that there was no real difference between the parties on the tariff not only promoted the growth of third party sentiment, but also prolonged the life of western conservatism.

The Liberals, for their part, had not only abandoned "continentalism" in the Convention of 1893, but with the possession of power had developed that moderation without which a nation-wide majority may not be won or kept in a country of sectional interests.³ Liberal speakers might proclaim that the party was the low tariff party; Fielding might make the master stroke of the British preferential tariff; certain items might be put on the free list here, the rates might be lowered on certain others there; but the Liberal party had become a national party, with all the powers and responsibilities of government, among them the maintenance and elaboration of the now historic National Policy. In consequence each national party began to appear more and more in the eyes of the wheat grower as an "organized hypocrisy dedicated to getting and holding office,"⁴ and the conditions were created for a third party movement in the West.

The tariff, then, was a major predisposing cause of a third party movement in the West. Down to 1906 the British preference and other concessions of the Fielding tariff, together with reiterated promises of further reductions, kept the western Liberals within the fold. The completion in that year, however, of the three-decker tariff marked the beginning of more serious discontent. It grew with the offer of reciprocity in the Payne-Aldrich tariff of 1909. With the increase of agricultural indebtedness, concomitant with the settlement of the West, and the disappearance of the advantageous price differential between agricultural prices and those of manufactured goods, on which the wheat boom had taken its rise, the discontent deepened. It found expression through the grain growers' organizations, those "impressive foci of progressive ideas."⁵ In 1909 came the organization of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, in 1910 Laurier's tour of the West,⁶ and the Siege of Ottawa by the organized farmers. Plainly, the West was demanding its due at last. The Liberal party, which

²Hansard, 1910-11, I, 1918.

³Wilfred E. Binkley, *American Political Parties* (New York, 1944)—"... Madison's principle that a nation wide majority can agree only on a moderate program," 87; also 17-18.

⁴Dafoe Library of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Sir Clifford Sifton, July 21, 1919; on the prospects of re-organizing the Liberal party.

⁵*Manitoba Free Press*, April 10, 1917, 9.

⁶*Grain Growers' Guide*, September 14, 1910, 13. Fred Kirkham, advocate of a third party, wrote to the editor from Saltcoats, Saskatchewan: "If the memorials presented to Sir Wilfrid Laurier have failed to imbue him with the determination to battle with the vested interests of the East to grant our just requests, we have no alternative but to become democratic insurgents, and form a new party and find a new general to fight under. We must be courageous in politics before Laurier will treat with us as a big community of votes to be reckoned with."

had lost support in Ontario in every election since 1896, which saw its hold in Quebec threatened by the Nationalists under Bourassa, could not afford to lose the support of a new and rapidly growing section. In 1911 the helm was put hard over for reciprocity, and Liberal prospects brightened in the West.⁷ But this partial return to continentalism in economic policy was too severe a strain for a party which had become committed as deeply as its rival to the National Policy. The "Eighteen Liberals" of Toronto, among them Sir Clifford Sifton, broke with the party, and it went down to defeat under a Nationalist and a National Policy cross-fire. At the same time the Conservative party in the West, particularly in Saskatchewan and Alberta, suffered strains and defections which were to show in a lowered vitality in succeeding elections. But the offer of reciprocity remained on the statute books of the United States for another decade, and year by year the grain growers in convention demanded that the offer be taken up.

The demand of the western agrarians for the lowering of the tariff, however, was by no means an only factor in the rise of the third party. Into the West after 1896 poured immigrants from the United States and Great Britain. Most of the Americans came from the Middle West and the trans-Mississippi region. Many brought with them the experience and the political philosophy of the farmers' organizations and the third parties of those regions. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of their influence on the political development of the West was the demand for direct legislation which found expression in those forums of agrarian opinions, the grain growers' conventions, and which also found its way to the statute books of the three Western Provinces. From the British Isles came labour and socialist influences, felt rather in labour and urban circles, but not without effect among the farmers. These populist and socialist influences were mild; their exponents were in a minority. Nonetheless, they did much to give western discontent a vocabulary of grievance. Above all, they combined to repudiate the politics of expediency practised by the national parties, to denounce those parties as indifferently the tools of the "big interests," and to demand that the farmer free himself from the toils of the old parties and set up a third party, democratic, doctrinaire, and occupational.⁸

In the Canadian West this teaching fell on a soil made favourable not only by a growing disbelief in the likelihood of either of the national parties lowering the tariff, but also by a political temper different from that of Eastern Canada. (One exception must be made to this statement, namely, the old Canadian West in peninsular Ontario, from which, indeed, the original settlement of the West had been largely drawn.) This difference may be broadly expressed by saying that the political temper of the eastern provinces, both French and English, is whiggish. Government there rests on compact, the

⁷Public Archives of Canada, Laurier Papers, 3089, J. W. Daffoe to Laurier, April 28, 1911. "In my judgment reciprocity has changed the whole political situation in the West. Until it was announced the drift out West was undoubtedly against the government; but now it is just other way about."

⁸*United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report*, 1910, 43. "Moved by the Vermilion Union: Resolved, that ten farmers, as members of Parliament with votes would have more weight in shaping the laws and influencing government than one thousand delegates as petitioners:

Therefore be it further resolved that the farmers, to secure this end, should vote for farmers only to represent them in Parliament and vote as a unit and cease dividing their voting power. Carried."

vested and legal rights of provinces, of minorities, of corporations.⁹ The political temper of the West, on the other hand, is democratic; government there rests on the will of the sovereign people, a will direct, simple, and no respecter of rights except those demonstrably and momentarily popular. Of this Jacksonian, Clear Grit democracy, reinforced by American populism and English radicalism, the Progressive Movement was an authentic expression.

No better example of this difference of temper exists, of course, than the Manitoba school question. Manitoba was founded on a balance of French and English elements; this balance was expressed in the compact of the original Manitoba Act, the essential point in which was the guarantee of the educational privileges of the two language and religious groups. The balance was destroyed by the Ontario immigration of the eighteen-seventies and eighties; in 1890 Manitoba liberalism swept away the educational privileges of the French minority and introduced the "national" school, the chief agency of equalitarian democracy. This set in train a series of repercussions which, through the struggle over the Autonomy Bills in 1905, the introduction of compulsory education by the Liberal party in Manitoba in 1916, and the friction caused by Regulation 17 in Ontario, led up to the split in the Liberal party between the western and the Quebec Liberals on the Lapointe resolution in the federal Parliament in 1916. This split not only foreshadowed and prepared the way for that on conscription; it also contributed to the break-up of the old parties which opened the way to the rise of the Progressive party after 1919.¹⁰ The western Liberals, that is to say, were turning against Laurier because they feared Nationalist domination of the party.

Thus it was that the ground was prepared for the West to throw its weight behind Union Government, first suggested as a war measure, then persisted in to prevent a Liberal victory under Laurier. Western Liberals and radicals did so with much reluctance and many misgivings. An independent movement was already taking root.¹¹ For the Liberal party, an electoral victory was in sight, following a succession of provincial victories and the discontent with the Borden Government's conduct of the war.¹²

This probable Liberal victory, to be based on anti-conscription sentiment in Quebec and low tariff sentiment in the West, was averted by the formation of the Union Government. The issue in that political transformation was whether the three western Liberal governments could be detached from the

⁹I am indebted to Professor J. R. Mallory of Brandon College, now of McGill, for a discussion clarifying this point.

¹⁰*Manitoba Free Press*, May 13, 1916. Editorial, "Consequences." "Whatever may be the political consequences of this blunder to Liberalism in Canada at large, Western Liberalism will not suffer if it adheres to the independence which its representatives have displayed at Ottawa this week. These developments at the capital must tend to strengthen the feeling which has been growing steadily for years that Western Liberals need not look to the East, at present, for effective and progressive leadership. . . . Canadian public life will thus be given what it sorely needs, . . . a group of convinced radicals. . . . To your tents, O Israel!"

¹¹*Ibid.*, June 28, 1917, 9. "The Saskatchewan Victory." "The Canadian West is in the mood to break away from past affiliations and traditions and inaugurate a new political era of sturdy support for an advanced and radical programme. The break-up of parties has given the West its opportunity; and there is no doubt it will take advantage of it." At least four independent candidates had been nominated in the West before June, 1917, in provincial and federal seats. In December, 1916, the Canadian Council of Agriculture had issued the first Farmers' Platform.

¹²Henry Borden (ed.), *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs* (Toronto, 1938) II, 749-50, J. W. Daffoe to Borden, September 29, 1917.

federal party. But the attempt made at the Winnipeg convention in August, 1917, to prepare the way for this change was defeated by the official Liberals.¹⁸ The insurgents refused to accept the verdict of the convention; and by negotiations, the course of which is by no means clear, the support of the three western administrations and of the farmers' organizations was won for Union Government. Thus the leadership of the West was captured, and assurance was made doubly sure by the Wartime Elections Act. At the same time, the nascent third party movement was absorbed by the Union Government, and the Liberal party in the West was wrecked by the issue of conscription, as the Conservative party had been mortally wounded by reciprocity.

Though the Union Government was constituted as a "win the war" administration, which should still partisan and sectional strife, other hopes had gone to its making. It was thought that a non-partisan administration might also be an opportunity to carry certain reforms, such as that of civil service recruitment, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a partisan government to carry. There was also, and inevitably, the tariff. The Union Government was not publicly pledged to tariff reform, but there can be no doubt that western sentiment had forced Unionist candidates to declare themselves on the tariff; indeed many western Unionists were low tariff Liberals, or even outright independents. The eastern industrialists, on the other hand, were alert to see that the weighty western wing of the Cabinet should not induce the government to make concessions to the West. Thus there was an uneasy truce on the tariff question during the remainder of the war, the issue lying dormant but menacing the unity of the Government and its majority once the pressure of war should be removed. The test was to come with the first peace budget, that of 1919.

These, then, were the underlying causes of the rise of the western Progressive Movement. In 1919 they came to the surface, unchanged in themselves but now operating in a heated and surcharged atmosphere. That there would have been a Progressive Movement in any event is not to be doubted; the war and the events of the post-war years served to give it explosive force.

Certain elements in this surcharged atmosphere were general, others peculiar to the farmer, in effect. Chief of the general elements was the fact that the War of 1914-18 had been fought without economic controls of any significance. The result was inflation with all the stresses and strains inflation sets up in the body economic and social. The high cost of living, as it was called, was an invariable theme of speakers of the day, particularly of spokesmen of labour and the farmer. The farmer was quite prepared to believe that he, as usual, was especially the victim of these circumstances, and would point to the "pork profiteers," to clinch his contention. Inflation was at the root of the general unrest of the day, and the influence of the Russian Revolution, the radical tone of many organizations and individuals, the Winnipeg strike, and the growth of the labour movement are to be ascribed to inflation rather than to any native predisposition to radical courses.

Among the farmers' special grievances was the conscription of farmers'

¹⁸Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Augustus Bridle, June 14, 1921. "The Western Liberal Convention was a bomb which went off in the hands of its makers. It was decided upon at Ottawa by a group of conscription Liberals; the intention was to bring into existence a Western Liberal group free from Laurier's control who would be prepared to consider coalition with Borden on its merits, but the Liberal machine in the West went out and captured the delegates with the result that the convention was strongly pro-Laurier."

sons in 1918. The farming population of English Canada, on the whole had supported conscription, but with two qualifications. One was that there should also be "conscription of wealth," by which a progressive income tax was meant. The other was that the farms should not be stripped of their supply of labour, a not unreasonable condition in view of the urgent need of producing food. But the military situation in the spring of 1918 led to the revocation of the order-in-council exempting farmers' sons from military service. The result was a bitter outcry from the farmers, the great delegation to Ottawa in May, 1918, and an abiding resentment against the Union Government and all its works, especially in Ontario.

In the West itself, drouth, especially in southern Alberta, had come to harass a farm population already sorely tried. Suffice it to indicate that in the Lethbridge area of southern Alberta, the average yield of wheat between 1908 and 1921 ranged from sixty-three bushels to the acre in 1915 to two in 1918, and eight in 1921.¹⁴ This was the extreme, but the whole West in varying degrees suffered a similar fluctuation in yield. It was a rehearsal of the disaster of the nineteen-thirties.

To the hazards of nature were to be added the hazards of the market. In 1917 the government had fixed the price of wheat to keep it from going higher, and had established a Wheat Board to market the crops of the war years. Now that peace had come, was wheat once more to be sold on the open market, or would the government fix the price and continue to market the crops through the Wheat Board, at least until the transition from war to peace was accomplished? Here was a chance to make the National Policy a matter of immediate benefit and concern to the western farmer, a chance not undiscerned by shrewd defenders of the National Policy.¹⁵ Here also, under the stimulus of war, was the beginning of the transition from the old Jeffersonian and laissez-faire tradition of the frontier West, to the new West of wheat pools, floor prices, and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. The point of principle was clearly grasped by the farmers, but their response was confused. The Manitoba Grain Growers and the United Farmers of Alberta declined in annual convention to ask the government to continue the Wheat Board, but this decision was severely criticized, one might almost say, was repudiated, by the rank and file of the membership. The Saskatchewan Grain Growers, who met later, emphatically demanded that the Wheat Board be continued. In the upshot it was, but only for the crop yield of 1919, and in 1920 it was liquidated. From this action came much of the drive, indeed the final impetus, of the Progressive Movement.¹⁶ Thereafter the western farmer was caught between fixed debt charges and high costs on one hand and falling prices on the other; his position seemed to him desperate. From his despair came first, the Progressive electoral sweep in the West, and then the economic action which created the wheat pools.

Finally, there was the question of tariff revision. It was, however, no longer the simple clash of sectional interests it had been. The customs tariff

¹⁴*Report of the Survey Board for Southern Alberta*, January, 1922.

¹⁵*Hansard*, 1919, 1, 558. Colonel J. A. Currie (Simcoe) "I am quite in agreement with the hon. member for Maple Creek (J. A. Maharg) when he says we should fix a price for the wheat of the West. That is in line with the National Policy." See also the Right Honourable Arthur Meighen's proposal for a modified Wheat Board in his speech at Portage la Prairie during the campaign of 1921. *Canadian Annual Review*, 1921, 449-50.

¹⁶*Cf.* Vernon C. Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy* (Toronto, 1946), 268.

had been increased to help finance the war. Any revision now would affect governmental financing of the war debt, and also the financial resources of private individuals and corporations in the post-war period. In short, the question had now become, what place should tariff revision have in reconstruction?

It was to this question that the Union Government had to address itself, while preparing the budget of 1919 under the vigilant eyes of the farmers' organizations on the one side and of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association on the other. The decision was, in effect, to postpone the issue, on the ground that 1919 was, to all intents and purposes, a war year and that only a very moderate revision should be attempted. The decision was not unreasonable, and was clearly intended to be a compromise between eastern and western views on the tariff.¹⁷ But western supporters of the Union Government were in a very vulnerable position, as the McMaster amendment to the motion to go into Committee of Supply was to show.¹⁸ The pressure from the West for a major lowering of the tariff was mounting and becoming intense. In the outcome, the Honourable Thomas A. Crerar, Minister of Agriculture, resigned on the ground that the revision undertaken in the budget was insufficient. In the vote on the budget he was joined by nine western Unionists. This was the beginning of the parliamentary Progressive party.

The position of the remaining western Unionists became increasingly difficult, though also their pressure contributed to the moderate revision of 1919.¹⁹ The fate of R. C. Henders is very much in point. Henders had been, as President of the Manitoba Grain Growers, an ardent and outspoken agrarian. In 1916 he had been nominated as an independent candidate for Macdonald. In 1917 he accepted nomination as Unionist candidate and was elected. In 1919 he voted with the Government on the budget, on the ground that this was in effect a war budget, and the time premature for a revision of the tariff. In 1920 the United Farmers of Manitoba, following the action of their executive, "repudiated his stand, accepted his resignation, and reaffirmed [their] confidence in the principles of the Farmers' Platform."²⁰ In 1921 he vanished from political ken. An honest man had taken a politically mistaken line and was mercilessly held to account. Such was the fate of western Unionists who did not cross the floor or find refuge in the Senate. Western low tariff sentiment would admit of no equivocation.

The third party movement, stirring in the West before 1917 but absorbed and over-ridden by the Unionist Government, was now free to resume its course with a favourable wind fanned by inflation, short crops, and post-war discontent. A chart had already been provided. The Canadian Council of Agriculture had in 1916 taken cognizance of the mounting demand that political action be taken by the farmers. Without committing the Council

¹⁷The changes were as follows: the 7½ per cent increase for war purposes was removed from agricultural implements and certain necessities of life; the 5 per cent war duty was modified; an income tax was levied.

¹⁸Fourteen western Unionists voted for the amendment. *Hansard*, 1919, IV, 3,678.

¹⁹*Hansard*, 1919, IV, 3475. W. D. Cowan, Unionist (Regina). "I believe that the changes which have been made in the tariff have been made entirely because of the agitation which has been carried on by the West. We have had, for the first time, I fancy, in the history of Parliament, a western caucus and in that we have been united. Old time Liberals united with old time Conservatives. On the one point that they should try to get substantial reductions in the tariffs. . . ."

²⁰*Canadian Annual Review*, 1920, 741.

itself, it prepared the Farmers' Platform as a programme which the farmers' organizations might endorse and which they might press upon the government. The events of 1917 diverted attention from it, but in 1918 it was revised and enlarged, and in 1919 was adopted by the farmers' organizations. In substance, —the platform called for a League of Nations, dominion autonomy, free trade with Great Britain, reciprocity with the United States, a lowering of the general tariff, graduated income, inheritance, and corporation taxes, public ownership of a wide range of utilities, and certain reforms designed to bring about a greater measure of democracy, such as reform of the senate, abolition of titles, and the institution of direct legislation and proportional representation.²¹ The platform gave the incoherent western discontent a rallying point and a programme, and was the occasion for the organized farmers entering federal politics. Its title, "The New National Policy," was a gage of battle thrown down before the defenders of the old National Policy, a challenge, direct and explicit, to make that policy national indeed.

This decision to enter federal politics was opportune beyond the dream of seasoned politicians. The prairie was afire in a rising wind, and soon the flames were flaring from one end of the country to the other. In October, 1919, the United Farmers of Ontario carried forty-six seats in a house of 111, and formed an administration. Later in the same month O. R. Gould, farmers' candidate in the federal seat of Assiniboia, defeated W. R. Motherwell, Liberal stalwart and a founder of the Grain Growers' Association, by a majority of 5,224.²² A few days later Alex Moore carried Cochrane in a provincial by-election for the United Farmers of Alberta. In 1920 the organized farmers carried nine seats in Manitoba, seven in Nova Scotia, and ten in New Brunswick.²³ By-election after by-election went against the Government, usually to farmer candidates, until the smashing climax of the Medicine Hat by-election of June, 1921, when Robert Gardiner of the U.F.A. defeated a popular Unionist candidate by a majority of 9,764.²⁴ Even the Liberals' tariff plank of 1919 did little to check the sweep of the flames. The political prophets were estimating that of the forty-three seats west of the lakes, the Progressives would carry from thirty-five to forty.²⁵

All was propitious, then, for the entry of the Progressives into federal politics. There they might hope to hold the balance of power, or even emerge as the largest group. The work of organization was pushed steadily. In December, 1920, the Canadian Council of Agriculture recognized the third party in the House of Commons as the exponent of the new national policy and endorsed the members' choice of the Honourable T. A. Crerar as leader.²⁶ During 1920 and 1921 Progressive candidates were nominated by local conventions in all federal constituencies in the West.

Two major difficulties, however, were arising to embarrass the Progressives in their bid for national power. The first was the charge that they were a class party. The second was the demand that political action be taken in the

²¹See *ibid.*, 1919, for text. 365-8.

²²*Parliamentary Companion*, 1921, 196.

²³*Manitoba Free Press*, February 25, 1921; *Grain Growers' Guide*, August 4, 1920, 4, and October 27, 1920, 5.

²⁴*Parliamentary Companion*, 1922, 247.

²⁵Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Sir Clifford Sifton, January 20, 1920.

²⁶*Grain Growers' Guide*, December 15, 1920, 3. Resolution of executive of the Canadian Council of Agriculture in meeting of December 7-9, 1920.

provincial as well as the federal field.²⁷ These embarrassments were eventually to split the Movement, defeat its bid for national power, and reduce it to the status of a sectional party.

The origin of these divisions in the Movement may best be examined by turning to provincial politics in the West. That the entrance into federal politics could not be kept separate from a demand that political action be taken in the provinces, arose in part from the federal composition of national parties. Any federal political movement is driven to attempt the capture of provincial governments, in order to acquire the means, that is to say, the patronage, whereby to build an effective political organization. It is not to be supposed that this political maxim was unknown to the leaders of the Progressive Movement. They hoped, however, that national success would be followed by a voluntary adherence of the western governments, which would render capture by storm unnecessary.

The Progressive Movement, at the same time, was a genuine attempt to destroy machine politics, and there was in its leadership a sincere reluctance to accept the facts of political life. They hoped to lead a popular movement, to which the farmers' economic organizations would furnish whatever direction was necessary. It was the zeal of their followers, eager to destroy the old parties wherever they existed, that carried the Progressive Movement into provincial politics.

Province by province, the leaders were compelled to bow to the pressure of the rank and file, and allow the organized farmers to enter the provincial arenas. The methods and the results, however, were by no means identical, for they were conditioned by the different political histories of the three provinces.

In Manitoba the dominating fact was that from 1899 until 1915 the province had been governed by the Conservative Roblin administration. The sheer power and efficiency of the Roblin-Rogers organization, perhaps the classic example of the political machine in Canadian history, accounts in great part for the victory of the anti-reciprocity campaign in Manitoba in 1911. Its spectacular demise in the odour of scandal in 1915 left the provincial Conservative party badly shattered. Henceforth there were many loose Conservative votes in the most conservative of the Prairie Provinces, a province a whole generation older than the other two, and during that generation the very image and transcript of Ontario. But the succeeding Liberal Government, that of the Honourable T. C. Norris, was reformist and progressive. There was little the Grain Growers could ask of the provincial administration that it was not prepared to grant. Why then should the organized farmers oppose the Norris Government? The answer was that the Progressive Movement was, for many Progressives, a revolt against the old party system, and the provincial Liberal organization had been affiliated with the federal Liberals. It might, indeed, become a major buttress of liberalism as the breach between the Laurier and the Unionist Liberal closed. If the old parties were to be defeated at Ottawa, they must be rooted out at the source of their strength in the provinces. Out of this conflict, largely one between leaders and rank and

²⁷Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Sir Clifford Sifton, January 26, 1921. "Crerar's only troubles out here arise from the ardor with which certain elements in his following insist upon organizing a purely class movement against the three local governments, thereby tending to antagonize the very elements which Crerar is trying, by broadening its basis, to add to his party."

file, came the decision of the new United Farmers of Manitoba in 1920 that the organization as such should not enter provincial politics, but that in the constituencies the locals might hold conventions, nominate candidates, and organize. If a majority of constituencies should prove to be in favour of political action, then the executive of the United Farmers would call a provincial convention to draft a platform.²⁸ As a result, political action was taken locally, and nine farmer representatives were elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1920.²⁹ As a result of this success, the U.F.M. placed the resources of the organization behind the farmers' political action,³⁰ and in the election of 1922 the farmers won a plurality of seats in the legislature. The suspected *rapprochement* of the Norris Government with the federal Liberals may have contributed to its defeat.³¹

In Saskatchewan and Alberta the dominating factor was that at the creation of the two provinces in 1905 the federal Liberal government used its influence to establish Liberal administrations. In Canada the possession of power is all but decisive. Governments fall not so much by the assaults of their enemies as through their own internal decay. From 1905 until 1921 the Liberals ruled in Alberta; from 1905 until 1929 they were in power in Saskatchewan. Moreover, in both, the Conservative party was cut off from patronage and unnaturally compelled to be a party of provincial rights. Both provincial Conservative parties declined from 1911 on, and rapidly after the provincial elections of 1917. In these provinces too, the administrations were careful to govern in harmony with the wishes of the organized farmers. Why then should the farmers enter provincial politics against the Liberal government? Again the answer is that the provincial Liberal parties were affiliated with the federal party, and were examples of the machine politics which Progressives hoped to destroy, politics rendered noisome by the corruption arising from the scramble for the resources of the West, and the political ruthlessness of the professional politicians of the day.

Down to 1917 the political developments of the two provinces were alike, but a remarkable diversion occurs thereafter. In Saskatchewan the Liberal party enjoyed shrewd leadership, considerable administrative ability, and a fine political organization. Threatened by scandal in 1917, it made a remarkable recovery under Premier William Martin. In that almost wholly rural province, the Liberal government was a government of the grain growers. Leadership, as in the instance of the Honourable Charles A. Dunning, graduated from the Association to the government. The slightest wish of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers became law with as much dispatch as the conventions of government allow.³² When the demand for provincial political action arose, Premier Martin met it, in the Preeceville speech of May, 1920,

²⁸*United Farmers of Manitoba Year Book*, 1920, 67.

²⁹*Grain Growers' Guide*, July 7, 1920, 6. Editorial, "The Manitoba Election." "The United Farmers of Manitoba, as an organization, took no part in the election, and each constituency where farmer candidates were nominated and elected acted entirely on its own initiative."

³⁰*Ibid.*, January 19, 1921, 3.

³¹*Manitoba Free Press*, April 28, 1922. Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Sir Clifford Sifton, July 7, 1922.

³²*Minutes of the Annual Convention of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association*, February 18-21, 1919, 4. Report of Premier Wm. Martin's address. "There are questions now coming before you affecting the welfare of the whole community of the Province. It is the policy of the present government and will continue to be the policy of the present government to carry out these suggestions."

by dissociating the provincial from the federal party. At the same time the weight of the executive of the Grain Growers was thrown against intervention as a separate party in provincial politics. As in Manitoba, when the demand, partly under pressure from the Non-Partisan League, became irresistible, it was referred to the locals.³³ The locals gave little response during 1920-1, and an attempt of third party men in 1921 to commit the central organization to political action was foiled.³⁴ As a result, the provincial Progressive Movement in Saskatchewan became largely an attempt at organization by independents, under the leadership of Harris Turner of Saskatoon.³⁵ Before organization could be well begun, Premier Martin dissolved the legislature and headed off the movement by a snap election. This was decisive. Only thirteen independents were returned, to a great extent, it would seem, by Conservative votes, for the provincial Conservative party simply did not contest the election. Thus the Liberal administration in Saskatchewan survived the Progressive rising, but at the price of severing temporarily its ties with the federal party.

In Alberta the same story was to have a very different outcome. Not only was the Liberal party of that province less fortunate in its leadership, though no less realistic in its tactics, not only did it suffer division by the quarrel over the Alberta Great Waterways Railway scandal, which created a weakness in the party that the division into Laurier and Unionist Liberals did nothing to mend;³⁶ but the farmer organization of that province was separate in its leadership from the government, and that leadership was from 1915 the leadership of Henry Wise Wood. In Alberta, the forceful personalities were outside the government; in Saskatchewan, they were, on the whole, in the government or close to it. Alberta lost the brilliant A. L. Sifton to the Union Government in 1917, and Alberta alone possessed a Henry Wise Wood. Wood and the executive of the United Farmers of Alberta were no more anxious than other leaders of the farm organizations to go into provincial politics. He, indeed, was on principle opposed to going into politics at all. The drive for a third, independent, farmer party, however, developed much greater force in Alberta than elsewhere. This was partly because the decline of the Conservative party was even more pronounced in Alberta than in Saskatchewan. It was also because the Non-Partisan League became more powerful in that province than in Saskatchewan. American populism and British radicalism had freer play in frontier Alberta than in older Saskatchewan. The Non-Partisan League, for example, captured two provincial seats in Alberta in 1917, whereas it had captured only one in Saskatchewan in the same year, and that by a fluke. The League went on to threaten to capture the locals of the U.F.A. by conversion and infiltration. This was a threat that could not be ignored, because it was in and through the locals that the farmers' organiza-

³³*Ibid.*, February 9-13, 1920, 114-19.

³⁴*Ibid.*, January 31-February 4, 1921. The debate on provincial political action was involved; a motion to enter provincial politics as an organization was defeated (118) and a motion to support action by constituencies was, it would seem, shelved (93).

³⁵*Saskatoon Daily Star*, June 1, 1921. Report of the convention of independents at Saskatoon, May 31, 1921.

³⁶John Blue, *Alberta Past and Present* (Chicago, 1924), 125. "The session of 1910 witnessed a perturbation and upheaval that split the Liberal party into two factions, which more than a decade afterwards regarded each other with some jealousy and distrust."

tions lived. Wood and the U.F.A. leaderships were therefore caught on the horns of a dilemma. They knew that political action had invariably ruined farm organizations in the past, as the Farmers' Alliance in the United States had gone to wreck in the Populist party. They knew also that they might lose control of the U.F.A. if the Non-Partisan League obtained control of a majority of locals and assumed leadership of the drive for political action. Wood solved the dilemma by his concept of "group government", and in doing so crystallized the strong tendency of the Progressive Movement, a tendency which owed much to the Non-Partisan League, to become a class movement, deeply averse to lawyers, bankers, and politicians. The U.F.A. would take political action, but it would take it as an organization. It would admit only farmers to its ranks; it would nominate only farmers for election; its representation in the legislature would constitute a separate group, co-operating with other groups but not combining with any to constitute a political party. Guided by this concept, the U.F.A. in 1919 entered politics, both federal and provincial.³⁷ In 1921 it won a majority of the seats in the Alberta legislature.

These varying fortunes of the Progressive Movement in the three provinces were significant for the character of the federal Progressive party. Broadly speaking, two concepts of the character and future of the party prevailed among its members. One, which may be termed the Manitoba view, was that the Progressive Movement was one of insurgent liberalism, which might have the happy result of recapturing the federal Liberal party from the control of the conservative and protectionist Liberals of the East. This was the view, for example, of J. W. Dafoe, a mentor of Progressivism. It aimed at building up a national, popular movement by "broadening out," by "opening the door" to all sympathizers. The Saskatchewan federal Progressives also accepted this view, the more so as the provincial movement had been headed off for a decade. The other concept may be called the Alberta concept. It was that the Progressive Movement was an occupational or class movement, capable of extension by group organization to other economic classes, but not itself concerned with bringing about such extension. Farmer must represent farmer, the group must act as a group.

It may be noted in passing that neither view of the Progressive Movement demands an explicit farmer-labour alliance. Why Progressivism did not develop this characteristic of the earlier Populist party and the later Co-operative Commonwealth Federation cannot be explained here, but it may be said that the leadership of both wings of the Movement was averse to an open alliance with labour.

Here again is the two-fold character of the Progressive Movement postulated in the opening paragraph. Progressivism which was an economic protest, seeking a natural remedy by political action little more unconventional than a revolt from caucus rule, is here termed Manitoban. Progressivism which was doctrinaire, class conscious, and heterodox, is here called Albertan. The former assumed that exploitation would cease in a society made competitive by the abolition of protection; the latter proposed to produce a harmony of interests by putting an end to competition by means of the co-operation of organized groups. Both tendencies, of course, existed all across the Movement. Each was personified and had as respective protagonists the Honourable T. A. Career and Henry Wise Wood.

³⁷*United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1919, 52-3.*

The extremes, however, were fundamental and irreconcilable. Manitoban Progressivism sought economic ends through conventional political means and admitted of compromise with the old parties. Albertan Progressivism sought much the same economic ends, but also sought to transform the conditions of politics. In this it was closer to the essential nature of Progressivism, with its innate distrust of elected representatives and of party organization.³⁸ Its pledging of candidates, its frequent use of the signed recall, its levy on members for campaign funds, its predilection for direct legislation and for proportional representation, establish its fundamental character. That in so conducting itself it was to give rise to forms of political organization which old line politicians were to envy, is one of those little ironies which delight the sardonic observer.

An examination of the course of the general election of 1921 adds little to the exposition of the theme. As revealed in the campaign literature, it turned on the issues of protection and of the class doctrines of Henry Wise Wood. Prime Minister Meighen, first of those western men with eastern principles to be called to head the Conservative party, put on the full armour of protection, and fought the western revolt in defence of the National Policy. It was courageous, it was magnificent, but it was not successful. His party attacked the Progressives as free traders seeking to destroy the National Policy for selfish class advantage. Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King stood firmly on the Liberal platform of 1919, which, marvelously contrived, faced squarely all points of the political compass at once. Liberal strategy was to avoid a sharp stand, to pose as the farmers' friend—"There never was a Farmers' Party while the Liberals were in power"³⁹—and to denounce the class character of Progressivism. Mr. Crerar was in the embarrassing position of a leader whose followers persist in treading on his heels, but he fought the good fight with dignity and moderation, protesting that his was not a class movement.

In the upshot, the Progressives carried sixty-five seats, and emerged as the second largest group in the House. Coalition with the Liberals was seriously considered and was rejected only at the last moment, presumably because Messrs. Crerar and Drury could not obtain from Mr. King those pledges which would have ensured the identity of the group and the curbing of the protectionist elements in the Liberal Cabinet. This decision marked the beginning of the disintegration of the Movement, for the Progressives neither imposed their policies on the Liberals nor definitely became a parliamentary party seeking office. With that fatal tendency of third parties to avoid responsibility, of which George Langley had warned a decade before,⁴⁰ they declined to become even the official opposition.

Thereafter Manitoban Progressivism lost its bright speed amid the sands

³⁸*Grain Growers' Guide*, March 5, 1919, 26. Article by Roderick McKenzie on "Political Action." "The purpose of the movement inaugurated by the farmers is that whenever the time comes to make a choice of representation to parliament, the electors get together to make their selection."

³⁹P.A.C., Pamphlet no. 5081, *Group Government Compared with Responsible Government*.

⁴⁰*Grain Growers' Guide*, September 21, 1910, 13-14 "It may be urged that a separate farmers' party might influence the government even if it did not become strong enough to take on itself the actual work of governing. The answer to that is this. The legitimate objective of a political party is to control the legislative and administrative functions. Without [that] objective it cannot exist for any length of time. . . ."

— and shallows of official Liberalism. Albertan Progressivism, represented by the Ginger Group, the federal U.F.A. members and a few others, alone survived the decay of Progressive zeal, and remained for fourteen years to lend distinction to the national councils, and to bear in its organization the seeds at once of Social Credit and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

DISCUSSION

Professor Masters asked why the speaker had made no mention of heterodox monetary theories in connexion with this movement, since such ideas have been common to all Western progressive movements. He also pointed out that whereas the labour organizations were the possible nucleus of a political party, both labour and farmers reacted against each other, and weakened the Progressive movement in so doing.

Mr. Rosenberg asked Professor Morton to explain Mr. Garland's role in the Progressive movement, particularly his defection from it.

Professor Talman asked if there were any La Follette influence on this movement. He asked the speaker to indicate the sources of his information.

Professor Morton in reply to these several questions stated that there was little or no trace of "funny money" in the movement.¹ He knew no explanation for this lack. He traced Mr. Garland's defection to Irish nationalist feeling. He saw no direct connexion between later American progressivism and the Progressive movement in Canada but he stated that there were strong connexions between earlier American populism and Canadian progressivism. He said his sources had been chiefly magazine and newspaper files, with some reliance upon oral discussion with surviving participants. He has found almost no private papers of Henry Wise Wood.

Professor Sage asked if there were any connexion of the United Farmers of Alberta with single tax ideas?

Professor Morton replied that such ideas had had considerable influence before 1914, chiefly upon municipal legislation, but that they had petered out after the last war.

Mr. George Ferguson stated that George Coote had ideas about "funny money," as did other members of the "Ginger group." He asked if Professor Morton had any more information about the failure of the Progressive movement in Saskatchewan. The explanation based on the abhorrence of the prairie farmers for corruption cannot be considered adequate. Alberta and Saskatchewan should be compared on this score.

Mr. George Hoadley asserted that Henry Wise Wood had no private ideas favouring "funny money." He pointed out that the Progressives (Farmers' Party) split on the question of Dominion-provincial relations. He stated that Wood was opposed to political action, and that only after six meetings of the farmers did he agree to such action.

Mr. McGibbon discussed the significance of the split in the Farmers' Party between the supporters of Mr. Bevington, and those of Mr. Greenfield, at the time when the Premier had to have a seat in the legislature. He emphasized

¹This observation was meant to apply to the years before 1921. It must of course, be corrected in the light of Dr. MacGibbon's statement.

that Mr. Bevington was a "funny money" man, and that he was greatly disappointed not to be elected.

Professor Rolph wanted to have information about the struggle for Progressive leadership after Mr. Crerar.

Mr. George Hoadley reiterated his assertion tht the Progressives did not have "funny money" ideas.

Professor Underhill argued that there was a good deal of "funny money" in the United Farmers. He named Messrs. Gardiner and Spencer as advocates of such ideas.

Mr. George Ferguson pointed out that the Progressive movement, in dying, sowed the seeds of the C.C.F. and the Social Credit parties.

Mr. George Hoadley affirmed, "We didn't promise them anything wth respect to money for we knew that you couldn't do it; but the people hoped."