

## **King and Context A Reply to Whitaker**

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# CRITIQUE

## KING AND CONTEXT:

### *A Reply to Whitaker*<sup>1</sup>

Paul Craven

IT IS barely ten years since Blair Neatby could announce, with all the magisterial authority of an official biographer, that "King's political ideas were not articulated, but he was human — he had ideas."<sup>2</sup> Since then, the revisionists have been hard at work. The image of King as an intellectual, as a full partner in an ideological brokerage house, is rapidly approaching the status of a new orthodoxy. Before Neatby stepped in to deny it, this view had been ventured only in the much reviled work of Ferns and Ostry<sup>3</sup> — and there but half-heartedly, as I shall argue below — and it is indicative of the magnitude of the change in our understanding of King that their book should have been reissued recently with scarcely a whimper from the academic community that had so lustily cried it down 20 years before. Similarly, the republication of King's own *magnum opus*, *Industry and Humanity*, in 1973<sup>4</sup> both reflected the revisionists' desire for easier access to their principal text and provided an important impetus to new work along these lines.

The general burden of this new reading of King is, in my view, welcome, and I number myself among the revisionists.<sup>5</sup> But it is one thing to map out a plan of campaign, to identify the intellectual King as an objective worthy of capture, and quite another to occupy the hostile territory successfully and make off with the spoils of war. The revisionists have so far failed to consolidate their claim to the disputed ground: to prolong the conceit, they wander in the no man's land of misdirected hypotheses, ungrounded explanations, and empirical inadequacy as often as they stray on target. Their difficulty may be apportioned

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented to York University's 1978 conference, "Political Thought in English Canada," under the title, "Corporatism, Liberalism and Mackenzie King."

<sup>2</sup> H. Blair Neatby, "The Political Ideas of William Lyon Mackenzie King," in M. Hamelin, ed., *The Political Ideas of the Prime Ministers of Canada* (Ottawa 1969), 121.

<sup>3</sup> H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London 1955).

<sup>4</sup> Published by the University of Toronto Press, with an introduction by D.J. Bercuson.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Craven, " 'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-11," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978.

more or less equally between errors in the original campaign plan and field maps, and their objective's own elusiveness.

Reg Whitaker's "The Liberal Corporatist Ideas of Mackenzie King"<sup>6</sup> is a case in point. While the article contains some fine insights and useful reinterpretations, it contains as well several of the methodological errors and misplaced emphases that have characterized this approach so far. The objective of this critique is to draw out the principal errors of method and their empirical underpinnings in Whitaker's treatment of King's intellectual background and his work in labour relations before the First World War.

Whitaker's paper falls into three major sections. The first of these, which follows a brief discussion of King's social origin and a warning about the futility of searching for thoroughgoing consistency in King's thought, examines some of the intellectual influences he experienced during his years at university. The second reviews King's work in the labour department from 1900 to 1911, and for the Rockefeller Foundation during World War I. The final section, which dominates the underlying argument of the paper, presents Whitaker's reading of *Industry and Humanity* and his conclusion that King's social and political thought is best described as "liberal corporatism:" in this, King "struck the prophetic stance of a liberalism yet to come."

The third section, the reading of *Industry and Humanity*, does not directly concern us here. Indeed, the principal criticism to be levelled at Whitaker is that he fails to recognize the distinction between an internal critique of that book and an analysis of its social origin. Whitaker's reading of King's book is a lucid and in many respects convincing one, although it must be pointed out at the outset that *Industry and Humanity* is susceptible to a marvellous variety of interpretations. Our principal concern with this reading however is to examine the ways in which it dominates the preceding sections of Whitaker's article.

Whitaker begins by advancing the claim that *Industry and Humanity* is an attempt "to work out certain innovative concepts of class harmonization and the integration of interest group into liberal democratic structures," and that it is in the light of this attempt that King's "work and ideas take on a contemporary relevance." Whitaker recognizes that King's work on these problems was neither very original nor wholly consistent, and he argues that "King is interesting more for what he reflected, in sharp focus, than for what he himself generated." These two quasi-hypotheses, it seems to me, contain the germs of both a methodological undertaking and a potential fallacy. The appeal to "contemporary relevance," inasmuch as it is an inducement to the reader to press on, is unexceptionable. But it conceals the danger that what we are to be treated to is an anachronistic reading of King, the danger that King is to be interpreted out of context so that, no matter what insights the reading may hold for our understanding of our own times, it will have little bearing on our understanding of King in his own terms. I shall argue that this threat is partially realized in

<sup>6</sup> *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 2 (1977), 137-169.

Whitaker's article, that he commits the fallacy of *nunc pro tunc*. But against this there is the methodological promise, in the notion that King "is interesting . . . for what he reflected," that this fallacy may be avoided, by placing King's thought squarely in the context of its times. This statement, it seems to me, makes it incumbent upon Whitaker to show us just what it is that he takes King to reflect. I do not think he is wholly successful in this, and his argument is fallacious just to the extent that he fails in this undertaking. This is not to deny that King's ideas have "contemporary relevance:" they do. But that relevance is in itself irrelevant to the attempt to make sense of those ideas and their origins. To measure the contemporary relevance of King's ideas and to account for King's acquisition of them are two quite separate enterprises, unfortunately Whitaker sometimes fails to keep them apart.

The first two major sections of the article, however, ought to stand as contributions to the fulfillment of the methodological undertaking to discover the origins of King's ideas. In the first of these, the section on King's years at the universities, Whitaker does indeed steer clear of the logical difficulty I have outlined, although in the second it begins to make itself felt. What is more surprising about both of these sections, though, is the extent to which Whitaker reiterates the received interpretations of these passages in the King biography, albeit often without acknowledgement, despite his evident familiarity with the primary sources. This has led him to some minor errors of fact and, far more importantly, to very questionable interpretations and emphases.

In the first section, Whitaker highlights some of the key intellectual figures who influenced King during his academic career. He repeats the assertion made by both Dawson and Ferns and Ostry that, barring his discovery of Toynbee, King's years as an undergraduate at the University of Toronto had little impact on his intellectual development. Whitaker introduces one further exception to this, William James Ashley,<sup>7</sup> who was at the University during King's first year. Dawson argued that King had no contact with Ashley at U of T,<sup>8</sup> but on the basis of somewhat inconclusive evidence in the King Papers, I am inclined to agree with Whitaker. I cannot agree, however, either that Toronto's impact was as minimal as is commonly asserted, or that Ashley was clearly "the most significant" of King's Toronto professors. At least as significant in his lasting influence on King's thought was James Mavor, and much that would otherwise appear "inconsistent" in King's intellectual career begins to make sense in the light of Mavor's influence. I have dealt at some length with these points elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Whitaker also follows his predecessors in stressing the importance for King of his discovery of the writings of Arnold Toynbee, and here he is on much

<sup>7</sup> Whitaker identifies him as "James Ashley."

<sup>8</sup> R. McGregor Dawson, *Mackenzie King: A Political Biography* (Toronto 1958), 70. However, there are notes on Ashley's economics course at U of T among King's papers: he may have audited the lectures without formally enrolling.

<sup>9</sup> Craven, "An Impartial Umpire," esp. ch. 2 and 3.

surer ground.<sup>10</sup> Whitaker recognizes the double importance of Toynbee for King, both as role model and as intellectual mentor. But he does violence to the content of Toynbee's thought, and this cannot but have consequences for his estimate of its influence on King. Thus for Whitaker, Toynbee thought capitalism ought to be impelled by Christian duty "toward more moderate redistribution of resources to the poor" — which surely cannot be what he means to say. By over-stressing the extent to which Toynbee's work was an attempt "to Christianize capitalist economics," Whitaker diminishes the toughmindedness of a theorist who celebrated "the historical method" as an attack on what he called "intellectual superstitions."<sup>11</sup> Certainly the evangelical Toynbee was attractive to King, but so was the political economist who placed so much emphasis on the changing structure of industry, on the shortcomings of the free market, on the "irreconcilable antagonism of interest"<sup>12</sup> between workers and employers, on the ability of "self-conscious human endeavour"<sup>13</sup> as expressed in the Chartist and trade union movements to change society, and on the analysis, in my view essential to an understanding of King's thought, that it was the trade union movement that saved Britain from revolution in the early nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> *Pace* Whitaker, it was not "public opinion" but class organization that, for Toynbee, would "push towards reform."<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that Toynbee thought that workers and employers were forever irreconcilable, nor that he pursued his analysis with a single-minded dedication to materialist explanations. In the final reckoning, he had to fall back on the notion of a "gospel of duty" that must replace the "gospel of wealth"<sup>16</sup> — although even here Toynbee thought he discerned a material foundation for "duty" in the new forms of industrial organization. My point is not merely that Whitaker, with only a paragraph at his disposal, has misrepresented Toynbee's work, but that in doing so he has also stressed those elements in it, by no means the most important, which most easily fit his conception of King's thought. King found more in Toynbee than Whitaker gives him credit for.

Taking King to Chicago, Whitaker pays due heed to the influence of Thorstein Veblen and makes what might be elaborated into an important contribution to our understanding of the shaping of King's thought, in the comment that his ultimate lack of interest in Marxism had its roots in his inability to really grasp alternatives to Christian idealism: confronted with such a choice, "King simply lost his intellectual moorings." But a few paragraphs later, the burden of this

<sup>10</sup> Once again, however, there is an annoying, if trivial error: Toynbee was not the founder of Toynbee Hall; it was established by his friends after his death.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the 18th Century* . . . (New York 1884), 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 166, 191.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 171, 173.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

insight is lost when we are told that King's rejection of repressive solutions to revolutionary activity flowed simply from self-interest: repression "was not much to King's taste, since it left someone like himself with little role to play." This fatuous comment, for which no evidence is offered, is an unfortunate echo of the fatal flaw in Ferns and Ostry's earlier analysis of King. Like Whitaker, Ferns and Ostry began with a commitment to discover the roots of King's thought and practice, but time and again they retreated into the skeptic's house with the charge of simple opportunism. Skepticism is among the more useful weapons in the armoury of the critic, but it can never serve for explanation in its own right: it becomes cynicism and betrays the enterprise. For Ferns and Ostry, unsubstantiated opportunism was the principal motive to be imputed to King, and their book suffered for it because they were usually satisfied to rest on that accusation without inquiring into either the preconditions for the opportuneness of any given action or opinion or the limits on King's ability to perceive what in hindsight might be thought opportune. Whitaker is occasionally heir to the same error.<sup>17</sup>

I shall have reason a little later on to return to Whitaker's discussion of Chicago, because it seems to me he has omitted some important considerations. Let us go on first to his treatment of King's experiences at Harvard. Once again, he repeats the familiar claims: that "it was Harvard University which provided him with his greatest intellectual stimulation," and that, Ashley aside, "the most important influence on him there was Frank Taussig." In my view, the influence of Taussig is greatly overrated in general, and Whitaker misrepresents his opinions. Whitaker tells us, correctly, that as Taussig's student King was required to work hard at the wages fund controversy, on which Taussig had recently published a book. There is the implication here that this was King's first serious encounter with the wages fund theory, and Whitaker tells us that "the moral which King eventually drew from Taussig's discussion was the eminently orthodox one that labour is dependent upon capital for production, that labour is thus dependent upon a 'wages fund . . . which is in the hands of the capitalist class. Their money income is derived from what the capitalists find it profitable to turn over to them'." The internal quote, it should be noted, is not from King but from Taussig. Whitaker goes on to report that "this soundly conservative lesson of classical political economy was one which King maintained throughout the rest of his career, and was a fundamental weapon in his intellectual armoury against socialism." He adduces no evidence for this sweeping claim.

Unfortunately, things were not quite this simple. In the first place, King had encountered the wages fund problem often before in his university career, first of all in the shape of Toynbee's brilliant destruction of the theory. In

<sup>17</sup> Whitaker's most valuable contributions to our understanding of King, however, have been his frequently penetrating psychological insights. See, for example, "Mackenzie King in the Dominion of the Dead," *Canadian Forum*, February 1976.

another connection, Whitaker quotes King's comment that he "derived much amusement from the attack Toynbee made on Ricardo," while working on *Industry and Humanity*, but he seems not to have realized that it was the attack on the wages fund doctrine that so amused King. Again, King dealt with the problem at Toronto, where Mavor had brought Austrian economics to bear on the wages fund, and had concluded that the doctrine was only tenable under conditions of perfect competition, conditions that by definition could not be achieved.<sup>18</sup> At Harvard, King found Taussig's treatment of the problem somewhat obscure, the more so in light of his previous experience with it. On first reading Taussig's book, King rather sagely noted that "it seems to me these writers have different things in mind when speaking of the Wages Fund."<sup>19</sup> Later on, when he came to accept some of Taussig's conclusions, it was with important reservations: "I believe Taussig is right though I think his conception of the Wages Fund is different to that held by the old orthodox economists."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Taussig's own position was by no means as "orthodox" as Whitaker makes out. Taussig explicitly rejected the classical claim that the theoretical resolution of the problem could speak to practical problems of wage determination: "the conclusions of the economist as to the theoretical relations of wages and capital have little or no bearing on the disputes between laborers and capitalists as they usually appear in the specific case." While the wages fund might set theoretical upper limits to increases in the general level of wages, "proximately, the success or failure to get higher wages will depend much on the accidents of the particular situation."<sup>21</sup> It appears that, in this case at least, King was right and Whitaker wrong. Finally, as Whitaker points out in connection with King's appraisal of another Harvard teacher, William Cunningham, Taussig's intellectual position was essentially alien to King's — he preferred the "complete view" of the Christian economists to the narrow utilitarianism whose best disciple at Harvard, he thought, was Taussig. If Whitaker is willing to bring his "cultural" argument against Veblen — and I think he is right to do so — then he must be willing to do the same for Taussig.

Whitaker, I think, misunderstands King's university experiences and his interest in political economy. After entering the civil service, Whitaker tells us, "King immersed himself in the literature on labour relations mainly of the factual, descriptive and policy-oriented type characteristic of government reports and institutional-oriented academic monographs. This was precisely the kind of economics which had most appealed to him as a student. On the other hand his interest in theoretical work in political economy waned directly with the lifting of the enforced discipline of university courses." The penultimate sentence is in its way true, although there is something important missing. The

<sup>18</sup> James Mavor, "On Wage Statistics and Wage Theories" (Edinburgh 1888).

<sup>19</sup> King Diary, 7 January 1898.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 January 1898.

<sup>21</sup> F.W. Taussig, *Wages and Capital: An Examination of the Wages Fund Doctrine* (New York 1896), 100f., 104.

last sentence seems to me to beg the question: King was never very much interested in abstract theory in political economy. He found it difficult and unrewarding, and he had in Toynbee and others a methodological rationale for dismissing its significance. Whitaker notices, for example, that King found the early sections of *Capital*, the abstract analysis of the commodity, very hard going, but that later he found the book "very logical." My guess is that he found refuge in the more descriptive and narrative passages which become more frequent after the initial discussion of the concepts. King's own interest in political economy was strongly journalistic, in the best sense, as his own writings at the time reveal. His work on the "sweating system," prepared for Postmaster-General Mulock, may serve as an example.<sup>22</sup> King's paper went beyond simple description, which had characterized earlier reports in this field, to attempt a sort of narrative explanation of the origins and persistence of "sweating," but it was very much an historical explanation in the Toynbee mould — what we might call nowadays call an institutionalist interpretation — rather than an abstract economic explanation of the sort one might expect from a Taussig. That King veered away from formal economic theory and chose instead to pursue this historical institutionalist variant was due less to his inability to work out the problems of formal theory than to the fact that he had identified himself with the institutionalist and historical critics of formal theory, grouped loosely as the English "historical school."

If, instead of taking a "big three" — Ashley, Veblen, Taussig — approach to King's university teachers, we broaden the scope of the enquiry, we find a surprising prominence among King's professors of both an acknowledged debt to Toynbee and an affiliation with the new historical criticism of classical theory. At the University of Toronto, Ashley, the close personal friend of Toynbee, the editor of his posthumous book, and the most consistent admirer of the German historical school in the English language, was of the first significance. He nominated his own successor to the Toronto chair: James Mavor. Unlike Ashley and Toynbee, whose background had been in history, Mavor approached political economy from applied science and scientific journalism, and he brought with him an admiration for both the empirical sociology of Booth and Le Play and a tortuous political career that had begun in attempts to apply Toynbeeian social service principles to the conditions of industrial Scotland, wound through the revolutionary socialism of the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, and made its way to the Liberal Party by way of the Glasgow Fabian Society.<sup>23</sup> Like Ashley and Toynbee, Mavor was

<sup>22</sup> W.L.M. King, "Report to the Honourable the Postmaster General on the Methods Adopted in Canada in the Carrying Out of Government Clothing Contracts," Sessional Paper 87, 1898.

<sup>23</sup> S.E.D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals in an Age of Transition* (Toronto 1976), ch. 7, and Alan Bowker, "Truly Useful Men: Maurice Hutton, George Wrong, James Mavor and the University of Toronto, 1880-1927," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975, esp. ch. IV.



intensely critical of classical political economy, although the grounds for his critique were very different from theirs. Like them, however, he argued that social science must be practical science, and like them he then believed that trade unions could and did affect the distribution of the social product. As early as 1891, he anticipated the debate over the effects of interminable struggles between large organizations of capital and large organizations of labour on the common good, and while he argued from an organic model of society, he urged that the best solution to the problem was "wisely conducted and strongly supported unions, with appeals to arbitration where disputes cannot be prevented otherwise."<sup>24</sup> In his first few years at Toronto, while he maintained this general position, he came to place more and more stress on the internal organization of the unions, writing a series of commentaries on Toronto newspapers on what he saw as the dangers of subversion of the working-class interest by incompetent or self-serving leaders.<sup>25</sup> During these years, when he was in closest contact with King, it was becoming increasingly plain that Mavor's greatest sensitivities were to the failings of mankind and to the tendency of power to corrupt. In distinction to Ashley or Toynbee, he was coming to believe that man is inherently evil, and to advocate technical, rationalistic solutions to social abuses. Despite his continuing commitment to an objective and practical social science, Mavor was becoming increasingly cynical about the prospects for social amelioration: this was eventually to lead him, in his usual roundabout way, to the uncompromising *laissez-faire* views of his later polemics against public ownership of telephone and hydro systems. He had not reached that terminus when King was his student, and he furnished a rationalistic sociological counterpoint to the historical criticism of Ashley and Toynbee. So far as his influence on King is concerned, the conventional wisdom, based on the events of the student strike, is that the two became and remained enemies. But this hardly answers the question: the strike came at the end of King's association with Mavor, and there is evidence that King attempted to defend him during the strike and was not estranged from him entirely until some years afterwards. Despite their mutual antagonism, Mavor had significant influence on the development of King's thought and career aspirations, and must be counted among the more important shapers of King's later practice and thought.<sup>26</sup>

At Chicago, the field of political economy had hardly succumbed, as it had at Toronto, to the critics of classical theory. But once again King found, perhaps sought out, those aspects of the subject that were to be abandoned when economics put on its disciplinary straitjacket in the wake of the marginal utilitarians. He studied sociology with C.R. Henderson, another experimenter with Toynbeeian social service projects, whose intellectual enthusiasms were similar to Mavor's, and who linked to the empirical social investigation of Le Play and Booth and an insistence on the practical bearing of his subject, a

<sup>24</sup> James Mavor, *The Scottish Railway Strike* (Edinburgh 1891), 64.

<sup>25</sup> "Prof. Mavor on Labour in the US," *Toronto Evening News*, 5 November 1898.

<sup>26</sup> Craven, "An Impartial Umpire", 77f.

superidealist critique of class distinctions based in the idea that the oppressor was more injured than the oppressed: capitalists, being the smallest class, were the most helpless.<sup>27</sup> At Chicago, King also came into contact with America's foremost exponent of unapologetic *laissez-faire* theory, J.L. Laughlin, and, true to the lessons of Toronto, he identified Laughlin's arguments as being on "the opposite side" to his own, and rejected his suggestions for possible research topics.<sup>28</sup> Of Veblen, the third important figure among King's Chicago teachers, almost enough has been said. It will be sufficient to add that, like Mavor, Veblen was an admirer and correspondent of William Morris and, far more importantly, like Toynbee and Ashley he was engaged in harrying the forces of classical political economy, although he had his doubts, too, about the contribution of the historical school.<sup>29</sup>

King's Harvard was almost overflowing with Toynbee devotees. Apart from Ashley and his sabbatical replacement Cunningham, a close personal friend of Toynbee's and the best surviving defender of his Christian idealism, there was sociology professor Edward Cummings, who, while he had probably never met the master, had put in a year in residence at Toynbee Hall and shared the enthusiasm for "practical work" that he found there. In other respects, though, Cummings was closer to Mavor and Henderson than he was to Ashley and Cunningham, a strange mix of social Darwinist and social gospeler who "solved" what he considered the "paradox" of reconciling the survival of the fittest with social progress by postulating that the "intelligent self-sacrifice of the strong to the weak makes the strong stronger and the weak more strong."<sup>30</sup> King thought Cummings' sociology to be "loose and flabby," and gave him Veblen's lectures to read.<sup>31</sup> King retained his belief in the efficacy of rational, if limited, state intervention and in the legitimacy of trade union activity, lessons learned at Toronto, throughout his university career.

What is important here is that while the sort of economics taught King during his university career ranged from the unfettered classical model to the marginal utilitarianism that was replacing it, one influential group — to my mind, the most influential — emphasized the English historical and American sociological schools' critiques of classical theory, critiques that diverged significantly from the new justification of *laissez-faire* in neoclassical economics. Leaving aside the emphasis on social amelioration and practical work that constituted this group's response to problems of industrialism, the analysis of

<sup>27</sup> C.R. Henderson, *Social Elements: Institutions, Character, Progress* (New York 1898), 170.

<sup>28</sup> King Diary, 2 February 1897.

<sup>29</sup> Thorstein Veblen, "The Fundamental Laws of Anthropol-sociology," *Journal of Political Economy*, December 1897.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in R.L. Church, "The Economists Study Society: Sociology at Harvard, 1891-1902," in P. Buck, ed., *Social Sciences at Harvard 1860-1920* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965), 43f.

<sup>31</sup> King Diary, 11 February 1898; 6 October 1898.

the emergence of capitalist social relations that was worked out by Toynbee, Ashley and Cunningham incorporated a sentimental regard for the mutual interdependency of worker and employer, which was taken to have been characteristic of preindustrial relations, but rejected Carlyle's longing for a return to the old ways in favour of an attempt to reconcile modern property relations with a humanitarian and politically sensitive concern for the well-being of the working-class. The old paternalism of master and man had been destroyed by changes in the organization of industry, so that return to the old ways was not only impossible but undesirable as it would mean losing all the advantages and promise of the new industrialism. The "indifference" of market relations could become the basis for a new liberal order, if it was accompanied by the "gospel of duty." In practice, "duty" translated into a recognition of the ultimate identity of interests between workers and employers, encouraged by the new interventionism of the state. Factory legislation, social insurance and disputes conciliation might be implemented by the state to ensure that the dictates of the "gospel of wealth" did not overrun those of the "gospel of duty." Whereas in industrial relations' terms the classical model merely denied the ability of trade unionism, in any guise but that of the benevolent society, to increase the share of the working class in the social product, the English historical school and its American disciples leaned heavily towards the view that trade unions could improve the position of the workers, and advocated the positive state against the claims both of *laissez-faire* individualism and revolutionary socialism.

King's mature intellectual position was an eclectic amalgam of bits and pieces picked up from several of his teachers, professors and authors alike. But the most prominent strain was that of the English historical school. Out of its analysis of the nature and implications of industrial capitalism, he patched together a view of the strains and tensions in Canadian society and a programme for amelioration. His views, which found practical expression in his work in the labour department, were described most fully in *Industry and Humanity*.

Whitaker's discussion of King's career in the Canadian labour department concentrates, as he points out, not on "King's role as labour mediator or the shape which the new department took under King's direction," but on "the ideology which his actions embodied." This is unfortunate for two reasons. First, it restricts the scope of the discussion to some familiar judgements about King's labour policy and practice, judgements that do not receive here the re-examination which they deserve. Second, it means that the methodological principle enunciated earlier, that King's thought must be seen as reflecting the context of his times, cannot be realized. Whitaker presents us with a picture of King's "ideology" and tells us it is embodied in his actions. These actions are themselves relegated to the back of the stage, where they are very dimly to be made out, and even there they are context-free. The conclusion to which we must be led by this procedure is that King's actions (about which we are to be told little) flowed from his ideology (about which some assertions are to be

made). But this is to stand both the idea of embodiment and the saving methodological principle on their heads, and to build a more-or-less hidden circularity into the analysis. This is objectionable on logical grounds, and it amounts to the exceedingly simplistic claim that Canadian labour policy in the first decade of the twentieth century was a function only of King's ideology. This carries the further implication that King brought his thought fully formed from Harvard to the labour department, and vitiates any attempt to see how his experiences as a labour mediator may have further shaped his ideology.

Whitaker's reading of the secondary literature on King's labour policies leads him to make unsupportably large claims. "King's activities and his reflections about his activities all point to one supreme central tenet in his conception of the role of the state in labour relations: industrial 'peace' at all costs." It is certainly true that King placed a great deal of weight on the uninterrupted operation of industry. But it is clearly not true that this was a "supreme central tenet," if those words are to have any meaning beyond the rhetorically emphatic. For example, King quite consistently opposed the introduction of compulsory arbitration legislation, despite what was at times substantial pressure from several quarters.<sup>32</sup> His reasons for doing so are instructive, for they indicate that there were, at the least, other "central tenets" vying for "supremacy" with the one Whitaker has identified. When the former BC mines minister, Smith Curtis, called on him to press for compulsory arbitration legislation in 1901, King "let him see that I do not favour this tendency, and was inclined to feel that it were better to leave industry more alone, save in laying down rules and restrictions against unfair play, and also subjecting it to the influence of public opinion where this could be focused through a Department or other means as e.g. in Conciliation."<sup>33</sup> Curtis' persistence occasioned this further reflection by King:<sup>34</sup>

I think tho' that he is mistaken in regarding compulsory arbitration as a great panacea. Most men who consider and advise it see only the seeming immediate effect upon stoppage of strikes, they fail to see that a strike may after all bring greater good than its prevention. I cannot believe (in) the compulsory adjustments of wages schedules. No judge unless he be an economic divinity could regulate rightly wages in any trade of importance for one year.

These comments, and others like them, do not seem to me to justify the large claim that King was interested in industrial peace at any price. The price of compulsory arbitration — too much interference with industry, the difficulty of fairly arbitrating wage rates and the failure to see "that a strike may after all bring greater good than its prevention" — was too high. It is important to note that King did not oppose compulsory arbitration because he thought it would be

<sup>32</sup> King resisted pressure for a compulsory arbitration law both when that demand emanated from the labour movement and when it originated with the CPR. See Craven, "An Impartial Umpire," ch. 9.

<sup>33</sup> King Diary, 11 January 1901.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 January 1901; see also 21 November 1901; 23 November 1901.

ineffective in preventing strikes from occurring. He shared the opinion of many of his contemporaries, based on the experience of New Zealand, that such legislation might well reduce the frequency of strikes, no matter what we have learned since. His objection to compulsory arbitration, then, was not that it would be an ineffective road to industrial peace, but that it would imply too many other costs.

This may be the point to bring up the significance of King's appeal to "public opinion" for, as Whitaker points out, King's notion of labour mediation "rested heavily on the idea of investigation and publicity." Two things need to be said about King's appeal to public opinion as the ultimate arbiter of industrial disputes. In the first place, it was very much the "idea of . . . publicity," and not the fact, that was involved. Despite the prominence of this idea in *Industry and Humanity* and in King's earlier writings and speeches, little came of it in practice. The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act is usually pointed to as the main instance of this principle finding its way into policy, and Whitaker joins the queue. While it is no doubt significant that King turned to the notion of public opinion to help supply the theoretical basis for the legislation, it must also be recognized that in practice he actively discouraged public scrutiny of the process and results of investigation, requesting conciliation board chairmen to hold their hearings behind closed doors and discouraging the compilation of verbatim transcripts and newspaper reporting of proceedings. One American observer summed up the nature of the policy in practice, and it is important to recognize that King supported the procedures she described:

Although the law is called the Industrial Disputes *Investigation* Act, and its theory has been that if the facts could be made known public opinion would stimulate a reasonable attitude in both groups, as a matter of fact investigation for the enlightenment of public opinion has not accompanied the administration of the act. Representatives of the government have sought . . . to bring employers and employees together. They have believed that publicity would jeopardize the settling of differences. What the act has done has been to impose an obligation not to strike until this method of negotiation and conference can be tried. The act, therefore, is an experiment in conciliation rather than a trial of the method of current investigation and publicity by government bureaus.<sup>35</sup>

The second point to recognize about King's appeal to public opinion is that he meant by the term not the Jeffersonian opinion that emerges fully formed from the populace, but an opinion that is formed and guided by special agencies, be they journalistic or governmental. Thus in the comment on compulsory arbitration quoted above, "public opinion" is qualified by the phrase, "where this could be focused through a Department or other means." King did rely quite heavily on public opinion in this sense, although not directly in mediating industrial disputes. He used the columns of the *Labour Gazette*, departmental annual reports, and occasional interviews and magazine articles to proselytize for conciliation, to attempt to form what he would no doubt have considered an

<sup>35</sup> Mary van Kleeck, "Foreword," to B.M. Selekmán, *Postponing Strikes* (New York 1927), 16.

enlightened public opinion, by the presentation of carefully edited accounts of departmental practice. Public opinion played no role in the settlement of particular disputes, but the formation of general acceptance of the principles of conciliation by means of little parables was an important part of King's general strategy.<sup>36</sup> In failing to recognize this distinction, Whitaker is unable to make sense of King's use of the concept.

Whitaker concludes his brief discussion of King's career in the labour department by drawing together three strands of analysis to make an ill-considered leap to what he calls the "anti-labour colouring of King's activities." First, he introduces Jamieson's hypothesis that King's conciliation practice "may have paradoxically brought short term peace at the cost of exacerbating long term conflict, for the simple reason that organized workers were stymied in their demands and eventually broke out later with yet greater strength and militancy." This is an interesting hypothesis about the consequences of the King policy although it is difficult to see just how, in this form, it could be tested. But let us assume for the sake of argument that it is an accurate account of the consequences of the policy. The second strand Whitaker introduces is that "the central role of the Canadian state was established just when Britain was reducing the role of government in industrial relations," and that Canadian industrial relations policy remained more interventionist than the British policy for decades thereafter. I am not sure what weight Whitaker wishes us to attach to this information. He could just as well have told us that "the Canadian state chose to restrict its industrial relations role to compulsory conciliation in certain restricted sectors of the economy just when Australasia was embarking on full scale compulsory arbitration," or "the Canadian state chose to exempt trade unions from the disabilities of anti-combines legislation just when in the United States the anti-trust acts were being used to attack the foundations of union organization." All of these statements are true, and if we wish to understand Canadian labour policy in a comparative context, using the foreign models most frequently appealed to by the parties involved at the time, all of them must be weighed. But the reason for the special comparison with Britain soon becomes clear. Whitaker wishes to argue that the Canadian stress on intervention implied "a certain acquiescence on the part of labour in the image of the state's 'neutrality'," and that this neutrality was mythical: "That the state should intervene to seek continued production at all costs would inevitably reinforce capital in its struggle with labour. Even beyond this rather obvious point, King's activities may be seen as 'distinctly contrary to the most fundamental interests of the labour movement with which he claimed to sympathise.'"

Whitaker's point about the neutrality of the state is at bottom correct. We must add the proviso that the state did not consistently intervene to seek

<sup>36</sup> King's use of the *Labour Gazette* and the annual reports of the labour department for these purposes is discussed at length in Craven, "An Impartial Umpire," ch. 7.

continued production at all costs, nor, as we have seen, did King think it should. When we come to the "acquiescence" of labour in Canadian state intervention, however, we run into a complexity undreamt of in Whitaker's analysis. The reality was not so much that labour acquiesced in King's model of limited intervention, as that the labour movement demanded much more far-reaching intervention, compulsory arbitration, before King came on the scene and during the first few years of his tenure in the labour department. Even after the Trades and Labour Congress had officially accepted the Gompers dictum that compulsory arbitration was tantamount to slavery, significant elements within the Congress endorsed its application to certain essential industries.<sup>37</sup> There were several reasons why the Canadian labour movement should have been more open to state intervention than its American counterpart: the greater readiness of Canadians to look to the state in its developmental aspect; the example of a labour-oriented Liberal government in New Zealand and a Labour government in Australia; and the hope that through government-sponsored conciliation or arbitration the barriers to negotiation imposed by employer refusal to recognize unions voluntarily might be overcome. The interventionism of the union movement was an important aspect of labour's programme, and it antedated King's arrival in Ottawa.

This leads us to the next item in Whitaker's analysis: that King's activities were "distinctly contrary to the most fundamental interests of the labour movement with which he claimed to sympathize." The problem here is that we do not know what Whitaker takes to be "the most fundamental interests," nor whether it is the labour movement or these interests with which he takes King to claim to sympathize. If he takes the most fundamental interests of the labour movement to be something in the order of the abolition of private property in the means of production and its replacement by a socialist workers' state, then he is right in saying that King's activities were distinctly contrary, but wrong in implying that King sympathized with this programme. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that more than a tiny minority of the labour movement sanctioned such a programme in the first decade of the century. But if Whitaker takes the most fundamental interests of the labour movement to be what the movement's leaders and spokesmen claimed them to be — better wages and working conditions, shorter hours, factory inspection, Oriental exclusion, disputes arbitration, prohibition of prison labour and so on — then it is clear, first, that King sympathized with most of these goals, *and*, second, that his activities in the Labour Department were *not* "distinctly contrary" to all of these interests. In attempting to evaluate or to understand King's activities and ideas, both of these sets of concerns must be kept in mind: the imputed material interest of the working class in the long term, and the perceived self-interest of the labour movement in the years 1900-1911. From the point of view of the first of these, King's activities were clearly not designed to banish capitalism from Canadian

<sup>37</sup> T.W. Banton's survey of Ontario union leaders, *Toronto Star*, 18 October 1902.

soil. But from the point of view of the second, it is far from clear that King's industrial relations policy was "distinctly contrary" to some of the perceived goals of the labour movement.

If Whitaker intends the first, he is merely telling us that King was not a revolutionary socialist, which, no matter what else it may be, is not news. If he intends the second, then he is presumably relying on Jamieson's estimate of the consequences of King's interventions, which we agreed under protest to accept for the sake of argument. But the difficulty for Whitaker here is that this was an argument about the long term outcome of the policy, a "paradoxical" outcome — "paradoxical" surely because it was unanticipated contrary to expectations. If this is so, then these consequences must be irrelevant to an examination of King's ideology, for what is being claimed is that when the ideology was put into practice the results that emerged were other than what had been intended or expected — intended or expected, we might add, not only by King but by the labour movement as well. But Whitaker wants to read back from the outcome of the policy to King's intentions: that is why he includes the clause, "with which he claimed to sympathize," in his analysis of the bearing of King's activities on the "fundamental interests" of the labour movement, and that is what enables him to make the immediate leap to the phrase, "the anti-labour colouring of King's activities." The point is that what may appear in retrospect as having had deleterious consequences for the labour movement may at the time and to King and his contemporaries have appeared as being action in labour's interest. If the problem under discussion is King's ideology and its development, the extent to which it was a "reflection" of the circumstances of his times, then these unanticipated outcomes must surely be of merely secondary interest, and must not be permitted to characterize motivation or intent.

"In considering the anti-labour colouring of King's activities," Whitaker goes on to write, "it is important to note that King steadfastly refused to accept the basic industrial self-determination of workers: he refused to recognize their voluntarily chosen unions as having any necessary legitimacy in bargaining with their employers." As Whitaker recognizes in this paragraph, there are three issues compressed here: the problem of union recognition in industrial disputes policy; King's distinction between legitimate and illegitimate unionism; and the so-called "company union" strategy which he is said to have adopted. In my view these issues may best be understood by dealing with them separately. To deal with the second first, since it will clear the ground for the others, King believed from the outset that class politics had no place in the trade unions. He was especially hostile, as a non-revolutionary-socialist, to radical syndicalism of the type espoused by the Western Federation of Miners, the American Labour Union and, later, the Industrial Workers of the World. So far as he was concerned, these were not trade unions but socialist parties, and he refused, so far as he was able, to deal with them as unions.<sup>38</sup> When we

<sup>38</sup> King's views in this regard and his approach to recognition disputes are discussed in Craven, "An Impartial Umpire", ch. 3 and 7 respectively.



discuss the problem of union recognition, then, we must note first of all that, for King, these revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalist organizations were just not unions, and so the question did not properly arise.

But it did arise when "legitimate" unions — not, as Whitaker makes out, company unions properly so-called, but business unions of the AFL-TLC variety — became involved in recognition disputes. Once again Whitaker makes an extravagant claim whose grain of truth is buried beneath a bushel of chaff: "Strikes for union recognition were wholly illegitimate and must be stopped; collusion between government and employers to foster company unions was altogether admirable and in the public interest." It is true that King had little sympathy for recognition strikes, although in the case of "legitimate" unions he deplored the refusal of employers to deal with the unions every bit as much as he did the action of the workers involved. A good part of his objection to recognition strikes flowed from Mavor's analysis of the internal affairs of unions: recognition was not a demand for more equitable wages or for more bearable working conditions; it was simply an attempt by self-serving leaders to find security at the expense of their striking members. Beyond this, the recognition issue was one where no compromise was possible — either the employer agreed to deal with the union committee or he refused — and compromise was essential to King's mediation strategy. His normal tactic in the face of a recognition demand was to plead for its postponement in favour of the settlement of specific grievances and immediate demands. King did not deny the legitimacy of collective bargaining between "legitimate" unions and employers: in principle this was a very good thing. What he did deny, in practice, was that it would be either proper or advisable for the state to impose such a bargaining relationship upon a recalcitrant employer. In this, of course, King was not alone. Neither Britain nor the United States had a compulsory recognition/collective bargaining policy: the closest thing to it at the time was part and parcel of the compulsory arbitration package in the Antipodes. It was not until Roosevelt's New Deal that collective bargaining legislation which preserved the right to strike was introduced, and while King might be faulted for failing to anticipate the Wagner Act (as Whitaker seems to do later on) it is not clear what purpose such a judgement would serve. It should be pointed out, too, that the Canadian labour movement had yet to decide that compulsory collective bargaining/compulsory recognition legislation was desirable. There is really no call to attempt to measure turn-of-the-century labour policy against the Wagner Act principles, the more so since King's labour policy up to 1911 was in fact more progressive than that of the United States at the time.

We come now to the claim that King's response to recognition disputes was "collusion between government and the employers to foster company unions." This hoary tale may well have originated in the attempt to read the "employee representation plans" of King's Rockefeller days and *Industry and Humanity* back into his earlier practice: otherwise, it is difficult to account for. In the first place, there is no record in King's interventions as Deputy Minister or Minister

of Labour of such collusion. If a company union is an organization established and controlled by an employer with a view to forestalling his workers' attempts to join a *bona fide* independent trade union, then there is simply no evidence that King ever participated in such a scheme during his career with the labour department. All else aside, to have done so would have been suicidal so far as his relations with the trade union movement were concerned. And in any event, Canadian employers at the time were notoriously less subtle: it was simpler merely to fire union sympathizers or to require potential employees to sign a yellow-dog contract than to go to all the trouble of setting up a union. There were a number of instances, however, in which King, acting as a conciliator under the Conciliation Act, diverted recognition demands by urging strikers to accept recognition of a committee of employees instead of a union committee. So far as I have been able to establish, the membership of such committees was in every case chosen by a majority vote of the workers involved, and in no case was the employer or his representatives involved in this procedure. This tactic was developed by King as the closest thing to a compromise possible on the recognition issue, and he undertook to persuade employers to meet with a committee of their workers if the workers, for their part, would agree not to make it an official union committee. On a number of occasions, King provided for the possibility of an outside official of the union sitting in on meetings to advise and assist this committee.

Now, this was not union recognition. But it was not company unionism and "collusion" either. It must be seen, not as some nefarious conspiracy with employers to destroy the trade union movement, but as yet another facet in King's general strategy of settlement by *ad hoc* compromise. It is noteworthy, again, that with a single important exception there was little significant opposition from the TLC unions to this tactic. The exception is interesting for a number of reasons, but most importantly in the context of Whitaker's paper because it may have helped lay the groundwork for the Rockefeller Plan.

The events in question occurred during King's intervention in a coal miners' strike in Nanaimo in 1905.<sup>39</sup> Many of the miners involved were members of John Mitchell's United Mine Workers of America; a smaller number (possibly a mere handful) belonged to the Western Federation of Miners, an "illegitimate" union, and others were not union members at all. An extremely stubborn management not only refused to recognize a committee to discuss grievances, but issued an ultimatum promising to close down the mines unless the miners agreed to accept what amounted to a wage reduction. During King's meetings with the UMWA local committee he managed to persuade it to call a mass meeting of all strikers to elect a committee of employees to meet with the management, pointing out that since the majority of the strikers were UMWA members, this committee could become *de facto* a committee of the union, no

<sup>39</sup> The case is discussed at length in Craven, "An Impartial Umpire," ch. 8 where it is argued that the conflict was really a capital strike against BC mines legislation.

matter what it was called. The local committee accepted this compromise, although the UMWA staff organizer opposed it, and the matter was complicated by the actions of the local MLA. The meeting was held; the committee was elected; it arranged a rather bad settlement with the company; and a second meeting was called to ratify this agreement. Due in no small part to King's unprecedented eloquence (a verbatim transcript of his speech to this meeting survives) the strikers were persuaded to return to work. After King's departure, a conflict emerged between the UMWA staff organizer and the local committee regarding his role in the affair: the dispute wound up on John Mitchell's desk and he, after an acrimonious exchange with King, finally accepted the latter's contention that the choice was between the *de facto* recognition of the UMWA through the employees' committee on the one hand, and the closing of the mines on the other. Nevertheless, there was bad blood between them for some time after this. Mitchell gave in, it seems, because King more or less blackmailed him with the threat of concerted public opinion against the Mine Workers as an American union which would have forced the closing of a Canadian mining operation. It should be added that King and Mitchell had a standing agreement to protect the UMWA from anti-American attacks. When King felt one of these coming on because of the union's actions in Canada, it was agreed that he would immediately contact Mitchell to try and patch up the affair. This agreement was exercised again in 1906, during the famous Lethbridge coal strike that furnished the immediate occasion for the introduction of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. King was interested in protecting the UMWA as a "legitimate" alternative to the radical Western Federation: Mitchell presumably had complementary interests. It may be significant that the Rockefeller Plan involved the UMWA in the Colorado coalfields, although by that time Mitchell was no longer president of the union and there is no evidence that King had similar arrangements with his successor.

There is no doubt that King's diplomacy in the Nanaimo affair, as in many of his other interventions, was directed far more to the termination of the work stoppage than to the achievement of a "fair" or "just" settlement: this, unlike compulsory arbitration, seems to have been one of the prices he was willing to pay for industrial peace. But this is still a far cry from company unionism, and one does not have to approve of what King did do in order to relieve him of that particular charge. It should be added that, notwithstanding Jamieson's claim to the contrary,<sup>40</sup> there is no evidence of "company union" deals having been worked out under the auspices of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, at least during King's tenure as Labour Minister.

Whitaker moves on to King's work for the Rockefellers: before joining him there is one further note that must be introduced regarding his role in the labour department. The federal government's industrial disputes policy was not by

<sup>40</sup> cf. Stuart Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada* (Ottawa 1968), 129.

any stretch of the imagination the major barrier to the development of the Canadian labour movement to emanate from the state system. More important by far was the reactionary state of trade union law (by comparison, for example, with the British law, with which it shared a common antecedent) and especially judicial interpretation. The trade union movement had good reason to attack the judiciary and to call for the abolition of the Senate, and it did both of these. At the same time, it had, until 1911, little but praise for the efforts of the Department of Labour. Any attempt to see King's activities in the context of their times must recognize this fact, and account for it.

With the Rockefellers, Whitaker has me at a disadvantage: I have not studied this period in King's activities in detail. Nevertheless, there are a few points that might be made. I pass briefly over the fallacy of attributing the positions allegedly taken by "the robber barons of American capitalism generally" to the Rockefellers in particular, and the patently untrue allegation that "in accepting the Rockefeller post with alacrity, King demonstrated that as a middle class professional, his talents were for sale to the highest bidder," in order to get at the meat of the problem: the union recognition question again.

When King arrived on the scene, the Ludlow Massacre was over and, as Whitaker correctly points out, the Rockefellers had been driven by public opinion into an attempt to improve their image. King devised his employee representation plan, apparently in collusion with David Rockefeller, and it was used to substitute for the United Mine Workers. Whitaker quotes from King's diary his rationale for not acceding to the union recognition/closed shop demand of the UMWA: its terms are similar but not identical to those he had employed in roughly cognate situations in Canada. The big difference between Colorado and, say, Nanaimo seems to have been that in the former King was for the first time clearly identified with capital in proposing this alternative to straightforward union recognition. We might pause at this point to recall that the Rockefellers' immediate response to the coal war had been to say that as mere majority shareholders in the company involved they had no responsibility for the actions of management. Public outrage had forced them to back down from this stance to some extent and King, reflecting perhaps on Toynbee's "gospel of duty," considered it an important aspect of his involvement that the Rockefellers be persuaded to accept the responsibility for setting things right. It seems to me that it was this facet of his activities, and not, as Whitaker claims, the denial of union recognition, that was "essentially paternalistic." Capitalism with a human face followed from King's rejection of both classical liberal economics and socialism: his practice in the Colorado affair might usefully be considered in the light of Toynbee's meliorism moderated by Mavor's cynical mistrust of working-class organization.

The way in which Whitaker caps his discussion of the employee representation plan illustrates his method: "Some twenty years later the 'Colorado plan' as it was grandiosely touted by the Rockefeller public relations apparatus was officially outlawed by the United States Congress in the Wagner Act." Once

again, there is an implicit criticism of King for not inventing the Wagner Act principles twenty years before their time.

There is a general point to be made about the treatment of King's activities as labour mediator. There is a great deal of tension in the King literature between attempts to account for and understand King's actions in the context of the political economy (including ideologies) of his time, and attempts to weigh King on the scales of morality. There can be no objection to making value judgements about King's actions, and there is an especially valuable didactic purpose to be served by weighing King on scales of his own making. What is objectionable, however, is what has become the frequent practice of permitting the value judgements to serve for explanation. Surely the accounting must precede the evaluation; surely the accounting must be to the greatest extent possible independent of the evaluation. To conflate the two from the outset is to fall into the trap of skepticism discussed above, and Whitaker is not alone in being caught. It seems to me that we are not in dire need of many more rehearsals of the existing interpretations directed to the conclusion that Willie King was a nasty chap whose activities betrayed the working class. For the time being, we can take that as read. What we do need are far more careful analyses of King's activities and the objective and ideological conditions that bounded them so that we can make sense of our history. If we are willing to banish great men from the core of historical interpretation then there is an obligation to shun great villains too. This problem is perhaps particularly acute in analyses of ideology, where the familiar milestones and signposts of, say, economic history are lacking. But we must remain aware of the danger that in our enthusiasm to twist the devil's tail we may ignore the conditions that gave him birth.

Finally, let us turn to Whitaker's treatment of the devil's cookbook, *Industry and Humanity*. The reading he offers is an important one in its own right and will undoubtedly have to be taken into account by future students of King's thought. But how does it relate to the methodological imperative not to view that thought as standing in splendid isolation, but to search for its origins in King's environment and action? We were to look, Whitaker told us, for what King "reflected in sharp focus," but the discussion of the book presents King as a "visionary" without grounding that purported vision in anything but the text. What methodological linkage can be said to exist between the analytic product of textual exegesis and the contextual imperative which was claimed to inform the argument? What relationship, in other words, does Whitaker's treatment of *Industry and Humanity* bear to the preceding sections of his article? Unfortunately, the short answer must be that they are logically unrelated.

There are several uses we might wish to make of texts like *Industry and Humanity*. We might treat them as embodiments of social theory to be evaluated in their own right according to the usual canons of theory testing, and therefore independent of the circumstances of their creation: this is the typical use to be made of theoretical works in the positivist (i.e., non-relativist) paradigm. We might treat them as primary documents in intellectual history,

emphasizing the material and ideological roots of the ideas they embody irrespective of the theoretical adequacy of those ideas in the first sense. Alternatively, we might take the texts not so much as end-points but as starting-points in examining a particular segment of the process of intellectual transition, again without especial regard to their adequacy as theory. A third use, related to the second, bears more specifically on intellectual biography: again, the text stands for a link in the process of intellectual transmission, but this time within the framework of a single thinker's development. The point is that in the first case, the text as theory, there is no methodological imperative to contextual analysis within the positivist paradigm. The other uses demand that textual exegesis be supplemented by an examination of context.

Now, it seems quite plain that Whitaker does not make the first choice. He does not wish simply to advance a reading of *Industry and Humanity* as a theory about the social world. For if he did, the two preceding sections of the essay would be irrelevant to his enterprise; he would not urge upon us the necessity of seeing the book as a reflection of other things rather than as something valuable in its own independent right; and he would not urge us to accept the book primarily as a datum, as "an important statement of liberalism in twentieth century Canada." I have no quarrel with Whitaker here. I agree that even if *Industry and Humanity* could be tortured into yielding up an internally consistent social theory it would probably not turn out to be a very useful one. Whitaker tells us that the book is "as overstuffed as a Victorian sofa," and it is surely only courtesy that prevents him from noting that horse-hair is not the only equine byproduct with which the work is replete.

So the place of *Industry and Humanity* is in the realm of intellectual history or biography. Can we identify Whitaker's enterprise in this realm? As we have seen, he is concerned to tell us something about King's life before writing the book, and he tells us nothing about King's life afterwards. So we might say, at least, that Whitaker's enterprise is located within King's intellectual biography, and that it is concerned with showing how King came to write the book that he did. I think that this is at least part of what Whitaker intends and I do not think that he does it particularly well. His account of King's years at university and as a labour mediator is derivative and fragmentary. Moreover, in discussing *Industry and Humanity* he does not make any especial effort to relate the themes he finds in the book back to King's earlier career. The few references of this kind that are made seem quite peripheral to the reading Whitaker gives us of the book itself. Beyond this I think it is correct to say that Whitaker does not broaden the scope of the intellectual history of *Industry and Humanity* much beyond his attempt to make it cap King's earlier biography. There are the desultory references to Toynbee and to one or two other progenitors of the ideas in the book, but these do not amount to a wholehearted attempt to uncover the sources King uses or to locate the book in the intellectual or social ferment of his times. What we are left with, then, is the treatment of *Industry and Humanity* as a cap to King's intellectual biography to 1918, and we are left

with the suspicion that if the cap fits it may well be ill made, inasmuch as we have been able to find fault with what preceded it. This reading does not tell us anything about what King "reflected" and it does not tell us anything about the relation between *Industry and Humanity* and King's earlier thought or activities.

One is left with the impression that the preceding sections of the article represent an unfortunate attempt to ransack the King biography in search of props for an original internal reading of *Industry and Humanity*. Such an attempt is logically unnecessary if Whitaker intended by that reading what he has in fact accomplished and accomplished well: a new interpretation of what the book means on its own terms. But, as we have seen, Whitaker intends more than this: he intends at least to provide a reading which *explains* the book's meaning in terms of its political and intellectual origins. The biographical scaffolding Whitaker sets around his reading is inadequate to this task, both because of its faults of emphasis and interpretation, and because he fails to speak, in that reading, to the methodological imperative he has in principle recognized.

To conclude this discussion, then, the strength of Whitaker's paper is in the merits of his textual analysis of *Industry and Humanity*. His reading of this text is a careful and subtle one, although it is by no means the only possible reading. It is not strengthened by the framework of biography he sets around it, although it seems probable that only contextual criticism could provide an adequate measure of the extent to which his reading catches King's likely intent. *Whitaker's paper must be seen, not as a contribution to the intellectual biography of Mackenzie King or to the analysis of the ideological development of Canadian liberalism, but as a textual analysis of a work important to both of these enterprises.*