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ARTICLES

"Fading Beams of the Nineteenth Century:" Radicalism and Early Socialism in Canada's 1890s

Gene Howard Homel

LATE nineteenth-century Toronto, according to "Uncle Thomas," an anonymous observer, contained a curious and colourful group of dissenters and radicals. "Socialists, anarchists, single taxers, Christian scientists, and candidates for the Legislature," they gathered in a little downtown restaurant wedged in between a row of wholesale businesses. For the uninitiated, the restaurant was "a quiet nook where men of 'isms and 'ologies congregate daily in the discussion of projects of transcendent vastness and lunches of co-relative modesty." The patrons, "social regenerators" who displayed "a Walt Whitman-like aversion to the razor habit," sat at the crowded square tables discussing a wide range of the world's problems, "from the cutting of bay ice to the passing of a resolution on the destiny of the North American continent." Felix Belcher, the proprietor of the restaurant, was "a quiet man, with a habit of playing chess and perfecting plans for reforming the world during his leisure moments. He holds views on the land question that would be startling to the Ratepayers' Association, and would think nothing of taxing land as heavily as low grade chewing tobacco." Belcher's customers, for the curious outsider, were merely men who sought "kindly sympathy" and "congenial companionship — men who believe in what is not self-evident; the perpetual minority; the cranks."¹

The "social regenerators" deserved more serious consideration than was given them by "Uncle Thomas." By the end of the nineteenth century, small but significant groups of Canadian radicals were grappling with the intensified problems of an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society. Unemployment, harsh conflict between workers and employers, and the stark contrast between the amenities of the wealthy and the distress of the urban poor were three distinct dangers. Of more general concern was what radicals perceived as the breakdown and ineffectiveness of over-arching and deeply felt ethics and values. A relative degree of community cohesion was apparently becoming supplanted by what one church called "the caste feeling between rich and

¹ Uncle Thomas, "The Regenerators," *The Canadian Magazine*, I, 1 (March 1893), 65.

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poor,"² and by what a minister described as "two hostile camps" between which a "great gulf is fixed."³ Canadians by the end of the century were facing a starkly frightening world of economic, social, and cultural crisis.

This essay attempts to describe and interpret some of the major convictions, supporters, and organizations of Canadian radicalism during the 1890s. The radicals can be broadly defined as social critics whose critique of industrial capitalism was usually radical, in the sense of advocating or promoting root-and-branch change in Canada's economic and political system. That the diverse and often ambiguous radical legacy was characterized by Christian and secularized ethical appeals and a concern for the protection of traditional social and cultural life in no way detracts from its challenge to the status quo of the period. In Great Britain, the United States, and elsewhere, radical criticism and movements were progressively confronting the assumptions and effects of the capitalist market, and it is in this international context that the Canadian movement matured.⁴

² *The Christian Guardian* (Toronto), 2 June 1897, 346.

³ Rev. E.S. Rowe, "Current Views on Sociology," *Acta Victoriana*, 20 (February 1897), 232-5.

⁴ On radicalism in Great Britain and the United States in the late nineteenth century, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York 1967); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians* (New York 1968), ch. 5; Peter J. Frederick, *Knights of the Golden Rule: the intellectual as Christian social reformer in the 1890s* (Lexington, Kentucky 1976); Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: the intellectual as a social type* (New York 1965); John Laslett, *Labor and the Left: a study of socialist and radical influences in the American labor movement, 1881-1924* (New York 1970); Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: origins of the modern movement* (Indianapolis 1964); Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston 1957); Kenneth O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie: radical and socialist* (London 1975); Stanley Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism: the struggle for a new consciousness* (Ithaca 1973); Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: men and ideas in the formation of Fabian socialist doctrines, 1881-1889* (New Haven 1975); Edward Thompson, "Romanticism, Moralism and Utopianism: the case of William Morris," *New Left Review*, 99 (September-October 1976). Sources on Canadian radicalism generally include Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930* (Kingston 1968); Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left, A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough 1977); A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement 1899-1919* (Toronto 1977); Ramsay Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," in Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation, Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton* (Toronto 1976); James K. Chapman, "Henry Harvey Stuart (1873-1952): New Brunswick Reformer," *Acadiensis*, 5 (Spring 1976); Bernard Ostry, "Conservatives, Liberals, and Labour in the 1880s," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 27 (1961); Wayne Roberts, "Studies in the Toronto Labour Movement," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978; and Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980); and Bryan Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal 1979).

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The focus of this essay is on Toronto, since the Queen City was a leading Canadian centre of radical opinion, and on the 1890s, since that decade of class conflict witnessed the breakdown of older forms of eclectic radicalism and their reconstitution into a more disciplined and class-conscious radical movement that largely merged into socialism by 1900. The radical *mélange* of the 1890s cannot for the most part be equated with socialism. But the making of Canadian socialism as a viable option was underway, a socialism which retained the ethical and anti-free-market proclivities of earlier radicals. This essay will first define more sharply the radicals' convictions, and then proceed to a discussion of Toronto's key radical spokesmen, organizations, and sources of support. The essay closes with a consideration of Canada's nascent socialist ideology.

Canadian radicalism in the 1890s was a diverse and contradictory *mélange* of earnestness, fad, and fantasy. Radicals were in the process of sorting through a variety of concerns, platforms, and panaceas. One meeting in 1893 suggested solutions for unemployment as wide-ranging as voluntary cooperatives, nationalization, land and tax reform, trade unionism, direct legislation, free grants of land, government loans, salaries for M.P.s, more education, and prohibition. "Social reform doctors," the *Globe* reported, "differ to almost as great an extent as their brethren who heal the body individual, instead of the body politic."⁵ Some radicals expressed sympathy for either the Liberals or Conservatives; many were fiercely non-partisan. Some described themselves as individualists, others as collectivists. Occupationally, they represented a cross-section of artisans and skilled mechanics, the less prosperous and secure members of the middle class, and a small sprinkling of the professions. They were shoemakers, printers, factory foremen, office managers, journalists, university students, small entrepreneurs, and ministers of the gospel. The radical movement encompassed single taxers, Bellamyite nationalists, anti-monopolists, labour reformers, supporters of the agrarian Patrons of Industry, and a handful of advanced socialists. Most radicals advocated a number of demands, since the divisions among direct legislation, the single tax, labour reform, and the like were anything but clearly drawn.

What, then, did Toronto radicals have in common? Radical convictions were developing in response to obvious urban and industrial crises; in particular, the perception of disparity and hostility between rich and poor. As a church magazine observed, "the minds of thoughtful Christian people have been greatly exercised in regard to the almost heathen condition of a very considerable proportion of the population."⁶ For the working class itself, periodic economic recessions worsened chronic problems of unemployment, inadequate housing, and poor wages and working conditions. Radicals obviously wished

⁵ *Globe*, 25 November 1893, 16. (The names of Toronto newspapers are used in shortened form.)

⁶ "An Experiment in City Mission Work," *The Methodist Magazine*, 32 (September 1890), 239.

to ameliorate these circumstances. However, unlike such moderate reformers as former Toronto mayor William Howland and child-saver J.J. Kelso, radicals agreed that some fundamental modifications had to be made to Canada's governmental, taxation, and ownership systems. Moreover, Canada had to be placed upon an ethical and associational basis. A leading radical cleric, C.H. Shortt, staunchly asserted that radicals were indeed revolutionaries who would establish a cooperative commonwealth with God as presiding officer.⁷ According to A.W. Wright, a carpet manufacturer turned labour journalist and Knights of Labor official,⁸ "the whole system must be done away with and a new one adopted."⁹

Radicals were also distinguished from reformers by their relative suspicion of traditional party politics. If reformers assumed that temperate answers to the questions of the day could be found through the old parties, radicals were more likely to appeal to the public or to act outside the two parties. For Wright, Canadians had to "think out the remedy for themselves," as politicians "had no time to waste on such trivial things as the lifting up of the race to a high moral plane."¹⁰ True, there was a certain elasticity in the boundaries between radicals and partisan reformers, and the radical condemnation of partisan politics was sometimes ambiguous. Some radicals, labour men in particular, had little difficulty finding a niche in the Liberal party. Others were disillusioned Liberals who continued to hold high hopes and great expectations for the wayward Grits. Wright was a staunch Tory. Still, the radical movement provided a haven for many people disappointed with the old parties, especially the Liberals. Distrust of the Grits, which helped spark the Patron and direct legislation causes, intensified after 1896, when Laurier assumed power and Mowat stepped down as premier. Just as Britain's Independent Labour Party was taking shape partly because of dissatisfaction with the performance of Liberal-Labour M.P.s, so Canadian radicals in the 1890s found little cause for cheer in the performance of Liberal governments on prohibition, monopolies, and urban and industrial problems. The Liberals had not developed, to the same extent as the British Gladstonians, a powerful resonance with labour along the lines of lib-labism. Nor had the Liberals done very much to promote unionists as candidates. English Gladstonian immigrants in Canada were sometimes stripped of their Liberal loyalties after the journey across the Atlantic by their observation of Canadian Liberal governments which were apparently unresponsive to moral appeals and fundamental democratic reform.

⁷ *Mail and Empire*, 24 November 1898.

⁸ Public Archives of Canada, A.W. Wright papers, scrapbook 4, various cuttings; *Ibid.*, scrapbook 9, cutting, *Toronto News*, 1913; Henry James Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of The Times* (Toronto 1912), 1188; Hector Charlesworth, ed., *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography* (Toronto 1919), 290-92.

⁹ Wright papers, scrapbook 4, cutting, *Kingston News*, 16 March 1889.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Guelph Mercury*, 10 April 1889.

The rejection of partisan politics by radical prohibitionists was a case in point. Even before Laurier became Prime Minister, some prohibitionists were steeling themselves against partyism. The two parties had refused to deal constructively with a morally transcendent issue; it was time to elect men pledged to abolish the liquor traffic. George Wrigley, one of Ontario's top radicals and the editor of the Patrons' paper, *Canada Farmers' Sun*, helped to issue a manifesto in 1895 for independent, anti-liquor candidates. Radical prohibitionist W.W. Buchanan ran in federal and provincial elections with backing from the Canadian Temperance League.¹¹ The *Templar*, the organ of the Templars of Temperance which was largely guided by Wrigley and Buchanan, charged that partisan politics allowed "the public voice [to be] defied and liquorism protected."¹² After 1898 prohibitionists realized that the Liberals in power were not the reformers they had appeared to be. Literature for the 1898 federal plebiscite on prohibition published by the Dominion Alliance, the leading prohibitionist federation, confidently asserted that Laurier "was not trying to deceive the public" when he declared that if the people voted for prohibition they would have it.¹³ Though plebiscite results were favourable to banning liquor — except in Quebec — Laurier, of course, failed to act. Alliance orators F.S. Spence and Rev. E.S. Rowe angrily accused Laurier of betrayal.¹⁴ Before the 1900 federal election, the Alliance and the Methodists' Epworth League decided that followers should campaign only for strict prohibitionist candidates.¹⁵

Radicals were loosely in accord on some basic economic convictions. Rejecting free-market assumptions as destructive and amoral, they feared and distrusted monopoly corporations and unbridled competition. Wealth was created by the labour of the producing classes, and should be retained by the productive elements of the community. Instead of properly being considered as public domain, labour, land, and money were private commodities aggrandized by monopolists. Such a system, Phillips Thompson had asserted in *The Politics of Labor*, "is diametrically opposed to the idea that every man has a right to the full value of his labor, and no man the right to receive value for which he does not labor, which appeals to every man's natural sense of right and justice."¹⁶ Rent, interest, and exorbitant profits — the results of monopoly

¹¹ *Mail and Empire*, 25 May 1896; *The Templar*, 13 December 1895; *ibid.*, 3 January 1896; Morgan, *Canadian Men*, 166. The Ontario-born Buchanan was a newspaper editor, Congregationalist, and national temperance organizer.

¹² *The Templar*, 3 January 1896.

¹³ University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, papers of the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, campaign pamphlets and broadsides of the Alliance for the 1898 federal plebiscite on prohibition.

¹⁴ *Citizen and Country*, 15 July 1899.

¹⁵ Dominion Alliance papers, *Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council of the Dominion Alliance*, 1900... (Toronto 1900); *The Canadian Epworth Era*, 2 (March 1900), 85-88.

¹⁶ Phillips Thompson, *The Politics of Labor* (New York 1887), 40.

— benefitted a few selfish individuals at the expense of the community. The widening gap between wealth producers and monopolists was alarmingly obvious, warned Walter Burnill, Toronto Labor Council president and radical campaigner.¹⁷ For Burnill, success in business necessitated “unscrupulous cunning, a hard heart, a blunt conscience and the feeling that it is the true business principle to get on by trampling others down . . .”¹⁸ Some radicals joined Wright in deploring the “money monopoly” and usury. The system “now stands like an inverted pyramid, and must be kept in position by props and stays, which cost all that can be earned by labor.”¹⁹ A “national currency” was needed.²⁰

Radicals were predisposed to view society as divided, though not irreparably so, between the vast community of producers on the one hand, and a small clique of monopolists on the other. Producers, who were united on essentials, included small businessmen and manufacturers as well as farmers and workmen. Exploitation of the producers consisted of the unjust collection of rents and profits based upon monopolies of land or money. Landlords, speculators, and financiers practically controlled the state’s largesse. Some critics echoed English radical demands for retrenchment, equal opportunity, and an end to ruling-class privilege. According to Buchanan, class privilege prevented the people from winning an equitable share of national wealth.²¹ “The mass of the people are not one penny richer because of this enormous endowment of riches” in Canada’s resources, explained leading single taxer and radical organizer, W.A. Douglass. Criticizing resource and tax giveaways, Douglass called for retrenchment and the removal of “every embargo on production or on exchange” save for the single tax on unimproved land.²² Dr. Emily Howard Stowe, pioneer female physician and feminist, castigated the National Policy as a corrupt bargain for big business.²³

These ideas often reflected a strong sense of community, in which the separation between owner and worker was not very conspicuous, and the forces of privilege and monopoly were alien and distant. The modernization of large-scale industry was just underway. J.W. Bengough, the famed cartoonist, writer, and single taxer, expressed this outlook when he maintained “there is no antagonism between capital and labor. They are natural partners. They are the two human elements — the active factor in the production of wealth. The passive factor is land,” and the land speculator was a “parasite — a worm who

¹⁷ *Globe*, 15 June 1894.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1893.

¹⁹ Wright papers, scrapbook 4, cuttings, *Peterborough Review*, 19 April 1889; *Cornwall Standard*, 15 March 1889; *Kingston News*, 16 March 1889.

²⁰ *News*, 13 October 1894.

²¹ *Mail and Empire*, 25 May 1896.

²² *News*, 12 October 1892.

²³ *Globe*, 12 December 1892. See also F.W. Watt, “The National Policy, the Workman, and Proletarian Ideas in Victorian Canada”, *Canadian Historical Review*, 40 (1959).

feeds on the fruit."²⁴ That the single tax taught the essential unity of the producing community was one reason why a conservative pastor could advocate it before a middle class congregation.²⁵ Many radicals, though, rejected Bengough's sanguine assertion that labour and capital were "natural partners" at present.

Radical convictions were steeped in nineteenth-century English social criticism. The Canadian radical's reading list contained authors of "very thoughtful and kindly nature" such as Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Ruskin.²⁶ Carlyle, Burns, Dickens, the Church of England's Christian Socialists, and especially Ruskin were influential voices warning of the decay of individual dignity and community cohesion because of industrialized and rationalized production. Espousing pre-industrial aesthetics and community solidarity over the rational free market, Ruskinism was well-suited to artisans and others anxious about mechanized production and the widening gulf between employer and employee. Radical reform was the restoration of an ethical order through moral conversion, so that people could act on the basis of intuitive morality instead of rationalized calculation. The English critics gave radicals the self-conscious task of righting an unregenerate society. A working-class Methodist youth leader, James Simpson, sparked the formation of the Ruskin Literary and Debating Society by a circle of young men who were studying Ruskin.²⁷ One socialist urged a reading of *Merrie England* by "Robert Blackford."²⁸ A Toronto Labor Council committee defended Ruskin, William Morris, and the Fabians from Goldwin Smith's attacks on radical "poverty destroyers."²⁹ The English critics sought basic solutions, not degradation through charity, since their love of humanity counselled that a minority should not become wealthy off the toil of the masses.³⁰

Perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of radical convictions in the 1890s was their broadly Christian and ethical nature. Radicals frequently stressed that they wanted to transform Canadian society on the basis of Christianity's social message. A new system shaped by Christian ethics would usher in an era of brotherhood, cooperation, and justice. "The laws of the country,"

²⁴ McMaster University Archives, J.W. Bengough papers, Box 6, MS "Chalk-Talk on Single Tax," n.d.

²⁵ Salem Bland, *James Henderson, D.D.* (Toronto 1926), 106.

²⁶ Public Archives of Canada, W.C. Good papers, Vol. 20, Good diary, 29 October 1898. Good was presumably exposed to Ruskin at the University of Toronto. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Good to Louie, 31 January 1897. Good was later the leader of a Ruskin Reading Club. *Ibid.*, Vol. 20, Ruskin Reading Club to Good, 7 April 1905.

²⁷ York University Archives, Ruskin Literary and Debating Society papers, Vol. 1, MS "History of Ruskin Literary and Debating Society," n.d.

²⁸ *Telegram*, 30 May 1896.

²⁹ Goldwin Smith, *Social Problems. An Address Delivered to the Conference of Combined City Charities of Toronto* . . . (Toronto 1889), 15-17.

³⁰ Goldwin Smith papers (Microfilm Reel 7), Allan Hazle, secretary of Toronto Trades and Labor Council, to Smith, 15 June 1896.

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Wright declared, "should be made to accord with God's law."³¹ "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man," the Toronto Theosophical journal trumpeted. "Christianity teaches this dual principle; latter day reformers and socialists proclaim it; poets and hymnsters sing it . . ."³² "There never was a time in the world when all the good people were so intent upon the salvation of their neighbours."³³ The wife of a Methodist minister wrote in her 1899 novel that "the fading beams of the nineteenth century reveal many schemes of the astute politician, labor leader, single taxer. Each claims in the last analysis to aim at fulfilling the second greatest commandment, to love our neighbors as ourselves; and we are taught, too, those in the greatest need are our nearest neighbors."³⁴

For late nineteenth-century Torontonians, Protestantism had been an overwhelming force of cohesion and commonality. It provided individuals with a badge of moral worth and a sense of personal meaning, and it provided social groups with collective beliefs and practices that had an over-arching legitimacy. But despite considerable enthusiasm in Toronto's religious life, the "doubt and despair"³⁵ that some churchmen worried about seemed to be increasing. The growth of mechanized production, urban conglomeration, and rationalized consciousness had been progressively undermining the over-all legitimacy of organized religion, thus impairing its role as the effective and unchallenged agent of community authority and solidarity. The church was failing to maintain the enthusiasm of many working people in particular. Statistical evidence of the eclipse, at least in the Methodist church, was not lacking.³⁶ More elusive and significant than empirical indices was a widespread sense of uneasiness seeping through the church, "a subtle scepticism pervading the air and, like a moral malaria, sapping the spiritual life of the people."³⁷ For one minister, the church by the turn of the century was in a state of "spiritual deadness."³⁸ Religion was faced with an onslaught of natural and social scientific rationalizations, and its assumptions were slowly losing authority among the working class and the managers of business and government. One indication occurred when the churches emerged on the losing side of a Toronto battle to prohibit Sunday streetcar service in 1897.

³¹ Wright papers, scrapbook 4, cutting, *Cornwall Standard*, 15 March 1889.

³² *The Lamp*, 15 September 1896, 27.

³³ *Ibid.*, 15 September 1899, 97.

³⁴ Lottie McAlister, *Clipped Wings* (Toronto 1899), 161; Morgan, *Canadian Men*, 745.

³⁵ Rev. George W. Kerby, "The Epworth League In Some Of Its Relations", *The Methodist Magazine and Review*, 46 (July 1897), 34.

³⁶ *The Methodist Magazine and Review*, 46 (October 1897), 376-77; *Ibid.*, 48 (September 1898), 282-83; United Church Archives, Methodist Church of Canada, The Sunday School and Epworth League Board, minutebook 1891-1906, reports of secretary Rev. Crews for 1900 and 1901; *Globe*, 15 June 1900; *Ibid.*, 16 June 1900; Rev. W. McMullen, "The Dangers and Needs of To-Day," *The Christian Guardian*, 4 January 1905.

³⁷ *The Methodist Magazine and Review*, 48 (September 1898), 282-83.

³⁸ McMullen, "The Dangers"; *Ibid.*, 11 January 1905.

Organized religion, then, appeared to be vested with insufficient authority, by itself, to counter the threats to community life. At the same time, urgent problems of poverty and progress were demanding attention. In these circumstances, a number of clergymen and laymen turned to radical criticism and activities. Radicalism for these people was an attempt to safeguard ethical precepts and values in social life and to base secular society upon them. The unity of the sacred and secular, becoming ruptured, had to be restored. The disparity between the two was unacceptable: the cost was too high. The obviousness of the gap emphasized the declining potential for an ethical and associational community. Radicalism was attractive because it was fighting to redeem Christian ethics in a way the church could not or would not do. Often implicit and sometimes explicit in radical opinion was the realization that the church was unwilling or unable to serve as the dynamic for fundamental change and integration. As one socialist put it, "Christianity is not doing for the million what it should."³⁹ Invariably from a denominational background, radicals alternately chided, proselytized, and bemoaned the church, and decided they would have to take up the church's burden of confronting social wrongs.

It would be a mistake, however, to equate radicalism's ethical underpinnings with the church alone. Ethical principles were explicitly propounded by the Patron and labour movements. If brotherhood, cooperation and the golden rule were actualized, it would mean an end to class privilege and exploitation, and the beginning of just and fair wealth production. Unions, the Orange Lodge, temperance and fraternal groups, and other working-class associations were convinced that the producing community's welfare transcended the operations of the impersonal and monopolized market.

A survey of leading Toronto radical spokesmen, organizations, and sources of support suggests the ethical and community-minded nature of radical convictions. A number of Toronto clergymen, for example, were active radicals. One was the Anglican Rev. Charles H. Shortt. Raised in Port Hope, Ontario, where his father was a minister, Shortt entered Trinity College in 1877 and emerged with a B.A. and M.A.⁴⁰ He served as a "country parson" in the 1880s, and was unsettled by the backwardness and conservatism of rural Ontario.⁴¹ In 1891 he was back in Toronto, where he founded a church on Christie Street.⁴² Already Shortt was a defender of labour reform. In 1887 he criticized middle class persons "who are in a blissful dream that everything is all right and do not at all like being awakened out of it." Citing the Bible and government commissions

³⁹ *Telegram*, 30 May 1896.

⁴⁰ Trinity College Archives, Trinity College Matriculation Register, 1852-1929, 15 January 1877; Trinity College Archives, *Trinity College Year Book*, 1895-1896, 170; Morgan, *Canadian Men*, 1020-21; *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1948.

⁴¹ Rev. C.H. Shortt, "Musings by a Country Parson," *Rouge et Noir*, 4 (1883); *Rouge et Noir*, 7 (1886); Morgan, *Canadian Men*, 1020-21.

⁴² *Trinity College Year Book*, 1895-1896, 170; Morgan, *Canadian Men*, 1020-21; *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1948.

in Britain and the United States, Shortt argued that workers seldom received more than half the value they produced, and their condition was worse than slavery. Defending the eight-hour day and equal pay for women, he agreed with J.S. Mill that, given the present state of society, objections to communism were but dust in the balance.⁴³ "The business of the Christian," he intoned, "was to go and remedy the evil he saw." Mechanization, rapid transportation and communication, and trusts had created a social crisis.⁴⁴ In the 1890s Shortt defended labour radicalism before various audiences.⁴⁵

Another radical cleric was the popular Ontario-born Rev. E.S. Rowe, who served Toronto Methodist churches in the 1890s. Rowe was one of a number of Methodist ministers interested in industrial problems, "and not only has he a theoretical belief, but practices it daily for the benefit of those in the community, always availing himself of every opportunity of ameliorating the ills and woes of mankind."⁴⁶ Rowe lamented the machine age which had reduced the skilled artisan to a "feeder of a machine," and had created a sharply divided class society in which "it is inevitable that the relations between the two will not improve."⁴⁷ By 1898 he was talking to Methodist audiences about "Christian Socialism."⁴⁸ Christians had to take an active interest in reform movements.⁴⁹ He defended striking bricklayers in 1899, adding that the church, instead of concerning itself with doctrine, "should establish and insist upon an ethical code" to improve industrial and living conditions.⁵⁰ Rowe's notions did not threaten his post as minister of Euclid Avenue Church. In 1898 the congregation invited him to remain after the next year, and several praised his "pastoral" work.⁵¹

The most prominent Toronto radical clergyman of the early 1890s was another Methodist, the Rev. William Galbraith. Born in North Monaghan, Ontario, in 1842, the scholarly Galbraith held a Ph.D. and a law degree.⁵² Sympathetic to the single tax, though he felt it was not "the complete cure," he helped to institute the Social Problems Association, a federation of Toronto

⁴³ Rev. C.H. Shortt, "That the Condition of the Labouring Classes Is Unjust," *Rouge et Noir*, 8 (1887).

⁴⁴ *Globe*, 10 December 1892, 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 November 1895; *Ibid.*, 14 May 1897; *Ibid.*, 6 September 1898. For more on Shortt, see W.C. Good, *Farmer Citizen* (Toronto 1958); *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1948.

⁴⁶ United Church Archives, Certificate of Ordination for Rev. E.S. Rowe; Morgan, *Canadian Men*, 978; Rev. George H. Cornish, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism in Canada* . . . , II, 1881-1903 (Toronto 1903); Thomas Edward Champion, *The Methodist Churches of Toronto* (Toronto 1899), 318.

⁴⁷ Rowe, "Current Views," 232-35.

⁴⁸ *The Christian Guardian*, 19 October 1898, 666.

⁴⁹ *The Canadian Epworth Era*, 1 (March 1899), 37.

⁵⁰ *Mail and Empire*, 10 May 1899.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 24 February 1898.

⁵² Methodist Church of Canada, *Minutes of the Bay of Quinte Methodist Conference*, 1909; Cornish, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism*, II, 1881-1903.

radicals.⁵³ He served the Association as chief officer and executive member, along with Shortt.⁵⁴ In 1894 Galbraith issued a pamphlet contending that "Christianity is decidedly revolutionary in its mission," and attacking the "immense monopolies and combinations" that "grasp the wealth of the world."⁵⁵ He joined a radical deputation that year asking the Mayor for civic action to relieve unemployment.⁵⁶ A handful of other clergymen participated in these activities. The 1893 Social Problems conference was attended by Rev. W.J. Smith, a Methodist pastor with various Toronto charges, and Rev. Henry Woude, minister of First Unitarian Church.⁵⁷ Rev. S.S. Craig was a well-known toiler for the single tax and social regeneration.⁵⁸

Rowe, Shortt, and Galbraith represented significant currents in church circles rejecting corporate and laissez faire excesses, and backing labour reform. The Epworth League of the Methodist church in Toronto, which often functioned as an extension school for young working-class Methodists, was responsive to social and political problems. The League at Parliament Street Church attracted 300 people to a debate on Bellamyite nationalization of monopolies,⁵⁹ and discussed the single tax and the "social condition" of "the masses."⁶⁰ Working for "applied Christianity," the League believed "in a Christianity that is just as good for this world as for the next; for the week day as for the Sunday; for the farm, the factory, the bank, the store, as it is for the church and prayer-meeting."⁶¹ In 1899 the Epworth League's Toronto Conference almost unanimously voted a resolution supporting the striking trackmen of the Grand Trunk Railway, because "certainly no man can live as a Christian [if he] should live on ninety-eight cents a day."⁶² Such notions as the single tax, government ownership of railways, and labour control of monopoly franchises were introduced and popularized by the Ruskin and Saturday Night Literary and Debating societies.⁶³

⁵³ University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, *Single Tax Association*, broadside, 29 August 1892, Toronto.

⁵⁴ University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, *Social Problems Association of Toronto*, broadsides, 1893-1894; *Globe*, 25 November 1893; *Ibid.*, 27 November 1893.

⁵⁵ Rev. W. Galbraith, *Christianity and Social Reforms* (Toronto 1894), 3, 6.

⁵⁶ *News*, 29 October 1894.

⁵⁷ *Globe*, 25 November 1893; *Champion*, *The Methodist Churches*, 18, 253, 260; *The Toronto City Directory* 1894.

⁵⁸ *Mail and Empire*, 24 November 1898; *Ibid.*, 14 November 1899; Ruskin Literary and Debating Society papers, Vol. I, MS "History of Ruskin Literary and Debating Society," n.d. Craig established a labour church in Toronto. United Church Archives, Salem Bland papers, Box 9, Manuscript 729.

⁵⁹ *Onward*, 1 (7 March 1891), 74.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 (7 January 1893), 3.

⁶¹ Kerby, "The Epworth League," 39.

⁶² *The Canadian Epworth Era*, 1 (July 1899), 210-11.

⁶³ Ruskin Literary and Debating Society papers, Vol. I, MS "History of Ruskin Liter-

Radicals expressed dismay at what they considered the "selfishness" of the age. Their ethical and often evangelical influences contributed to the popular radical notion that extensive change would occur through the conversion of individuals to generous sentiments. The means to hasten the evolutionary pace of progress were educational; the exhortations would come from pulpits, societies, and discussion groups. For some, the prognosis for progress hinged on the potential of people to see the error of their ways and to make a simple change of heart, a paradigm of change expressed by the enormously popular novel *In His Steps*, written by the American Rev. Charles M. Sheldon. *In His Steps* related the attempts of churchgoers in a mythical congregation to emulate Jesus' conduct on a day-to-day basis. The novel was serialized in Canada's *Methodist Magazine*, and Sheldon visited Toronto at the end of the decade.⁶⁴ James Simpson, the working-class Methodist who joined organized radicalism about 1898, eagerly read Sheldon's book until four in the morning, so stunning was its message.⁶⁵ Sentiment would play a major role in Canada's regeneration. Rowe contended that "social reform must come from the heart of man,"⁶⁶ and Craig in 1898 looked forward to ten years hence when society would be overturned and "divine justice would rule the human heart."⁶⁷

Temperance and prohibition groups were also bearers of democratic and ethical radicalism. They were often led by Wrigley, Buchanan, Bengough, and other radicals, and the *Templar* warmly discussed the single tax and socialism as avenues of working-class salvation.⁶⁸ The prohibition cause marshalled anti-monopolistic arguments; a Bengough cartoon showed labour crushed beneath a monster labelled the "annual cost of the liquor traffic."⁶⁹ Stonemason Isaac Mills was among several artisans aiming anti-alcohol appeals at his fellows.⁷⁰ The 1895 trade-union Labour Day parade was addressed by Mills and Buchanan on behalf of prohibition, the four-hour day, single tax, and labour M.P.s.⁷¹ A joint meeting of the Labour Council and the Royal Templars heard alderman F.S. Spence's case for shorter working hours.⁷² Though unfriendly to prohibition, largely on the grounds of its paternalism, artisans

ary and Debating Society," n.d.; *Citizen and Country*, 28 September 1900; Baldwin Room of Metropolitan Toronto Public Library, James Simpson papers, MS speeches to the Saturday Night Literary and Debating Society, n.d., c. 1898.

⁶⁴ *The Canadian Epworth Era*, 1 (February 1899), 37. *The Methodist Magazine* (October 1898), 380, praised the novel for "discussing some of the most important social problems of the times — strikes, lock-outs, the liquor traffic and evangelizing the people."

⁶⁵ Simpson papers, Simpson to Alma Simpson, n.d., c. October 1917.

⁶⁶ Good papers, Vol. 20, Good diary, 5 November 1898.

⁶⁷ *Mail and Empire*, 24 November 1898.

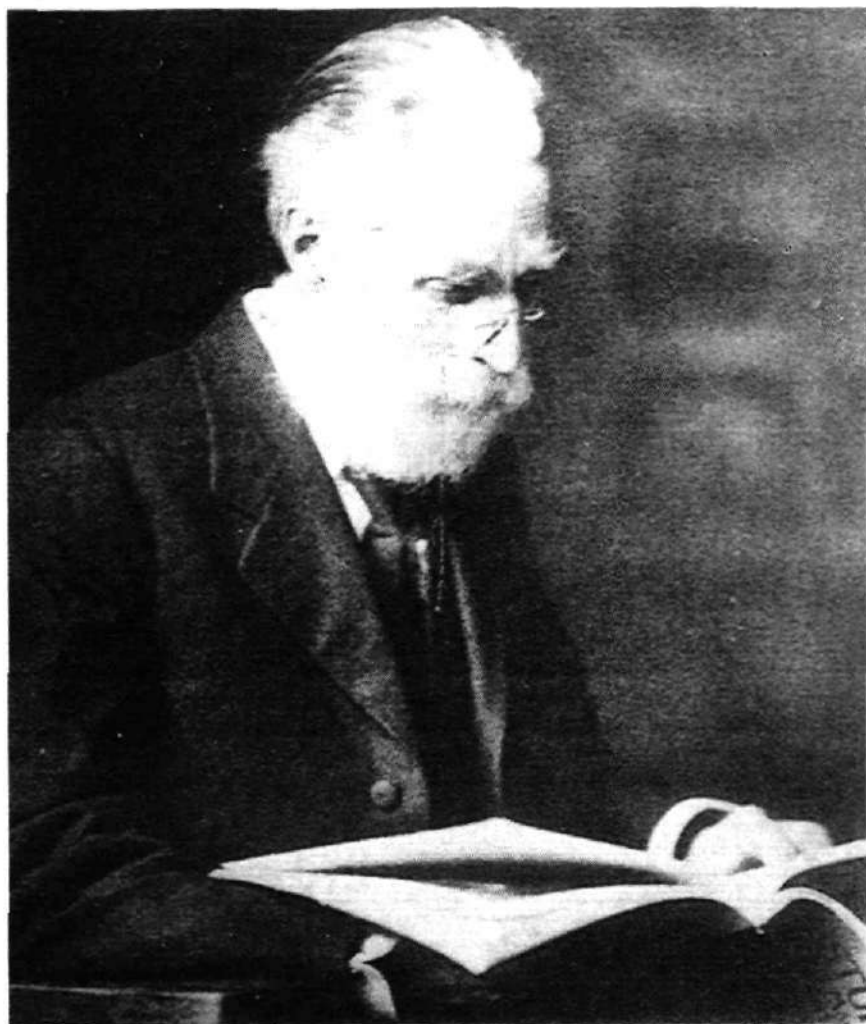
⁶⁸ *The Templar*, 20 December 1895.

⁶⁹ *Onward*, 5 (6 July 1895), 212.

⁷⁰ *The Templar*, 26 July 1895.

⁷¹ *Globe*, 3 September 1895.

⁷² *Mail and Empire*, 18 May 1896.



Phillips Thompson. Photograph reproduced with permission of Public Archives of Canada, C-38581.

generally expressed the temperance message of solidarity and uplift.

The Orange Order in Toronto, largely comprised of workingmen, was another of several organizations enunciating labour-reform and anti-monopoly sentiments. The Order provided a forum for men like Rowe to declare that powerful capitalists were not taking into account the effect of their actions on the commonwealth.⁷³ The *Orange Sentinel* noted with approval the growth of

⁷³ *The Sentinel*, 30 November 1899.

industrial unionism and socialist ideas among the British working class.⁷⁴ It called for government safety legislation to protect railway labourers,⁷⁵ attacked the sweating system,⁷⁶ and demanded tough anti-trust laws "for the protection not of the small capitalist only but of the public."⁷⁷ Wrigley's *Citizen and Country* remarked in 1899 that the *Sentinel* "frequently contains articles favoring economic reforms that are urgently needed in Canada."⁷⁸

Still another source of radical support was the often esoteric and mystical Theosophical Society, which proselytized for an all-encompassing brotherhood. The relationship between the religious sect and radicalism was close in the 1890s. By joining the Theosophists, the "broadest organization in the world," "you place yourself in relation with a very large number of the most talented, unprejudiced, and thoughtful people on earth," bringing "Truth, Light, and Liberation for discouraged Humanity."⁷⁹ Theosophists claimed to have the clearest understanding of God's fatherhood and human brotherhood: "As each ray is a part of the sun's light and thus a part of the sun, and of every other ray, so each man is a part of God and at the same time a part of every other man."⁸⁰ The Theosophists' attack on "selfishness"⁸¹ struck a responsive chord. The Toronto Society, chartered in 1891, contained Phillips Thompson, Dr. Emily Howard Stowe, and her daughter Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen. Two of the most active radicals of the decade, F.E. Titus and Felix Belcher, were local Theosophists. Titus was an Ontario-born lawyer, and Belcher came to Canada from London, England, as a young man before opening his restaurant.⁸² The chapter reportedly had labour members "capable of independent thought and investigation."⁸³

Journalists Phillips Thompson and George Wrigley were among the most

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 October 1898.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1899.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 August 1899.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1899.

⁷⁸ *Citizen and Country*, 12 August 1899. On the Orange Order in Toronto at an earlier period, see Gregory S. Kealey, "The Orange Order in Toronto: Religious Riot and the Working Class," in Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warrian, eds., *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto 1976), 13-34.

⁷⁹ *The Lamp*, 15 December 1896, 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 September 1896, 27.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15 January 1897, 89; *Ibid.*, 15 September 1899, 97.

⁸² "Some Early Canadian Lodges," *The Canadian Theosophist*, 44 (1963), 26-29; *Ibid.*, (1963), 66-68; *Ibid.*, 44 (1963), 103-05; Public Archives of Canada, Phillips Thompson papers, Thompson's certificate of admission into the Theosophical Society, 30 March 1891; *Globe*, 21 November 1898; *The Lamp*, 15 December 1899, 160; *Globe and Mail*, 28 February 1946; *Ibid.*, 10 July 1954. Another member, Mrs. Mary Macpherson, was also an active radical.

⁸³ *The Lamp*, 15 September 1894, 30. There was some overlapping in this period between radicalism, especially Bellamy nationalism, and Theosophical groups in the United States, as well as in Britain. This relationship seemed to have declined after the mid-1890s, partially because of Theosophism's increasing schisms and narrowness.

influential Canadian radicals of the 1890s. Both embodied the ethical, cooperative and community-based nature of radicalism, and both drew on popular democratic traditions. Wrigley came from a family farm between Paris and Galt.⁸⁴ One of his forebears had joined Mackenzie's uprising, only to be captured and imprisoned.⁸⁵ Like Wright and Thompson, Wrigley served as a radical journalist in several Ontario cities in the 1880s and 1890s. Between 1892 and 1896 he edited the *Canada Farmers' Sun* in London and Toronto for the Patrons of Industry, then at its zenith of political activity.⁸⁶ He tried to educate *Sun* subscribers in a broad radicalism. The paper, however, declined in readership and he sold his interests to Goldwin Smith, who installed a different staff.⁸⁷ Wrigley also issued the *Brotherhood Era* in 1895-96 in conjunction with the *Sun*; the former received Theosophical approval.⁸⁸ After working on the *Templar*, he founded *Citizen and Country*, Canada's most important radical publication between 1898 and its demise in 1902. His son, G. Weston Wrigley, a printer who had helped to publish the *Sun*, became the *Citizen's* business manager and an enthusiastic radical organizer.⁸⁹ George Wrigley was the movement's godfather, advocating in his temperate manner public ownership, direct democracy, and a cooperative system of production. Bonds of moral association would have to replace the chains of cut-throat competition. The "law of God" meant that "men and machinery shall be made the most of under popular control," and that the necessities of life would be provided for all.⁹⁰

Phillips Thompson was clearly the cutting edge of the radical movement. He mixed a lengthy writing career with a steady advocacy of advanced radicalism that carried him through single tax and Bellamyite ideas, and the Knights of Labor and Patrons. Few if any Canadian radicals were as well-

⁸⁴ Good, *Farmer Citizen*, 65.

⁸⁵ James Young, *Reminiscences of the Early History of Galt and the Settlement of Dumfries, in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto 1880), 161. See also Andrew W. Taylor, *Our Todays and Yesterdays. A History of the Township of North Dumfries and the Village of Ayr* (n.p. 1970).

⁸⁶ Good, *Farmer Citizen*, 65; *Social Justice*, 1 (December 1902). Wrigley, editor of the short-lived *Social Justice*, listed in this issue his credentials as editor of *The Canada Labor Courier* (1886-87), St. Thomas; *Canada Farmers' Sun* (1892-96), London and Toronto; *The Templar* (1898), Hamilton; and *Citizen and Country* (1898-1902), Toronto. He also had a hand in the *Templar* prior to 1898 and the *Liberator* in 1902. He was admitted to the Canadian Press Association in June 1895 as *Sun* editor, and was a member in 1899 as *Citizen* editor. Public Archives of Canada, Canadian Press Association papers, Vol. 1, minutebook 1882-1910, 7 June 1895; 19 May 1899.

⁸⁷ Good, *Farmer Citizen*, 65, 69; Louis Aubrey Wood, *A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada* (Toronto 1924), 147-48. The transfer led to a series of angry interchanges in the late 1890s and 1905 among Smith, Thompson and the Wrigleys over the price paid Wrigley.

⁸⁸ *The Lamp*, 15 November 1895, 36.

⁸⁹ *Social Justice*, 1 (December 1902); *Western Clarion*, 3 July 1903.

⁹⁰ *Citizen and Country*, 11 March 1899.

informed and talented. The English-born Thompson "has been among us for many a long year," the *Toronto World* observed in 1895. After a career as humourist and writer,

He at last became the victim of "views" that reach away out into the 22nd century. . . . Some say he is working on the idea that the human being belongs to the state and should be controlled and educated by the state from the time he has shed his milk teeth; that the state should examine him, designate his particular aptitude and bring him up according to his particular fitness for any trade or profession. Others have described Mr. Thompson as a cross between Malthus and Bellamy.⁹¹

The *World's* sardonic remarks were occasioned by an uproar at Toronto University, when the administration denied the use of campus facilities for a debate between Thompson's collectivist beliefs and the individualism of Alfred Jury, tailor and Trades Council leader.⁹² The subsequent student strike was a focal point for Toronto social criticism in the mid-1890s.

Thompson's ideas were obviously much more rigorous and sophisticated than those of his radical compatriots. While "Uncle Thomas" referred to Thompson as a Bellamyite and currency reformer, he clearly recognized that "the earnest man of great projects" was "a socialist; distinguished from the great army of his brethren in parliament and the legislature by being aware of the fact, and by invariably sympathizing with the under dog in the fight."⁹³ Since publishing *The Politics of Labor*, his socialism had become clarified.⁹⁴ It would foster the free development of individuality,⁹⁵ and he lectured on "Individualism through Socialism," using Kidd's *Social Evolution* as a guide.⁹⁶ For Thompson, capitalism's framework was not only economic, it was also cultural and psychological. People were not ready for complete democracy until there had evolved "a change of their habits of thought."⁹⁷ Social transformation required not only new institutions, but new "habits of thought and mental attitude, and the work will require generations."⁹⁸ This, then, was the value of Theosophical brotherhood, which he defended in 1903. The study of Karma enabled radicals to appreciate the need to change the consciousness of capitalist society as well as to win elections.⁹⁹ In this context, such demands as shorter working hours were manifestly inadequate. For Thompson, as for other radicals, a regenerated Canada would facilitate individual and social perfectability through man's highest aspirations. A completely secular attitude to religion, he argued, ignored the spiritual side of consciousness, from which alone issued the "inspiration and incentive" to change the contours of society. Perhaps

⁹¹ *World*, 25 January 1895.

⁹² Hector Charlesworth, *More Candid Chronicles* (Toronto 1928), 72-73.

⁹³ Uncle Thomas, "The Regenerators," 66.

⁹⁴ *Mail and Empire*, 11 November 1898; *Ibid.*, 16 June 1899.

⁹⁵ *Globe*, 15 March 1898.

⁹⁶ Good papers, Vol. 1, Good to Louie, 14 January 1900.

⁹⁷ Thompson, *The Politics of Labor*, 198.

⁹⁸ *Social Justice*, 1 (December 1902).

⁹⁹ *The Western Socialist*, 24 April 1903.

reflecting his Quaker upbringing, he urged that people "develop the divine element within themselves." But "the greatest obstacle to soul growth is depressing social conditions which prevent the development of man's higher faculties, and stifle all his better aspirations in the ignoble struggle for gold or for bread as the case may be."¹⁰⁰ Socialism was the essential precondition for the full development of each person's spiritual capacities.

The radical convictions of Wrigley, Thompson and many other men and women were disseminated by an organized radical movement. In the early 1890s, Bellamyite nationalists campaigned in favour of a wider acceptance of public ownership for private monopolies. Like Titus, "whose heart was warmed into love for social reform by Bellamy's 'Looking Backward,'" ¹⁰¹ some radicals were intrigued by Bellamy's vision of social ownership and solidarity. Wright told an audience to read *Looking Backward* if it wanted to study the society that would supersede the wage system.¹⁰² The Nationalist Association in Toronto agitated for the civic government assuming control of the unpopular Street Railway Company.¹⁰³

Single-tax organizations exerted a substantial influence on radical thought. An Anti-Poverty Society, with teachers and journalists among its members, preached the gospel of Henry George.¹⁰⁴ In 1892 the Single Tax Association sent a circular to city ministers calling their attention to "unearned wealth," and Rev. Galbraith advocated a radical unity meeting.¹⁰⁵ The result was the establishment of the eclectic Social Problems Association of Toronto in 1892. In the following years a number of Social Problems Conferences drew together Toronto's leading radicals, ranging from Dr. Stowe, who explained the causes of crime, to Titus, who urged the creation of a Civic Church as "a sort of moral caucus." Association Conferences were attended by workingmen, and allowed such labour leaders as Robert Glockling, Tom Banton, and Alfred Jury to air their grievances on child labour, unemployment, and sweating. Titus, Belcher, and Galbraith sent an Association circular asking clergymen to preach sermons on social problems.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ *Social Justice*, 1 (December 1902). For more on Thompson, see Russell Hann, "Brainworkers and the Knights of Labor: E.E. Sheppard, Phillips Thompson, and the Toronto News, 1883-1887", in Kealey and Warrian, *Essays in Canadian Working Class History*.

¹⁰¹ *Globe*, 25 November 1893, 16.

¹⁰² Wright papers, scrapbook 4, cutting, *Guelph Mercury*, 10 April 1889.

¹⁰³ University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, Woodsworth Collection, James Mac. Connor papers, Box 7, MS "The Anti-Poverty Society and the Nationalists," n.d.; Bland papers, Box 9, Manuscript 729; *Citizen and Country*, 4 May 1900; Toronto Trades and Labor council, *Official Programme and Souvenir of Labor Day Demonstration 1900 Toronto, Canada* (Toronto 1900), 32-33.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Single Tax Association, broadside, 29 August 1892, Toronto.

¹⁰⁶ Social Problems Association of Toronto, broadsides, 1893-1894; *Globe*, 10 December 1892; *Ibid.*, 12 December 1892; *Ibid.*, 25 November 1893; *Ibid.*, 27 November 1893.

Single taxers presented their panacea as a means of bringing "our social adjustments into harmony with the principles of Christianity."¹⁰⁷ Henry George had not invented the single tax, one clergyman contended, but God had revealed it to him.¹⁰⁸ Bengough explained to ministers that the single tax was "The Earthward Side of the Gospel."¹⁰⁹ Like the Social Problems group, the Single Tax Association attempted to convert church opinion. It issued an "Address to the Churches," co-signed by the Labor Council and several union locals. The manifesto lamented the "widening of the gulf between the haunts of poverty and the palaces of the millionaires." "When some must toil like slaves and then secure only a fractional part of what they produce, and when others without doing the slightest productive act, can enjoy an abundance of superfluous luxuries, when with the most ample natural opportunities for employment thousands find it so difficult to secure employment, how can the industrial classes be convinced that equity reigns and justice triumphs?" Profits from land, minerals, forests, "or the other things that man never furnished" were "contrary to the spirit of true religion."¹¹⁰ Perhaps in response to this agitation, the *Methodist Magazine* saluted at George's death his "efforts to relieve the sorrows and brighten the lives of the great army of the poor,"¹¹¹ and it published a review of George's books by W.A. Douglass.¹¹² Though amorphous single-tax ideas were influential in the 1890s, Thompson, Wrigley and other radical leaders totally rejected the single tax as virtually useless, and the dogged and obsessive single taxers were an organizational failure. They reminded one of the joke about the funeral at which the minister failed to appear. The undertaker requested an eloquent-looking fellow to speak, and the latter, confessing he did not know the deceased, added that he thought it was his duty to use the occasion to defend the single tax.¹¹³

Trade unions represented many decades of working-class democratic traditions, embodied most recently by the Knights of Labor. A considerable sector of the radical movement, labour men were active not only in numerous radical organizations, deputations, and conferences, but also in the electoral campaigns of Wright, Thompson, and John Armstrong. Thompson ran in a couple of by-elections on a platform of the initiative and referendum, the abolition of the contract system, the payment of union wages on public works, better

¹⁰⁷ University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, Single Tax Association of Toronto, "Social Ethics," broadside, n.d.

¹⁰⁸ *Globe*, 3 September 1898.

¹⁰⁹ Bengough papers, Box 3, cutting, *Acton Free Press*, n.d.

¹¹⁰ University of Toronto Rare Books and Special Collections, Single Tax Association of Toronto, "Address to the Churches . . .," broadside, n.d.

¹¹¹ *The Methodist Magazine and Review*, 46 (December 1897), 567; *Ibid.*, 47 (January 1898), 92.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 47 (June 1898), 564-67.

¹¹³ Archives of Ontario, G. Frank Beer papers, J.S. Willison to Beer, 11 April 1919. On the single taxers, see also Ramsay Cook, "Henry George and the Poverty of Canadian Progress," Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 1977.

factory inspection, an end to government grants for immigration, and "public control of public franchises with a view to the ultimate nationalization of industry."¹¹⁴ Armstrong ran in the 1894 Ontario general election in East Toronto with the canvassing support of the Labor Council. Insisting that workers must represent themselves, Armstrong called for referendums on major questions, reduction of work hours by legislation, and an end to the taxation of productive industries.¹¹⁵

Toronto unions were well-stocked with radical leaders. Among the more prominent working-class radicals was Robert Glockling, a bookbinder, Labor Council official, and former Knights of Labor spokesman.¹¹⁶ Burnill and Cribben, "shoemakers and philosophers both," were shopmates and fellow Trades Council officers. Tom Banton, "to whom Karl Marx is as familiar as the tools that lay in less happy times on his carpenter's bench," was a cabinetmaker.¹¹⁷ Pioneer radical tailor Alfred Jury was "of a more practical turn of mind" than Thompson, at least according to the *World*. "He believes in the supremacy of the mind, of the reasoning half of it particularly."¹¹⁸ Boundaries between the trade unions and the radical movement were practically blurred, and many staunch labourites did not toil at what are normally considered working-class occupations. Thompson, Wrigley and Wright were journalists, and D.A. Carey was a newspaper reporter. Allan Hazle operated a stationery and newspaper store. W.A. Douglass, active in the labour cause, was a financial manager and accountant.¹¹⁹ Given the broad base of radicalism, there was nothing unusual about the Toronto Labor Council's close cooperation with non-labour individuals and organizations, such as the Patrons of Industry. At first, Council in October 1894 decided not to admit to membership single taxers, Patrons or Socialist Labor Party advocates, despite the pleas of Glockling to seat Patrons. Council shortly reversed its decision on the Patrons, and Patron representatives George Beales, Wrigley and Sam Jones were seated.¹²⁰ Jones was "an artist and designer, and a general agitator" interested in the "Relation of Art to Social Reform."¹²¹ Several labour radicals, Thompson in particular, were active in the electoral campaigns of the Patrons, especially in the 1894 provincial election, when 17 Patron candidates were sent to Queen's Park.¹²²

The Trades and Labor Congress and other union bodies regularly passed

¹¹⁴ *Globe*, 29 November 1892; *Ibid.*, 6 December 1892.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1894; *Ibid.*, 15 June 1894. Among Armstrong's platform speakers were Thompson, Glockling, Burnill, Carey and Wright.

¹¹⁶ *Album of Labor Leaders of Canada & United States with Biographies* (n.p. 1910).

¹¹⁷ *Globe*, 25 November 1893; *The Toronto City Directory* 1894.

¹¹⁸ *World*, 25 January 1895.

¹¹⁹ *The Toronto City Directory* 1894; *Ibid.*, 1896; *Ibid.*, 1899.

¹²⁰ *News*, 6 October 1894; *Ibid.*, 20 October 1894; *Ibid.*, 3 November 1894.

¹²¹ Uncle Thomas, "The Regenerators," 67; Good papers, Vol. I, Good to Louie, 9 December 1898.

¹²² On the Patrons of Industry, an important aspect of 1890s radicalism, see especially Russell Hann, *Farmers Confront Industrialism* (Toronto 1975).

resolutions for the single tax, proportional representation, and an end to grants of public land for monopolistic and speculative purposes.¹²³ Labour men, however, contributed a distinct character to radicalism. They were less likely than other radicals to use the rhetoric of social Christianity, and more likely to stress specific problems facing workingmen. Certainly few workers would countenance the paternalism of radical speechmaker A.J. Hunter, a Ph.D. and incipient minister, who stated that Canadians "don't know what is the matter with them. It is my duty to show them."¹²⁴ Then, too, labour men were perhaps more amenable to partisan political ties. The Grit affiliations of Glockling, Jury, O'Donoghue, March, and Dower were rather apparent.¹²⁵

But there could be no doubt that many labour men espoused an urgent radicalism in the 1890s. For them, labour was the source of all wealth, but it was receiving only a mere fraction of the value it produced. The interests of the wealth producers were the interests of the whole community, which was bound together by cooperation, the golden rule, and "free access to natural opportunities." For the Labor Council, "there is a principle of justice and right by which every man will receive the FULL reward of his labors and not the scant miserable pittance doled out to him by someone, who has conceded him a privilege not a right to work."¹²⁶ Labour and capital seemed to have different needs. "One man wants to sell his labor for as much as he can get for it, and the other wants to secure the man's labor as cheaply as can." Machines had increased "the power of accumulating wealth" 50 times, yet shorter hours and higher wages had not resulted.¹²⁷ Large-scale mechanized production was reducing skilled workers' control over the workplace and leaving in their place a badly paid mass of miserable operatives. For Banton, the cause of unemployment was modern industrial capitalism. Machines were replacing hand labour, and even small employers were becoming wage slaves. The remedy was cooperation and common ownership of natural and financial resources.¹²⁸ Jury, stating that workers needed a "greater love of man," maintained that labour-capital conflict would continue until capitalists were eliminated and workers had "the full results of their labor." A cooperative system owned and controlled by labour, replacing the wage system, was the solution. Burnill signifi-

¹²³ *Globe*, 18 September 1896.

¹²⁴ *Star*, 13 October 1900.

¹²⁵ At the beginning of the 1890s Jury was appointed to a provincial commission on prison and reformatory systems, and in 1897 he was named a Dominion Immigration Agent to Britain. In 1900 Glockling became secretary of Ontario's Bureau of Labour and O'Donoghue was appointed a federal fair wage officer.

¹²⁶ Smith papers, Allan Hazle to Smith, 15 June 1896. (Emphasis in original).

¹²⁷ Wright papers, scrapbook 4, cutting, *Guelph Herald*, 10 April 1889.

¹²⁸ *Globe*, 25 November 1893. On mechanization and labour, see Gregory S. Kealey, "The Honest Workingman and Workers' Control: The Experience of Toronto Skilled Workers, 1860-1892," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 1 (1976); Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (December 1977).

cantly added that workers must still look to the legislatures for relief,¹²⁹ and in 1894 Toronto labourites met to establish an independent political platform.¹³⁰

Few radicals could muster much toleration for the Socialist Labor Party which had managed to plant a handful of tiny Ontario locals. For labourites the SLP was narrowly sectarian and hostile to unionism.¹³¹ The Toronto Labor Council swore in 1898 that it would never consider any ties with the party, and attacked it for using the word "Labor" in its title.¹³² The SLP, Weston Wrigley asserted, was unsuited to Canadian conditions.¹³³ "The people are in favor of Socialism," the London, Ontario, *Industrial Banner* wrote, "but they will never tolerate De Leonism" and its "union wrecking proclivities."¹³⁴

By the late 1890s, radicals were increasingly criticizing and rejecting the single tax and anti-monopolism as inadequate panaceas. In 1898 and 1899 the newly established Social Reform League provided Toronto radicals with an opportunity to sift through tougher alternatives. When James L. Hughes, the reform-minded Conservative educator, lectured on the "Possibilities of Reform under the Present Industrial System," pointing out that an American company had decided to share its management with employees, Thompson countered that the experiment could not be widely imitated, as companies were squeezed too tightly by competition. The competitive system had to be ended. Rev. S.D. Chown advanced the claims of applied Christianity.¹³⁵ At another Social Reform meeting, held at Rowe's church, Glockling defended trade-union advances through "social evolution" as opposed to "social revolution." Rowe asked workers present why the church was out of touch with labour. After two socialists angrily castigated organized religion, they were repudiated by a man counselling that the Bible taught cooperation, and by Wrigley, who wanted workers to remain in the church to make it a Christian vanguard. No one, noted W.C. Good, a Toronto University student, opposed true Christianity, which was considered incompatible with the present system.¹³⁶

Christian pronouncements and church personnel continued to influence radicalism. While one of Bengough's barbed cartoons was aimed at clerics for sanctifying big businessmen and scorning striking workmen,¹³⁷ and while most radicals doubted that the church could effect serious change, church groups comprised much of the backing for the Social Reform League and similar organizations. The Outlook Club of Bond Street Congregational Church, which sponsored a League meeting,¹³⁸ included among its directors G. Weston

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 December 1892.

¹³⁰ *News*, 30 June 1894.

¹³¹ *Globe*, 21 September 1896.

¹³² *Mail and Empire*, 9 December 1898.

¹³³ Toronto Trades and Labor Council, *Official Programme*, 32-33.

¹³⁴ *The Industrial Banner*, July 1902.

¹³⁵ Good papers, Vol. 20, Good diary, 7 October 1898.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5 November 1898.

¹³⁷ Bengough papers, Box 3, cartoon, "The Gnat and the Camel," n.d.

¹³⁸ *Mail and Empire*, 29 October 1898.

Wrigley and single taxer G.J. Bryan.¹³⁸ A radical delegation to the Labor Council included representatives from the Outlook Club, the Euclid Methodist Young Men's Club, and the College Street Baptist Young People's Union.¹⁴⁰ When the League held a conference of over 100 people in November 1898, among the participants were Rev. Rowe, the chairman, and Simpson, president of the Toronto-area Epworth League.¹⁴¹ The main speakers at a public rally were Rowe, Shortt, and Craig.¹⁴²

The 1898 conference of the Social Reform League marked the high tide of old-style radicalism. After the traditional concerns were raised, a recommendation was made for a new platform of the initiative, referendum, and proportional representation, doubtless spurred by a speech from the president of the Direct Legislation League of America. The lowest common denominator for the varieties of radicalism present was direct legislation, which did not propose to tinker with the economic system. It would, however, allow the people their rightful share of political power. With direct legislation, the remainder of the radical agenda would be effected after a period of educating the public. A Canadian Direct Legislation League was created. *Citizen and Country* was its organ and Hughes, Wrigley, Titus, and Mrs. McDonnell, a feminist, composed its executive.¹⁴³

But the Direct Legislation group never planted deep roots. Few radicals were as excited about the common denominator as they were about their favourite planks; direct legislation was merely a means to these ends. The Social Reform League and *Citizen and Country*, however, continued to publicize radical ideas and demands. A Social Progress League was established to encourage the study of political economy.¹⁴⁴ In October 1899 it presented a platform to the Labor Council which Council was asked to endorse. Among the League speakers were several unionists. Planks included the initiative and referendum, full legislative power for civic governments, the abolition of ward boundaries and the contract system, and the eight-hour day on public works. Simpson, representing the Saturday Night debating club, presented the demand for municipal ownership and operation of street railways, telephones, electrical plants, and all other franchises.¹⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the demands for gas and water municipalization, socialism was not on the agenda of most radicals during the bulk of the 1890s as the paramount demand. Though radicals were opposed to what they consid-

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 November 1898; *Ibid.*, 14 November 1899.

¹⁴⁰ Public Archives of Canada, Minutebooks of the Toronto Trades and Labor Council, minutebook 1893-1901, 29 October 1899.

¹⁴¹ *Globe*, 25 November 1898.

¹⁴² *Mail and Empire*, 24 November 1898. On church radicalism, see Richard Allen, *The Social Passion* (Toronto 1973), ch. 1.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1898; *Globe*, 25 November 1898.

¹⁴⁴ *Citizen and Country*, 25 March 1899; *Ibid.*, 4 May 1900.

¹⁴⁵ Minutebooks of the Toronto Trades and Labor Council, minutebook 1893-1901, 29 October 1899; *Star*, 31 October 1899.

ered the undemocratic, amoral, and exploitive capitalist market, this hardly committed them to collective ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Indeed, some individualist radicals, especially single taxers, thought their solutions might avoid the socialist extreme. This was particularly true of those who retained some degree of party loyalties.

But by the end of the 1890s, a more fundamental socialist critique was emerging within the radical movement. By the turn of the century, socialism progressively became the touchstone of radicalism. The transformation of collectivist radicals into socialists was facilitated by several factors. Single tax, anti-monopolism, and labour cooperatives appeared increasingly inadequate to many, especially against the backdrop of continued economic disparity. The agitation of socialists such as Thompson, who in 1892, for example, posed a full system of state ownership as the solution for unemployment,¹⁴⁶ was another factor. Thompson had rejected the older panaceas in the pages of his *Labor Advocate* in 1891. In 1899 he wrote that although it was acceptable for radicals to unite around some immediate demands, until these planks were subordinated to the goal of socialism, little progress would occur. The task for some time would have to be the education of the masses to socialism itself. Radicals "are always liable to be diverted by side-issues and political expedients that promise temporary relief, but do not tend in the direction of Socialism, or perhaps are manifestly in the other direction."¹⁴⁷

Another influence was the intensifying disappointment with the incumbent Grits at Queen's Park and Parliament Hill. Laurier's failure on prohibition, his Government's inadequate interest in urban and industrial problems, his French-Canadian origins, and the weakness of the Liberals in Toronto tended to loosen liberal and individualist ties and open the way for an acceptance of socialist identities. Moreover, while the incipient socialism of the late 1890s did not in the main have a strictly economic appeal, the concept of surplus value, insofar as it was to be expressed by socialists, was not a starkly sharp departure from radical traditions. Single taxers, with their notion of "unearned increment," and labour men, with their insistence that toilers received only a fraction of the wealth they produced, had prepared the ground for so-called scientific concepts of surplus value.

Finally, it did not for the most part require a great leap or dramatic rupture to embrace socialism, because it was presented as an ethical gospel; indeed, as the logical culmination of the Christian message. Traditional notions of community advancement and solidarity attracted radicals to the all-encompassing nature of socialism. "The goal of Socialism is brotherhood, or heaven on earth," one supporter wrote. "The Socialist sees people starving and committing suicide by the thousands in lands of churches and high civilization and strives to make the world fit for every man and woman to live in."¹⁴⁸ Another

¹⁴⁶ *Globe*, 12 December 1892.

¹⁴⁷ *Citizen and Country*, 11 November 1899.

¹⁴⁸ *Telegram*, 27 May 1896.

thought that workers, in the grasp of "ever increasing anxiety and want," should be able to "get an occasional glimpse of heaven on earth." "What we Socialists want is the practice of the doctrines first taught by the Great Socialist 1900 years ago."¹⁴⁹ For a Methodist writer, the socialist was not the fanatical bomb-thrower "but may simply designate for us a fairly conservative individual, who sets himself to remedy the great evils of the day."¹⁵⁰ Rowe, an ethical socialist, argued that the current tendency "in exalting the interest of the community above that of the individual" was leading to socialism, which meant that "the nation ought to regulate industry in the public interest — that whatever concerns the public welfare ought to be put under public direction."¹⁵¹ For one of W.C. Good's friends, Christianity meant social improvement. It used to be that all roads led to Rome: now "all roads lead to socialism" and "the people are waking up" and welcoming it.¹⁵² Simpson maintained that the church had failed to reach the masses and teach brotherhood. Socialism would now enlist the masses and put brotherhood into practice.¹⁵³ That socialism was variously identified as brotherhood, the Sermon on the Mount, conservative reform, and public regulation of industry ensured that it would have a not unfavourable reception, though what most now regarded as socialism bore only a faint resemblance to what socialists in several years would consider the real item.

Those who accepted socialist ideas considered them the purest, fullest, and most logical expression of radicalism. The ethical sentiments that defined socialism offered it an obvious appeal — it was the restoration of the community over the market. Vague and possessing little systematic coherence, socialism was at once conservative — the maintenance of beleaguered values — and radical — the replacing of the present order with an ideal one. The socialists owed much to what Charles W. Eliot, the contemporary American scholar, called the transformation since 1870 from individualist to collectivist attitudes towards the social environment.¹⁵⁴ Socialism drew vitality from its promise to transform the moral character of man and from its vision of a reformed, restored, and integrated community serving the needs and interests of the producers of wealth.

The culmination of late nineteenth-century radicalism was the establishment in 1899 of the Canadian Socialist League, the first indigenous and popularly based socialist organization.¹⁵⁵ Some measure of public ownership, of

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1896.

¹⁵⁰ *The Templar*, 19 January 1894.

¹⁵¹ Rev. Rowe, "Current Views," 235-36.

¹⁵² Good papers, Vol. I, W.C. Paynter to Good, 28 November 1899. On Paynter, see Good, *Farmer Citizen*, 43.

¹⁵³ *Globe*, 19 April 1900. Shortt added that true Christianity tended to socialism.

¹⁵⁴ Charles W. Eliot, *The Conflict Between Individualism and Collectivism in a Democracy* (New York 1910).

¹⁵⁵ *Mail and Empire*, 19 October 1899; *Ibid.*, 21 October 1899; *Globe*, 21 October

course, had been demanded by many radicals before the CSL, but the League represented an advance over 1890s radicalism because it made paramount the goal of the eventual common ownership of all major economic resources. At the same time, the CSL manifested little ideological rupture with the past. Its platform and personnel were largely drawn from pre-socialist radicalism, and Wrigley, whose *Citizen and Country* was made the CSL organ, tipped his hat to those "noble-minded" readers of Bellamy and George who had paved the way for the League.¹⁵⁶ The CSL platform requested the abolition of the Senate, the initiative and referendum, proportional representation, and adult suffrage: all radical legacies. A national currency and government banking system, and the public ownership of franchises should be instituted. Though the platform wanted "community-produced values to be used for public purposes," its land nationalization plank obviously transcended the narrow bounds of the single tax. The key goal was the public ownership of all monopolies and "ultimately of all means of production, distribution and exchange."¹⁵⁷ The CSL was characterized by explicitly religious appeals — Christ was the first socialist and the Sermon on the Mount was his manifesto¹⁵⁸ — cautious gradualism, and practical and fairly effective attempts to win labour support. Many Toronto unionists either joined the CSL or participated in its electoral campaigns to send radicals to the House of Commons and the Ontario legislature. Among the active Leaguers were Thompson, the Wrigleys, Simpson, Titus, and Good.

The development of Canadian radicalism in the 1890s had been stimulated by a sense of crisis, typified by class tensions and polarities, and by a preoccupation with ethical values and traditions. For radicals, the community had to be restored over the presumptions and incursions of the free market; as Ruskin had argued, the purpose of wealth was the production of "as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures."¹⁵⁹ The impersonal, monopolized, and inequitable capitalist market was antagonistic to the best interests of the wealth producer and his community. A competitive and splintered society based on "mere civic relationship"¹⁶⁰ had to be regenerated by the ethics of brotherhood, solidarity, and cooperation, which characterized the agrarian and labour movements. A radically restructured system was required in which the producers of wealth would have sufficient power to protect their interests and desires. Such a system would facilitate the development of each person's highest moral and spiritual capacities. By the close of the 1890s, many radicals had accepted socialist ownership as the priority and the

1899; *Citizen and Country*, 4 May 1900; Toronto Trades and Labor Council, *Official Programme*, 32-33.

¹⁵⁶ *Citizen and Country*, 4 May 1900.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1900.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1900.

¹⁵⁹ John Ruskin, *Sesame & Lilies, (Unto This Last and The Political Economy of Art* (London 1907), 142-43.

¹⁶⁰ *Onward*, 7 (5 June 1897), 180.

essence of radicalism. With the successful establishment of the Canadian Socialist League, and the increasing willingness of radicals to engage in independent electoral activity, radicalism emerged from the fading beams of the nineteenth century as tougher and more class conscious. Still, the community-minded and ethical convictions of the movement would be largely retained, thus ensuring its place in the years to come as a significant force in Canadian life.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ For an analysis of pre-World War One socialism in Ontario see Gene Howard Homel, "James Simpson and the Origins of Canadian Social Democracy," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978. The author thanks Russell Hann, Wayne Roberts, Bryan Palmer, and Michael Fellman for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.