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The Crisis of Social Democracy in Canada

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The Crisis of Social Democracy in Canada

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Gerry Harrop, *Advocate of Compassion: Stanley Knowles in the Political Process* (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press 1984).

James A. McAllister, *The Government of Edward Schreyer: Democratic Socialism in Manitoba* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1984).

J.T. Morley, *Secular Socialists: The CCF/NDP in Ontario, A Biography* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1984).

Nelson Wiseman, *Social Democracy in Manitoba: A History of the CCF/NDP* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press 1983).

IN THE MONTHS PRIOR to the September 1984 federal election, the polls indicated a sharp fall in the New Democratic Party's popular support, even in its western bastion. Media commentators, even staunch party supporters, predicted the imminent collapse of the NDP to levels near the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation's prostration after the 1958 Diefenbaker sweep. The NDP was out of touch, it was claimed. The NDP's answers were old hat. Such views seemed dramatically confirmed by the controversial report by James Laxer, former researcher for the federal NDP caucus, claiming that the party's economic analysis and programme were woefully inadequate and outdated.

The NDP's response to the crisis was not surprising. The party made a sharp right turn and focused its campaign on "ordinary Canadians," modestly defending the social security net and some government intervention in the economy. Indeed, the party simply took the ground vacated by the Liberals as Turner moved right to meet the Tory challenge. Another first had been achieved by social democracy in Canada: the Commission for Social Affairs of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops sounded markedly to the left of Canada's "socialist" party. The results, which saw the NDP salvage its position in the House of Commons, were heralded by the strategists of moderation as a triumph. It had worked. And that is what matters above all else in the hurly-burly of the electoral dance.

These four books, all in various and uneven ways, chronicle aspects of the continuing crisis of social democracy in Canada. Each adds usefully to the

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already vast literature on Canada's tentative experiment in social democracy. Not surprisingly, all the authors had, or have, a more or less intimate relationship with the NDP. The happiness or unhappiness of that relationship informs much of what each has to say. Harrop is a continuing uncritical enthusiast. McAllister was a senior member of the planning secretariat of the Schreyer cabinet and remains a continuing if critical party member and activist, now in Ontario. Morley is little more than an apologist and propagandist for the Ontario party establishment which, as a former executive assistant to the leader, he served loyally, and continues to serve loyally with this book. Wiseman was a party activist in Manitoba in the 1960s until he left the party in 1972 as an unhappy Waffler. As for me, I, too, was a party member and activist in the 1960s, leaving the party in 1973 when the Saskatchewan Waffle voted to leave the NDP in the wake of the repression and effective expulsion of the Ontario Waffle. Like virtually all works on the CCF/NDP, then, these works and this essay are afflicted by the on-going love-hate relationship between the party and elements of the progressive intelligentsia.

Wiseman's history of the Manitoba CCF/NDP fills a void in published scholarship — and it is a scholarly and thorough piece of work, despite Wiseman's personal political history. He chronicles the peculiarities of "the Ontario of the prairie provinces" — the settlement patterns, the ethnic composition, the absence of mass agrarian radicalism, the growth of the working-class movement, and its divisions. Wiseman tries to come to terms with the province's political schizophrenia: a province in a region touched repeatedly by waves of popular discontent, yet the province in the region deriving the most benefit from the Ontario-oriented confederation strategy. Manitoba was the most conservative of the prairie provinces, yet plagued the federal government through its provincial legislature. Moderates dominated the labour movement, unlike British Columbia or Alberta, yet the only general strike in Canada's history worth the name occurred in Winnipeg.

The meat of the book begins in the era after the General Strike. Despite efforts by various scholars to emphasize the moderation of the strike's goals and demands, it is clear that the Winnipeg General Strike and its ruthless defeat established moderate political hegemony in the working-class movement more fully. Wiseman shares this view, but does not take it far enough. Had the strike carried the day, and won even the limited demands on which it was based, the foundation for a more militant working-class politics could have been laid. The defeat of the strike, and the resultant discrediting of radical syndicalism and revolutionary socialism, laid the basis for the decisive triumph of moderate social democracy. The outcome split working-class political and economic struggles, as the gas and water socialists had long advocated. The working class' political struggle was channelled on to the parliamentary electoral road, while the economic struggle was channelled into moderate business unionism.

From the defeat of the strike onward, as the CCF and its predecessors were founded and struggled to win support, the foremost lesson of the strike informed every move: moderation. Unable to make a rural breakthrough? More moderation was required. Denounced by business interests as too radical? Meet them head on with yet more moderate rhetoric. Unable to achieve an urban ethnic breakthrough to meet the Communist challenge? Denounce communism while translating your moderate programme into diverse languages. Denounced as godless? Retreat into the social gospel and elevate the maximum number of preachers to leadership positions. The Manitoba party's search for moderation and respectability culminated in the disastrous deci-

sion of the CCF to join Bracken's "non-partisan" government in 1940, CCF leader, Farmer, becoming the minister of labour. After two years of fruitless effort to influence the government, and a poor showing in the 1941 election, the CCF left the government.

Almost immediately the Manitoba party shared the surge in CCF support which occurred in the mid-1940s. Membership shot from 800 to 4,000. A breakthrough was made in two 1943 by-elections: D.L. Johnson won Brandon and Berry Richards took The Pas, which Premier Bracken left to lead the federal Tories. Thus on the threshold of an unprecedented breakthrough, the party faltered. The two new MLAs proved to be too radical and too effective. Richards in particular proved a good orator and a brilliant organizer. Overnight the newcomer rose to prominence: a member of national council, a provincial vice-president, chief party organizer, a possible leadership contender. Almost as quickly he, and Johnson, were laid low by the moderates, who above all else, in the words of Stanley Knowles, did not want to be seen to be "playing footsie with the Communists." (60)

There were two central episodes in the demise of Johnson-Richards, and both had to do with the party's unhappy relationship with the Communist Party. The CP's flip-flops on the CCF had been notorious: first the CCF was a traitor to the working class; then the CCF was called on to join a united front against fascism; then the CCF was denounced for supporting an imperialist war; finally the CCF was attacked for splitting the progressive forces in the war effort. In 1943 the communist Labour Progressive Party (LPP) unsuccessfully applied for affiliation to the CCF. In 1945 the LPP called for unity on the left, which meant at least cooperating with the Communists. Both Richards and Johnson advocated this position, refused to recant, and went public. The party labelled them as either Communists or dupes of communism. Knowles embarked on an unrelenting smear campaign, resulting in the suspension of the two MLAs from the party and their expulsion from caucus. In 1945 the CCF led the old parties, despite the controversy, with 35 per cent of the vote, though winning only 9 seats. Richards was reelected as an independent CCF candidate, since the local CCF refused to run anyone against him. Johnson, opposed by a local CCF candidate, was defeated. After the election, Richards was reinstated, while Johnson was expelled (later joining the CP).

This fanaticism about keeping the CP at arm's length worsened with the Cold War. The CCF joined the anti-Soviet crusade, supporting Canada's pro-U.S. foreign policy. Richards refused to participate in the crusade, attacking instead American imperialism, the Marshall Plan, and NATO. The red-baiting by Coldwell and Knowles against Richards increased, and increased again when Richards' eloquence convinced the 1948 CCF convention to pass a resolution denouncing the Marshall Plan. This was too much. Richards and another MLA were expelled in 1949. The sorry episode ended when Richards was defeated in the 1949 election, running as an independent.

The expulsions, the anti-communism, and the later moderate Winnipeg Declaration were all in vain. Having ravaged itself in an effort to prove its anti-communist credentials, the Manitoba CCF suffered from Cold War politics anyway, declining in the post-1945 period to virtual collapse by 1953. But the architects of moderation hung on, and with the "new political formula," when the NDP was founded with organized labour's affiliation, hope increased.

The strategy of moderation began to pay off in the 1960s. The party programme was shifted further to the right, techniques of electoral organization were improved, and middle-class candidates were found. In less than seven years and

three elections, the NDP rose from third-party status to power under the leadership of Ed Schreyer, described by Wiseman as "pragmatic, nonideological and politically respectable." (138) Wiseman's assessment of the NDP's two terms in power, 1969 to 1977, is blunt:

> The NDP's legislative achievements . . . were remarkable for their similarity to programs in other provinces. Little was done that had not been done elsewhere in Canada, and little at all of a controversial nature was done after the first few years in office. . . . (125) Little in the NDP government's first performance diverged from what non-NDP provincial governments did. (139)

In fact, according to Wiseman, the NDP had come to "best represent small-l liberalism," "a party that had come to accept the economic system which in earlier years it was so eager to transform." (120, 145-6) Indeed, but for the taste of political rule, the NDP in power made little or no difference. The fact that Ed Schreyer, after defeat, could be elevated to the office of governor-general and then later to high commissioner to Australia -- jobs it would have been unthinkable to offer a CCFer in the past, and even more unthinkable for a CCFer to accept — seems to confirm Wiseman's conclusions.

Of course, Wiseman can be partly dismissed by some as partisan — an unhappy Waffler who left the party. Opposed to the strategy of moderation, he would not be likely to concede that the strategy worked in effecting real change. McAllister's study of the Schreyer years cannot be so easily dismissed. Nor does he take the line that Wiseman takes, as do so many disgruntled left-wingers. Indeed, he gives Schreyer the benefit of the doubt, accepts Schreyer's own statement of his objectives in power, and proceeds to a thorough analysis of results; in doing so, he restates the classic dilemma of social democracy. Having pursued power through electoral means, having done everything necessary to succeed in a liberal democratic political system, social democratic parties find it difficult to effect even the most marginal structural changes. Assuming that Schreyer wished to move towards socialism, and granting Schreyer the right to set the criteria for such modest movement, McAllister does a deft job of unveiling the lack of results.

In a number of documents produced after its election, the Schreyer government, under the premier's signature, published a series of "Guidelines for the Seventies," laying out the regime's goals. These included: more equality of opportunity and of condition; greater planning; greater participation by the people in shaping the province's destiny; more government participation in the economy; and full employment. Granted, if realized, these would amount to "major changes in a society dominated by capitalist economic institutions." (8) Indeed, McAllister lets Schreyer speak for himself. In 1976, Premier Schreyer outlined a main objective of his government in these terms:

> . . . to reduce differentiation, to bring about greater equality, to reward the dignity of work. And I do not believe for a moment that the dignity of work is rewarded when somebody who works in the packing house or steel mill or smelter, full-time, honest effort, who works in a sense that his shirt sticks to his back, receives one-fifth or one-sixth of somebody in an executive or professional position. That is anathema, I suggest, to a true Social Democrat.

This is fine, vague rhetoric. But Schreyer went on to set a specific goal, advocating a ratio between "a captain of industry and a floor worker in the plant . . . in the order of 2.5 to 1 and not more than that," as "a realistic goal to strive for." (54)

McAllister puts the Schreyer government to a relentless, systematic and often tedious test in a microscopic examination of Schreyer's "100 months" in power. The legislation was "not particularly innovative," the major structures of the government went "unchanged," the planning secretariat was virtually powerless, the growth of crown corporations was

modest, the shift in tax burden was small and not out of line with non-NDP governments, relations with the federal government (which McAllister suggests should have been more conflict filled, given Schreyer's social democratic goals) were among the best of the provinces. It goes on and on. Minimum wages remained at between 50 and 55 per cent of the industrial composite. Greater participation in decision making was effected only through "minor measures" with "little impact." In fact, the most devastating assessment is that after eight and one-half years of NDP rule, when the Tories returned to power in 1977, very little of substance was altered.

Having thus spent five chapters assessing the Schreyer government's record, McAllister then examines the political peculiarities of Manitoba, the history of the CCF/NDP as it moderated over the years, the transformation of the party into a weak organization dominated by the leader, the shift in class character and background of the MLAs, and the characteristics of the cabinet and civil service. Each area of study is not new, but the detail provided on Manitoba gives us yet another case study of the moderation, professionalization, and electoral transformation of a social democratic party. McAllister's major conclusions are a restatement of other assessments of other social democratic parties and merely reassert the classic dilemma: "the election to political office . . . of democratic socialist or social democratic parties has not resulted in the implementation of anything approaching a socialist economy or society." (89) Finally, "the overall evaluation of the Schreyer government, in terms of how close it came to achieving the ideals of democratic socialism, must be rather negative." (163) His study represents an interesting and useful effort to show how and why this failure occurred in the case of the Schreyer government.

Lest the Wiseman and McAllister volumes leave you in despair, concluding that the social democratic project is a hopeless illusion, the other two volumes may act as an antidote. Both tell you everything in the CCF/NDP is okay and that the universe has indeed unfolded as it should have.

The Stanley Knowles you'll meet in the Harrop hagiography is very different from the red-baiting, radical cruncher who hunted down and purged those who played "footsie" with Communists. Harrop tells us of this "advocate of compassion," that "he remembers and he cares." (7) Berry Richards knew a man who remembered, who carried a grudge, and finally got his man. Harrop speaks of Knowles' "selfless dedication," yet his study reveals the man as a dedicated office seeker and holder. In many ways Stanley Knowles symbolizes the history of social democracy in Canada. It is the story of moderation and compromise which led down the sad trail, transforming Knowles from a principled socialist and pacifist, when first elected in 1942 in Woodsworth's seat, to the man who came first to be known as Mr. Pension, until finally, today, he sits in the well below the speaker of the House of Commons, ill, frail, stricken, known as Mr. Parliament. It is even more pathetic than Schreyer's acceptance of the impotent office of governor-general.

It is a sad, if revealing book. It is of interest if only to see how the party itself prettifies its history and tries to elevate its leading personalities to sainthood. Stanley Knowles was born in 1908 in the United States. In 1926 he came to Canada to work as a printer at a newspaper in Carberry, Manitoba, moving on to Boston for better pay. Though he still carries his union card, Knowles worked as a printer for less than two years, returning to Canada in 1927 to go to Brandon College to become a preacher. He and T.C. Douglas were classmates, graduating in 1930. Knowles switched from the Baptist to the United Church, studied further at United College, and was ordained in 1934. While

working as a preacher, he began his active search for office, running unsuccessfully federally in 1935 and 1940, and provincially in 1941. In 1941 he became an alderperson and the next year he won Winnipeg North Central, which he held through thirteen victories until 1980, suffering only one defeat during the Diefenbaker sweep in 1958.

Harrop points out that Knowles began as a defender of veterans, the unemployed, pensioners, women, and labour, but "he was to go on to become an outstanding defender . . . of the rights and privileges of the House of Commons. . . . For the rest of this long career the inclinations of his heart and his mind were never to stray far from the Green Chamber." (24) Although he supported Woodsworth's pacifist position on World War II, he very quickly shifted his ground to support the war effort, including conscription. In 1954 he was a hawk on the Korean War. He became a leading anti-communist Cold War ideologue, but his biographer overlooks this and even ignores Knowles' central role in the Manitoba purges. Throughout his party life he remained "the incarnation of the party establishment." (113) When it was opportune to denounce communism, Knowles denounced it. When it was opportune to purge radicals, Knowles purged them. When it was opportune to attack the Waffle, Knowles attacked. But his biographer chooses not to go into the messy details, though he admits that Knowles actually wavered on opposing the use of the War Measures Act in 1970. The book is, after all, a celebration.

In other words, this book is almost entirely unenlightening in any substantive sense. But it is revealing, and not just as an example of party loyalists uncritically *rewriting history*, but also of *another* tragic affliction of social democracy. Knowles loves parliament. He believes in it, reveres it. It is his passion. The honorary appointment to the Privy Council in 1979, which gave him the title "Honourable," moved him deeply. The decision to allow him to sit below the speaker after his retirement brought tears to his eyes. So, too, does social democracy love parliament. Indeed, of all the parties, the NDP is the staunchest defender of parliament and its traditions. While Liberals and Tories view parliament as something to use and manipulate, the NDP really believes deeply in it. Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd, and Allan Blakeney were always circumspect of the opposition's rights as premiers of Saskatchewan. Schreyer would never have thought of using disruptive tactics in opposition, nor heavy-handed tactics in power. Barrett never abused the privileges of the opposition in B.C., the way Bennett the Younger has. And this is part of the legacy of moderation. Accused for years of being undemocratic, of being reds, the CCF/NDP responded by becoming yet stauncher believers in liberal democracy and its paraphernalia. Stanley Knowles has simply carried that tradition to its logical and bizarre conclusion.

While Harrop makes it clear from the outset that his is a partisan view, Morley attempts to present his celebration of the Ontario party establishment as a dispassionate intellectual analysis. The reader is immediately left speechless by Morley's theoretical approach. He suggests that the history of the Ontario CCF/NDP is analogous to "the human organism's growth and survival." He elaborates: "The development of any institution from sectarianism to secularism is typical and normal and parallels the development of the human personality from childhood to adulthood. . . ." (4-5) From there on it is predictable where Morley intends to take us: the party's early radicalism was mere childishness; the party's present moderation is *maturity*. According to Morley, the Ontario CCF's personality has gone through five stages of growth.

The first, infantile stage, lasting from 1932 to 1942, was the sectarian period. Two years after the founding of the CCF,

the Ontario section was dissolved and reorganized by national office because "the CCF clubs had been thoroughly infiltrated with Communists and Marxists of more exotic persuasion." (40) Alas, it was too late, since the United Farmers of Ontario disaffiliated, offended by the use of the word "comrade." Alas, further, the parental rebuke by the national office did not convince the party to mend its silly ways. The Ontario CCF continued to alienate many by its "style of presentation," its "ringing declarations," and its advocacy of an "unacceptable . . . degree of state control." The split over the war invited "the wrath of patriotic English Canadians." The party refused to abandon its sectarian characteristics, which included "lack of popular appeal," demands for "total dedication and sacrifice" from its members, and "disregard for community sensibilities." But all was not lost, "like a child, its personality contained the seeds of maturity" as a new group of leaders emerged who were "comfortable in the dominant political culture." (41-5)

This group ushered in the next stage, "the pursuit of inevitability," when the party was convinced victory was near. The period 1942-51 was characterized by great gains by the CCF, and included two periods as official opposition (1943 and 1948). But the dream and confidence were shattered in the 1951 election: 19 per cent of the vote and two seats.

The next stage, 1951-64, was the "*quest for respectability*." Convinced that its leftism was the problem, the party developed "a modern and moderate image." Galbraith's thought became influential and the party leadership pursued "middle-class types" for a new membership base. The failure of the new NDP to make the expected breakthrough led to the fourth stage, "the quest for power" from 1964-71. The party had a sense of power "very similar to that which a young adult feels fresh from school or university . . . in terms of affecting things in his [sic] own life." The quest for power failed, however, ushering in the last stage from 1971 onwards, "the quest for relevance." In Morley's words, "the party in Ontario has become mature." (72, 89, 98)

During this "strange, eventful history," in the bard's words, the party did not drift right, as many allege, according to Morley, but merely adjusted to reality like any sensible adult. The many purges which Morley documents must have had more to do with disciplining unruly childish behaviour than with repressing ideas. The dissolution of the party in 1934 over its endorsation of a common front, the expulsion of a Sudbury MPP in 1948 for alleged communist sympathies, the policy "to rout out Communists from all positions of political influence," the many expulsions of Trotskyists in the 1950s and 1960s, and the expulsion of the Waffle in 1972, all these do not signify a rightward drift. Indeed, even those who were clearly not Communists but who resisted anti-communism were swept aside, as the party strove to "dissociate itself completely from the Communists in Canada." (206, 84) As Morley says, "The leadership firmly, sometimes almost hysterically, repudiated any attempts by the Communists or others to associate themselves with the CCF/NDP and did what it could to make the people of Ontario aware of the party's basic anti-communist position." (87)

Joe McCarthy would have been proud. *But Morley cannot find a rightward drift.* He concedes, however, that the party "did not continue to say in the 1960s and 1970s what it had said in the 1930s," adding: "It was not so much that the rhetoric was different but that the policy concerns of the party were different. The *issues which have symbolically engaged* the party over the last twenty or thirty years have, with one exception, not been those of central socialist concern." (132) What were these new issues that engaged the maturing party? They included:

"liquor licenses for cocktail lounges and beverage rooms;" "the problem of permitting margarine to compete with butter;" "changing . . . hydroelectric power . . . from twenty-five to sixty cycles;" NATO (the socialist exception?); "public assistance to Roman Catholic high schools;" "controlling resource industries;" and "abortion on demand." (132) But this is not a right turn. This is just maturity.

Morley's book is useful precisely because it provides a justification for the party establishment — it tells us how they see themselves and their actions. The blindness is self-evident. But, you see, the party's direction had nothing to do with power struggles and faction fights, with opportunism and anti-communism. It was just a process of maturation. Morley, who interviewed eighteen prominent party figures, did not even bother to interview leaders of the Ontario Waffle, like Laxer or Watkins. And he certainly made no effort to find the victims of earlier purges to find out what they had to say.

While Morley does not go biological on us by suggesting that such elements were health-threatening bacteria gobbled up by heroic white cells, clearly he views such episodes as irrelevant outbursts of infantile tendencies that the maturing personality repressed, much like barbaric material from the id is repressed by the sensible and rational ego. As political theory, Morley's book is self-serving nonsense. As propaganda, it is marvellous, even hilarious. By the way, you'll be happy to hear that "the party has not suffered any mid-life crisis." (232-3) Morley does not say when he expects senility to set in.

These four volumes raise the question of whether social democracy, in any *meaningful sense, is still alive in Canada.* Each crisis in the party's history, whether in Manitoba, in Ontario, or at the federal level, has been met with the same simple-minded solution. Moderation. Move right. Failure to succeed in the early years was blamed on too much radicalism. The solution? Expunge radical ideas from the party's programme, expel radical party members, especially if they are too successful in challenges for leadership and ideological hegemony. When moderation and expulsions failed to deliver the electoral goods, what was needed? Yet more moderation. When that failed, the solution was better public relations, and new and more shiny electoral machinery. When that failed, yet more moderation was required. Socialist or left social democratic ideas were never given serious consideration, except in what Morley sees as the infantile phase of the party's early years. Those who later advocted left turns, even modest ones, were swept aside. The fact that Wiseman and McAllister can only find liberal ideas alive and well in the Manitoba party, and that Morley sees the issue of butter versus margarine as a sign of political maturity, calls into question the NDP's claim to the status of a social democratic, labour-oriented political party.

Yet the fact remains that the NDP is seen as the party of the left. Despite all the efforts at moderation, despite all the ideological laundering, despite all the purges, the NDP, in the perceptions of labour and the general electorate, is still seen as a social democratic party. And the NDP leadership, at least at party meetings, still thump their chests and proclaim their devotion to social democracy, sometimes even to socialism.

The NDP in the 1980s faces another crisis, a crucial crossroad, as do all social democratic parties in the advanced capitalist world. The basic security system, developed after the Great Depression and greatly expanded after World War II, is largely in place, though under attack *and erosion from the New Right. Social* democrats have no new vision to inspire popular support. Most have adopted the position of defending the last half-century of marginal gains, rather than extending those gains into new areas. The brave new

world of a reformed, sensitive, mixed economy capitalism has not brought the promised enhancement of the quality of life. Income redistribution has failed. Poverty remains. The inequities of capitalism persist, indeed, have worsened in the last few years. The social wage gains have been largely stolen by the capitalist economy (the bottom 20 per cent of income earners still earn today the same tiny share of income they earned 30 years ago, only now a greater part of that income is made up of government transfer payments; and the gains made are financed through a regressive tax system which has increasingly lightened the tax burden on business while imposing heavier and heavier burdens on wage and salary earners). As the fiscal crisis of the state worsens and the New Right carries forward its crusade to erode the welfare system, the political crisis of social democracy will deepen. If the NDP's history tells us anything, it suggests that the response to the crisis will be another move resolutely rightward.

In those provinces where the NDP has won power and remains a major party, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and B.C., social democracy seems content to continue a game of electoral musical chairs. Defeated by more clearly pro-business parties, they wait, as the NDP in Saskatchewan and B.C. now wait, until the electorate hurts enough to reelect social democrats to repair the damage. Social democracy seems uncertain whether there are new fields to conquer, or, if there are, how to conquer them. Guaranteed annual incomes, meaningful worker participation, the principled extension of the public sector, determined pro-worker labour market interventions, ruthless enforcement of fair taxes on the corporate and business sectors, aggressive planning strategies to use the state to direct the economy, such measures seem too much for them, too controversial. Even modest but significant reforms, like universal, publicly funded day care, the unrestricted right to abortion, universal accessibility to universities, massive public investment to improve the quality of primary and secondary education, and further measures to truly socialize medicine are all viewed with alarm by the current social democratic leadership in Canada.

It appears at this point that social democracy is unable or unwilling to make a further qualitative leap to new conceptions of the use of the state to fill human need, to increase genuine equality, or to enhance the quality of life. The leadership remains mired in the depression mentality centred in work and wages, welfare protection from starvation and homelessness, basic health care, and routine education. Perhaps social democracy has reached its *pinnacle of achievement in the struggle* for socialism. Perhaps the very demands which might inspire a new wave of popular support can no longer be met painlessly within capitalism. After all, that was the promise of social democracy in opposing revolutionary socialism — socialism could be won piece by piece, painlessly, by stealth, and gradually.

The evidence in these volumes is clear. The historical project of social democracy in Canada has failed. But it is a failure social democracy refuses to recognize. Hints and glimmerings of that failure have been recognized by elements among the working class and its supporters in provinces where power has been won. But caught in the "least of evils" electoral trap, there appears to be no serious alternative but to support the NDP and to hope for the best. And these books in different ways say that the best from an NDP regime is not significantly better. In a phrase, the working class has not yet realized that, even under an NDP government, what you've got is pretty much what you'll get.