“Easier to believe than to reflect”: 
The British Columbia Social Credit movement, 1932-1952

by

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B.Ed., University of Saskatchewan, 1990
B.A. (Honours), University of Saskatchewan, 1992

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF 
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

We accept this thesis as conforming 
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
August 1994

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Date 18 August 1994
Abstract

Historians and political scientists have explained the pre-eminence of Social Credit in British Columbia during the last half of this century as an institutionalized protest against the seeming inactivity of partisan governments and as a reaction to the strength of the social democratic element in the province's political culture. This thesis examines the period from 1932 up to and including the BC Social Credit movement's electoral breakthrough in 1952 and suggests that economic and political conditions during that time affected the way that Social Crediters organized and changed the focus of Social Credit ideology in BC from monetary reform to a call for good government and conservative values. It also suggests that some previous conclusions about BC's Social Credit movement – that it was an outgrowth of Alberta Social Credit, that it was a populist organization, that it was too small to be intellectually significant – should be modified in the light of new evidence. This thesis should serve as a starting point for more specialized studies of the Social Credit movement in British Columbia.
# Table Of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One – Keeping the faith, 1932-1947</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins and early years</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and pieces</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – “Problems of human adjustment” 1947-52</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revival of the League</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing the way</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glory bound, but Alberta-bound?</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett ex machina</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three – A way of life</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty in the midst of plenty</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and “losing the whip-hand”</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsion and competency</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and principle</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: British Columbia Social Credit Organizations ........................................41

Table 2: National Social Credit Organizations ..................................................41
List of Figures

Page

Figure 1: “This is a Mugwump” ............................................................................94
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCARS</td>
<td>British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVA</td>
<td>City of Vancouver Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVP</td>
<td>Peer Vernon Paynter Papers, British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spam</td>
<td>Pamphlet collection, University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMT</td>
<td>Henrietta M. Thompson Papers, City of Vancouver Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBCSC</td>
<td>University of British Columbia Special Collections Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WACB</td>
<td>W.A.C. Bennett Papers, Simon Fraser University Archives, Burnaby</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor at UBC, Robert A.J. McDonald, for tearing himself away from the book – a much more worthwhile pursuit – to contend with my usually tangled prose and always baffling attempts at historical argument. Thanks also to committee members David Breen and Charles Humphries. The errors and omissions that remain are mine. To Lyle Wicks and Cyril Shelford who granted me interviews: many thanks for your patience in ‘setting me straight’ and for understanding that what I submit here is a work of interpretation informed by many sources other than your experience. To the staffs of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria; University of British Columbia Library Special Collections Division; and City of Vancouver Archives: I am grateful for your interest and assistance. Darren Widenmaier minimized my computer worries considerably and the 7-11 stores at 10th and Alma and 16th and Macdonald in Vancouver supplied the caffeine for the many late-night writing sessions.

Though I see them only rarely, the moral support of my parents, Ann and Leo Kuffert, has been a great comfort to me. Despite my home community’s perception of scholars as an idle, weak, aimless sort insulated from poor harvests, relationships and the rent, my mother and father have broadened their definition of meaningful labour to include what I do. I thank them for their understanding and much more.

This work is dedicated to my grandmother, Alma Ruth Helfrich (Nelson): a true friend to all who know her and a wonder to all who have had even a glimpse of her unenviable past.

LBK
Vancouver, August 1994
Introduction

Many British Columbians are familiar with BC Social Credit's long reign as a conservative governing party after its election in 1952. However, its history in the province is longer and more complex. For most of the twenty years following its introduction in 1932, Social Credit in BC appealed to very few as an alternative to the Liberal and Conservative parties and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The following study explores BC Social Credit's transformation from small movement to political party. An examination of the BC movement's organizational and intellectual history during the formative period from 1932-52 reveals a triumph within the movement of neo-conservative values over economic technique which brought about the acceptance of Social Credit as an alternative to the province's established parties, a change that shaped BC's political culture for almost forty years. The interaction between the movement's ideology and historical conditions such as the return of prosperity during wartime and the expansion of the welfare state did much to define the way Social Credit would eventually govern the province.

Near the end of World War I, Major C.H. Douglas, an English mechanical engineer, conceived of Social Credit. In it, he proposed a restructuring of the monetary system which would enable consumers to buy all the goods industry could produce,\(^1\) promising emancipation from the control of financiers. A fear of

\(^1\) The \(A + B\) theorem, Douglas' way of symbolizing under-consumption, reasoned that workers are paid \(A\) to do their jobs, but goods cost \(A + B\), the cost of bank charges, overhead, etc. Therefore, consumers must somehow gain possession of \(A + B\) in order to make the economic
inflation formed the basis for attacks on what Douglas and his followers considered a simple mechanism to eliminate poverty. When the first Social Credit group was formed in British Columbia in 1932, BC had had provincial political parties in the tradition of Britain or eastern Canada for less than thirty years. In 1933, the CCF, a left-of-centre movement/party with its own internal problems, emerged and gained extensive support from British Columbians. In 1935, voters in Alberta elected a government promising to implement Douglas' system. In sharp contrast to the CCF and the highly visible Alberta version of Social Credit, the education-oriented, discordant Social Credit movement in BC went relatively unnoticed. After 1941, the movement had to contend with a strong wartime coalition of the Liberal and Conservative parties.

A strengthened economy during and after World War Two reduced discontent with government financial policy, the traditional target of Social Credit's criticism. The movement expressed its concern for such values as liberty and responsibility more frequently in those years, though it never officially abandoned the idea of monetary reform. As the 1940s drew to a close, BC Social Credit became increasingly unified at the same time as the two parties in the government coalition of Liberals and Conservatives drifted further apart. Early in 1952, their fragile partnership dissolved. Before they parted, however, the Coalition parties approved the use of the transferable ballot in the coming election. Designed to benefit either the Liberal or Conservative candidates

[system run at full capacity, and B was to be provided in the form of a dividend issued by the government.]


3 For a more detailed explanation of the transferable ballot and party politics generally in this era, see H.F. Angus, "Note on the British Columbia Election in June 1952.", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 18, no. 4, (November 1952) 518-525, or David J. Elkins, "Politics
through reciprocated second choice ballots, and thus to avoid splitting the so-called ‘free-enterprise’ vote, the system failed to perform as expected. The strong showing predicted for the CCF materialized, accompanied by a swing – largely unforeseen – toward Social Credit. These two ‘protest parties’ became the official opposition and the government, respectively. Choosing former Conservative W.A.C. Bennett as their new leader and Premier, Social Credit embarked on a career in government that would see it stray further from the Douglas system so revered by its early British Columbia adherents.

* * * * *

Through most of its history, the British Columbia Social Credit movement was racked with divisions. So far, studies commenting on Social Credit in the province have equated these schisms with paralysis instead of evolution.\(^4\) Taken in the context of the depression-war-prosperity cycle, BC Social Credit’s small size and internal difficulties suggest important questions about the mutation of radical organizations, the limited appeal of the original Social Credit doctrine, and the movement’s ability to attract dissatisfied British Columbians. But the government era’s appeal to scholars is strong, and the wealth of historical sources dealing with Social Credit in the early 1950s and beyond – especially compared to the 1930s and the war years – only exacerbates the tendency to ignore the movement period. Analysts have cited protest voting, a new electoral system, evangelical Alberta Social Crediters, and W.A.C. Bennett’s dynamic persona as explanations for the second ‘revolution’ in British Columbia politics – the rejection of the

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\(^4\) Robin, *Pillars of Profit*, 32; Sherman, *Bennett*, 90-91; Sanford, 187-188.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

established parties in favour of the CCF and Social Credit in 1952.\(^5\) But what was Social Credit in British Columbia? A thoughtful answer to this question must assess Social Credit’s protracted self-definition but most Social Credit activity in British Columbia in the 1930s and 1940s has been dismissed as irrelevant or as the ranting of a confused collection of malcontents and cranks.\(^6\) As a result, we know little and can surmise less from existing scholarship about the support for and the nature of Social Credit in British Columbia during that period. W.A.C. Bennett put his own stamp upon his party, yet a powerful Social Credit government after 1952 remains an unstable, whiggish foundation on which to base analysis of what Social Credit in British Columbia was or became.

Margaret Ormsby suggested that neither British Columbia’s non-partisan years nor those following can be well-understood without closer attention to the “mainsprings of our political development.”\(^7\) Though small and electorally unsuccessful, Social Credit in British Columbia before 1952 is an example of one such “mainspring” and requires closer attention. Given the model of polarization\(^8\) often ascribed to BC’s political culture since the election of Social Credit, would it not be wise to explore the sources of this polarization? Reactions to Social Credit

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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

as a governing body often dismiss the pre-government years as an awkward time for British Columbia Social Credit or ignore them altogether, conflating what Bennett made later with what the movement had been. Few acknowledge the lengthy career of Social Credit in BC or offer explanations for the movement’s rise to power that go back more than a few months before 1952’s watershed election.⑨ Confined in most cases to biography, popular history, and political science, and eager to explain the dramatic rise of Social Credit, accounts of Social Credit in BC generally begin the story closer to the middle than the beginning. This perspective offers little more than an Arthurian legend in which Bennett pulls the Legislative mace from the yielding grip of the Liberal-Conservative coalition to claim his coastal kingdom.

The second volume of Martin Robin’s political history of the province and David Mitchell’s biography of Bennett, as well as several articles and theses, tend to treat Social Credit’s pre-government period in BC as background to a more convenient enterprise: the study of Social Credit or Bennett in power. They join with political theorists in assuming that a movement’s proximity to power determines its importance within the local political culture.⑩ Exhibiting a spotty inclination toward political action in the 1930s, with little hope of forming a government through the 1940s, BC Social Crediters addressed the topics of authority and responsibility consistently but were about as far from positions of authority as they could be. The breadth of BC Social Credit thought during the

movement period often escaped the narrow confines of monetary theory commonly considered to be the realm of Social Credit, suggesting that the movement's eventual electoral victory was the result of organizational and intellectual development as much as political opportunism or a quest for authority.

Perhaps because the movement was not large or unified before 1952, when it ran candidates in all the ridings but one, its stock as an indicator of British Columbian opinion has been devalued among political scientists. Some, such as Jeremy Wilson, Donald Blake, or Terry Morley take care to relate the rise of Social Credit to often-overlooked aspects of BC experience or new ways of viewing BC political culture but continue to portray Social Credit as vital only since 1952. Wilson cites greater unity of electoral “swing” among constituencies in 1952 as evidence that an erosion of localism followed improvements in the provincial transport and communications infrastructure and resulted in the provincialization of politics, but still presents the idea that Social Credit was “new” at that time. Terry Morley sees great paradoxes in Bennett’s career, but not in the ideological changes the Social Credit movement made to its own program – changes which had the effect of attracting Bennett. Blake acknowledges Social Credit’s electoral attempts in 1937, 1945 and 1949, but cites its behaviour during the Bennett era as the most noteworthy aspect of its existence.11 Perhaps the daunting task of sorting out the various organizations comprising the British Columbia Social Credit movement12 has frightened historians and others away from what emerged from Bennett’s hands as a more straightforward program.

Indeed, Bennett has accounted for much of the attention to the post-1952


12 A tabular reference to these organizations is provided between Chapters One and Two.
career of Social Credit in British Columbia. For some, his arrival served to obscure the movement’s long history. In her survey history of British Columbia, Jean Barman writes that “A new party gained power in 1952 headed by a leader committed to change” and among “the early adherents to Social Credit in the province was William Andrew Cecil Bennett.” Bennett had not joined Social Credit until 1951, nineteen years after the movement’s inception; he was not among those who formed the British Columbia Social Credit League in 1949; and he was not chosen Social Credit leader until after the 1952 election. His coronation was, however, important. It completed BC Social Credit’s transition from movement to party within a political culture that only fifty years earlier had shunned partisan divisions.

Although none of the three biographies of Bennett were intended to document the history of the Social Credit movement, they nonetheless serve as evidence of Bennett’s eminent status in the province and to his autocratic method of governing. The best of the three, David Mitchell’s W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia, provides a concise summary of the movement period to describe the conditions surrounding Bennett’s move to the Social Credit banner and to introduce the ‘players’ in the Social Credit organization so the reader will recognize them later in the narrative of Bennett’s life. Unlike the other two biographies, journalist Paddy Sherman’s Bennett and Ronald Worley’s The Wonderful World of W.A.C. Bennett, Mitchell’s W.A.C. integrates archival material, secondary works, and extensive audiences with Bennett to provide a context for his main enterprise. Sherman, who offers plenty of material on Bennett, manages

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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

a weak attempt at prefacing his subject’s arrival as a Social Crediter, reporting, for example, that the Social Credit Association of Canada (BC Section) formed ten years before it actually did (p. 90). Clearly, Sherman viewed Social Credit’s early organization and its later forms as unrelated. Worley, Bennett’s former executive assistant, contributes a sycophantic memoir of his time with the Social Credit Premier and seems to conclude that BC Social Credit must not have been around for long before Bennett chose to join it in 1951. The value of Worley’s work lies in his sketches of prominent Social Crediters, although he concerns himself with little before the advent of Bennett.

The only work to study BC Social Credit exclusively during the period from 1932-1952, Barbara Horsfield’s 1953 thesis,15 begins with an examination of Major Douglas’ Social Credit theory. She then describes BC Social Credit’s rather complex history using an institutional framework offering little beyond a catalog of who was in charge but providing references to other contemporary sources and some useful observations regarding organizational change. Horsfield completed the study so soon after Social Credit’s 1952 victory that she was able to interview important figures in the movement’s early history and gain some perspective on its evolution at a time when public interest in the origins of BC Social Credit was still relatively high. This information stands out as the most valuable part of her work, and her arguments rely heavily upon the interviews.

Generally, writing about Social Credit before its election in British Columbia suggests an imitative organizational/ideological connection with Alberta’s Social Credit movement.16 David Mitchell contends that the BC movement was unique

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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

to the province but does so as part of an argument that it was not as overtly religious as Aberhart’s flock and that it allowed Albertans to manipulate it in the early 1950s. Thomas Sanford’s dissertation presents the CCF and Social Credit in BC as protest parties unique to the political culture of British Columbia yet linked to “the deviant culture of the prairie provinces.”

There is some evidence that the influential Alberta Social Credit government was behind the rise of BC Social Credit, though new evidence points to a more complex and autonomous BC movement. Even with some external involvement, British Columbia Social Credit remained distinct enough to suggest that the process of thinking about Social Credit in British Columbia had deeper historical roots and was more particular to the province than has been previously acknowledged. As Peter Worsley argues:

> ideas, in the process of becoming absorbed into successive cultural contexts, different from those in which they were engendered or have hitherto flourished, not only assume a different sociological significance insofar as they will be differently used by being incorporated within new frameworks of action, but will also become modified qua ideas, since they must be necessarily articulated with other psychic furniture: pre-existing interests, cognitive elements and structures, affectual dispositions etc., which are all part of the receiving milieu. The original ideas must intrinsically, therefore, be modified and become different ideas.

The literature dealing with Social Credit in British Columbia has not sufficiently examined the possibility that the redefinition of Social Credit in terms of the province’s larger cultural context began well before the post-1952 or ‘government’ era. Despite the fact that Social Credit’s rise in British Columbia involves politics in the traditional sense, the movement’s thought is rich enough to

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17 Mitchell, W.A.C., 120.
argue that its history involved more than the satisfaction of interests or the trading of political favours. Historical developments within the movement and without affected its constitution and its ideological priorities during the years that BC Social Credit grew to occupy a prominent position in the province’s political culture. In search of a way to ‘bring about’ Social Credit, the movement emphasized the previously secondary tenets of support for free-enterprise economics and personal liberty, a far cry from the technocratic, expert-run system first embraced as Social Credit in 1932. However, these rather fundamental changes remain relatively unexplored.

What does ‘bringing about’ Social Credit mean? The achievement of Social Credit could mean achieving a balance between productive capacity and the level of consumption (economic definition), or the recognition of the typical individual’s right to be responsible for their own welfare (social definition), or both. Economically, Social Crediters argued that technological advancements which fostered improvements in production constituted a kind of social capital which should be distributed among consumers. Although monetary reform remained a part of BC Social Credit’s program as the movement period progressed, the movement did not present it as consistently or prominently as it had during the 1930s. Socially, the movement’s members believed that the individual was the basis of labour, property, and ingenuity – the very basis of society. Yet, an individual’s opportunities to be a Social Credit activist independent of one of its study groups or Leagues were slim to none. The movement devoted much energy to claiming that it represented the collective interest. Initially the people, as defined by Social Credit, were to demand an end to poverty through the adoption of the...
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Social Credit method of exchange. Eventually, however, Social Credit declared that the people wanted to avoid becoming dependent on cumbersome government or compulsory schemes, which Social Crediters associated first with the CCF and eventually the Coalition.

Clifford Geertz has argued that despite the poor connotation of ideology in the discourse about ideas and the tendency of ideological symbols to be inaccurate or exaggerated representations of reality, ideology is a powerful, though not well understood, factor in articulating popular anxiety. The argument that support for Social Credit came from particular segments of society because Social Credit ideology addressed their economic interests has been used in analyses based on post-1952 data but reflects a shaky understanding of ideology’s position in political culture. Geertz contends that ideology may be viewed as a cultural system which “crystallizes otherwise inchoate social and political discontent.” In other words, when it is difficult to determine in whose interest a particular historical event has unraveled, ideology – the theories, values, and beliefs which override other considerations for some people – may be seen as alternate maps of social reality.

In describing how the late nineteenth-century agrarian movement in the United States grew and changed, Lawrence Goodwyn presents the idea of a movement culture which progresses through a set of stages: formation, recruitment, education and politicization. A useful way to understand BC Social

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Credit's ideological development is to treat it not as a movement culture interested only in disseminating orthodox Social Credit theory (recruitment, education) and later in articulating a set of general values (recruitment, politicization), but as one in which all these elements were present to some degree. By thinking about how this movement culture was altered – what kinds of historical factors intervened to cause responses in thought and organization – definite links between the movement's organizational goals and its ideological priorities may be posited. BC Social Credit may have de-emphasized monetary reform by 1952, but it did so because its ideology had broadened to accommodate other tasks that its leaders and members had constructed as equally urgent. An example follows.

One of the most active members of the BC Social Credit movement described the moment he became a Social Crediter: "In a flash, I saw [Social Credit] was what I'd been waiting for. We are headed for a slave state unless we can cure the evils in our midst." For British Columbia Social Credit, these evils were personified at first in the scheming banker, then in CCF and Coalition attempts to frustrate the responsible individual. That the evil had different names and could be considered to come from various points on the political spectrum showed the persistence of Social Credit movement culture, especially from the mid 1940s onward: its ability to define the political decisions of its members as support for a creed under siege. It was zealous belief and commitment like Lyle Wicks' that helped the movement to weather – though not to conquer completely – the attacks of skeptics, the limbo of wartime, and the politics of postwar prosperity. Had the movement's perspective on credit reform or the freedom of the individual not defined Social Credit as significantly outside the mainstream of

23 Lyle Wicks, President of the British Columbia Social Credit League, quoted in the Vancouver Province, 14 March 1952, 2.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

traditional party politics, the organization may have floundered as members would be unconvinced that the movement offered an alternative to debt finance or collectivism.

Social Credit introduced British Columbians to a conservatism which was not based entirely upon the maintenance of the status quo but upon the idea that citizens should prosper simply because prosperity was always possible, if not exactly probable. But it was not always that way. The rise of an unmitigated faith in free-enterprise economics among Social Crediters enhanced the polarization of BC’s political culture, a phenomenon that has been attributed most often to class difference. It is important to ask how and why Social Credit began to identify more clearly with free-enterprise or with moral propriety or with individual rights, because such changes indicate that adherents to the Social Credit movement viewed these as vital issues, not only for themselves, but for their society.

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The first and second chapters of this study explore the organization of the British Columbia Social Credit movement, and developments surrounding it, from the formation of the first Social Credit group in BC through the 1952 election that brought it to power. Social Credit remained a small and relatively obscure movement for the roughly fifteen years examined in Chapter One. In its final years, particularly under the direction of the BC Social Credit League, it attempted to combine movement and traditional politics, became more politicized, and finally with the recruitment of W.A.C. Bennett and success at the polls, became a political party. This period is discussed in the second chapter, which also addresses

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such important factors as the role of Alberta's Social Credit movement in BC and the landmark election of 1952. The third chapter focuses on the movement's intellectual history, exploring the shift from adherence to the economic doctrine of Major Douglas to the rhetoric of protest and individual responsibility embraced by BC Social Credit in the early 1950s and relating it to the organizational developments described in the first two chapters.

In sum, these chapters argue that changes in the way Social Credit constituted itself in BC from 1932 to 1952 reflected a changing conception of its purpose there. At first its enemies were bankers, so the most direct solution to the province's problems, as Social Crediters identified them, was to push incumbent governments for financial legislation that used the Douglas Social Credit model. By the 1950s, when British Columbia was prospering, credit had ceased to be the most pressing issue and the focus of Social Crediters' concern had shifted to the villains in Victoria who appeared to threaten fundamental freedoms in the name of collective security. Social Crediters in British Columbia had long organized to 'take aim' at their perceived enemies but only in the last years of the movement period did they realize they had to do so in the most public sphere - politics - to be effective. This, ironically, was crucial to the movement's ascent to power, as it was able to "widen the circle"25 of people identifying with at least part of a Social Credit ideology originally presented as a rigid system designed to relieve the problem of underconsumption. Social Credit in British Columbia had become, by 1952, a "way of life" governed by the Christian ethic, a profound sense of the individual's sovereignty, and a conventional, free-enterprise agenda, all promoted in the name of democracy. BC Social Credit claimed that it was out to get the

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25 Leonard B. Kuffert, interview with Lyle Wicks, 17 February 1994, Victoria. According to Wicks, this was a phrase W.A.C. Bennett used to describe the process of making Social Credit a popular government after 1952.
people the results they wanted, but it consulted its own membership in determining these results and prescribing courses of action to achieve them. Social Credit, once defined as a state of economic well-being based on the speedy enactment of rational monetary reforms, had become by 1952 a state where almost everyone was to be left alone to reap the dividends of their "cultural heritage": British Columbia's resource abundance. Social Credit relied increasingly on imagery linking freedom with progress and on references to BC's vast potential to justify its move away from the Douglas version of Social Credit, which the movement/party could no longer promote as its sole aim if it hoped to enact any reforms in a parliamentary system where representation still had to be gained by electoral means.
In 1936 the City of Vancouver celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The timing could not have been less auspicious, as the city and the province sought relief from the depression that had been plaguing them since 1930. Social Credit, which claimed to have a remedy for this ‘poverty in the midst of plenty’, had established study groups in British Columbia as early as 1932 but attracted only a handful of members. The 1935 election of a Social Credit government in Alberta raised some questions in British Columbia about the Social Credit economic strategy, but the system remained a nebulous mystery to most British Columbians. Through the depression and war years, groups representing Social Credit in BC differed over its meaning. They came to view the problem of achieving Social Credit – whatever that entailed – as one which could only be solved by replicating Social Credit as set out in Douglas’ writings. Faced with disagreements about how to achieve their goal, members found it easier to form small factions than to compromise on fundamental issues. Factionalism is not confined to Social Credit organizations and has been noted as a general characteristic of movements.\(^{26}\) The purpose of discussing the movement’s form here is not to assert that British Columbia Social Credit was somehow unique in its factionalism followed by periods of internal goodwill, but to attempt to understand the longevity of its movement culture in spite of clear indications that devotion to the maintenance of Social Credit technique did nothing to advance its cause with the voting public.

“Easier to believe than to reflect”

This chapter discusses the early part of British Columbia Social Credit’s movement phase, noting that the movement directed much of its energy inward in an attempt to hold firmly to the letter of Social Credit philosophy. Consequently, it did not attract the large membership required to secure the kinds of changes – mainly the election of a government committed to monetary reform – that the achievement of Social Credit required in those days. In his study of Quebec’s Créditistes, another variant of Social Credit in Canada, Michael Stein argues for the following interpretation of movement dynamics:

[members] consider the economic (ie, ideological) goals to take precedence over its political and social goals; they consider themselves to be disciples of Major Douglas, ... they define the movement’s ends as reconstructive and reformist rather than merely oppositionist; and they view the tendency for the movement to split into factions as either a necessary evil caused by human frailties (of personality and ambition) or as a force for rejuvenation. There is a clear implication in such perceptions that the movement, its doctrine, and its goals transcend the individuals who belong to it.  

For essentially the same reasons, BC Social Credit had not become a popular movement by the end of the Second World War because it was perceived to ignore the interests of current and potential members in favour of espousing a system.

While movement status was an ideal platform from which to criticize the policies of the established parties and the CCF, internal acrimony arising over the movement’s direction and priorities and diversion of public attention toward the war effort virtually guaranteed that Social Credit in BC would fail when it ran candidates. By comparison, Alberta Social Credit’s movement phase was short, taking place during a severe depression. In addition, William Aberhart controlled

27 Stein, 156.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

the organization until the election of 1935 when it swept to power. Without a comparably unified political organization supported by a large group of members who saw their interests and personal philosophies reflected in the movement, Social Credit would struggle to find a wider audience in British Columbia.

Social Credit organizations faced two challenges: growth and solidarity. Few BC Social Crediters were able to call for a common policy because, for a long time, not all members viewed political action aimed at publicity and growth as the most useful way to proceed. Some favoured a strategy of educating people who had the power to effect necessary changes, and some favoured a more traditional political strategy of electing committed Social Crediters. The movement’s inability to agree upon a plan for achieving Social Credit, and its reluctance to take political action, kept it small, divided, and relatively innocuous for most of its early history.

During the early 1940s, Social Crediters in BC began to join organizations – including a national body formed in 1944 – that de-emphasized or submerged the more impracticable part of Douglas’ theory: the social dividend. However, parts of the BC movement remained closely affiliated with Douglas and his Social Credit Secretariat, headquartered in England, and thus firmly committed to the monetary aspects of Social Credit doctrine, but those factions were quite small. Tensions over how closely the movement should heed Douglas on such contentious issues as his anti-semitic beliefs kept the groups representing Social Credit in British Columbia divided, but active enough during the war years to prevent the movement’s dissolution. Though its literature addressed broadly defined social issues by the mid-1940s, Social Credit still appeared to many British Columbians to be mainly a radical program advocating substantial financial reforms during a time of recovery and prosperity.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

Origins and early years

On a small scale, Canadians had entertained monetary reform schemes long before the Douglas system gained prominence. An interesting example, with an important connection to the British Columbia Social Credit movement, was W.C. Paynter's 1895 experiment at Tantallon, NWT [later part of Saskatchewan], in which a group of settlers traded among themselves in their own currency. Paynter presented his pamphlet, *The Trumpet Call of National Currency*, unsuccessfully to various political organizations, including the Progressives in 1921 and the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section) in 1924.\(^{28}\) The pamphlet was in its third or fourth edition by the time Paynter's son Peer moved to Vancouver in 1931, the year before Social Credit first appeared in British Columbia in the form of a Social Credit study group, which Peer Paynter promptly joined.

Social Credit's route to British Columbia did not run through another part of Canada in the way that Peer Paynter's had. Major Douglas traveled to Ottawa in the early 1920s to explain his system to committees on Banking and Commerce and the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) government studied Social Credit intently during the 1920s and early 1930s, retaining Douglas to act as the government's "Principal Reconstruction Adviser."\(^{29}\) Neither of these brushes with Social Credit's originator stirred enough interest on the west coast to prompt the formation of Social Credit organizations. British Columbia's formal acquaintance with Social Credit began in 1932. The messenger was *Vancouver Sun* reporter Henry Torey,

\(^{28}\) Peer Paynter kept a copy of the 1932 edition in his file of authoritative material on Social Credit. PVP, box IV, Miscellaneous Material, Social Credit philosophy and policy. A cousin of Peer Paynter's called attention this tradition of reform in the family when attempting to curry favour with Social Credit's first Premier. Jack Anderson to W.A.C. Bennett, 16 July 1952, WACB, MG 1/2, 6/10, General Correspondence, July 1952.

who indulged his curiosity and wrote for information about Douglas' theory to The New English Weekly, a British periodical that was sympathetic to Social Credit. Torey and William Tutte, another Sun journalist, formed a study circle, known as the Douglas Social Credit Group, British Columbia Section. Tutte soon became the most prolific proponent of Social Credit in the province, writing a Social Credit manual or textbook and developing an extension course offered as a take-home introduction and guide to Social Credit.

The first formal attempts at collective study and promotion of the Douglas plan in British Columbia resembled the Alberta Social Credit movement's genesis in that small study groups, called Groups of Ten, were the points of entry for new members and the sites of frequent meetings. The similarity ended there. In Alberta, Aberhart had established a central advisory board to supervise the rapidly growing network of study groups, despite the fact that autonomous groups had no mandate from Douglas to seek each other out and form a political front. The British Columbia groups followed their British mentor in this respect by conducting independent study of Douglas Social Credit literature and holding smaller educational meetings, but only for a short time.

Douglas' brief visit to Vancouver in the spring of 1934 strengthened BC Social Crediters' determination to secure significant changes to the way credit was managed. Within two years, groups advocating Social Credit economic reform existed in Vancouver, Victoria, Nelson, and Duncan. In 1934, members of these BC study groups, described by journalists as “followers of [the] Douglas system”, convened at sparsely-attended sessions held in a Vancouver café. As might be

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31 Macpherson, 146.
32 Horsfield, 40.
expected, the keynote speakers at the October 1934 convention – both members of British Columbia Douglas groups – displayed keen interest in Douglas’ economic proposals, but they did not advocate a concerted political effort in the interest of achieving Social Credit. Barbara Horsfield contends that this convention led nowhere, and that the Vancouver group under Torey and Tutte remained the stronghold of Social Credit in the province for “several years” before Social Crediters attempted provincial organization.34 However, the charter Vancouver group did not hold a monopoly on activity. A Victoria group undertook educational work in that city through the mid-1930s and, in the non-partisan tradition of Douglas Social Credit, one of its most important activities was to lobby incumbent officials for the adoption of Social Credit techniques.35

The depression provided early meetings of the Douglas Crediters on Vancouver Island and the BC mainland with plenty of fodder for discussion. These meetings took an approach that was different from assemblies in Alberta, which had concluded that only an organization of Social Crediters committed to the installation of Social Credit principles could rescue Alberta from the depression.36 Of course, British Columbia’s Social Crediters viewed Social Credit theory with approval, but at their early meetings, the Douglas system was not presented dogmatically as the sole or perfect solution to humanity’s ills. According to Vancouver journalist William Rose, the Vancouver group carried on dispassionate debates about various schemes designed to reverse the cycle of depression and simply found the Douglas plan the most sound.37 A cautious press warned that

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34 Horsfield, 38, 40.
37 Rose interview in Horsfield, 39. According to former Social Credit League President, M.L.A., and cabinet minister Lyle Wicks, the Technocrats, believers in the scientific administration of all human
public confidence in such an unproven system, in such uninspiring times, could only be gained through positive proof of Social Credit's claims. As one columnist argued:

> It would all be most excellent if it would work. To the Social Credit League remains the task of convincing British Columbians that it will work. If the League can carry conviction, it should have no difficulty in winning power. But it must not forget that, pending the outcome of the Alberta experiment, all British Columbia is from Missouri.\(^{38}\)

At once, this editorial comment encapsulated the objective of BC’s Social Credit movement in the mid-1930s, and the most common conceptions about it. The movement sought to convince British Columbians that the Social Credit system could work, but it did not necessarily seek political power as its sister movement had in Alberta. In British Columbia, Social Credit was a solution to depression-era problems, but only for a small number of followers of Major C.H. Douglas. For them, the Douglas system was a powerful, universal method of economic management that should appeal to any thinking person. But the time and effort needed to understand Social Credit and participate fully in the movement, and the emergence of the CCF as the voice of labour in the early thirties, limited Social Credit's growth.

Social Credit in British Columbia was a movement intent on disseminating the Douglas technique, which it considered suitable for adoption by any government.\(^{39}\) The paradox of not applying a system which was designed to be implemented in a practical manner annoyed BC members like William Tutte, who

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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

wrote Douglas Social Credit for Canada in 1934. Tutte, considered the “Mentor” of Social Credit in British Columbia, confessed: “at nearly every public meeting which is held ... the question is asked: ‘How would you make this Social Credit Work?’ ‘What kind of legislation would it need?’ And to my mind it reveals a very legitimate curiosity.” At the same time, Alberta’s Social Credit movement grew rapidly, attracting national and international attention after being elected in 1935. A visit to Vancouver in late 1935 from an avowed supporter of Douglas’ theory, the Dean of Canterbury, Hewlett Johnston, shoved Social Credit further into the public limelight in BC, but it was clear that Johnston’s prayers were with the brave Albertans who had already made their leap of faith. Douglasites in BC like Tutte, who did not consider Aberhart’s administration to be true Social Credit, had difficulty keeping the curious from simply looking east for a ready example of Social Credit. One commentator suggested that even Premier T.D. Pattullo might be interested in doing more than studying the Social Credit example in Alberta:

The practical politician, like Mr. Pattullo, may see no more in Social Credit by his own unaided intellect than an enormous and incomprehensible system of bookkeeping. It is no matter. This incomprehensible thing landed Mr. Aberhart in office in Alberta, with fifty-six seats out of sixty-three in the Legislature. Mr. Pattullo can understand that.

However, Pattullo did not wait long to dismiss Social Credit as unworkable. Hope dwindled among members that British Columbia’s government would take to Social Credit. Being the proprietor of Social Credit in BC carried a great advantage for the movement, even following the system’s rejection at the hands

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41 “Social Credit: What it Will Do For You.”, speech by Very Rev. Hewlett Johnston, 2 October 1935, Vancouver Auditorium. UBCSC. Johnston was to gain fame as the “Red Dean” for his support of the British Labour Party in the 1940s.
42 “Their Open Minds.”, Province, 8 October 1935, 6.
of Pattullo’s economic advisors: “Mr. Pattullo’s experts have riddled this unidentified system with criticism, and perhaps, if we were told what it was, all the other Social Crediters would say it wasn’t the real thing.” The movement could reject studies – like Pattullo’s – into the feasibility of a Social Credit plan because it could argue that what the government was studying was not Social Credit as it should be implemented. BC Social Crediters followed this strategy in differentiating their model of Social Credit from the one presented in Alberta.

When Social Credit support reached flood tide in Alberta during 1935, some Douglas Social Crediters in British Columbia expressed their displeasure with Aberhart’s activities, claiming that Aberhart was not practising true Social Credit. In a brief submitted to the *Vancouver Sun*, Tutte and fellow Vancouver group member Milford Wright argued that Aberhart created a false impression of Social Credit for the public through his limited understanding of, and seeming disregard for, the Douglas system. Tutte and Wright objected also to the religious taint Aberhart gave the movement:

It is quite normal for a group of Douglas Social Credit adherents to have quite different reasons for their membership in the movement, in which, however, they can unite to achieve an economic end ... Mr. Aberhart has, perhaps in all sincerity created another Geneva with himself as its Calvin ... It is difficult to separate his religion from his “Social Credit” plan.

The failure of Alberta’s government to move quickly in implementing Social Credit financial reforms and its ‘de-secularization’ of the Douglas system raised an accusatory response in BC. One theorist has argued that a perceived divergence from the doctrine that is supposedly the basis for the movement’s very being often

44 “Brief of the Douglas Social Credit Group, British Columbia Section on the proposals of Aberhart.”, cited in Horsfield, 43.
leads to charges of impurity. In the BC Social Credit movement, early leaders exhibited strict adherence to Douglas and contempt for the liberties Aberhart had taken in Alberta. Thus, British Columbia Social Credit avoided identification with the Alberta movement for a short time.

Despite the movement's success in portraying BC Social Credit as doctrinaire and autonomous, more pragmatic members realized that some form of organization was necessary if what they viewed as Alberta's perverted, but well-publicized, example of Social Credit was to be countered in British Columbia. Certain members of the largest group in Vancouver opposed association at the provincial level on the grounds of Douglas' proscription against entry into politics and fear of the negative publicity that poor election results would surely bring. However, with the satisfaction of public curiosity in mind, the Social Credit League of British Columbia (SCLBC) was formed late in 1935; the League, in turn, created a separate political arm. The creation of a body that aimed to promote Douglas's policies by electoral means indicates the emergence of an important division in the movement over how Social Credit was to be achieved: through education or by political action.

In his biography of W.A.C. Bennett, David Mitchell argues that the Social Credit League of British Columbia was created because of the poor showing by Social Credit candidates in BC ridings during the 1935 federal election. In Mitchell's view, "many B.C. followers of Major Douglas felt that a Province-wide

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45 Leo Zakuta, A Protest Movement BeCalmed: A Study of Change in the CCF. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, 16-18. Zakuta argues that this same type of wrangling took place in the CCF, where to diverge from doctrine usually encouraged the labelling of dissenters as right-wing.
46 "BC Social Credit League Formed.", Province, 16 October 1935, 23. Horsfield, 44-46. It chartered the British Columbia Social Credit League as its political arm and the press commonly used that name when referring to League activities, but official publications bore the name Social Credit League of British Columbia. Social Credit League of British Columbia, Social Credit for British Columbia: Official Manual, 1937. Vancouver: 1937. Lyle Wicks writes that in 1949, the charter members of the SCLBC allowed the use of the name British Columbia Social Credit League, even though both names had been registered under the Societies Act. Wicks to the author, June 1994.
organization was needed if Social Credit was going to have any impact."\textsuperscript{47} However, at this early stage, members of the BC movement thought that Social Credit, \textit{as they conceived of it}, was a national remedy being misrepresented in Alberta. Convinced that Social Credit legislation would be disallowed if a province tried to enact it, and fearful of the dual money system Aberhart was proposing,\textsuperscript{48} the most outspoken BC Social Crediters sought to defend both the scale and nature of orthodox Douglas theory in Canada, and thought that action by Social Crediters who were more rational than Aberhart might be the only way to maintain it. This strategy would require at least the education of incumbent politicians, if not the installation of Social Credit representatives in Victoria and Ottawa.

By 1936, the keepers of the Douglas flame in British Columbia perceived an immediate threat to their hegemony from Aberhart, who usually visited the west coast once or twice each year. Not long after Alberta Social Credit’s landslide victory in 1935, Aberhart met with William Tutte to discuss the future of Social Credit in Canada. The meeting confirmed Tutte’s suspicion that Aberhart had at best a tenuous grasp of orthodox Social Credit principles, but the Alberta Premier declared that he had “no desire to go into another province unless it was absolutely necessary.” On the strength of this promise, the Social Credit League of BC made Aberhart an honorary vice-president.\textsuperscript{49} Disaffected members of the League helped him break his promise within a year. They aimed to recreate the unity of Alberta’s organization by somehow confederating the two most visible

\textsuperscript{48} In \textit{Social Credit for Canada}, 259-260, Tutte warns of inflation, and “bad” provincial money driving out “good” federal money if one province were to issue its own currency.
\textsuperscript{49} “Social Credit Moves in BC.”, \textit{Times}, 3 January 1936, 3. Interviews with William Rose and Stanley Wilcox, in Horsfield, 47.
factions in the BC movement: committed Douglasites who favoured a non-partisan educational role; and members who, like Aberhart, were partial to an unorthodox, evangelistic interpretation of Social Credit.

In 1936, Aberhart had made a "secret" trip to Vancouver where he met with Social Crediters interested in affiliating the BC movement with an obviously larger, more persuasive, and dynamic Alberta League. One of these dissatisfied BC members, John Loveseth, had corresponded with Aberhart for most of 1936, urging him to "take the lead in B.C. as the first step to spreading to nation-wide activity." The itinerant premier appointed Loveseth as his representative in BC and ostensibly hatched a plan to finance the takeover of the BC movement from Alberta, linking the two provincial organizations. Aberhart exhorted Social Crediters in BC to subscribe to the plan:

If you once get Social Credit-minded, there will be no hope for you; there is no turning back. ... Why don't you pick 100 of your finest and best honest men and say to them: 'We will stand by you.' If you do, with all your advantages, with everything in your favour, I would not be surprised to see B.C. beating Alberta. How lovely that will be to know we two provinces were a united people through Social Credit. We would rise or sink together.

The name of Aberhart's venture was the British Columbia Social Credit Union. He set up an advisory board to govern the Union's actions and agreed to channel funds to the BC organization through one of his sons-in-law residing in the province. Division plagued the new organization almost immediately, as at least two crucial members resigned. By late November 1936, Aberhart had declined to take any further responsibility for the movement. A 1937 suit for back wages

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brought against Aberhart by Loveseth and another member of the BC Social Credit Union's administration fully exposed the ambitious, yet covert, nature of the doomed Union's leadership.\(^{53}\)

The Social Credit Union did not perish without effect. Rumours of its intentions in the electoral field forced the now more politically-conscious Social Credit League of British Columbia to produce a constitution, which it rolled out at its first convention in 1936. Ironically, this document proved to be a mixture of Douglas and Aberhart-style doctrine, coming as it did from an organization with renewed Douglastite enthusiasm\(^{54}\) but exposed to the Albertan example of Social Credit politics. The advent of the Social Credit Union also prompted the League to nominate candidates for a projected 1937 provincial election. Local study groups were to nominate their own candidates, subject only to the approval of the provincial executive,\(^{55}\) which remained the final arbiter of the potential candidate's command of Social Credit principles.

As they undertook political action for the first time on the provincial level, League members aimed to "place before the electors of the province a distinctly B.C. Social Credit policy" but still held out a friendly hand to the only Social Credit government in Canada.\(^{56}\) The translation of Social Credit theory into policy was closer to reality in Alberta than anywhere else, and political success in Alberta, though considered unnecessary for the achievement of Social Credit by some, was looked upon with favour by the BC movement, especially in view of repeated

\(^{53}\) Aberhart to Loveseth, 26 November 1936, cited in "Ex-King Liked ...", \textit{Province}, 9 March 1937, 3; Horsfield, 48; Robin, 34. Another organization, the Social Credit Co-operative Association headed by a Mr. Morgan, was mentioned in a story about the League's nominations, but disappeared quickly from the record. "B.C. Social Crediters Nominate 11 for House." \textit{Province}, 27 November, 1936, 1, 6.


failures to convince Liberal Premier Pattullo that Social Credit was a strategy available to any political party.\textsuperscript{57} In 1937, Pattullo presented his Work and Wages program, concocted especially for the provincial election. This plan, which was not geared toward Social Credit's aim of balancing purchasing power and production, was a clear signal to those advocating the achievement of Social Credit via education that selling their proposals to an electorally successful political party would be more difficult than they had expected.

Although the Social Credit League of British Columbia had emerged as the hardiest of Social Credit bodies in the province, two other factions continued to function. A mid-1930s turn in Douglas' writings had inspired the distinction between these groups, one led by William Rose, the other by Vans Macdonald. Shortly before the League formed in BC, Douglas began to write about more than economics, urging that an expression of popular will leading to the adoption of Social Credit be the goal of Social Crediters worldwide.\textsuperscript{58} In BC, A.V. McNeill, an enthusiastic student of Douglas' writings, first detected this turn and introduced these more comprehensive works to the Vancouver meetings. His leadership spawned debate regarding political matters where only monetary theory had been discussed previously. After the outbreak of World War II, Douglas included the dismantling of a Zionist financial monopoly as an item on the Social Credit calendar and religion became a topic of debate as well.\textsuperscript{59} The Macdonald and Rose factions evolved in response, with Rose's group committed to economic


\textsuperscript{59} This trend toward what we now view as the conspiratorial or anti-semitic side of the Douglas canon culminated in \textit{The "Land for the Chosen People" Racket}. Stratford-on-Avon: K.R.P. Publications, 1943.
theory alone and Macdonald’s willing to consider whatever Douglas might care to write about.\textsuperscript{60}

Despite these internal problems, the 1937 provincial election was the first for which the BC Social Crediters could prepare a group of candidates or issue a manifesto outlining League policy, and the Social Credit League of British Columbia took the opportunity to do both. The press reported that except for talk of a dividend and a just price for consumer goods, the League’s platform was “little different” from those of other parties that were promoting “good government.”\textsuperscript{61} A closer examination of the manifesto reveals that the League made its proposals for good government without substantial attention to how they would be carried out, concluding with a reiteration of Social Credit’s concern for the province’s economy and what could be done to improve it. The Manifesto declared that:

... the whole force and intention of this Programme of the Social Credit League of British Columbia is directed to this final objective: British Columbia’s real wealth, and its power to produce an ever increasing quantity of real wealth, for the full use and benefit of the people of British Columbia.\textsuperscript{62}

A section in the manual offered answers to bothersome questions that Social Crediters might face while campaigning. Of the twenty-seven scenarios it laid out, twenty-five dealt with Social Credit dividends, credit, or monetary reform.\textsuperscript{63} This number indicated an inability to convince other political organizations to adopt Social Credit ideas and a clear bias toward winning converts to the movement through the process of reasoned debate, not through emotional appeals. The

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\item \textsuperscript{60} Horsfield, 56. The debate continued until 1948, and was considered counter-productive by more progressive members. Wicks to the author, June 1994.
\item \textsuperscript{63} SCLBC, \textit{Official Manual, 1937.}, 5-8.
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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

League still considered Douglas’ financially well-adjusted state its ultimate goal and recognized that the public identified it chiefly with monetary policy. Peer Paynter, one of eighteen Social Credit candidates, admitted that the organization’s primary objective was publicity, a fortunate choice in view of its abysmal showing at the polls where it gathered about one percent of the popular vote.64

Outside British Columbia, Aberhart’s falling out with Douglas and Social Credit’s British headquarters in 1936 fueled discontent among Alberta Social Crediters. A number of government members criticized him for his inability or unwillingness to implement Social Credit reforms within eighteen months, as he had promised following the 1935 election.65 Forced to appeal to Douglas in 1937 for a team of Social Credit experts, Aberhart received a tandem who reasserted Douglas theory in Alberta through the creation of an extra-governmental Social Credit Board66 that introduced legislation – eventually disallowed as outside provincial jurisdiction – aimed at establishing Social Credit in that province. Horsfield argues that the formation of a Social Credit board in Alberta brought the Alberta and British Columbia movements closer together, noting that the BC League resumed its practise of inviting members of the Alberta legislature and Social Credit Members of Parliament west for speaking engagements, and that Aberhart had become an eager student of Douglas’ entire canon by the time he died in 1943, taking particular interest in combatting a supposed international conspiracy which was running the financial system for its own gain.67

Before the creation of the Social Credit Board in Alberta, members in BC

64 Mitchell, W.A.C., 116. Account of the 1937 election from Reimer’s interview with Paynter, PABC [now BCARS] #1175, 1977. The Vancouver Sun reported that the Social Credit League had nominated twenty candidates. “All Parties Begin Real Campaign Next Week.” Sun, 1 May 1937, 1.
65 Macpherson, 169-171.
66 Finkel, 60.
67 Horsfield, 55.
had objected strenuously to the Aberhart regime's sloth in enacting Social Credit legislation because they realized that the Alberta government's actions, Douglasite or not, were under intense scrutiny,\textsuperscript{68} and that the fate of further Social Credit action in Canada, political or not, hung in the balance. Although C.B. Macpherson presents the federal disallowance of Alberta's banking and credit legislation in 1938 as a tactical triumph for the Aberhart regime in that it proved, to the Board's satisfaction, the extent of a conspiracy against Social Credit,\textsuperscript{69} its effects on Social Credit organizations outside that province have received little attention. While disallowance likely hurt the electoral efforts of Saskatchewan's Social Credit organization in 1938,\textsuperscript{70} its impact in British Columbia was mitigated somewhat by BC Social Credit's relatively accurate homegrown prophecy of disallowance: Mentor William Tutte's early pessimism about a provincial challenge to federal monetary laws.\textsuperscript{71} BC Social Crediters were not taken by surprise, and disallowance itself did not seem to alter the BC movement's organization substantially. The League issued no statements expressing its dismay at the court decision, yet the subsequent period, roughly concurrent with the Second World War, saw a decrease in unified political activity for Social Credit within the province.

\textit{War and pieces}

By the beginning of World War II, Douglas had treated a broad range of topics in his works, and unity at the provincial or federal levels based solely on

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\textsuperscript{69} Macpherson, 178.
\textsuperscript{70} Finkel, 65.
adherence to Douglas’s ideas had become very difficult. Social Crediters throughout Canada would continue, as the Macdonald and Rose groups had done in British Columbia, to extract from the Douglas canon the parts of Social Credit they wanted to pursue and to form their own associations, however small, to keep their versions of Social Credit pure. Even before this uncertain period for Social Credit in British Columbia, those in the League who sought to politicize the movement expressed concern that too much talk about religion and such peripheral matters had already led to a decline in Social Credit’s public profile in BC, pointing to the poor results of the 1937 provincial election as evidence.

In response to these complaints, members who identified strongly with Major Douglas’ Social Credit Secretariat in Liverpool sent for instructions from the Major, who told them to abandon technical details and “appeal to the emotions of the people to get them to demand action in their constituencies.” With the Major’s advice in mind, Vans Macdonald had by early 1938 become chairman of a breakaway faction called the United Democrats. In 1939, at the invitation of the United Democrats, W.D. Herridge spoke in Vancouver. In New Democracy, a scheme he was soon to promote throughout Canada, Herridge aimed at monetary reform and advocated a united effort, “a war party”, comprised mainly of Social Crediters and the CCF. This last proposition was a bit much for Aberhart, who spoke to small crowds in Vancouver in August 1940, and for most BC Social Crediters as well. By 1940, British Columbian adherents to Herridge’s New

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72 William Rose’s faction urged others within the BC Social Credit movement to stick with Douglas’ original plan for monetary reform rather than concerning themselves with exactly who was causing economic problems. Horsfield, 56, 59.
73 Horsfield, 59.
Democracy had recanted and the United Democrats had appropriated its name. The United Democrats, now called BC New Democracy, lasted only a few months.\textsuperscript{75}

After flirting with Herridge's ill-fated scheme,\textsuperscript{76} Aberhart masterminded another of his own, the Democratic Monetary Reform Association (DMRO). Through it he hoped to unify Social Credit organizations in Canada. The DMRO was controlled by Aberhart, from Alberta, in no uncertain terms. It featured odd rituals, gave a prominent place to prayer and, to express the popular will, encouraged the formation of 'unions of electors' in every province except Alberta.\textsuperscript{77} In BC, Social Crediters had a choice of three national organizations to join, and many Social Credit League of BC members disappeared into either the DMRO; the short-lived, British Israelite-dominated, National Dividend Association; or the Federation of Canadian Voters, which included the core of the Macdonald group, which eagerly supported Douglas' anti-semitic theories. The DMRO died with Aberhart in 1943. The Federation folded in 1944.\textsuperscript{78}

One wartime Social Credit group in BC, the Perfect Circle, was a haven for those with a demonstrated knowledge of Douglas Social Credit principles, and very little is known about its formation or dissolution. It had around thirty members, including long-time Social Crediter Peer Paynter. Initiation consisted of finding one's way through a maze of doors labeled with Social Credit's basic

\textsuperscript{75} Hallett, 320; Horsfield, 61.
\textsuperscript{76} Horsfield (61) sets the date for the DMRO's formation in late 1937, but both Finkel (74) and Macpherson (204) claim that this body was formed in 1941. Lyle Wicks asserts that it was formed in Winnipeg in 1940. Clearly, it did not attract a large membership or attain a lasting significance within the national Social Credit movement.
\textsuperscript{77} The union of electors was a Douglasite device for ensuring popular control of elected assemblies. Members of the organization desiring to put Social Credit into action were to vote for the candidates who pledged to pursue that goal alone.
\textsuperscript{78} The intransigence of the Quebec delegation was also blamed for the failure of the DMRO. The Macdonald group formed the Armed Forces Union, which they ran for about two years, from September 1944 to August 1946. Horsfield, 61, 70.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

tenets and opposing philosophies. If initiates chose the doors with the proper responses, they would become members. Before the Second World War ended, the movement was attracting a new type of member: those interested not only in the technical details of Social Credit, as the members of the Perfect Circle were, but also its record in Alberta and its more general promise to champion the cause of the individual against big government. One of these members was Lyle Wicks, a Vancouver street railwayman whose experience in joining Social Credit has been vaguely described as an almost religious conversion. In 1944, Wicks joined a study group in Vancouver after rejecting socialism and found it an organization that could offer something other than the theoretical mire he saw in socialist discourse. Inside and outside the movement, supporters of free-enterprise looked beyond the war, wondering how to manage the postwar economy and how to dismantle the structure of rationing, price and wage controls, planned production, and government intervention that was helping to prosecute and ultimately win it.

During wartime, the federal government had fixed its attention on supplying Canada’s war effort, and in BC, a Coalition government had been formed at the end of 1941 in the name of efficiency and domestic stability. Public sympathy had waned for experimental, unconstitutional financial methods like Social Credit as war production and virtually full employment diminished the cry for income support through dividends or other artificial means. “The coast province just now is vastly more interested in doing its bit to win the war than it is

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79 Mitchell, W.A.C., 117-118.; Interview with Paynter, PABC #1175.
80 Robin, 105. Vancouver Province, 14 March 1952, 2.; Wicks considers his experience more of an “event of understanding.” L.B. Kuffert, Interview with Lyle Wicks, 17 February 1994, Victoria. [hereafter Wicks interview].
81 Harold Brown, President of British Columbia Federation of Trade and Industry, to V.W. Odhum, 6 June 1944. Victor W. Odhum Papers, National Archives of Canada.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

in monetary reform”, reported one prairie journalist, “and if the war isn’t won, none ... will be needed anyway.” Social Crediters shared a burden with other Canadians during wartime: they were busier. Working longer hours, volunteering, and surrendering portions of their incomes through war bonds, Canadians of all political stripes were less able to participate in the activities – such as attending meetings – upon which movements thrived. As Lyle Wicks recalls of his association with Social Credit late in the war: “it’s a wonder we did anything.”

Most wartime efforts to impose some order upon a fractious and enfeebled BC movement sought a federation of Social Crediters across Canada, or at least viewed action in the federal field as the most promising arena for the achievement of Social Credit. In 1944, as the war’s tide was turning, proponents of a national Social Credit organization convened in Toronto, calling themselves the Social Credit Association of Canada (SCAC). By the end of the year, British Columbia’s chief delegate to the Toronto meetings, Major A.H. Jukes, D.S.O., O.B.E. – a retired military man who had served in India, a veteran among BC Social Crediters, an “intellectual” and a self-styled “farmer” who wrote and distributed Social Credit pamphlets from his home near Saanichton on Vancouver Island – had helped charter a provincial group, the Social Credit Association of Canada, British Columbia Section, (SCAC-BCS) which he would take over by 1946. This latest attempt at forming a catch-all organization in BC came under immediate criticism from those in the movement who disagreed with its priorities. Vans Macdonald’s study group, among others, chose to keep its distance from the new

83 Wicks interview.
84 Wicks to the author, June 1994.
provincial organization, preferring the ‘union of electors’ strategy adopted by the Quebec Social Crediters, which called for an education-oriented body, less centralized than the SCAC or its provincial affiliates, and less concerned with contesting elections.86 That strategy, given the results of the 1945 provincial election, the first contested under any sort of Social Credit banner since 1937, seemed sound. With less than half of one percent of the popular vote in 1945, the movement had some public-relations work ahead of it. William Rose, the most vocal of the members who favoured the exclusive pursuit of monetary reform through education, wrote a four-part defense of old-time Douglas theory that was sharply critical of national SCAC president Solon Low, who seemed, in Rose’s estimation, to gloss over the uncertain economic picture in favour of railing against the spread of socialism.87

The advance of socialism had been a matter of concern for many in BC since the CCF had begun to gain an appreciable share of public support in the mid-1930s. A Coalition government was formed between the Liberals and Conservatives in 1941 as a war measure, but by the end of the war, keeping the CCF out had become the main reason for the traditional or ‘old-line’ parties to maintain the Coalition.88 Concurrently, visions of communist infiltration found a home among Social Crediters nationally and in BC. By the mid-forties, the epithet ‘communist’ rivaled ‘bankers’ toady’ as the most effective way to defame a Social Crediter, and the left had become a convenient scapegoat. Solon Low defended Social Credit rather unconvincingly against frequently-levelled accusations of anti-

"Easier to believe than to reflect"

semitism by blaming such charges on Communists:

"The attack against the Social Credit movement as anti-Semitic which appears in the Jewish magazine "Today" in the form of an editorial, is but one incident in an organized campaign promoted by Communists, and apparently having the backing of a powerful section of Canadian Jewry." 89

In British Columbia, some leading Social Crediters were charged with being Communists. Peer Paynter was tried and cleared in 1946 by an official inquiry. 90 Paynter had been president of the SCAC-BCS but abandoned that office "as he felt his name was somewhat under a cloud", and later swore an affidavit that he had never been a Communist even though he had been exonerated. 91 William Rose, also a longtime Social Crediter, did not share Paynter's good fortune. In 1946, a member of the SCAC-BCS found a letter addressed to Rose and brought it immediately to Vans Macdonald, who forwarded it to the English headquarters of the Social Credit Secretariat. The letter was from a Benjamin Gateman and warned Communist Party operatives, of which Rose was apparently one, to redouble their efforts to keep the BC Social Credit movement small. The letter was reproduced in its entirety in a British publication, The Social Crediter, and contained some damning evidence against Rose:

We must never be caught asleep again such as the key men in Alberta were. ... Our concern [in BC] is with the manner in which the theories of Douglas are being disseminated. Under no circumstances must it appear that the movement is being sabotaged. ... On the face [conventions] appear quite all right, but they are dangerous. Never [allow] groups [to be] formed so

90 Mitchell, W.A.C., 120. Mitchell also claims that Eric Martin was accused of the same offence, but Lyle Wicks, who was in contact with Low, recalls that Martin's role was one of giving evidence. Wicks to the author, June 1994.
that accredited delegates will attend. Once the groups get out of control, your trouble starts. ... Decentralization of power and Anti-Supreme State are favourite themes. ... Aberhart grew dissatisfied with the growth of S.C. in B.C., and attempted to form another party. How this move was frustrated is known to you. If the disgruntled in B.C. should show any signs of being impatient and should at any time accuse the key men of being inactive and in some cases, openly accuse them of being Communists, point to published letters and addresses to refute such accusations. ... 92

Rose denied that the letter was his, claiming it had been planted among his papers. But, when questioned by Solon Low, Rose admitted that he had been "engaged by the Communists to oppose all movements that would harm the Communists."93 In her account of the incident, Barbara Horsfield asserts that the letter was a plant intended to divide Social Credit in BC, but L.D. Byrne, named in the letter but not implicated as a Communist, considered it genuine. Rose made no efforts to rejoin the movement.94

Genuine or not, accusations such as those against Rose did nothing to solidify either the movement's grip on its own future or on the future of British Columbia. Such accusations forestalled the completion of what Lawrence Goodwyn has identified as two important stages of movement-building: recruitment and politicization. For most of the war years, Social Credit had been underground, overshadowed by Canada's war effort and divided — by choice — into tiny and often short-lived factions. It failed to recruit a mass following under a single banner and failed to create a unified means to express its discontent, although it had done an admirable job of educating its members. Goodwyn posits education as a step resulting from successful recruitment but preceding

93 Mrs. F.E. Harris, secretary of SCAC-BCS, to Macdonald, 18 June 1947, cited in Horsfield, 68.
94 L.D. Byrne, note attached to Horsfield manuscript, 1953. Wicks interview.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

politicization,\textsuperscript{95} but in movements like Social Credit which involve a technical system of reform, the education and recruitment phases may be almost simultaneous. The effort to root out Communism, while establishing the movement ideologically as thoroughly anti-Communist, stole valuable time away from activities to recruit members and yoke the strength of their numbers by creating at least a quasi-political institution. As early as 1937, Douglas had advised groups in BC to concentrate on raising an emotional response in the public, but Social Crediters in BC would not understand the full value of this directive for more than a decade.

"Easier to believe than to reflect"

Table 1: British Columbia Social Credit Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Reason(s) for dissolution</th>
<th>Prominent member(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Social Credit, BC Section (DSC-BCS)</td>
<td>1934-1935</td>
<td>affiliation of small groups federated by SCLBC, 1935</td>
<td>Tutte, Torey brothers, Paynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit Union (SCU)</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>internal strife, difficulty recruiting members</td>
<td>Loveseth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect Circle</td>
<td>1938-1944</td>
<td>members migrate to SCAC-BCS</td>
<td>Paynter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Democrats/ BC New Democracy</td>
<td>1938-1940</td>
<td>internal strife</td>
<td>Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit Association of Canada, BC Section (SCAC-BCS)</td>
<td>1944-1950</td>
<td>Jukes defies constitution, BCSCL formed as alternative</td>
<td>Jukes, Wicks, Paynter, Rose [to 1946]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia Social Credit League (BCSCL)</td>
<td>1949-</td>
<td>becomes Social Credit Party</td>
<td>Wicks, Martin, Paynter, Worley, Bennett, Rolston</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: National Social Credit Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Reason(s) for dissolution</th>
<th>Prominent BC member(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democracy</td>
<td>1939-1940</td>
<td>associated with CCF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Dividend Association (NDA)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>formation of FCV?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation of Canadian Voters (FCV)</td>
<td>1940-44</td>
<td>formation of SCAC</td>
<td>Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Monetary Reform Organization (DMRO)</td>
<td>1941-1943</td>
<td>Aberhart dies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit Association of Canada (SCAC)</td>
<td>1944-</td>
<td>absorbed by national Social Credit Party</td>
<td>Jukes, Paynter, Wicks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though movement culture still constrained BC Social Credit early in the postwar era – a condition exemplified in the concern over preserving Social Credit doctrine from perceived communist infiltration – it edged steadily toward politics. By 1946, members eager to see a Social Credit government in British Columbia had become more vocal and more powerful in the movement. Members like Lyle Wicks, who had joined in 1944, longtime Social Crediters like Peer Paynter, William Savage, Claude and Helena Powell, and Eric Martin could no longer see the purpose in merely hoping that the public would be drawn to Social Credit theory and lobby their elected representatives to enact the proper legislation. Some prominent members like William Rose and Vans Macdonald became estranged from the vanguard of the movement; others, such as Major Jukes, became relics of a bygone era, faithful to lofty Social Credit ideals that had little political clout in British Columbia. Organizational changes during the late 1940s, primarily the formation of the British Columbia Social Credit League in 1949, yielded a more dynamic movement that employed political language and tactics more frequently.

As it grew, the British Columbia Social Credit League became less occupied with doctrine and more concerned with gaining the power to enact its reform program, though it relished its image as a grassroots organization that conducted its affairs from the ‘bottom up’. As it grew, the League also attracted some politically experienced members, led by W.A.C. Bennett who joined in late 1951. Not all of these members became candidates. The number of migrants from
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Alberta to BC and the movement’s association with extra-provincial Social Credit bodies may have affected BC Social Credit’s development in a positive way, but its long experience as a small movement and its emerging sense of the pivotal issues in BC society kept it from becoming as dependent on external stimuli as some have claimed. The balance it found between politics and movement fervor made its first full-scale attempt at election a heady ride with sobering consequences.

Revival of the League

After Peer Paynter left his position as its president in 1946 “under a cloud”, BC’s Social Credit Association (SCAC-BCS) came under the direction of Major A.H. Jukes, whose manner of administrating fostered an unfriendly environment. Lyle Wicks recalls that Jukes was an unusual person and resented those Social Crediters, inside and outside British Columbia, who opposed his judgment. “From an idealistic point of view,” says Wicks, “[Jukes] had a good grasp of Social Credit and he’d express it, but he was a tyrant.” No one in the movement disputed Jukes’ command of Social Credit principles, and most considered him an intellectual.96 But Jukes did not attempt to address the situation of British Columbians as closely as he might have. He preferred to view the provincial organization as his part of the world Social Credit campaign.97 A military background led him to conduct Association business in a manner that was too dictatorial for many Social Crediters. Jack Adam objected to the executive’s handling of the 1946 convention and called for direct democracy to replace the delegate system, adding that the Association was being handled contrary to Social Credit belief:

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96 Wicks interview.
97 In his short-lived journal, Pacific Current, Jukes treated such topics as the United Nations, Social Credit in China and Good Samaritans, leaving the BC news and opinion for smaller articles on the back pages.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Altogether it appears to be anything but a Social Credit convention. It savours in essence, of totalitarianism, conceived in Fascism, born in Naziism, weaned into Socialism and applied as would Communism.98

Lyle Wicks became vice-president of the Association by 1947, owing mainly to the ultra-Douglasite Vans Macdonald’s reluctance to join. Wicks’ rapid advance to an executive position heralded the advance of the pragmatic Social Crediter: eager to test the waters of politics yet determined to maintain Social Credit’s movement status. The arrival of Wicks, and others like him, was to set the stage for an important rift in the movement that would result in the birth of BC Social Credit’s most dynamic and unified organization. In 1948, Jukes refused to call a convention, thereby violating the Association’s constitution which required at least one such meeting per year. The Vancouver Area Council, formed in 1948, and later the national SCAC, condemned Jukes’ tactics. In January 1949, the National Council advised Wicks to call a convention of the provincial body.99

Both sides dug in with their respective stories. Supported by the Vancouver Area Council, Wicks stated that Jukes had acted improperly by asking that dues for a hastily-called 1949 meeting be prepaid, and that the Major had published a Social Credit newspaper without consulting the membership.100 In his newspaper, Jukes claimed that the Association’s members had decided conventions need not be annual, that as Provincial President he alone possessed the right to speak on

98 John S. Adam to SCAC (BC Section) Executive, 15 March 1946, PVP, box I, Correspondence, 1946-1950. All subsequent entries marked PVP or WACB are from the correspondence files of the Peer Vernon Paynter or the W.A.C. Bennett Papers, unless otherwise noted. Paynter’s correspondence comes from box I, Bennett’s from MG 1/2, 5/9 through 6/11, (16 March 1951 – 30 July 1952).
99 Mitchell, W.A.C., 121.; Horsfield reports that Wicks attended the provincial convention in 1948, but none was held that year. Horsfield, 70.; Wicks interview.
100 “BC Socred Split Looms” Province, 5 March 1949, 21. Jukes also chose members to manage the convention and schedule resolutions; tasks that would normally be delegated and debated in an executive meeting. Social Credit Association of Canada in British Columbia, Notice of Provincial Convention. (1949).
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

behalf of the provincial organization, and that any difficulties the BC Association had could be attributed to “problems of human adjustment.”101 Though they may have agreed with Jukes on the latter point, his opponents within the movement recognized that the Social Credit program for BC also had to change if it was to gain representation in a democratically elected legislature. The Vancouver Area Council stressed the importance of progressive action and obtaining results, a stance that led them to seem less insistent upon the letter of Social Credit law and more closely tied to the national Social Credit organization.102

When the Vancouver group boycotted Jukes' March 1949 convention, the Major recognized that continued unity under an SCAC-BC banner would be unlikely. His Vancouver Island-based group later chose to affiliate with Douglas’s Social Credit Secretariat in Liverpool.103 About two weeks after Jukes' convention, Wicks, Paynter, Martin, and forty-eight other members held their own in Vancouver.104 They could not take over the name Social Credit Association of Canada, BC Section, because Jukes had chartered it in 1944 and had not formally renounced it. Instead, they founded the British Columbia Social Credit League.105 It is a testament to the enmity between Jukes' followers and the Wicks-led League that one of Jukes' group accused Wicks of keeping the date of the 1948 national convention – which was never held – a secret from Jukes,106 who was then vice-president of the national Social Credit Association and would have been notified.

101 Pacific Current, v. 1, no. 1, January 1949, 3,7. HMT.
102 Wicks interview.
103 "Which is Real Convention? Major Jukes Holds His Own." Province, 22 March 1949, 5.
104 British Columbia Social Credit League, List of Delegates, Vancouver Convention, 1949. Other estimates of the number attending this first convention run as high as seventy or eighty.
105 William Rose, by that time out of the movement, had kept the old Social Credit League of British Columbia name from Jukes' group, whom he considered "Fascists" with anti-Semitic views, by letting its charter lapse after Jukes had chosen a name. Rose interview in Horsfield, 73. Another account has the charter members of the old SCLBC agreeing to let the new organization use the name BC Social Credit League. Wicks interview.
106 Jack Adam interview in Horsfield, 71. Wicks interview.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

of any such meetings.

The split widened as the League revealed a more politically-oriented and dynamic plan than Jukes' strategy. Jukes supported the Douglasite Union of Electors idea, which called on members of Social Credit organizations to vote for candidates, regardless of their affiliation, who promised to propose and vote for Social Credit legislation if elected. In his report to the first British Columbia Social Credit League convention, Wicks produced a litany of charges, accusing the Major of being unco-operative and insensitive to the emerging protest potential of Social Credit in BC. In concluding, Wicks urged delegates to

keep our eye on the ball, remembering that while errorless ball sometimes wins ball games, in the main we need to make hits to become winners. There is a definite place for defensive tactics, but let us knock out at the world[,] demonstrating the true worth of Social Credit, thus making a hit for all the time.107

In accordance with Wicks' message to knock out at the world, the League's first public act was to nominate candidates for the upcoming 1949 provincial election. The League barely met the deadline for accreditation, and although it was clearly the most militant of the Social Credit organizations to date, it suffered from the chronic BC Social Credit ailment: a small membership. Its financial condition was desperate as well. A lawyer friendly to the cause charged only $75 for registering the new League as an official society, yet the League took months to honour this debt.108

In the 1949 election, Major Jukes and his associates contested a dozen selected ridings as the Union of Electors. Accounts of this election erroneously put Jukes' group ahead of the League in the number of candidates nominated,

108 Wicks interview.
claiming that the Union fielded twelve to the League's nine, and that "other
disaffected Socreds, though sympathetic to the new League, united under the
banner of Social Credit and placed seven candidates." 109 This group, known
officially as Social Credit Party candidates, were actually members of the League.
Among the "sympathetic" candidates running under the Social Credit Party name
were League president Wicks and vice-president Eric Martin. Because of a shortage
of time and the whirl of re-organization, all sixteen names were not listed under
one banner. 110

The League began its campaign as soon as nominations went out, but it did
not venture into virgin territory. It concentrated on the areas which had given
Social Credit the most support in the past: the Vancouver, Fraser Valley,
Okanagan, and West Kootenay regions. 111 The League paid more attention to
electoral boundaries than it had previously, preferring individual polls as
convenient targets. Once a group formed to represent one polling area, the next
would be formed, if possible, around an adjacent poll, with the intention of
covering the constituency in this manner. 112 In the past, Social Crediters had been
satisfied to form groups anywhere they could. The League and Jukes' Union of
Electors recognized each other's strongholds and respected them. League
organizers avoided Vancouver Island and did not nominate any candidates there,
while the Union contested only two mainland ridings, three-seat Vancouver-Point
Grey and a CCF bastion, Vancouver East. Only the Coalition and the CCF

109 Mitchell, W.A.C., 121. Judith Antonik-Bennett and Frederike Verspoor, British Columbia
213-218.
111 Paynter interview in Horsfield, 77.
112 Even before the League's formation, the Vancouver Area Council fulfilled the role of organizing
the smaller study groups within the Vancouver area. Wicks, "Social Credit (1945-1949)", 4.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

contested all forty-eight ridings. The League did not consider its work in areas without a sufficient member base or a constituency association advanced enough to call for nominations. Outside the Lower Mainland and Island regions, the work of organizing had to be accomplished as much by literature and broadcast as through local meetings. During previous campaigns, Social Credit’s small membership disqualified it from obtaining CBC radio time granted free to larger political organizations. However, because of the membership growth which began in 1949, the League was granted these broadcasts at a time when its finances would still not allow it to fund such endeavours.

Despite more opportunities for publicity, the newly-constituted League posted disappointing results in the 1949 provincial election. However, in the battle over which group spoke for Social Credit in the province, the “Douglasite and other fringe groups” effectively disappeared after this “one last fling,” leaving the field to the League. A generally heightened profile for Social Credit in BC and the effective takeover of the movement by the League, significant internal developments, hardly ushered in a new age of Social Credit in British Columbia. The Liberal/Conservative Coalition won thirty-nine of the forty-eight seats, and the CCF took all but two of the rest, which went to Independent and Labour candidates. The Coalition and CCF polled over ninety-six percent of the popular vote between them, while the combined Social Credit total was 2.05%. The poor results for both camps of Social Crediters – Jukes’ Union of Electors and the League candidates – indicated that the perception of Social Credit as a depression-

113 Antonik-Bennett and Verspoor, 213-218. League candidates outpolled Union candidates, but none were able to secure even one percent of the popular vote.
114 Federal ridings went uncontested for these same reasons as well. BCSCL, Bulletin., no. 9, 17 September 1949, 1.
116 Mitchell, W.A.C., 122.
117 Antonik-Bennett and Verspoor, 213-218. BCSCL: 1.65%, Union of Electors: .4%. 

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era package of reforms remained relatively widespread outside the movement. However, with better coverage in the press, and the benefit of a more congenial relationship with the national Social Credit Association, the League had become the de facto voice of Social Credit in British Columbia after 1949.

The League continued to view membership growth and attendance at meetings as crucial to the achievement of Social Credit but realized that the voting public, perhaps not eager to join Social Credit as full members, must also consider it a serious alternative. "It is important to secure as a member of the League, every possible person in the province of British Columbia," wrote Lyle Wicks, "for while the [membership] fee can be extremely useful, our position and prestige within this province are in direct ratio to our numbers." The League considered itself the only organization that could be trusted to frustrate socialism and communism. The League strove for "Goodwill" within its own membership because "[t]he one thing Communism fears, i.e. Social Credit, can halt the crumbling of democracy and secure a happy, free people who can and will oppose this enemy successfully." Goodwill was to be fostered by suppressing criticism of others within the League, for in 'knocking' other members, one also criticized their objectives and strategies, and that would not evoke the image of a united Social Credit movement in the political arena.

In 1949, fifty-one official delegates attended the first League convention and the League’s sixteen candidates secured only 1.65% of the provincial vote. However, over the next two years, the League – by that time synonymous with

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118 BCSCL, Bulletin., no. 10, 7 October 1949, 1.  
119 BCSCL, Bulletin., no. 11, 8 November 1949, 1.  
120 BCSCL, Bulletin., no. 12, 26 November 1949, 1.  
121 The figure of twenty-six voting delegates indicates a paid-up membership that could, theoretically, have been as low as 143 province-wide, or as high as about 260, based on convention rules of one delegate/group or fraction of ten members. BCSCL, List of Delegates, Vancouver Convention, 1949. Antonik-Bennett and Verspoor, 213.
Social Credit to most observers in the province—would grow in power and prestige as Wicks had hoped. The idea that members of the movement must work to "keep it together" was foremost in his mind as president, and other members began to realize that the divisive early 1940s, while educational for movement organizers, did little to bring about the achievement of Social Credit.\footnote{Wicks interview.} The League adjusted certain aspects of its approach to be politically effective while retaining a position of protest and righteous detachment from party politics. Personal contact and small meetings preserved the perception of Social Credit as a movement. The press began to cover BC Social Credit policy rather than report perfunctorily on election platforms and conventions because Social Credit began to offer its opinion on topical issues more often. The League issued its own pamphlets more regularly, and League members became more frequent and prominent contributors to the \textit{Canadian Social Crediter}.\footnote{"B.C. Socreds to Seek Company Unions' End.", \textit{Province}, 12 May 1949, S. In February of 1950, BC rated a small piece in the national organ, ["Boom and Want Times Decried By B.C.'s Enlightened Wicks." \textit{CSC}, 1 February 1950] three months later a more detailed report, [B.C. League Gives List of Aims and Objects." \textit{CSC}, 10 May 1950] and graduated to supplying lead articles by 1951. ["The Present Funny Money System." \textit{CSC}, 3 October 1951].}

While the League's fortunes waxed, Major Jukes and his Douglasites fell upon hard times. Fighting the 1949 election had proved too great a task for the Union of Electors. By late 1950, Jukes and like-minded Social Crediters had essentially wound up their activities,\footnote{A 1953 statement of policy from Vans Macdonald's Social Credit Secretariat in B.C. claimed that this recently-formed group followed the true path of Douglas Social Credit and criticized the national, Alberta, and BC Social Credit organizations for working toward the national achievement of Social Credit. Between 1950 and Macdonald's statement, the League appears to have organized without interference. Social Credit Secretariat in B.C., "Statement of Policy", 1 June 1953. WACB, MG 1/1, 7/13, Pamphlets -- B.C., 1952-1953.} but communications between Jukes and the League remained strained and it was a few months before one of the Major's repentant associates broke the news to the League. Gilbert McGregor apologized to Lyle Wicks for having "defended the Major so strenuously in Vancouver" and

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\textit{"Easier to believe than to reflect"}
\end{flushright}
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

reported in May 1951 that “no meetings have been held in Victoria by Major Jukes for a year or so.” McGregor also estimated that Jukes’ small study group had not convened since the previous September. Later in May, Paynter received word that Jukes had been broadcasting in the interior but his old Union of Electors arguments had not stirred much interest. Jukes’ influence upon the movement, the active membership of which then consisted almost exclusively of League members, had withered enough that it became possible to speak of the League as the sole active Social Credit body in British Columbia.

Pointing the way

With the decline of its chief opposition inside the movement, the League had a free hand to organize throughout the province. Lyle Wicks pointed out the differences between theory and political action that drove the League to actively evangelize rather than merely offering Social Credit to the public:

You talk about bringing the people the results they want from the management of their own affairs and at the same time you go around thinking that it will all happen. It won’t happen. You’ve got to go out and do something about it.

With the adoption of more aggressive methods, organizational efforts succeeded as never before. Overall membership rose, and new Social Credit groups sprang up in every constituency during 1951 and early 1952. The BC Social Credit League had every expectation that it would improve upon its 1949 electoral bid with a larger membership base and a larger campaign force. In 1951, Peer

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125 Gilbert McGregor to Executive, 3 May 1951, PVP.
126 Paynter remarked about Jukes’ followers that “there are not enough to call them an organization.” Paynter to Ernest Hansell, 5 May 1951. PVP.
127 Wicks interview.
128 By mid-1951, the membership had risen to 1400, and in early 1952, some meetings drew over 200, and yielded new membership rates near 20%. Paynter to Ernest Hansell, 5 May 1951.; Paynter to Wicks, 30 January 1952, PVP.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Paynter, a member of the BC executive, became Organizer for British Columbia. He traveled the province setting up Social Credit meetings, bringing in speakers, making presentations about Social Credit, and overseeing the progress of newer groups. More than a full year before the 1952 election, the League set up committees in the form of a shadow cabinet with members taking responsibility for tracking various government portfolios.129

Despite these signs that it had become more politicized, some aspects of BC Social Credit remained based in movement culture. The League relied on local study groups to generate membership, and to convince potential members that Social Credit was not so much a club one joined but a swelling consensus based on common sense. Social Credit League bulletins urged members to bring a friend to meetings, still the main venue for signing up new members. The League’s nomination forms required potential candidates to “subscribe unreservedly to the principles of Social Credit, as enunciated in the Manifesto of the Social Credit Association of Canada”, and to “repudiate any and all affiliations with other political parties.”130 Potential candidates not only had to believe in Social Credit but also declare that their previous associations were misguided. A strong local group made it much easier for new members and veterans alike to feel part of a movement on the rise.

Paynter was busy until relatively late in the 1952 election campaign organizing groups, especially in the northern interior, a virtually untapped area. Wicks contends that Paynter was particularly effective in the Peace River, Lillooet, Prince George and Columbia regions but that other League members did more of

129 BCSCL, Executive Meeting, 26 March 1951, PVP, box IV, Minutes of Meetings, 1948-52.
130 BCSCL, “Nominee’s Form”, PVP, box IV, Miscellaneous Material, Social Credit philosophy and policy.; “Draft Proposal Respecting Nomination of Candidates”, 2, PVP.
the organizing outside those areas. By 1952, the League managed the formation of new study groups by careful identification of individual polls within constituencies and wanted desperately to avoid duplication of campaign efforts or low voter turnouts in particular polls. Members submitted systematic campaign maps to Paynter as aids to better organization. They promoted grand schemes for the provincial campaign and touted certain candidates being groomed for local nomination, hoping that League officials might endorse these choices at nomination meetings. Paynter frequently referred these requests to his regional trustees who were usually members with solid local reputations and described advisors like Ralph Chetwin [sic] as "real good Social Crediter[s]," people that the League could rely on in newly organized districts. Walter and Della Smith were an exception: having been members at Tahsis on Vancouver Island, they moved to New Westminster and then to Kamloops, fitting in immediately as vital members of the Social Credit organizations in each new area.

While local representatives worked to maintain Social Credit's advances in each district, Paynter secured experienced Social Crediters to speak at the all-important organizational meetings. Speakers from 'outside' boosted confidence in a movement that was still, in outlying districts, identified more with its local proponents than with a vigorous provincial organization. The League urged any Social Credit visitors it could to speak at local meetings "to leave the feeling that we have men that are known and have some substance with us." 'Big name' speakers were desirable, but these speakers did not have to be members of the

131 Wicks interview.
132 C. Ivan Dobb to Paynter, 20 January 1952, PVP.
133 James Craigen to Paynter, 10 December 1951; Dobb to Paynter, 20 January 1952, PVP.
134 Paynter to Dobb, 30 January 1952, PVP. Ralph Chetwynd later became a cabinet minister under Bennett.
135 PVP, various letters to Paynter from the Smiths.
136 Paynter to Hansell, 6 December 1951, PVP.
Alberta legislature, or from the national organization. For newly organized groups, authoritative guidance was most important, as L.L. King explained in early 1952:

If you will not be able to get up this way for some time, do you concur with my idea of calling a meeting and forming a constituency organization at Prince George, although I would hesitate to do this, as an outside speaker is very essential to a bang up rally, and then there is the need of someone being here who will be able to give out such information, as is considered expedient, concerning B.C.S.C. policy.\textsuperscript{137}

Although some groups needed education regarding the basic principles of Social Credit, some were well aware of the personalities within the League, a reflection of the shift toward politics and away from doctrine. Close to the election date of 12 June 1952, members in Port Alberni were not certain that they would be running a candidate but needed an inspirational speaker to augment membership and give reasonable grounds for holding a nominating meeting. One member asked Paynter: "Would you be on the Island at that time or would there be another speaker available? Our members do not care to hear Lyle Wicks."\textsuperscript{138}

A study group in Victoria admonished the central office for shoddy administration and suggested that the League set up a committee to screen radio speeches, as it had caught League speakers making several "incorrect statements".\textsuperscript{139} These requests stemmed from concerns that the League may have been sending out the wrong message to an electorate that had become much more aware of Social Credit since the Coalition began to unravel in 1951.

Though League workers could control some aspects of membership growth\textsuperscript{137} L.L. King to Paynter, 18 January 1952, PVP.\textsuperscript{138} Fred Adams to Paynter, 3 March 1952, PVP.\textsuperscript{139} Accusations of poor administrative work probably resulted from two separate break-ins at the League's East Broadway office, in which several members' records disappeared along with their membership fees. Wicks interview.; W.L. Fahey, Victoria Social Credit Group #1 to Wicks, 30 November 1951, PVP.
and campaign strategy, certain factors were beyond their reach. In company towns, the frequent meetings required to maintain study groups were often difficult to set up. An active member in Quesnel complained about the difficulty of assembling the membership “because of the time and circumstances in which they are working and of course the time of the meeting.”140 Shift-work, the sign of a healthy economy in resource towns, did not allow the level of participation or the chance to educate organizers and candidates that movements like Social Credit demanded.141 Despite concern over potential candidates’ knowledge of Social Credit system fundamentals, their chances of winning a particular riding mattered as well. Commitment to Social Credit principles, as they were currently being expressed, remained most important. Non-Social Crediters were not struck off organizers’ lists of possible nominees because it was possible that they had not yet seen the light, although conversion to Social Credit had to come before a nomination. The Social Credit struggle to break into Fernie, a riding in the Kootenays, illustrated the difficulty of finding the desired equilibrium between politics and movement integrity.

To avoid the appearance of meddling in the Fernie constituency, Paynter wrote to Alfred Siple, his lieutenant there, to get him pushing Thomas Uphill, the long-serving, extremely popular Independent-Labour incumbent, toward Social Credit.142 Tom Uphill was a proven political commodity in the Fernie riding who would not give up his independent status. The problem for Social Credit in newly organized areas was securing likable Social Crediters as candidates and discouraging mediocre nominees from entering the race. Siple wrote Paynter less

140 R.R. Stauffer to Paynter, 18 March 1952, PVP.
141 British Columbia Social Credit League, "Annual Convention Resolutions.", 2-3 November 1951, Resolution #77. WACB.
142 Paynter to Siple, 6 December 1951, PVP. Uphill was the M.L.A. from Fernie from 1920-1960.
than two months before the 1952 election explaining that "The C.C.F. have put no man in the field [sic] neither has the Conservative and S.C. will get there [sic] support along with all the No 2 [votes] of Tom Uphill. But Trouble is in our ranks," and Social Credit's reputation as a respectable alternative to the Liberal candidate was in jeopardy. The source of this trouble was a move to nominate the favourite of a rowdy collection of men. In Siple's view, the potential candidate would be an ill-considered choice. He accused these triflers of attempting to mock the movement, concluding: "This of course is the only way they can get a chance[:] to get the beer parlor boys rallied and more memberships sold so they can vote in their [sic] man." 143

The perception of Social Credit as a radical movement lingered in ridings like Fernie, despite Social Credit support for free-enterprise, particularly in the area of resource development. 144 Siple attributed modest membership figures to fear of employer reprisals: "even if S.C. was no good it would win as the people are so upset against the old parties[,] but because everyone works for the coal Co. they can't take part." 145 This fear of sanctions against voters expressing a preference for Social Credit was not restricted to those in wage-earning positions. Small business-owners province-wide feared traditional forms of reprisal for joining what was not supposed to be a political party, as Paynter noted: "There are a great many that tell us they will support us but are afraid to take a stand as they are afraid of having a licence cancelled or having a government contract taken away from them Etc." 146

Even local executives experienced difficulty controlling who represented

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143 Siple to Paynter, 24 April 1952, PVP.
145 Alfred Siple to Paynter, 24 April 1952, PVP.
146 Paynter to Allan Schindeler, 6 February 1952, PVP.
them. One particularly good example of this odd marriage between movement culture and politics occurred on Vancouver Island when some Chemainus Social Crediters put a local reeve named Beasley forward for the nomination in Cowichan-Newcastle. Their move caused a perceptible cooling toward Social Credit in the district, and the CCF accused Social Credit of choosing a Liberal. Believing that the other nominee would win the “silent vote”, the Social Credit constituency association faced the dilemma of saving the riding and seeming like a political party, or not meddling in the nomination process and possibly embarrassing the movement. To the satisfaction of all, Beasley resolved the matter himself when, less than two months before the 1952 election, he put out press releases “worded in such fashion that they constituted a scurrilous attack on the Social Credit League (Party).”\(^{147}\) When Beasley did not retract his statements, the League was able to cancel his membership on the grounds that he was no longer a good Social Crediter, having openly criticized the League’s motives. Within a movement culture, this nominee remained ultimately responsible for his own removal from the contest because removing him outright would have been ‘playing politics’.

Ironically, Social Credit’s dramatic expansion in the early 1950s was the culmination of a politicizing process that began with the original League’s attempts in the 1937 election to counteract the Aberhart-sponsored Social Credit Union’s threat to orthodox Douglas Social Credit. Subsequent attempts to run candidates in 1945 and 1949 taught members in BC that Social Credit principles must be expressed unequivocally. Though they were committed to electing Social Credit candidates, even executive members had jobs that forced them to pursue

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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

that goal in spare hours, and it was not until late in the movement period that BC had a full-time organizer.\textsuperscript{148} Though they were tremendous forces for Social Credit, Paynter and the League’s activists could not be everywhere in the province. Accounts of Social Credit’s eventual triumph in British Columbia usually bring to mind Major Douglas’s A + B theorem, positing Alberta + Bennett as vital factors. Both contributed to the election of Canada’s second Social Credit government, but their contributions should be examined with some care.

\textit{Glory bound, but Alberta-bound?}

To suggest that an Alberta presence was indispensable in the swing toward Social Credit in BC\textsuperscript{149} seems reasonable because the Alberta Social Credit League was Canada’s largest and most successful Social Credit organization in the early 1950s. However, that explanation leaves little room for British Columbia members as agents in the dramatic growth and electoral success of their own movement. Newspaper accounts and the secondary works that rely on them point to the leadership convention of the BC Social Credit League in late April 1952 as an Alberta invasion. They fasten upon the fact that an Alberta MP, Ernest Hansell, was chosen to lead the election campaign and conclude that without the Albertans, all would have been lost. Martin Robin’s observation that BC Social Crediters were “commissioned and paid by the Alberta generals”\textsuperscript{150} is hasty and incorrect. Conversely, an argument that Alberta played no role at all would be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{148} For example, the League’s headquarters remained in Lyle Wicks’ house on Brunswick St. in Vancouver until late in 1951, and Wicks did not leave his regular job with BC Electric Railway until early March 1952.
\end{itemize}
similarly flawed and equally fruitless in a study of the British Columbia Social Credit movement, which must account for both the organization’s autonomy and the circumstances accompanying its growth. Neither the Alberta government nor the Edmonton-based Social Credit Association of Canada (SCAC) could provide the level of guidance or assistance attributed to them so near the decisive 1952 election.\footnote{The bulk of this evidence may be found in the Peer Vernon Paynter Papers at the British Columbia Archives and Records Service in Victoria. This collection is the only source with significant documentation regarding BC Social Credit’s relations with other Social Credit organizations, and therefore it is invaluable to an examination of any Alberta-BC Social Credit connection. Paynter corresponded with members in BC, who knew him as the provincial Organizer, and with the heads of the national Association, which he served as a vice-president. It should be clear from the introduction to this study that most writers expressing opinions on the rise of Social Credit in BC claim a large role for external organizations in the 1952 election. None of these accounts had access to Paynter’s files.} Even if one assumed that Albertans were the engine of Social Credit growth in Canada, their integration into the BC movement still depended upon the movement’s efforts to organize in the coast province.

Monographs devoted to Alberta Social Credit rarely mention British Columbia or the SCAC. If there was a plan afoot to control the British Columbia movement in the interests of national Social Credit progress, or if the SCAC was a puppet organization of the Alberta League, these developments escaped Barr, Finkel, Macpherson and Irving.\footnote{John J. Barr, \textit{The Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of Social Credit in Alberta}. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. Alvin Finkel, \textit{The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta}. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989. John A. Irving, \textit{The Social Credit Movement in Alberta}. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959. C.B. Macpherson, \textit{Democracy in Alberta}. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953.} Is it reasonable to assume that a movement as strongly in favour of individualism and decentralization as the BC Social Credit League was in 1951-52 would allow itself to be wholly annexed? It is more likely that Alberta’s most potent effect on British Columbia Social Credit lay in the individual decisions some Albertans made to leave for BC, where some became Social Crediters. Lyle Wicks credits emigration by some dynamic Albertans for
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

helping to spread the word about Social Credit, but it is difficult to assess their impact beyond noting that some espoused Social Credit principles in both provinces.

Census figures show steady increases in the number of Albertans moving to British Columbia in the early Social Credit era. The number of Alberta-born residents in BC went from 20,231 in 1931 to 38,331 in 1941 to 78,305 by 1951. This is a notable trend in light of wartime demand for agricultural produce and activity in Alberta’s petroleum sector even before the Leduc oil strike of 1947. It is difficult to comment on the financial straits of migrants from Alberta or their reasons for leaving. Their political affiliations remain equally obscure, and references to a diaspora of Albertan Social Crediters seem contradictory. Why would Social Credit activists flee Alberta? If the mere presence of migrants from certain regions or provinces affects the political climate at the destination, then support for the CCF should have increased dramatically in BC because from 1931-1951 the number of Saskatchewan migrants to BC exceeded the number of Albertans.

The BC Social Credit League did not keep data on the provincial origins of its members, but Peer Paynter estimated that many of the new members who enrolled after he became provincial organizer were former Albertans. Lyle Wicks recalls that Albertans would often act as latent “outposts” of Social Credit, helping to form groups once organizers came through in the early 1950s, but they would rarely form groups on their own. James Craigen in Williams Lake noted the

153 Wicks interview.
155 Sherman, 95. Mitchell, W.A.C., 149.
156 Census data calculated as above.
157 Paynter to Solon Low, 30 September 1951, PVP.
158 Wicks interview.
same trend, telling Paynter: “My guess is for every Albertan Social Crediter in B.C. you locate, there are 5 more lying dormant with their ideas because they are supporters, but not teachers, workers but not leaders, needing direction, but not thinking to give any because it looks so pointless in the midst of all the ignorant.”

Though his comment indicates that the voting public in British Columbia was uninformed regarding Social Credit, Craigen acknowledged the role of BC’s own Social Credit body as an important factor in the movement’s growth. Albertan Social Crediters moving to BC, whatever their numbers, had to ‘start over’ and wait for the British Columbia League to extend an invitation to join. It is not clear that Social Crediters outside British Columbia thought a large cadre of Albertan Social Crediters had come to the province. Craigen was pessimistic about Social Credit awareness among his fellow British Columbians, and SCAC president Hansell went further when he expressed little confidence in the majority of British Columbia members:

... in their enthusiasm for a change in government, recent additions to our Social Credit movement in B.C. (By recent additions I mean the many inexperienced people who have joined our ranks + who know little or nothing about Social Credit) may be so enthusiastic as to force the issue of leadership before its proper time. ... For goodness sake don’t permit a convention composed for the most part of novices to stampede this thing into an abortive mess.

The Alberta and BC Social Credit Leagues were independent organizations affiliated with the SCAC, which was composed of representatives from the provincial Social Credit Leagues and had limited coercive power. SCAC executive members like national leader Solon Low and national president Ernest Hansell coordinated Social Credit efforts in the federal field. A sense of urgency surrounded

159 James Craigen to Paynter, 10 December 1951, PVP.
160 Hansell to Paynter, 31 December 1951, PVP.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

the SCAC, and its officials speculated often about the timing of a Social Credit sweep across the nation. Consequently, SCAC vice-president Peer Paynter – British Columbia’s only representative in the SCAC executive – also considered the BC provincial organization crucial to the struggle for nationwide success.\textsuperscript{161} The SCAC became interested in provincial affairs if these seemed to have a bearing on future activities in the national field, but served as an advisory body otherwise. Hansell explained the Association’s role:

> While we have no desire to interfere in any way with the right of the Provincial Leagues to manage their own affairs, we feel that there may be times when an expression of our opinions may be valuable, and when Provinces may appreciate our advice. Some of us have been in the political field for many years – some have fought many elections and have had considerable opportunity to observe political action and avoid the dangers which may not always be obvious.\textsuperscript{162}

By 1951, the SCAC determined that even limited success in the next BC election could help its national aspirations and took an interest\textsuperscript{163} in developments there, offering some money for organizing efforts. Under SCAC sponsorship, Peer Paynter became the provincial organizer for BC. Though his expenses were paid by the national Association and he was not officially sanctioned by the provincial League as an organizer,\textsuperscript{164} he responded to letters and inquiries on behalf of the League, continued serving as one of its vice-presidents, and steered newly-formed groups toward the provincial organization, asking them to send donations and membership money there. New members became members of the BC League, not the national Association. Paynter’s activities were duplicated manifold by other

\textsuperscript{161} Paynter to Hansell, 1 November 1950.; Paynter to Hansell, 5 May 1951, PVP.
\textsuperscript{162} Hansell to Paynter, 23 May 1951, PVP.
\textsuperscript{163} Hansell to Paynter, 9 May 1951, PVP. National president Hansell told Paynter that the reports the national office received “from time to time” were encouraging.
\textsuperscript{164} Wicks interview. PVP, various references to expenses and stipends.
League members who accounted for much of the growth during 1951 and 1952.

Some of the practices employed by British Columbia Social Credit organizers might have enhanced the perception that the Alberta League had taken over in BC. Paynter never tired of comparing the current provincial administration to the Social Credit regime in Alberta, but there were no other Social Credit governments. During Ernest Manning's tenure as Premier (1943-1968), Alberta's Social Credit government reduced the provincial debt and made significant reforms in the areas of social services and education, though it failed to enact Social Credit legislation. Paynter carried lists of the most current statistics comparing the Alberta and BC governments and emphasized the disparity in total debt as a telling measure of Coalition mismanagement.

The example of Alberta - though it did not prove the efficacy of the monetary policy which defined Social Credit for most outside the movement - warranted a pride of association for Social Crediters in British Columbia and ready statistical ammunition in their campaign against the traditional parties.

The example of Manning's government was an effective one. However, certain events leading up to the 1952 election in BC have been cited as evidence of direct involvement by the SCAC and by Albertans. British Columbia's Coalition government dissolved in late March 1952, and Social Crediters inside and outside BC had been anticipating an election for some time. The SCAC believed that the campaign must be run smoothly because the Social Credit plans on the federal level depended very much upon the results. Reports of the BC Social Credit

\[165\] Finkel, The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta., 3. A friend of Bennett's, living in Edmonton, wrote that "We can honestly say of our government here that it has been the best in the Province's history, despite the fact we feel it isn't exactly a Social Credit government, but at least it is an honest one ..." Bessie Mulholland Farquharson to Bennett, 19 July 1952, WACB.

\[166\] "Facts Book", PVP; Peer Paynter, "Radio Script." CBR Provincial Affairs, broadcast 3 April 1950, 5. PVP.

\[167\] Hansell to Paynter, 31 December 1951.; Hansell to R. Rudolph, 18 March 1952., PVP.
Easier to believe than to reflect

League leadership convention held on 26 April 1952 make it plain that the powerful Alberta League, the Alberta government and the SCAC issued an ultimatum to the British Columbians, asking them to elect an Albertan as campaign leader or aid would be cut off. All the BC nominees stood aside. The convention chose Ernest Hansell as campaign leader. For many commentators on BC's political culture, this episode has been made to stand for the genesis of Social Credit in British Columbia, although Lyle Wicks recalls that

nobody in BC, but nobody, would buy a bill of goods that was directed from Alberta, period. ... Albertans came in and they were great people. We had to be careful that they didn't take over. Well, they never did, but they were great supporters. They paid their dollar and became committed Social Crediters, in BC.¹⁶⁹

One problem with the explanation that an overwhelming Alberta presence in BC League affairs was a great boost to the movement is that the SCAC had urged the BC League to assume the costs of holding rallies and bringing in speakers even before an election was called. There was not enough money in the national treasury. The SCAC, supposedly an arm of the mighty Alberta League, had been able to fund Paynter's activities for about two years, but it balked at footing the bill for an entire campaign.¹⁷⁰ The League got as much mileage as it could from Social Credit Members of Parliament who could make the trip to BC because the SCAC would not send more than a few without financial support from the BC League.¹⁷¹ The League had anticipated a financial squeeze and

¹⁶⁸ During the convention, Paynter denied that the 'ultimatum' was a threat at all. “Albertan Leads BC Social Crediters.” Province, 28 April 1952, 17.
¹⁶⁹ Wicks interview. Wicks' emphasis.
¹⁷⁰ Hansell to Paynter, 18 March 1952, PVP. During the campaign, W.A.C. Bennett had to quell a rumour that Alberta had donated $100,000 to the BC Social Credit election coffers. Bennett to Victoria Daily Times, telegram, 30 May 1952, WACB.
¹⁷¹ Hansell to Wicks, 4 April 1952, PVP. Hansell informed the BC League that “A little more evidence that B.C. is willing to finance incoming speakers will give much more encouragement to us in sending speakers.” Hansell to Wicks, 2 February 1952, PVP. Wicks recalls that Alberta helped by sending some literature, but no money. Wicks interview.
warned some of the more ambitious members long before the election to expect austerity and to work hard within their own constituencies to win votes. When a member suggested that Alberta could take over part of the BC campaign, Paynter responded:

So many people think that because you are in politics that you have a lot of money to spend. That is not so with the Social Credit organizations either here or in Alberta. The members who are interested in seeing the Social Credit policies put into operation have to both do the work and put up the money. This means that we have to work differently from any other organization and still get to the people....

Though some in the movement viewed Paynter as interested – in the classical sense of the term – in the national and the provincial arms of Social Credit, he portrayed the persistence of movement culture by differentiating between Social Credit in BC and “any other organization.” Even during the campaign of 1952, organizational work continued and members did most of it. Was this the mark of a Social Credit body that left its evangelical work to outsiders? Members gladly received any help they were offered, but they realized that BC Social Credit must remain autonomous and must direct its own affairs when able. At the April convention they retained control, making it plain that Hansell had come in as campaign leader only, and that voters were being asked to mark their ballots, very much in movement style, for a Social Credit organization that did not have a leader in the traditional sense. Hansell’s selection was not so much a triumph for Alberta as a compromise through which BC gained the use of some political expertise. No capable or willing leaders could be found in the

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172 James Craigen to Paynter, 10 December 1951, PVP. Craigen suggested that the Alberta government could handle the Peace River-Prince George regions.
173 Paynter to James Craigen, 2 January 1952, PVP.
174 Wicks interview.
175 Mitchell, W.A.C., 149.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

British Columbia organization, and members, having experienced the satisfaction of steady growth since the formation of the League, did not wish to fall into bickering over a leader and thus resurrect the internal strife that had harmed the movement as recently as 1949. Social Crediters in BC finally heeded Wicks' admonition to "keep it together." A full slate of candidates required an experienced leader conversant with Social Credit principles. The League eventually acquired a leader, and though he was not as familiar with Social Credit principles as the import Hansell, W.A.C. Bennett's vast network of contacts and his persuasive manner proved extremely useful well before he was selected to guide the mostly neophyte Social Credit caucus.

_Bennett ex machina_

Any one of many dedicated Social Crediters could serve as a spokesperson for the League, and Lyle Wicks, as president, was its "nominal leader" until Hansell was chosen to head the campaign. In the months before the 1952 election, members of the BCSCL understood that they sought a political leader who could serve as its public icon. The provincialization of politics in BC made a leader even more of a necessity, as candidates could no longer rely upon their regional reputations to sway undecided voters. W.A.C. Bennett, the MLA for South Okanagan since 1941, had pursued the leadership of the Conservatives in 1946 and again in 1950. After a few months as an independent, he joined Social Credit in December 1951. Bennett's alignment with Social Credit provides an illustrative example of the movement's politicization. Conversely, the debate over

176 Wicks interview.
177 Wicks interview.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

his arrival and role prior to the 1952 election testify to the persistence of a movement culture.

The Coalition government under Premier Byron Johnson had experienced a significant backlash against its Hospital Insurance policy almost since the latter was introduced in 1948. The British Columbia Hospital Insurance Service plan featured mandatory registration and payment of premiums, with no chance of opting out.\(^{179}\) In March 1951, W.A.C. Bennett rose in the house, stated that he could no longer support the government’s handling of the hospital insurance plan, and declared that he would sit as an independent member. His Conservative colleague Tilly Rolston, member for Vancouver Point Grey, followed his lead. Immediately, Bennett received hearty congratulations and advice from new admirers, some of them Social Crediters.\(^{180}\) League president Lyle Wicks contacted Bennett but no agreements or alliances resulted, though some acquaintances and friends urged Bennett to investigate Social Credit more closely. “It would be smart if you’d turn Social Credit as they are not so crazy” wrote one of them, but admonitions that he should form a “people’s party” and exploit his status as a “free Conservative” were as common.\(^{181}\) Social Crediter James Wardrop confessed to Bennett that the “S.C. Movement in B.C. is without proper Leaders and no one knows it more than themselves, and I speak from within.”\(^{182}\) Bennett resisted temptation and remained an independent member.

By the fall of 1951, Bennett was instrumental in a by-election campaign in the Esquimalt riding, running the campaign for retired naval officer Commander

\(^{180}\) Mitchell, W.A.C., 123.
\(^{181}\) E.T. Evers to Bennett, 16 March 1951; Hilton Young to Bennett, 16 March 1951; Mrs. D. Krenzler to Bennett, 21 March 1951; E. Jaggard to Bennett, 16 March 1951; H.H. Smith to Bennett, 16 March 1951. WACB.
\(^{182}\) James W. Wardrop to Bennett, 16 March 1951, WACB.
Easier to believe than to reflect

Alfred Wurtele. Though the effort was unsuccessful, Bennett's work on this campaign served him well as a sampling of the political climate in BC. Bennett viewed the transferable ballot as the great hope of independents and other reform groups, and had promoted it during his days as a member of the Coalition. He wrote to Wicks suggesting that the next general election, in which the transferable ballot would be used, might bring satisfying results "if we are all working closely together." Bennett may not have taken up Wardrop's offer of inside information about the Social Credit movement, but one should not dismiss the idea that Bennett would seek his own sources. Ron Worley, a refugee from the Liberal party who had recently joined a Social Credit group in Victoria, wasted little time before ingratiating himself with members of the Social Credit executive. He left the Liberal Party on 21 September 1951 and, four days later, cautioned Social Crediters against Bennett: "I know Bennett quite personally, and I would ask you to be very careful, ... I think there are many things you should know about Mr. Bennett concerning his ambitions." However, Bennett told Tilly Rolston that he had "received letters from 'Ron' from Victoria which are very encouraging." Worley was operating on both sides of the leadership question, playing the role of concerned Social Crediter while aiding Bennett in his quest for a political vehicle. Though he may have been considering Social Credit for a long time, Bennett responded with polite caution to offers from Social Crediters, explaining that he wished to avoid entanglement with "different elements" in the movement.

184 Bennett to Wicks, 5 October 1951, WACB.
185 Worley to Paynter, 22 September 1951 and 25 September 1951. PVP.; Bennett to Tilly Rolston, 5 October 1951. WACB. Worley had become acquainted with Bennett in 1951, discussing the possibility of a new party, and supporting Bennett's stand as an independent member. Sherman, 95.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Social Crediters behaved cautiously around Bennett as well. Paynter despaired over Bennett’s approach to the movement, yet recognized Bennett’s political potential. He also realized the political problems inherent in electing a leader from outside the province. As organizer, he was able to gather considerable opinion on the subject and believed that to make a respectable showing the leader must come from British Columbia, though he admitted that the BC movement lacked experience. In a letter to Hansell, he offered his assessment of the leadership question in BC:

He [Bennett] seems to me to be quite sincere but has an inflated opinion of his importance in the political life of this province. However he has quite a following and could be a great asset to our movement if he were to join it in the proper manner and at the proper time. If he were to arise to the point of leadership of the Social Credit forces, it would be great pity [sic] and wreck the whole B.C. movement as well as have a very bad effect on Alberta and our progress toward Ottawa.

Through the fall of 1951, Bennett kept his intentions relatively private and seemed more interested in interpreting the results of the recent by-election, telling a friend:

The voters in Esquimalt, and I think that would apply throughout the rest of the province, seemed to be looking for something else to vote for besides either of the two old line Parties or the C.C.F. Socialism. ... The problem therefore is to supply the alternative to fill this political vacuum and to carry on a dynamic crusade during the Provincial election. Let “X” represent that movement at the present time.

“X” began to look more like Social Credit, but Bennett had still not joined the movement, an important point in the minds of members. Worley told Bennett that

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187 Paynter called the public “very provincial-minded.” Paynter to Low, 30 September 1951.
188 Paynter to Hansell, 27 October 1951, PVP.
189 Bennett to H.G.T. Perry, 5 November 1951, WACB.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

Social Crediters were seeking a high-profile member to lead them and intimated that Bennett seek the leadership almost as a condition of entry. Coupled with his inexperience as a Social Crediter, Worley's experience in the seedy world of party politics made it easier for him to suggest some rather heavy-handed methods to hasten Bennett's ascent to the Social Credit leadership, even though Bennett had not yet joined Social Credit. Worley pledged to

take over the Victoria group from Fahey, and assist Don Smith in forming another group in the city. We will fill both with as many of our cohorts as possible, and should the occasion arise we will go-down-the-center for Bennett, come-what-may.

Bennett replied that no announcement was forthcoming but gave his blessing to Worley's strategy, reassuring Worley that he was "doing what is right in Victoria ... [I] wish you well."¹⁹⁰ The previous exchange indicates that Bennett had probably decided to join Social Credit by November 1951 but that he would not receive a uniformly warm reception.

Bennett attended Social Credit's November 1951 convention in New Westminster – he was not officially a member of the movement – but was not accorded the special treatment Worley thought such a powerful figure and potential leader deserved. Eric Martin and Wicks, whom Worley considered a "wretched little man" for snubbing Bennett, advised Bennett to become a Social Crediter at a meeting in his own constituency.¹⁹¹ Martin supported Bennett as a potential leader and told Paynter: "WACB [sic] seems to be considering joining, leadership or no leadership. He asks for a talk with the board, sometime in the near future in order to find out if his joining will cause trouble or not in our ranks."¹⁹² Bennett, the astute politician, joined in Kelowna on 6 December 1951.

¹⁹⁰ Worley to Bennett, 7 November 1951; Bennett to Worley, 10 November 1951. WACB.
¹⁹¹ Mitchell, W.A.C., 135. Worley to Bennett, 7 November 1951. WACB. Wicks interview.
¹⁹² Eric Martin to Paynter, [December 1951], PVP.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

Soon after, Solon Low commented from Ottawa:

Bennett’s affiliation with the Social Credit group in Kelowna has caused no end of comment down here as well as in British Columbia. Most people who mention it to me seem to think that the man is making his bid for leadership in B.C. Be that as it may, the fact remains that it has put Social Credit a little more into the limelight. I imagine that Tillie will follow Bennett’s lead.\textsuperscript{193}

To join as every new member joined was important. Had Bennett been allowed to move right in as leader, a strategy more than a few members supported, Social Credit might not have retained as much of its movement image as it did through the 1952 election campaign.

Early in 1952, denunciations of Bennett as an “opportunist” continued. Paynter reiterated his opposition to Bennett when he urged “That this Board advise the utmost care and discretion in the election or appointment of officials of the British Columbia Social Credit League in any capacity where such position involves a person recently holding office in any other political organization.”\textsuperscript{194} Expressions of support for an leader from within the BC movement continued as well, because many realized that a leader from outside the province would not “meet universal approval.”\textsuperscript{195} To reassure those who had heard early rumours that the election campaign would be run at least partially by members of the national Social Credit Association, Bennett’s supporters and detractors alike cited the League’s constitutional prohibition on leaders from outside the provincial membership itself.\textsuperscript{196}

Bennett was among the gracious BC Social Crediters who declined to run against Ernest Hansell in April 1952. By that time, BC Social Crediters knew that it

\textsuperscript{193} Solon Low to Paynter, 20 December 1951, PVP.
\textsuperscript{194} BCSCL, Executive Meeting, 6-7 March 1952, PVP, box IV, Minutes of Meetings, 1948-52. T.E. Swann to Paynter, 16 and 26 February 1952, PVP.
\textsuperscript{195} Wicks interview.
\textsuperscript{196} Anon. to Paynter, 13 February 1952; William Savage to Paynter, 27 February 1952, PVP.
would be unconstitutional for a non-resident to continue as leader without a seat in the legislature and that Hansell’s election was a stop-gap measure.\textsuperscript{197} The need to keep organizing groups while campaigning absorbed much of the energy that Social Crediters might have expended choosing a leader. The League made a wise choice in deferring the leader-selection process until after the campaign. Bennett’s experience in the legislature made him the favourite of many neophyte Social Crediters who had joined the League for the same reason as he had: Social Credit fit well into the political vacuum formed by the Coalition’s move to the left, exemplified for many by the hospital insurance issue.

Once all the counts and recounts in the 1952 general election were complete, the vote yielded nineteen seats for Social Credit, eighteen the CCF, six the Liberals, four the Conservatives, and one independent, Tom Uphill, who won in Fernie for the ninth time. Bennett became Social Credit leader at a special meeting in mid-July, and significant changes to the way the leadership decision was made indicated the extent to which traditional political methods had penetrated BC Social Credit. Only the elected candidates were allowed to vote,\textsuperscript{198} a move supported by Ron Worley who claimed that Bennett was “the only sound honest factor in the whole outfit” and called the defeated candidates the “unwanted” who “should have nothing to say equal to that of the M.L.A.’s.”\textsuperscript{199} Worley may have been in the minority, but his comment marked a clear move away from Wicks’ idea that every member was important to the cause. The whole matter of attracting such “political animals” as Bennett and Worley indicates that the balance between movement culture and politics had tilted irretrievably in favour of the political, a process that would be completed once the new

\textsuperscript{197} William Savage to Paynter, 27 February 1952, PVP.
\textsuperscript{198} Mitchell, W.A.C., 165.
\textsuperscript{199} Worley to Bennett, 10 July 1952, WACB.
government took office.

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The Social Credit League’s march from relative anonymity to victory at the polls was a time of transition. As the results of the 1952 election suggest, the combination of politics and movement appeal worked well enough for Social Credit in BC. The formula’s adjustment – human and otherwise – reveals much about British Columbia’s political culture at mid-century, and about the way reform organizations must concede certain important aspects of movement culture if they hope to gain the power to implement their programs. Under Bennett, the BC Social Credit League could not hope to retain its position as a movement. Its policy in office became its chief characteristic. It could no longer speak in the language of movements about how things were going to be different. Instead, the League faced the task of fulfilling its vision in a way that would allow it to continue governing.

Much of this study has been devoted to suggesting that the British Columbia Social Credit League – the organization that gained power in 1952 – did not spring fully formed out of the misfortunes of the tired Coalition government only to be wielded by Albertans. Without the foregoing relatively comprehensive survey of the movement’s history and dynamics, another important aspect of Social Credit’s long development could not be discussed. Social Credit ideology in British Columbia also evolved to reflect the values of its members and contemporary conditions.
Chapters One and Two of this study argue that the British Columbia Social Credit movement's size and methods of organization reflected conditions in BC from the last great depression through the boom years of the early 1950s. They do not, however, address shifts in the meaning of Social Credit. Over time, the movement entertained an increasingly conservative perception of public opinion while calling consistently for reform in one form or another. This combination of propriety and protest allowed the construction of a larger and more politically successful form of association by 1952. This third and final chapter examines some important changes – and continuities – in BC Social Credit thought. Its scope widened to accord with the interests and political dispositions of British Columbians who preferred a more competitive and open society and felt threatened economically by the consolidation of capital and ideologically by the ruling Coalition's leftward shift during the 1940s. Initially a technocratic movement largely unconcerned with social or political issues, BC Social Credit was able to fill a political vacuum in British Columbia by articulating the values of independence, responsibility and dynamism.

Adjustments to BC Social Credit thought were rarely sudden. The most palpable shift affecting the movement's structure occurred in the area of monetary policy. The movement never repudiated Major C.H. Douglas's radical method of balancing consumption and production but demoted it from its position at the head of the Social Credit creed in favour of a broader, more pragmatic program whose appeal was laden with neo-conservative values. Conversely, parts of Social Credit that had been secondary or altogether absent in the movement became
more prominent. For example, the eventual representation of Christianity as an important basis of Social Credit belief served the movement's political aims because an identification with what it called "Christian democracy" resisted direct criticism more effectively than the Douglasite economic reforms had done. Also, circumstances intervened to change the movement's stance significantly in some areas. Social Credit's optimism, which cast unemployment as a sign of increasing leisure even during the depression, gave way in more prosperous times to the more conventional definition of unemployment as a negative economic indicator. Though the movement exhibited an early attachment to the "collective desires of the entire community" and continued to express concern for the well-being of all British Columbians, the right-wing segment of Thomas Sanford's "politics of protest" seemed most comfortable with issues like overbearing taxation and the concerns of enterprising citizens who stood to lose 'freedom' under a socialist state.

Social Credit made most of its appeals in the name of 'the people'. Populism, a term applied by some observers to Social Credit in BC, may connote anything from an invocation of mass opinion to an active system set up to obtain direct instructions from a sovereign populace. The politicization of the BC movement required an identification of Social Credit principles with some vaguely-defined popular values, but the deference to the wisdom of the masses necessary to make this long process a populist act was absent. However, it is impossible to deny that the movement referred consistently to the popular interest. To divine the popular will, it relied upon a composite image of the typical citizen, incorporating respect for independence, personal property, the nuclear family, civic

“Easier to believe than to reflect”

responsibility, and an aversion to state intervention. It employed a unique definition of the term *policy* to communicate its principles. Perhaps a more revealing question for a study of BC Social Credit ideology is not ‘Was it populist?’, because organizations claiming popular motives can be considered populist to some degree, but rather ‘How did BC Social Credit decide who the people were and what they wanted?’

*Poverty in the midst of plenty*

In 1934, William Tutte, Mentor of the Douglas Social Credit group in BC, praised Social Credit as a path to sanity. He noted the irony of long breadlines in Canada, one of the world’s wealthiest nations, and the government’s inability to recognize the source of widespread ‘poverty in the midst of plenty.’ Tutte contrasted the contemporary financial establishment’s haphazard “rule of thumb” approach to credit management with the simplicity of the Douglas system, touting Douglas as an “eminent Scottish engineer and business cost expert, who some years ago founded the New Economics of Abundance and devised a scientific plan” that was not a political reform. It deals solely with the economic system – with the defects of the machine, not the shortcomings, if any, of the engineer. It could be administered by any political party the people of Canada prefer to put into office. They can be Liberals, Conservatives, Labor, or even a despotic monarchy or dictatorship (from which last God save Canada); if they were reasonably intelligent it would make no difference.

Accordingly, the early movement offered no apologies for seeking members

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202 Douglas used this phrase repeatedly to describe the human condition in relation to the potential of technology.
among pensive British Columbians unsatisfied with an economic system that operated on the basis of scarcity. Social Crediters like Rev. F.W. McKinnon, a Victoria clergyman, considered Social Credit a thoroughly modern scheme for a progressive age, the only one able to "reckon with the machine."205 Not all observers shared that opinion. Aberhart's stunning victory in Alberta prompted one columnist to consider all Social Crediters dupes engaged in a frantic search for a grand solution to economic depression. "Among the half-educated a great error is propagated more easily than truth," wrote A.B. Sanders of the *Victoria Daily Times*, "because it is easier to believe than to reflect, and men prefer the wonders of romance to the plain economic facts."206 Thus, the prominent example of Alberta's Social Credit government during its first years gave a false impression of the Social Credit membership in BC. In reality, reflection was quite common in the BC movement's early years and the chief activity of the early movement in British Columbia was educating those interested in what was called the 'money question.'

To fully understand Social Credit – to know how to cure the paradox of "artificial scarcity" – was a task with steep prerequisites. The Douglas Social Credit College Extension Course greeted students by demanding that they possess a "comprehensive background" in orthodox economics in order to grasp "all the implications of a Social Credit Economy".207 Clearly, a familiarity with the business cycle and economic theory would benefit the potential Social Crediter, so it is not surprising that the early membership in BC contained a high proportion of educated people. At the formation of Douglas Social Credit - B.C. Section in 1934, University of British Columbia professor R. Rolleston West and R.W.

205 "Gives Talk on Credit Scheme." *Colonist*, 27 November 1934, 4.
McDowell, an industrial relations expert, were chosen president and vice-president. When the old Social Credit League of British Columbia (SCLBC) presented its list of candidates for the 1937 provincial election, it included a civil engineer, four businessmen, a lawyer, a doctor, a former magistrate, and a rancher.208

William Tutte, in his *Douglas Social Credit For Canada*, saw conditions in the 1930s as the direct result of an inequitable distribution of purchasing power, not as a moral or social problem. This line of reasoning reflected the Saint-Simonian idea that the administration of things would replace the government of people eventually – a feature of Douglas’ thought that died much earlier in Alberta because it conflicted with Aberhart’s advocacy of a strict moral state.209 Tutte rejected Marxist arguments that a class war would overwhelm the entire capitalist system and instead saw the indignation of a consumer class210 building up to the detriment of the financial establishment alone. "The Reds do not constitute the peril," he wrote. "They are an ineffective minority. The danger zone lies within the Great Middle Class, [the] last people on earth who might be suspected of a desire for revolt."211 BC Social Credit presented Social Credit as a wholly secular, wholly economic reform, independent of politics, religion or traditional class constraints even after the SCLBC had run candidates in the 1937 election.

As they did elsewhere, critics of the Douglas system in British Columbia pointed to a paradox within Social Credit itself. They said Social Credit intended

208 “Economic Freedom From Social Credit.”, *Sun*, 29 October 1934, 14.; “B.C. Social Crediters Nominate 11 for House.”, *Province*, 27 November 1936, 1,6. Not all eleven nominees’ occupations were listed, but the remainder of the candidates were described as having been interested in the "money question" or economics.
to distribute purchasing power by denying that goods produced by advances in
technology were actually owned by anyone. While he agreed that the “problem of
poverty” – scarcity – had been solved, the CCF’s Fred Henderson contended that
Social Credit had not accounted for the problem of property. Bruce Hutchison
concurred, suggesting that government expropriations or the denials of ownership
necessary in schemes such as Social Credit were too radical for the average
person, and that

“Communism will never be adopted in America. But America
quite conceivably can be stampeded for Townsendism, Share-the-
Wealthism, Social Credit or Technocracy. What the high priests of
all these things never tell you is that they can’t be worked with
the private ownership of the machine and the public doesn’t want
that.”

In 1935, the public wanted jobs, one clear manifestation of which was the
On-To-Ottawa Trek that began in Vancouver. Social Crediters in British Columbia
thought that an elimination of material want through Social Credit would
eliminate economy-related social problems like homelessness. They treated
unemployment differently. Being out of a job would not be a problem under a
Social Credit system. Tutte explained: “If Science is morally right in displacing
human labour then the individuals so displaced, being truly products of national
progress, should not be financially penalized”. National progress, also called
Cultural Heritage, justified paying a dividend to everyone including displaced
workers and equated unemployment with leisure earned by the community’s
ingenuity. Destitution, or the twenty cents a day offered in the relief camps, was
the more familiar face of unemployment for many British Columbians, and in

212 Fred Henderson, The Social Credit Illusion. speech, November 1934, Vancouver: The
Commonwealth Press, 1934, 17.
214 Tutte, Douglas Social Credit For Canada., 218.
those conditions Social Credit’s optimistic perspective remained difficult to support.

By 1934, Douglas had suggested that people urge governments to implement Social Credit. He did not trust the public to know exactly how the system would work but trusted them to communicate a general goal: “A mob feels, it does not think, and consequently by whatever mechanism we represent a mob we can only represent a desire, not a technique.” Implementing Social Credit was to be the job of financial experts authorized to create the proper amount of credit when surpluses in production had been detected but Douglas left the job of calling for the system to be implemented to the public. He did not advocate the formation of political organizations to achieve this objective, a feature of his doctrine that remained important to a significant portion of the BC movement’s membership.

Despite the apolitical nature of early Social Credit organizations in BC, the movement recognized that the state must take over the credit system in order to bring about Social Credit reforms. The state, in early Social Credit thought, had a positive role to play in the achievement of Social Credit. This role was necessarily one of compulsion. If a Social Credit government were to issue new currency as a dividend, citizens were compelled to spend it. Early British Columbia Social Crediters recognized that their system called for a “transfer of the Monopoly of Credit” to the state and recognized the need to prevent counter-productive strategies – like the hoarding of currency – through measures designed to encourage spending. But, pioneers in the Social Credit movement sought financial independence, an important side-effect of which would be social

216 Tutte, Douglas Social Credit For Canada., 174.
freedom for the individual.217 What individuals spent their dividends on did not matter, but the Douglas system was willing to penalize those who did not contribute to the collective welfare through the simple act of consumption. The [theoretical] penalty for not participating in a Social Credit economy was the very condition the system hoped to eliminate for all individuals: poverty. From the outset, Social Credit rhetoric pointed to the individual consumer and small business owner as the victims of traditional economics and the potential beneficiaries of Social Credit,218 arguing that freedom from starvation and want was its goal. It did not see the nationalization of credit in conflict with individual rights.

While Alberta Social Credit embraced political action quickly and fully under Aberhart, most in the BC movement clung to Douglas' non-partisan idea of 'unions of electors' during its first five years. Ironically, the introduction of a Social Credit political presence to British Columbia came as a reaction to Aberhart's 1936 attempt to form a Social Credit organization there. BC members at that time preferred to discuss only economic problems, and officially, the single goal of the Social Credit movement in British Columbia was the promotion of credit reform under the pretext of economic necessity and the popular will. In contrast, Aberhart, by combining Social Credit and religion, had ignored the warnings of Major Douglas' friend Maurice Colbourne, who wrote:

What would happen if Britain, for instance, in a fit of disastrous Christlike behaviour said to the other nations: 'Take you the oil of Mosul, and you the diamonds of South Africa, and you the rubber of the Straits, and you our native coal: God will provide for us'? Idle question!219

“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Little room for discussion of religion and societal problems existed where the material necessities of life were absent, especially when Social Credit’s financial reforms promised –essentially as a side-effect to the achievement of general prosperity – to eliminate the societal offspring of poverty. For early Social Crediters in British Columbia, the social and economic spheres of existence could be separated successfully. Its 1937 platform admitted, for example, that the refusal of some people to work was a social problem that should be left alone to right itself. It stood for election in the same year and fared horribly, probably owing – in the area of doctrine – to its narrow focus on Douglasite economics with a program for social policy that was hastily appended.220

Even Major Douglas wrote about more than the economy. The anti-semitism woven into Douglas’ works as of the late 1930s reached its height around the same time the Nazi death camps were operating at full capacity.221 Some BC members did not look too deeply into these writings, preferring to concentrate on economic theory, but some gave the tales of an international plot their full attention. The split that resulted did little for the credibility of BC Social Credit as a unified organization. Members of the factions supporting Douglas’ more extreme views seldom rose to prominence within the larger movement. The Second World War and full production intervened, providing jobs and income in the armed services or allied industries. With little evidence of poverty in the midst of plenty to rail against, Social Credit’s reputation as a likely solution to British Columbia’s economic woes suffered further.

220 SCLBC, Social Credit for British Columbia.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

War and “losing the whip-hand”

Failing to enter any candidates in the 1941 election, BC Social Credit during the early war years could best be described as secretive, the prime example being Peer Paynter’s Perfect Circle group. Supporters of the Social Credit system found it difficult to decide which of the traditional parties they should support. In 1941, a concern for wartime stability and uncertainty about what the CCF would do if it gained power prompted a coalition of the Liberal and Conservative parties. Liberal Premier Pattullo, whose advocacy of provincial rights had previously earned the approval of the Social Credit League of BC, balked at the Coalition, which was committed to stronger Dominion-provincial relations. Social Crediters were satisfied by the Coalition as an anti-socialist measure but disappointed by an erosion of provincial autonomy. On the whole, however, British Columbians were more interested in supporting the war effort than listening to calls for monetary reform. In a roundabout way, the war years afforded Social Credit in BC a chance – which it ignored until at least 1943 – to alter some of its policies in relative silence, as the movement remained fractious and small.

Major Douglas had come upon the idea of Social Credit by comparing economies during war and peacetime. The conditions that the people wanted – the “results desired” in Douglas’ jargon – were present in BC during the Second World War. Coupled with wartime prosperity – an escape from poverty in the midst of plenty – political stability under the Coalition shook the foundations of

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222 “Social Credit Endorses Pattullo.”, Province, 27 November 1940, 5. Pattullo resigned over the issue of coalition, leaving the Coalition premiership to Liberal John Hart.
224 Barman, The West Beyond the West, 262.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

Social Credit in BC. The experience of war was unpleasant even on the homefront, but it kept British Columbians working and precluded the scale of misery that movements like Social Credit needed to make their arguments for radical reform appear more urgent. In 1940, one commentator noted that

B.C. already has several movements or parties dedicated to monetary reform, some working openly others outlawed under the Defense of Canada Regulations. Like S.C. all of these claim to be working for the uplift of the common man. And the tragedy ... is that the common man isn’t paying any great attention to any of them. ... But the fact is that he seems unable to see an undernourished child in every youngster clamoring for an ice cream cone or a financial tycoon in every man with his pants pressed.²²⁵

All Social Crediters or potential Social Crediters looked for a swift and victorious end to the war and worked toward that goal, but they were also concerned that a return to peace might not reduce wartime levels of regulation and government intervention. The first evidence of this concern came, ironically, from the pen of Major A.H. Jukes, a veteran Douglasite. Jukes began distributing his pamphlets and making broadcasts in 1943. He espoused monetary reform because he was certain that Canada would once again face the problems of poverty it had experienced following the First World War and through the depression.²²⁶ Jukes’ thought represents a reawakening for Social Credit in British Columbia in that it introduced an alternative issue to monetary reform, one that would become prominent in the movement’s program by 1952. Jukes argued, most forcefully from 1943-1945, that although Canadians could expect their

²²⁵ H.B. Smith, “Mr. Aberhart Leads a Foray.”, 3. Smith was probably referring to the Democratic Monetary Reform Organization, the United Democrats, the National Dividend Association and the Federation of Canadian Voters, all of which were reputed to be active in BC at the time. See Table 2 following the first chapter.
financial system to return to chaos, "no longer is poverty the most pressing issue. The focal point now is the curtailment of liberty through increasing restrictions and legislative decrees." 227 He was convinced – and made his case effectively to other members – that individuals had "transferred the control of policy to the administration and to that extent [we] have surrendered the right and power to frame and control our own policy. We are rapidly losing the whip-hand." 228

Jukes' approach was unique. Another Social Crediter who wrote about the grim prospects of the postwar era, L.D. Byrne, an imported advisor to the Aberhart and Manning governments in Alberta, expressed similar objections to growing bureaucracies but included the Douglasite anti-semitic line of 'reasoning' to explain why the world would suffer following the war. 229 Jukes ignored Douglas' Zionist plot fantasy but echoed Byrne's anti-statism in response to wartime conditions of rationing and regulation, and to the expanded role for the state envisioned in Leonard Marsh's influential Report on Social Security for Canada, released in 1943. 230 The BC Social Credit League's principle of criticizing ideologies and policies, not groups or individuals 231 indicated that it dwelled more in movement culture than in politics. Jukes sometimes fell short of this ideal, however, asserting

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227 Jukes, Dictatorship by Stealth., 1.
228 Jukes, Dictatorship by Stealth., 4.
229 L.D. Byrne, Battle for Freedom., Address to the Rocky Mountain House Board of Trade, 10 February 1943. Edmonton: Social Credit Board, 1943. The CCF noted this trend in the writings emanating from Alberta and criticized Social Credit severely, linking it to various fascist organizations in the U.S. and Europe. William Ivens, Social Credit Sense -- or nonsense? Winnipeg: Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, 1947, 22-24. David Elliott makes the contrary case that the Alberta Social Credit Movement had rid itself of the anti-semitic element by the mid-1940s in "Anti-Semitism and the Social Credit Movement: The Intellectual Roots of the Keegstra Affair.", Canadian Ethnic Studies 17, no. 1, 1985, 78-89.
230 Jukes, Doctors' Dilemma: Political and Economic. Address to Vancouver Medical Association, 2 May 1944, Victoria: 1944, 14. Leonard Marsh, Report on Social Security for Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975. (Reprint: originally Ottawa: King's Printer, 1943.) Thomas Sanford argues that the Douglasites, among which Major Jukes was the most prominent, had damaged their chances for power within the movement by clinging to Douglas' anti-semitic and anti-democratic writings. Sanford, 182.
231 Lyle Wicks recalls that this was one of the most important and respected rules in the movement. Wicks interview.
that individuals should be held responsible for their actions ("We jail thieves, not theft").

Major Jukes articulated the individual rights arguments that served as a foundation for Social Credit's later championing of free-enterprise economics and made clear the BC movement's rejection of Douglas' paranoid conspiracy theory. Though he had pioneered criticism of big government in BC - thereby implicitly questioning Douglas' call for strict adherence to any Social Credit scheme - Jukes clung tenaciously to the Douglasite proposals for monetary reform. Social Crediters considered him an intellectual, mainly because his pamphlets and broadcasts often touched topics outside the ambit of most voters' experience and concern, seeming theoretical and somewhat removed from local matters. The best surviving example of more mundane BC Social Credit ideology at the end of the war - a transitional phase in the movement's thought - comes from a campaign speech given during the 1945 election. Mrs. Lyle Campbell sought election in Burnaby, and her speech reflected quite clearly where BC Social Crediters had chosen to follow Douglas, and where they had decided to modify Social Credit.

In the 1937 provincial election pledges like Mrs. Campbell's to uphold the rights of the individual would have been peripheral to Social Credit's program of monetary reform. The change indicated that social reform had risen, in the course of a few years, to a more prominent place in the movement's program. Campbell began by promising to "make the freedom and happiness of the individual the chief [sic] end", to "oppose the establishment of all centralized control and bureaucratic regimentation", to "press for the abolition of all controls, regulations, boards and bureaus, and other bureaucratic wartime regulations, at the earliest

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“Easier to believe than to reflect”

possible date.” These pledges are significant in that they show how, by war’s end, support for individual rights had been teamed with a call for implementation of the Douglas system.233 By contrast, in the national SCAC’s “Social Credit Charter”, monetary reform remained the prime article of Social Credit faith from which all other proposals followed.234

Though the next part of Campbell’s speech presented the standard Social Credit argument for credit reforms, “freedom and happiness” reappeared as the prime reasons for undertaking the reforms. Unemployment continued as a positive indicator of technological progress. The long-standing tenets of Social Credit survived the war relatively intact, although the movement made no attempt to reconcile its opposition to bureaucracy with the massive administration needed to monitor Social Credit’s financial scheme. Each citizen would receive a “basic income.” The methods of distributing this income had been broadened to embrace pensions and family allowances and money was to be made available for these through standard Social Credit bookkeeping practices. The overall program remained dependent on the nationalization of credit, but rather than citing efficiency and the elimination of poverty as prime motivating factors, social harmony and the maintenance of freedom emerged as equally compelling reasons to join and support Social Credit.235

Early members in BC had considered social questions to be outside the domain of Social Credit. A balance between the Douglasite concern with credit and a new, broader program – unprecedented in its support of what it viewed as

233 Mrs. Lyle Campbell, Social Credit Candidate for Burnaby, “Address to the Burnaby Ratepayers Association.”, Norburn Hall, 16 October 1945, 1-3. PVP, box IV, f 10, Speeches, Addresses etc. by various BC Social Credit Officials.
235 Campbell, “Address ….”, 1-3.
acceptable social norms – came to characterize the movement’s public face during the mid-1940s. The prosperity of the war years and beyond made it more difficult for Social Crediters to argue that the reforms at the core of Social Credit belief were urgently needed. The widespread aversion for Communism in the immediate postwar period also figured prominently in changes to the movement’s outlook. Organizationally, it led to William Rose’s expulsion from the movement in 1946. Ideologically, it forced Social Crediters to emphasize that their policy of promoting freedom from regimentation and compulsion had always been part of the Social Credit creed and that substantial changes to the financial system were compatible with the freedoms that six years of war were fought to preserve. The war’s consequences – relative peace and relative prosperity – allowed the movement to become more deeply concerned with issues not immediately related to the survival of the polity as a whole but rather to the quality of individual life.

Compulsion and competency

Though his literary output during the mid-1940s did much to advance a uniquely British Columbian perspective on Social Credit’s meaning, Major Jukes’ commitment to action through unions of electors and his determination to guide BC Social Credit by himself marginalized the blend of Douglasite technique and libertarian ideals he espoused. He lost control of the movement to the upstart BC Social Credit League in 1949. The pragmatic moderates who assumed the leadership of the movement echoed Jukes in raising the alarm against government intervention, but they also realized that any lingering hopes for enacting Social Credit economic reforms on a provincial basis died in 1948 when Alberta’s last

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236 Jukes, “The Veteran,” in Five Broadcasts [1945], 8.
237 Sanford, 182.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

attempt at passing financial reform legislation was declared *ultra vires*. That year, BC’s Coalition government inaugurated its roundly-condemned hospital insurance plan and Social Crediters in the province finally had an issue they could embrace on theoretical and practical grounds: mandatory premiums robbed British Columbians of their freedom to choose, and premiums for the service were too high.

To Social Crediters, the British Columbia Hospital Insurance Service (BCHIS) exemplified the Coalition’s disregard for the ordinary citizen. The idea of being compelled to participate in a state-run scheme was anathema to Major Jukes, who contended that Social Credit stood for “inducement in all fields of our political and economic life” and that compulsion was the tool of “all others.” Clearly, Jukes viewed Social Credit monetary reform as a system that could only induce consumers to spend, although earlier BC Social Credit theory advocated the elimination of interest on “savings which [are] hoarded,” in effect compelling the consumer to put surplus money into circulation. Jukes criticized the hospital insurance plan on the basis that the provincial government had removed the “right to contract out” as granted to the individual “under the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and so on.” He argued that the hospital insurance plan was unconstitutional and “completely alien to the British tradition of freedom and responsibility.” Peer Paynter devoted an entire radio broadcast in 1950 to the evils of the plan, arguing that the rising cost is not the worst phase of the scheme. We recognize that any monopoly is bad but here we have a Compulsory Government Monopoly, which eliminates competition, destroys

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efficiency and invites corruption. A Monster created in spite of the wishes of the people, to cause dissention in our midst and destroy our much vaunted faith in the democratic form of government.\textsuperscript{242}

The plan lingered through 1950, and in 1951 the BC Social Credit League, by then the dominant association of Social Crediters, had resolved that the whole system, which was “dictatorial in nature, ... controlled by a centralized board, which has supreme power, which is fascism” be revamped. Under the Social Credit plan, municipalities would undertake the building and maintenance of hospitals and voluntary members of the plan were to pay one dollar a day for hospitalization for the first ninety days, after which the service would be free of charge. Pensioners in need and maternity cases would be allowed free hospitalization.\textsuperscript{243} This resolution implied much about the value system operating among Social Credit members: local districts should be responsible for their own affairs; a nominal charge for hospitalization will keep triflers away; mothers and older people who have contributed to society deserve an exemption. The Social Credit solution to the problem of hospital insurance fit with its philosophy of providing “Freedom with Security”\textsuperscript{244} by advocating a basic level of service and allowing individuals to contract out, that is, to obtain medical coverage elsewhere. More than this, however, Social Credit opposition to the Coalition’s existing plan forged a link with the “British tradition of freedom and responsibility” of which Jukes spoke so highly.

The theme of responsibility recurring within BC Social Credit ideology

\textsuperscript{244} Lyle Wicks, \textit{Fundamentals of Social Credit}. Vancouver: British Columbia Social Credit League, 1952, 4-5.
through the entire movement period. During the 1930s, Social Credit theory contended that the individual could not be held responsible for rampant poverty, the financial system was to blame.\textsuperscript{245} Douglas advocated open ballots so that voters would be forced to accept responsibility for their votes. Conversely, they would be able to contract out of legislation if they did not vote for the political organizations enacting it.\textsuperscript{246} The Douglasite notion of responsibility remained a negative one, in that individuals were not accountable for measures they had not endorsed; withdrawal of support for government initiatives was the citizen's only weapon, because in Douglas' estimation, the public could not reasonably and positively articulate its wishes in more than a general fashion. The idea of a more direct form of responsibility became a prominent part of the BC movement's message in the mid-1940s/postwar period and it was no longer discussed only in terms of the voter's prerogative to reject programs like the BCHIS plan. In the wake of World War II, the movement's executive urged members to 'do their part' and contribute to the fight for Social Credit lest the opposite - a government and society offering security \emph{without} freedom from compulsion - result from their inactivity. "Consider the issues in this election," said Mrs. Campbell in 1945, "and without hesitation, every intelligent voter in British Columbia will know why he must face the facts squarely this time, or pay for it later."\textsuperscript{247}

Facing the facts - debt, oppressive legislation, the difficult struggle against party machines and Social Credit's critics - seemed to be an extension of the wartime imperative driving Canadians to enlist and to contribute. Social Crediters in BC were finally urged to 'roll up their sleeves' and end the cycle of financial and - under the emerging welfare state - social oppression in which they were the

\textsuperscript{245} Tutte, \textit{Douglas Social Credit for Canada.}, 27.
\textsuperscript{247} Mrs. Lyle Campbell, "Address ...", 3.
perpetual victims of their own complacency. Candidates and members alike equated failure to do their part for the achievement of Social Credit with further decline in British Columbia society. In reporting the results of the 1949 election, the Social Credit Bulletin implored members to

be on guard not to blame someone else for some of the mistakes which may have crept in, but rather let each one of us first examine our own record carefully, and see how we ourselves failed; then apply the lessons learnt, so that our next effort may be of a higher standard.248

A movement culture which had initially claimed that it cared little for political distinctions as long as the Social Credit system was implemented had come by the late 1940s to cultivate a healthy abhorrence of political apathy. It had augmented Douglas' narrower argument about retaining the individual's right to contract out with its own prediction that, regardless of what the Coalition did, shirking one's responsibility to Social Credit principles could only lead to disaster. "If we fail to elect a Social Credit Government we can blame no one but ourselves," warned one 1952 election pamphlet; "If we haven't suffered enough from the old line party system it[']s our God-given right to suffer some more."249

The movement's members had clearly identified Social Credit as more than a technique to combat poverty. It had become a more general philosophy or "way of life" and supporting Social Credit was now as much an affirmation of this philosophy as it was a vote. In a circular that began "Dear Neighbor", the League assumed the voice of a typical British Columbian: a carpenter, a veteran, married with two children, a new homeowner whose father was unemployed during the 1930s. Home ownership was not a newly introduced virtue for Social Credit, since

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248 Bulletin., no. 5, 18 June 1949, 1.
249 Martha S. Slater, "To Those Who Read and Think.", BC Social Credit League, 1952. PVP, box IV, Miscellaneous Material, Social Credit philosophy and policy.
the 1930s it had symbolized isolation from a debased tenant population. Social Credit viewed employed individuals, eager to support themselves and their families in their own homes, as representative of the British Columbian ethic because they had not succumbed to collectivism. The writer promoted the Social Credit scheme of distribution and suggested that it was the best course for Canada. He ended by issuing a call for action: "Of course I want your help too, so why not do a little investigating, then get behind a worth while movement and boost." The Social Credit League aimed to shed the movement’s image as a gathering place for fanatical monetary reformers and portray it as an organization through which responsible citizens could protect what they viewed as a commonsense way of life.

Joining Social Credit was a solemn step, and prospective members – even a prospective leader like Bennett – were always invited to attend a meeting before making a commitment. An interesting blend of the personal responsibility ethic and the conviction that Social Credit was a way of life entirely distinct from other philosophies comes in the form of a cartoon portraying a creature whose prime symbolic effect lies in its position on the fence. The Mugwump’s reluctance to jump forward into the orderly realm of Social Credit suggests that it is a spectator and a critic but not responsible enough to become an activist, a ‘doer’. As economic conditions improved during and after the Second World War, the rights of the individual assumed a more prominent position in the BC Social Credit movement’s rhetoric. However, the individual’s role received attention as well. Douglas’ functional definition of the individual as sovereign, but also part of

252 BCSCL, “This is a Mugwump.” (cartoon/meeting notice), [1951], PVP, Box IV, f 7.
Figure 1: "This is a Mugwump"

This Is A Mugwump

A MUGWUMP is a bird that sits on the fence with its mug on one side and its wump on the other. Mugwumps don't do anything but shoot off their mugs. They complain and grumble and sit on the fence waiting to take advantage of what others do.

DON'T BE A MUGWUMP. — COME TO A SOCIAL CREDIT MEETING AT .............................................

ON ........................................................................................................ AT .............................................

Hear Social Credit discussed and have your questions answered. When you are satisfied that the Social Credit principals will solve a great many of your problems we would be glad to have you work with us and become a member of the British Columbia Social Credit League.

an economic system, gave way to one in which the individual was expected to do more than indicate a general goal. Though the idea of responsibility was central to Social Credit values, it relates to another concept that became part of the BC Social Credit ethic, especially during the later movement period: competency. Competency is here defined as an independence that allows individuals the time and latitude to express their political views and to participate in public life. The term is suggested by Daniel Vickers, an historian of colonial America, who uses it to describe an economic state, "a degree of well-being that was both desirable
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

and morally legitimate ... a degree of comfortable independence.” Vickers’ subject is temporally and spatially removed from mid-twentieth century British Columbia, but independence and moral legitimacy may be seen as important principles in BC Social Credit’s ideology throughout its long development.

“What is the difficulty about enabling every man to pay his own way through life?” asked Major Jukes; “[h]aven’t we more than enough for all?” The idea that governments had ignored Social Credit methods in favour of adopting relief, make-work, and welfare policies disappointed British Columbia’s Social Crediters. Early on, they had pointed to the province’s unfulfilled potential “to produce an ever-increasing quantity of real wealth” as justification for adopting Social Credit monetary policy. But they had also distinguished between ordinary citizens and “worthless people” who refused to work. The SCLBC’s 1937 platform admitted that if a Social Credit economy was put in place these people “would live at the lowest level of subsistence ... the same common sense would be used as we practice when dealing with the criminal, the insane, etc.” Though all would receive dividends, the reward for those with jobs would be an “immensely higher standard of living.” Rather than dwell upon what it considered social problems, the League chose to emphasize what the socially responsible – the competent – could expect if Social Credit were implemented.

A reasonable amount of evidence also exists to suggest that Social Credit viewed certain kinds of people as more typical of the average British Columbian. Committed to the individual, the movement espoused the idea of ‘equal rights for

255 An effect of this immensely higher standard was to be more single-family housing to halt an alarming growth in tenancy, which was seen as a condition breeding crime and apathy. SCLBC, *Social Credit for British Columbia*. [1937], 4, 6, 19, 26.
all, special privileges for none', but saw certain groups as monolithic, erratic or dangerous to the commonwealth because they did not display the initiative or follow the code of ethics that for many Social Crediters defined the competent citizen. A couple in Grand Forks expressed their concern about a meeting there that featured "a Douk." as chairman.\footnote{Paynter to Mr. and Mrs. H. Manchester, 11 March 1952, PVP.} Paynter’s reply indicated an all-too-common attitude toward socially ‘unconventional’ groups and a contempt for those unwilling to take part in any movement:

> Mr. Martens is not a "Douk" but a Menenite [sic] ... There are so many people in any district who are not willing to accept their responsibility as citizens in working for a movement such as ours that it is often hard to get an organization started on the proper basis.\footnote{Paynter to Mr. and Mrs. H. Manchester, 25 February 1952, PVP.}

It is not surprising that an erroneous sighting of a Doukhobor at a Social Credit meeting caused alarm among less tolerant members, especially since Doukhobors cared little for worldly politics. The sect of rebellious pacifists\footnote{See George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, \textit{The Doukhobors}. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968 for a careful account of Doukhobor experience in Canada and their dealings with several BC Governments.} had long been a symbol of irresponsibility and semi-citizenship to many British Colombians. Once Social Credit formed a government in 1952, Bennett promised to solve the "Doukhobor Problem" through firm treatment of Doukhobor law-breakers.\footnote{W.A.C. Bennett, \textit{Message to the Electors from Hon. W.A.C. Bennett, Premier and Leader of the Social Credit Movement in B.C.} Vancouver: British Columbia Social Credit Campaign Committee, 1953. CVA.}

Although they recognized gender distinctions in economic and legal affairs such as a universal dividend and labour laws for women, BC Social Crediters before 1944 did not consider attention to gender an important factor in the achievement of Social Credit. Men and women alike could join and participate fully in Social Credit groups. Three of the eighteen Social Credit candidates in
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

1937 were women.\textsuperscript{260} By war's end, women were no less prominent in the movement, but even female candidates had few reservations about expressing support for socially-constructed women's roles. The dominant provincial organization (SCAC-BCS) included among its "Great Freedoms" the "sanctity of the home,"\textsuperscript{261} and in spite of her calls for equal pay for equal work, Campbell upheld the image of women as mothers in traditional family settings, explaining her own candidature by saying: "Women are becoming more interested in the business of our country today than ever before. They realize that the future of our children depends on our action today."\textsuperscript{262} The Social Credit League later supported the formation and activities of Women's Auxiliaries but did not specify what these activities were to be.\textsuperscript{263}

Social Credit's perception of racial minorities differed little from that of most white British Columbians. Major Jukes used the example of the Japanese evacuation to illustrate a Social Credit principle in one of his pamphlets, arguing that the removal of those people was swift and efficient because no partisan divisions existed regarding the urgency of the task: "the execution of our policy was left to the Federal authorities. In just the same way we [should] unite in all major problems once we saw it was for our mutual good."\textsuperscript{264} Though the individual was the basis of Social Credit belief, it was simpler for some members to refer to groups. One member wrote to Peer Paynter to inform him that "a number have asked if the Indians are being informed re S.C.! We understand that our C.C.F. Indian [Frank Calder, Nishga MLA for Atlin] is at heart S.C. Will he run as S.C. in the next election? Should not they and the Chinese etc be

\textsuperscript{260} SCLBC, \textit{Social Credit for British Columbia}, 4, 28.
\textsuperscript{261} SCAC-BCS, "Constitution and Bylaws." [1944]. 2. HMT.
\textsuperscript{262} Campbell, "Address ...", 1.
\textsuperscript{263} BCSCL, "Constitution and Bylaws, 1950", HMT.
\textsuperscript{264} Jukes, \textit{Dictatorship by Stealth.}, 13.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

informed[?]”

To Mrs. Wright, informing ‘them’ was a purely political tactic. Social Crediters did not consider cultural concerns important enough to account for in the process of defining popular opinion. Members of the League reasoned – as Jukes and others had previously – that every citizen would be satisfied in the atmosphere of ‘freedom with security’

that Social Credit promoted regardless of, for example, the Doukhobors’ desire to live communally, native concerns, or gender issues.

During the later war years, Social Credit ideologues had based their understanding of what ordinary people desired on their respect for initiative and personal responsibility, while objecting to encroachments through taxation or legislation. Jukes suggested that

everyone whatever his colour, religion or race, wants to secure for himself and his family, as near as is humanly possible, a guarantee that in the future, he and they will be amply provided for, free from anxiety and at liberty to enjoy what is theirs.

While during the 1930s the movement committed itself to alleviating poverty, increasing state involvement in the affairs of British Columbians toward the end of World War II and into the 1950s prompted Social Credit to claim that an enlarged welfare state, if financed through property taxation, a 3% provincial sales tax, and an onerous hospital insurance plan, would burden hard-working British Columbians beyond what they should reasonably be asked to bear. Competent citizens – employed and able to manage their own affairs – were not a drain upon the public purse, so why should they be forced to replenish it? Lyle Wicks explained his fundamental objection to the quasi-socialist policies of the Coalition:

265 Alma Wright to Paynter, 16 January 1952, PVP.
267 Jukes, Let us establish every man in his own rights., 3.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

"you can’t build something that’s based on revenge, to take away from somebody who’s got something." 269 The Coalition government, in the view of Social Crediters, had failed to protect British Columbians from the economic revenge previously thought to be the strategy of the CCF alone.

Peer Paynter’s notebook, a collection of small sheets of ruled paper stapled together, contained a handy catechism to which Paynter could refer at meetings and on the election trail:

Social Credit most talked of policy why – People are looking for something better.
Other parties not based on principal [sic], hence legislation for political gain.
S.C. on basic principal Christian way of life ... To put these into effect we must have Grit
Some will not get the full significance of these principals. 270

Paynter suggested that the trend in legislation and society in British Columbia had been a retreat from responsibility and morality. The movement needed people with Grit to oppose this trend, and it needed people who realized the significance of what the movement, by 1951, had defined as its “Philosophy of Life”:

1 Man is the most important thing on the face of the earth – Sanctity of Individual

2 We must have, FREEDOM WITH SECURITY.

3 Government has only one reason to exist & that is to carry out the will of the people to give the people the results they want from the management of their affairs. 271

During the 1952 campaign, a member in the Cariboo sent Paynter a draft document indicating that Social Credit had become identifiable enough as a

269 Wicks interview. This firm opposition to the redistribution of wealth was a long-standing part of Social Credit ideology. SCLBC, Social Credit for British Columbia, 12.
270 Peer Paynter’s notebook 1951, PVP, box IV, Handwritten notes.
271 Paynter’s notebook 1951, MS. edited in manner shown.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

philosophy in BC that its promotion could only rest with those who had distinguished themselves by their disinterest. The writer explained that the ideal Social Credit candidate must be “a man who has the individual standpoint ... unselfish motives, AND, the time to devote himself to the cause. ... Humble and for humanity — look around you[,] WHO IS HE —? A man to take Social Credit beliefs and fight for them”272 Although candidates under all banners required time to spend representing their constituents, a commitment to the principles of Social Credit could only reasonably be made by someone who was also morally equipped to support them. During the League period, formal statements of Social Credit principles concerned themselves with values, truth, and right more than they had previously, and a reluctance to engage Social Credit’s political enemies in the manner of a competent, confident member of the movement was more likely to draw criticism from other members. “If you are satisfied with the way your province is being run,” said Paynter in one of his broadcasts, “just say nothing, do nothing and be nothing.”273

Policy and principle

As we have seen, the idea of freedom with security became an integral part of Social Credit thought, along with sanctity of personality and getting results. Even before the BC Social Credit League was formed in 1949, members considered these to be the foundations of the movement.274 These vague principles do not indicate how Social Credit proposed to govern, for the details of government were subordinate to fulfilling policy. However, Social Credit employed the term policy in unique way. In Douglas’ theory, policy was the expression of a

272 C.P. Cant, “THE MAN WE ARE LOOKING FOR”, [1952], PVP, Box IV, f 10.
general desire, not the method employed to reach the objective. This definition changed little throughout the movement’s history. Major Jukes noted the efficiency of a common policy in his example of the Japanese evacuation. The BC Social Credit League ascertained this same kind of policy at its conventions: directives from the membership to ensure that the League’s program accorded with certain results, which were then called “the results [the people] desire from the management of their own affairs.” Policy and principle became, in the years after World War II, more prominent in Social Credit thought than the technique of Social Credit itself with the result that they came to represent the movement to British Columbians in time for the 1952 election.

The concept of policy was useful to the developing movement. BC Social Credit effectively replaced Douglas’ stark, technical system with a program built around the maintenance of freedom and guarantees of a Christian democracy in which all could develop their personalities. In the context of reaction to such issues as hospital insurance and the imposition of a provincial Sales Tax in 1948, to say that democracy and freedom from compulsion were what the people wanted – their policy – helped Social Credit distance itself from the one-dimensional Douglas program that had failed electorally for so long. Even though they were again separate entities in 1952, the voting public held both Coalition parties responsible for the unpopular measures they had initiated as a team. By 1952, BC Social Credit had honed its statement of principle – considered to be popular policy – to four easy-to-memorize points and had found an effective way to present itself as a protest organization without abandoning completely its simple view of finance. The four points were:

275 BCSCL, “Constitution and Bylaws.”, [1950], 1. WACB. MG 1/1, 7/13.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

I. The individual human is the most important of God’s creations.

II. The major function of any Government is to bring the people the results the people want from the management of their affairs.

III. Security alone is not enough. We must have freedom with security.

IV. Anything that is physically possible and desirable can and must be made financially possible.277

In the light of these articles of the BC Social Credit movement’s latter-day faith, the ideological changes of twenty years emerge more clearly. The first three addressed social conditions, an indication of the extent to which the fourth, a veiled re-presentation of Social Credit monetary reforms, had become untenable, at least as the pivotal item of Social Credit belief.

Under the Douglas system, individuals possessed power but were considered free only if they were “independent of labor for fear of starvation.” BC Social Crediters embraced the system during the worst years of the depression, hoping for the return of an era of individualism in business and society through a credit revolution.278 They viewed the individual as literally ‘individual’ – an atom of opinion unable to be divided – the most responsive and real expression of humanity. Major Jukes went further, saying that the idea of the public was “a pure abstraction. It does not bleed. ... In no sense of the word could it be made real.” The individual is the basis of policy, he argued, yet everywhere the rights of the individual had been subordinated to the public good.279

God did not enter the reckoning in Social Credit’s earlier incarnations and

277 Lyle Wicks, Fundamentals of Social Credit, 3-6.
278 Douglas Social Credit College, Extension Course., Study No. 15, 1. SCLBC, Social Credit for British Columbia, 19.
279 Jukes, Let us establish every man in his own rights, 8-9.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

was not ‘invited’ because the application of Social Credit was to take place strictly on human terms. By 1945, BC Social Credit had come to equate the struggle for individual freedom with Christianity and made the encouragement of Christian principles one of its primary aims. In that year, Mrs. Campbell urged schools to provide instruction in the “duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a Christian democracy” – one of the first examples of the BC movement’s explicit affiliation with a religious outlook. The reason for this development is unclear. Jukes’ pamphlets and broadcasts contain no references to Christian democracy and no records of a debate over Christianity’s place in the movement’s creed have survived. Thomas Sanford claims that the movement’s affiliation with Alberta’s Social Credit League in the months before the 1952 election contributed to an increase in religious rhetoric, but that leaves six or seven pious years unexplained. In a study testing for a later period, correlations between religion/ethnicity and partisanship/ideology, Donald Blake found that religious and ethnic factors had little to do with the choice of Social Credit or the NDP. After 1944, the BC movement was affiliated with the national SCAC, an organization headed by the deeply religious Solon Low, but it is difficult to evaluate this connection’s effect on religious consciousness within the movement.

The movement strengthened its overtly Christian outlook during the League

282 Jukes’ mid-1940s output contained no religious slant, and his short-lived Pacific Current of 1949 was openly critical of Social Crediters like L.D. Byrne who argued that faith was the basis of a true Social Crediter’s life. Pacific Current, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1949, 8.
283 Blake, 2 Political Worlds., 87-88. Blake might have obtained even more telling results by polling Liberal and Conservative party supporters to determine their religious adherences. Liberal and Conservative supporters should register a higher degree of religious apathy/atheism during the 1940s and early 1950s than either Social Credit.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

period, consistently reminding members of Christ’s sacrifice for individual freedom and of its belief that Social Credit was actually the “means whereby Christianity can be established.” Curiously, the CCF did not undergo such a transformation. Though the CCF made some efforts to wave a Christian banner in 1953, the need to satisfy the more doctrinaire anti-religious element within the party kept it from embracing Christianity as Social Credit did. In its last phase, the BC Social Credit movement identified the individual with God to suggest that any system of government that did not honour the individual first and foremost was in violation of natural and supernatural laws. Democracy was a Christian concept because, ideally, the state would be subject to the “sovereignty of God, from which springs the brotherhood of man.” After the League’s revival in 1949, freedom of personality was added to the movement’s principles, but one’s fully developed personality could not infringe upon another individual’s rights as a citizen.

The trend toward the veneration of the competent Christian individual paralleled some important historical developments. The advent of the CCF in BC augmented an already doctrinaire and devoted socialist tradition, but for Social Crediters the mere nationalization of a debt-based economy was no answer to the problems of the depression. They considered traditional means of generating employment and revenue like Pattullo’s ‘Work and Wages’ plan unfair because governments were “pulling some of the people down in order to raise others

285 Sanford, 208-209.
286 BCSCL, What Social Credit Will Do for British Columbia, 4.
287 BCSCL, What Social Credit Will Do for British Columbia, 1.
The money needed to finance relief and make-work schemes was borrowed and those who had retained their jobs and owned property would be penalized eventually through taxation. The Second World War drove BC Social Credit further right as the movement opposed larger bureaucracies and more regulations. The relative prosperity of the war years seemed the perfect opportunity to re-establish the hegemony of Adam Smith's "intelligent self-interest" which would "regulate consumption and production far better than any committee." By the 1950s, some of Social Credit's dire warnings about the erosion of rights in favour of collectivism were proven correct. Higher taxes and more onerous government-generated costs for small businesspeople, particularly lumbering and mining operators, allowed the Social Credit movement to claim that it was the only organization in the province morally and materially opposed to such measures.

The second point of Social Credit philosophy – 'the results that the people want' – relates more directly to the idea of policy. It is troublesome because interpreting involves the elusive concept of populism. In an article called "British Columbia as a State of Mind", political scientist David Elkins argues for populism as a characteristic of Social Credit's continuing [in 1985] appeal in BC. Elkins contends that BC Social Credit's ideological profile contains populist components of which a profound suspicion of experts and a commitment to popular action are the most important. A scholar of North American populism, Lawrence Goodwyn, writes that "in its twentieth-century usage, the word "Populism" has come to imply – simply and inaccurately – a mass popular movement

289 SCLBC, Social Credit for British Columbia., 12.
291 Robin, Pillars of Profit, 99.
unencumbered by serious intellectual content." While this study contends that BC Social Credit shed the 'intellectual' trappings of its early years and its Douglasite factions, the purpose is neither to fit the BC Social Credit movement to the populist mould nor to reject the term and its connotations entirely. Rather, comparing Elkins' principal criteria with some examples of change within the movement shows that populism, even in the way Goodwyn says we commonly understand it in the twentieth century, may not adequately explain BC Social Credit.

Expertise held a prominent place in early Social Credit thought because experts in econometrics were to issue orders governing how much new money could be distributed. Theoretically, these experts would ensure that the popular policy of ending poverty would be carried out. However, the first extension course on the Douglas system in the province advocated a rigorous education in the rather technical business of Social Credit monetary reform, presumably so that students could articulate more clearly their desire to employ Social Credit experts. Other interpretations stressed Social Credit's nature as "automatic and mathematical," arguing that experts were not necessary once the system had been set in motion. In any case, the movement's leaders frowned upon certain kinds of experts: critics of Social Credit. Throughout the entire movement period, intellectuals hostile to Social Credit theory were identified with socialism on a national or international scale, and locally with Coalition attempts to regiment British Columbians through an expanding bureaucracy. Professors of economics and members of the League for Social Reconstruction, the CCF's intellectual wing, were favourite targets, as were graduates of that bastion of debt-based financial

295 Tutte, *Economic Madness And The Path To Sanity*, 34.
theory, the London School of Economics.296

Given the model of populism that Elkins presents as descriptive of conditions in BC in the 1970s and 1980s, to expect that Social Credit's later movement period would feature at least the roots of populist distrust in experts seems reasonable. An examination of movement literature during the late 1940s and early 1950s reveals that while calls for popular control and support for democratic reform played an increasingly important part in the Social Credit program, the attitude toward experts at that time remained similar to when the movement was more concerned with the mechanics of financial reform. Under the Social Credit League, appeals for the implementation of Social Credit still envisioned the employment of "qualified men whose duty it would be to see that the money system served the people."297

By the time it was elected in 1952, British Columbia Social Credit had little need for experts, because the more technocratic part of Social Credit ideology had either vanished or been effectively submerged in the movement. The League no longer condemned or praised experts, its wrath diverted toward social planners who generated schemes like the perennially-debated hospital insurance system. With encouraging growth in 1951-52, Social Credit secured the services of political experts. The adoption of Ernest Hansell, then Bennett, as leaders indicated that principle had effectively replaced technique as the central feature of Social Credit ideology in BC as neither man was known to be an expert in the implementation of Douglas' economic philosophy. However, both had experience winning votes.

297 BCSCL, What is Social Credit?: A Simple Explanation For The Busy Reader., Vancouver: British Columbia Social Credit League, 1950. WACB, MG 1/1, 7/13, 9.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

The most convincing part of Elkins’ argument for populism as a defining characteristic of BC Social Credit is his identification of commonsense action with a populist political culture.\textsuperscript{298} Initially a movement driven more by its reputation as a scientific approach to economics, Social Credit’s representation of the individual’s fight against unnecessarily complex, authoritarian and inequitable systems of government and finance had taken hold by the end of World War II. The Social Credit League’s definition of policy allowed the movement to claim that it intended to eliminate many of the obstacles between the people and government by advocating the popular will.\textsuperscript{299} The BC Social Credit movement assumed that its movement status and its commitment to individual rights and freedoms meant that it was an instrument of popular opinion. Its appeals supported accountability to the public through the legislature, but the movement did not promote a mechanism for the removal of incompetent representatives such as the initiative, referendum and recall systems characteristic of American populism and adopted briefly under Aberhart in Alberta.\textsuperscript{300} When the movement spoke of the results the people wanted from the management of their affairs, to whom were they referring? In 1950, a League representative called for a plebiscite – a sign of populist devotion to democracy – on the issue of hospital insurance but wanted to restrict the franchise to ratepayers in each municipality.\textsuperscript{301} There are no indications that Social Credit ventured outside its own membership to gather opinion. The movement decided upon its platform in delegate conventions, at which a good number of the resolutions were either struck off summarily or

\textsuperscript{298} Elkins, “BC as a State of Mind.”, 62-63.
\textsuperscript{299} BCSCL, \textit{What Social Credit Will Do for British Columbia}, 2.
\textsuperscript{301} Non-taxpayers could be covered under Social Credit’s plan, but would have to apply for benefits. Peer Paynter, “Radio Script.”, 3 April 1950, 4.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

referred to committees, as W.A.C. Bennett’s annotated list of resolutions from the 1951 meetings attests. Social Credit could say that it stood for democracy without describing how it planned to protect the people from any abuses that the movement itself, given the chance to govern, might perpetrate. Perhaps British Columbia Social Credit was the most democratic political organization in the province, but from the outset its methods reflected a confident paternalism more than a respect for the wisdom of the oppressed people, which is commonly cited as a characteristic of populist thought.

The last two fundamentals in Social Credit’s 1952 creed are closely linked and indicate clearly the movement’s changing stance regarding monetary reform. Social Crediters had claimed from the outset that security – enough material wealth for everyone – was an essential goal in any society and that raising incomes necessarily meant raising production. The League presented security and freedom as “two great heritages which Social Credit maintains are inseparable” and considered itself the proprietor of freedom. Socialist methods could bring security, the League argued, but those methods relied upon two premises that were antithetical to Social Credit and by extension, antithetical to freedom: wealth must be redistributed, and the state is the ideal agent of redistribution. Social Crediters objected to the assault on liberty and property they saw accompanying state-run programs. Major Jukes asked his readers to “[t]ake, for instance, a plan of so-called Social Security. It is not enough to know what it will do for us. We must

302 BCSCL, “Resolutions.” British Columbia Social Credit League Annual Convention, New Westminster, 2-3 November 1951. WACB, MG 1/2, 6/1.
303 A conference held to define populism concluded that one common characteristic of populism was a worshipping of the people “the more miserable ... the more worshipped.” Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, eds., Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, 4.
304 Wicks, Fundamentals of Social Credit., 4-5.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

also know what it will do to us ... it will half-fill the hungry with fairly good things and the rich it will send slightly emptier away.”

In arguing for the maintenance of freedom, the BC Social Credit movement argued for the protection of the responsible, independent individual – the competent citizen – from the grasping hand of collectivism. Without drawing attention to class barriers, Social Credit appealed to those with jobs, to homeowners, independent labourers and businesspeople to oppose the “first steps towards a Slave State.” While the Social Credit League of the early 1950s still sought monetary reform, the most threatening oppressors were those who would promote security at the price of complicating and restricting freedom. Consequently, Social Credit saw citizens who, during the 1940s, had succeeded within a market framework as the targets of oppression. In a value system where freedom meant freedom of choice for everyone, BC Social Credit could not promote mandatory schemes. Freedom was also interpreted as a guarantee that the modern idea of universal security would not penalize the competent.

Within BC Social Credit belief, the idea that what is physically possible should be made financially possible is related closely to the notions of freedom and security. This fourth fundamental represented all that remained of the monetary reform strand in Social Credit thought. The face of the BC Social Credit movement that is most familiar to journalists and historians, the crusade of 1952, presents an organization that seems to have completely abandoned the idea of monetary reform. The early movement had clearly endorsed drastic changes in the monetary system as the core of its doctrine, and the traditional money system’s inherent inequalities continued to frustrate Social Crediters throughout the

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306 Jukes, Dictatorship by Stealth., 2.
307 Wicks, Fundamentals of Social Credit., 5.

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movement period. Legal impediments and a reluctance to study Social Credit on the part of the general public combined to move debt-free money ‘further down the ladder’ of Social Credit priorities as of about 1949, but it was not dropped. To use the movement’s own language, the policy of security with freedom could be carried out in other ways.

In the name of security and freedom, Social Credit renewed its claims to the cultural heritage on behalf of the citizen but extended this claim from the province’s industrial potential to its resources. The movement had always realized, in the course of assessing British Columbia’s productive capacity, that the resources of the province could be exploited as a source of revenue, but only relatively late in its career did the movement view resource exploitation as a method of debt reduction and industrial development which could replace traditional Social Credit monetary and credit theory. The Fundamentals suggested that the principles of credit reform would be best applied on the federal level and that “our natural wealth plus individual enterprise can bring security with freedom, providing Social Credit principles are applied by the government.”

Though the League expressed its hope that Social Credit monetary reforms would take place, it did not view making the physically possible financially possible through some degree of state involvement, which would have been contrary to Social Credit principles. Major Jukes had enumerated the five

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309 The theme of a “storehouse” of potential wealth arose early in BC Social Credit’s history, but resources were portrayed as a kind of foreign exchange medium which would allow the province to buy imported goods in the event that Social Credit was adopted in BC. SCLBC, Social Credit for British Columbia, 3-4, 13. Douglas Social Credit College, Extension Course., Study No. 1, 1. Jukes, Let Us Establish Every Man In His Own Rights., 3.
311 Wicks, Fundamentals of Social Credit., 5-6.
"Easier to believe than to reflect"

ingredients – labour, material, machinery, skill and need – required to reap the abundance of the earth and concluded that the only obstacles were financial.\(^{312}\) Even the League’s fictional carpenter recognized the irony of indolence in the midst of abundance: “when bad times were here people wanted houses, carpenters were out of work, mills were closed down, lumbermen were idle, but we had plenty of lumber in our forests [sic].”\(^{313}\) In 1951, Ron Worley’s Victoria Group #1 had resolved that “Natural Resources are the answer to queries from the public regarding Finance” and suggested that the League move Resources to second place behind Finance in the platform.\(^{314}\) By 1952, the League had whittled Jukes’ list of required factors to material, skills and labour, the combination of which “should give B.C. the highest standard of living in the world.” Part of its method of negotiating financial obstacles, if elected, would be to increase royalties on the resources extracted. On BC Social Credit’s list of financial priorities, the credit revolution came after a pay-as-you-go budget, elimination of debt, administrative cuts, and income tax changes.\(^{315}\) Essentially, heightened interest in resource exploitation came at the expense of orthodox Social Credit reform. The League still presented Douglas’ doctrine, but bound it up with talk of British Columbia’s abundance as a guarantee of security and freedom.

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In the face of a coalition government that it perceived as interventionist and traitorous to the individual, BC Social Credit warmed to classical liberalism, diluting its call for the nationalization of credit with the message that individual

\(^{312}\) Jukes, \textit{Let us establish every man in his own rights.}, 3.
\(^{313}\) BCSCL, "Dear Neighbor;".
\(^{314}\) BCSCL, "Resolutions." Annual Convention, 2-3 November 1951, 6.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

rights were as vital as, if not more vital than, collective security. However, one might also argue that the movement displayed the classical republican tendency to "secure civic liberties against the corruptions of time"\textsuperscript{316} by placing little value on cultural or gender differences and tying its definition of the responsible citizen to a traditional family, male-breadwinner model. Conservatism is a more apt label if one must be applied. After a twenty-year period characterized by increased government activity, the rise of the welfare state and a consolidation of capital, a declaration that the “British Columbia Social Credit League is the only political force in B.C. standing for free enterprise, the reduction of the provincial debt, elimination or control of monopoly, abolishing compulsory forms of legislation and the decentralization of control\textsuperscript{317} indicates that the movement had filled the vacuum\textsuperscript{318} that Bennett perceived on the right in BC politics. BC Social Credit shifted its focus from advocating an economic system to promoting conservative social principles because it saw more than the economic status quo at stake in the postwar period. The end product paid homage to Douglas by suggesting his system could be adopted, but it desperately wanted the voting public to believe in the stability and privacy it could offer the individual through its program for sound government. As the movement’s organizers found out, the best way to convince enough British Columbians to join or support Social Credit in 1952 was to portray what Social Credit had become in its simplest terms – “Christianity in practice”\textsuperscript{319} – more a way of life than the work of an engineer.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{317} Peer Paynter, “Radio Speech.”, 1950, PVP, box IV, Speeches, Addresses etc. by various BC Social Credit Officials.
\item \textsuperscript{318} Various letters, 1952. WACB.
\item \textsuperscript{319} Paynter to Solon Low, 30 September 1951, PVP, 2.
\end{itemize}
Conclusion

The debate over political divisions in British Columbia during the last half of this century has centered on the issue of whether such divisions were largely a function of social class\textsuperscript{320} or conflicting ideologies.\textsuperscript{321} Social Credit's transformation from an all-encompassing system for economic reform to a set of principles grounded in self-sufficiency and independence suggests that the disposition toward individual or collective responsibility, which Donald Blake considered the "central ideological dimension" in BC politics, contends on an equal footing with economic or class interests and may help identify the origins of the left/right division often cited as the legacy of 1952.\textsuperscript{322} Though supporters of Social Credit in British Columbia were few through the 1930s, scarce and scattered for most of the 1940s, and a mildly fractious lot even after the victory of 1952, the entire history of the movement forms an irreducible part of BC Social Credit's eventual ascent from relative obscurity to power. Between 1932 and 1952, the clearly identifiable and radical sect comprised by British Columbia's original Social Credit groups became something quite different: an organization sufficiently in the mainstream to attract, admit, then elect as its leader W.A.C. Bennett, a former Coalition MLA and Conservative leadership candidate.

Social Credit interested a handful of British Columbians in the early 1930s

\textsuperscript{322} Blake, \textit{2 Political Worlds.}, 9.
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

because it seemed a scientific way to combat a worldwide problem – economic depression. Following the organization’s relative inactivity during the early war years, many in the BC Social Credit movement opted for a decidedly political role and a broadened program as prosperity and pragmatism gradually undermined economic reform’s position as the cornerstone of Social Credit in British Columbia. In the last two or three years leading up to its election victory, the Social Credit movement conducted a spirited defense of individual responsibility, private enterprise and localism after the ruling parties in BC seemed to abandon these values during the 1940s. Bennett’s government later ventured into large-scale public ownership, but these initiatives were not that odd given the Social Credit preference for inducement and the imperative of progress the movement had adopted as part of its new creed.

When faced with internal disagreements, movement cultures based initially on a well-defined body of doctrine such as the Douglas Social Credit system tend to spawn factions rather than compromises. While the historical record of the number of groups claiming to represent Social Credit in BC raises doubts about the movement’s unity and purpose through its early years, these divisions may be seen as “speed[ing] up the process of ‘thinking’”\textsuperscript{323} about such questions as the relative effectiveness of voter education vs. membership recruitment. In general, movement culture makes an individual’s commitment to movement fundamentals a prerequisite to affiliation and views opinions and philosophies contrary to its own as not only misguided but pernicious. The Second World War prevented many Social Crediters from working as diligently for the movement as they had during the 1930s, but also galvanized their opposition to the creeping socialism they saw in the wartime example of state controls and an enlarged welfare system.

“Easier to believe than to reflect”

The perception that problems other than poverty threatened British Columbia during the 1940s prompted Social Credit to take up the fight for individualism, an amorphous concept with economic, social and spiritual components, and one that was more amenable to mass politics in a prosperous age than a disruptive Social Credit system based on dividends and price controls.

Clifford Geertz wrote that “Ideology bridges the emotional gap between things as they are and as one would have them be, thus insuring the performance of roles that might otherwise be abandoned in despair or apathy.” In this way, the organization and thought of the British Columbia Social Credit movement were inextricably linked. Because it viewed itself as a movement interested only in the establishment of Social Credit, the achievement of that goal dictated changes in the movement’s organizational structure as the idea of Social Credit was redefined in response to social and economic conditions in the province. Prosperity during the war years and beyond made monetary reform less urgent, yet ‘Keeping it together’ was important to Social Crediters, and they managed to maintain an organization nominally loyal to Social Credit despite the fact that what passed for Social Credit doctrine had changed considerably. No other movements or parties in the province had embraced anything resembling Social Credit’s call for fiscal responsibility, and of the parties calling themselves free-enterprise, none personified the values of the ‘yeoman wage-earner’ or the competent citizen more convincingly than the Social Credit League.

Social Crediters in BC – most of them Douglasite in the same manner that some early devotees of socialism in BC leaned toward Marx – supported the movement’s 1937 electoral effort only to compete with Aberhart’s version of

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324 Geertz, “Ideology as a Cultural System.”, 55.
Social Credit, which they considered an heretical abomination. By the early 1950s, the Albertan example of cautious government – while still not orthodox Social Credit – suggested that similar methods employed in BC could accomplish much. Thus, Alberta did play a role in the election of Social Credit in BC, but that role was not as decisive as some have claimed. The recruitment of politically experienced members like W.A.C. Bennett and the movement's obscure but effective platform based on freedoms and desires were the results of protracted ideological and organizational changes without which the movement could not have become the government in British Columbia.

Most students of Social Credit in BC return to 1952, interested in what was a dynamic government through the 1950s and the 1960s; Bennett’s spectre prompts them to look no further. Yet, BC’s Social Credit governments owe much to a malleable movement culture which had determined by the early 1950s that its objectives no longer required such drastic means as wholesale reform of the monetary system. Scientific finance, the focus of the early movement period, proved a difficult bill of goods to sell in a prosperous market more receptive to the concealed conservatism that was expressed in slogans like 'freedom with security' and 'the results the people want from the management of their affairs.' Major Douglas’ careful study of the financial system had revealed its flaws and British Columbia Social Credit’s early roots lay in his theories, but the movement’s branches came to embrace a profound disdain for welfarism, faceless corporations and big government in a way that was more practical than populist, and more sensual than cerebral. Clearly, the meaning of Social Credit changed over its first twenty years in British Columbia. Belief had conquered reflection.

The BC Social Credit movement circumvented what Edwin Black called a
“Easier to believe than to reflect”

“lack of tradition” in the province’s politics by creating within BC political culture an element that viewed a commitment to nineteenth-century liberal values and the prudent exploitation of British Columbia’s resources – her real cultural heritage and the reason many in her rather mobile population had been drawn to the province – as sufficient to maintain conditions in which all would be responsible for their own well-being. Though a return to prosperity and the threat of compulsion prompted the movement to change the emphasis of its program, it sought to preserve a feature that had been present in British Columbia for a long time: the view that the individual was the foundation of society. Social Crediters in BC thought that collective action – though occasionally necessary to preserve individual dignity – should not be practised for its own sake. Compared to the universal appeal of the simple liberalism that had been articulated even before British Columbia joined the Canadian confederation, the limited applicability and radical tint of the orthodox Social Credit system became an ideological burden for Social Crediters during the 1940s. The movement, over a period of years, made the significant changes which allowed it to become a potent political force in the 1950s and beyond, but it did so by espousing values that were hardly new to the province and in a way that has been scarcely recognized.

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