"TO BE AND BUILD THE GLORIOUS WORLD":
THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT AND PRACTICE
OF WATSON THOMSON, 1899-1946
by
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Department of Social and Educational Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
June 1983
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"To Be and Build the Glorious World" examines the educational thought and practice of Watson Thomson, the most passionate and controversial of the activist educators who worked in Canada from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s. Using a contextual biographical methodology, the evolution of Thomson's motivational structure and worldview is examined. The opening chapters identify the educative forces that shaped Thomson's transformative-communitarian educational philosophy. Subsequent chapters analyze the interplay of Thomson's transformative-communitarian vision with the Canadian context—Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

A critical examination of Thomson's educational thought and practice shows that he adopted a consistent *modus operandi*. For Thomson, study-groups were to be spearheads of social change. Guided by the vision of a new, fully co-operative society, these groups would gradually initiate a social and intellectual revolution. Thomson's spearhead theory, put into practice in many contexts, was most successful in Saskatchewan. There he found support in a left populist culture.

Thomson's accomplishments as an adult educator were many. First, he had a significant impact on many individual lives, helping people to see life as an indivisible whole. Second, Thomson participated in, and initiated, a remarkable range of educational ventures, some successful, others not.

Thomson's educational thought and practice raises important questions on the relationship between nonformal education, social movements and policy outcomes. Indeed, a close study of Watson
Thomson's career reveals the existence of a gentle, but persistent movement towards cultural revitalization in Western Canada in the 1930s and 1940s. Further, it suggests the presence of some unexpected avant-garde themes in the life of the Canadian left.

This thesis, then, "explains" Watson Thomson's educational thought and practice contextually. In so doing, it also offers an explanation of the previously undocumented histories of adult education in three prairie provinces.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>AC</td>
<td>African Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>AED</td>
<td>Adult Education Division Papers, Saskatchewan</td>
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<td>AETP</td>
<td>Adult Education Theory and Policy</td>
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<td>CAAE</td>
<td>Canadian Association of Adult Education</td>
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<td>CAAEP</td>
<td>Canadian Association of Adult Education Papers</td>
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<td>CCEC</td>
<td>Canadian Council on Education and Citizenship</td>
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<td>CCF</td>
<td>Co-operative Commonwealth Federation</td>
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<td>CCL</td>
<td>Canadian Congress of Labour</td>
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<td>CCYM</td>
<td>Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement</td>
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<td>CFA</td>
<td>Canadian Federation of Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIIA</td>
<td>Canadian Institute of International Affairs</td>
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<td>CIO</td>
<td>Congress of Industrial Organizations</td>
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<td>CJC</td>
<td>Canadian Jewish Congress</td>
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<td>CLF</td>
<td>Canadian Labour Party</td>
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<td>CLPD</td>
<td>Canadian League for Peace and Democracy</td>
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<td>CNCR</td>
<td>Canadian National Committee on Refugees</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
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<td>CWC</td>
<td>Clyde Workers' Committee</td>
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<td>CYC</td>
<td>Canada Youth Congress</td>
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<td>DCP</td>
<td>Donald Cameron Papers</td>
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<td>FCSO</td>
<td>Fellowship for a Christian Social Order</td>
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<td>HSA</td>
<td>Home and School Association</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Harry Avison Papers</td>
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<td>IBEW</td>
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<td>ILP</td>
<td>Independent Labour Party</td>
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<td>R.B. Inch Papers</td>
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<td>International Woodworkers of America</td>
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<td>PW</td>
<td>People's Weekly</td>
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<td>RRP</td>
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<td>SCM</td>
<td>Student Christian Movement</td>
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<td>SSP</td>
<td>Sidney Smith Papers</td>
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<td>TCDP</td>
<td>T.C. Douglas Papers</td>
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<td>Trades and Labour Council</td>
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<td>UAAA</td>
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<td>UFC</td>
<td>United Farmers of Canada</td>
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<td>UFWA</td>
<td>United Farm Women's Association</td>
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<td>ULFTA</td>
<td>Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association</td>
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<td>UNAC</td>
<td>United Native African Church</td>
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<td>WEA</td>
<td>Workers' Educational Association</td>
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<td>WEAP</td>
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<td>WCP</td>
<td>William Conyers Papers</td>
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<td>War Information Board</td>
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<td>WFL</td>
<td>The Western Farm Leader</td>
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<td>WMHP</td>
<td>William M. Harding Papers</td>
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<td>WSLP</td>
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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the educational thought and practice of Watson Thomson, the most passionate and controversial of the activist educators who worked in Canada from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s. During this period overwhelming global events—the collapse of the international economy, Hitler's rise to power, the Spanish Civil War, the Munich Crisis, outbreak of World War II—precipitated a cultural awakening of significant proportions in Canada. Old ways of seeing the world disintegrated; many Canadians seemed ready to reject individualistic, laissez-faire capitalism and to seek new personal, social and political arrangements. Propelled by world-shaking events, thoughtful Canadians saw in adult education the key to creating an "active citizenry" informed of global events and committed to participation in community, regional and national affairs.

The 1930s and early 1940s was a remarkable time of ferment and social experimentation. Many believed that a more just and democratic society was surely coming to Canada, but wondered whether the "people" or an elite would benefit. Indeed, by 1943 the CCF's future as the party of change looked very promising. Meanwhile, Leonard Marsh's report on social security roused both the Liberal political establishment and the general public. The latter, weary of patriotic rhetoric, longed for stability and direction in a vertiginous world. By 1943, Canada appeared to be at a cultural turning point. With the bureaucratic welfare state not yet in place, voluntaristic adult education flourished.
During this period Canadian adult educators shifted from the traditional pattern of "enlightening individuals" or "disseminating technical knowledge" to an activist orientation: education for social change and a participatory outlook. In the 1930s and 1940s, before peace and prosperity had returned and before mass entertainment had seduced communities, Canadians (particularly in rural areas) met in study groups, listened to lectures, attended forums, watched educational films and gathered around the radio as they never had before or have since. Social pedagogy, the desire to comprehend the structure of one's society in order to overcome structural injustice and to gain control of one's life, flourished in a wide range of contexts and institutions.

To be sure, it is possible to identify a number of orientations within the broad adult education movement (a community development model, a political education model, a co-operative society model and a transformative-communitarian model). But the educational activists were unanimous in their belief that adult education had a crucial role to play in resolving the "crisis of Canadian democracy." Unless Canadians had a participatory civic outlook, they thought, Canadian society would evolve in elitist and hierarchical directions. All educational activists wanted social change. They did not all agree on the content of that change. Their energies were focussed on enlightenment prior to material change. To accomplish their goals, they utilized a wide-range of pedagogical techniques. The small study-group was pivotal. But the activists, desiring to extend their influence beyond the intellectual few, experimented with film and radio forums, citizens' conferences, clubs, panels, social surveys, newsletters, reading materials, fairs, journal articles and play-reading and craft groups. The activists believed that one could
teach people to create a better world. They concentrated on a pre-political transformation of the general will. Out of this transformation, they believed, would emerge an institutional framework sensitive to the people's needs and permitting input into policy formation. Their work ran alongside and intersected with the political struggles between an emergent CCF and a floundering Liberal party. Thomson was, indisputably, one of the leading educational activists of the period. Highlighting Thomson's thought and practice will serve as reference point for the period.

The method chosen for this study is contextual biography. Over the past few years the writing of biography has been overshadowed by a new social history that lays special emphasis on long-term trends, social structures and on quantitative evidence. The contextual biographer maintains, against current trends, that individual behaviour cannot be collapsed into social categories such as class, ethnicity, nationality or gender. Individuals are never mere instruments of impersonal structures or numbers on computer cards. This study of Watson Thomson is based on the assumption that no significant social phenomenon can be understood apart from the motives and aspirations of the persons who shape it. Yet, while men and women do make their own history, they seldom do under conditions of their choosing. Thus, to study them means doing biography sensitive to the material and social structures surrounding its subjects.

One must continually move between the concrete details of a person's life and the broader context of his time and place. The contextual biographer has always to be alert for cases where the subject did X or Y because of these structures. He may well conclude
that cultural or political explanations best account for his subject's behaviour. Contextual biography's potential, therefore, lies with its sensitivity to the complexity of the individual's interplay with his cultural surroundings. Done skilfully, contextual biography illuminates the context while explaining the subject.

But the central task of the contextual biographer remains the explication of the motives, aspirations, thought and practice of the subject. Thomson, inescapably, is in the foreground of this thesis. The danger of contextual biography is, of course, that one grants the individual too much credit for specific outcomes. The romance of contextual biography, on the other hand, is that, in tracing an individual's journey, one uncovers previously unknown currents of thought or contributions to social history. The latter has been the case in this study. The contextual biographer's approach to writing history is experimental. One confronts the context as one moves along. One is always open to surprises.

The opening chapters of the thesis trace Thomson's "perilous journey" from the narrow cultural world of lowland Scottish Presbyterianism to the avant-garde circles of London in the 1930s. Our primary concern is to identify and analyze the educative forces shaping Thomson's motivational structure and world-view. This world-view we call "communitarian socialism." It is communitarian because of its proponents' commitment to small-scale co-personal experiments as anticipations of the new order, socialist because of the commitment to justice and egalitarianism in the larger social order. When focussing on Thomson's educational thought and practice, we have used the term "transformative-communitarian." This captures Thomson's
belief that the process of world change began with the transformation of the egoistic personality.

In subsequent chapters, which trace Thomson's career from Alberta to Manitoba and, finally, to Saskatchewan, we examine the interplay of his transformative-communitarian vision with the Canadian context. Thomson's practice as an adult educator was consistent with his social philosophy. His educational activity in three prairie provinces and several national organizations was motivated by a desire to awaken individuals and communities to a participatory civic outlook and to create co-operative forms of organization. He believed that individuals had to be awakened to communal responsibility and communities had to break through internal divisions to find the "truly human" ground of commonality. The small-group was the indispensable context for learning to transform self and society. Thomson's pedagogical techniques are comprehensible within the context of his goal of altering personality and social structures. Any technique that brought people together to reflect critically on their responsibility to act responsibly and justly in the world was encouraged. This ranged from the small group, the cell of direct democracy, to the national Citizens' Forum, the personalized mass. Moreover, his own experiments in communitarian socialist living at Roslyn Road in the early 1940s provided a laboratory for testing his ideas.

Watson Thomson's social pedagogical activity weaves through the progressive, co-operative and socialist movements of the 1930s and 1940s. He was widely respected as a commentator on international affairs and recognized in farm, labour and left political circles as a gifted, if enigmatic, educator. His open personality and sensitivity
to others was widely recognized. Yet his peculiar contribution to the left, and adult education, as theorist and practitioner, is scarcely mentioned in our historical literature.

The earliest reference to Watson Thomson in mainstream educational histories is in Charles Phillips' *The Development of Canadian Education* (1957). There Phillips makes a passing reference to an unnamed adult educator who was fired for alleged communist leanings by the Saskatchewan government in January 1946. Dr. J. Roby Kidd's 1950 collection of essays, *Adult Education in Canada*, includes a section entitled "A Working Philosophy of Canadian Education." He incorporates statements from John Grierson and Gregory Vlastos. Thomson's more sophisticated philosophy of adult education is omitted. This is partly due to Kidd's lack of access to archival material from Thomson's Saskatchewan period. Kidd does, however, include references to three of Thomson's articles in the CAAE house journal, *Food for Thought*. In *We Have With Us Tonight* (1957), E.A. Corbett mentions Thomson's role in the innovative Northern Plains study, but not his work in the CAAE or in the field. However, when Kidd and Corbett were writing in the 1950s little scholarly work on adult education had been completed. Canadian adult education still lacks its Cubberley, let alone its Cremin or Katz. Then, too, one might speculate that in the Cold War era, CAAE leaders had an ideological interest in repressing the memory of its activist wing.

mentions Thomson, as he does most issues, only in passing. Ron Faris (The Passionate Educators, 1975) includes Watson Thomson among the activist educators who dominated the CAAE until 1945. Both Armstrong and Faris are unaware of Thomson's axial role in the "leftward tilt" of the CAAE in the early 1940s. Moreover, their works are top-heavy in their focus on the administrative structures of the CAAE. As important as the CAAE's co-ordinating role was, the education action was in the field—in extension departments, farm, labour and community organizations. Thomson's role in the CAAE was only a small part of his contribution to Canadian adult education.

Ormand McKague has completed the most extensive work on Watson Thomson as part of his 1981 doctoral study of "Socialist Education in Saskatchewan, 1942-1948: A Study in Ideology and Bureaucracy." McKague interprets Thomson as a revolutionary educator. Although McKague's thesis is revisionist in persepctive, he pays little attention to the actual content of the programs generated by Thomson and his co-workers or to the response to these programs at the grass-roots. Nor is he familiar with the extensive archival materials on Thomson's education thought and practice.

This study, then, inserts Watson Thomson, the Scottish-Canadian communitarian socialist, into the social history of adult education and Western Canadian radicalism.
INTRODUCTION

FOOTNOTES

1 Frank Peers claims that most adult educators in the 1940s were "sober, moderate, temperate and tolerant Canadians, deeply concerned about social injustices and inequalities, it is true, but without the firm belief in their own solutions that usually marks the man with a passion for social reform. Indeed, among the persons who figure in this narrative, I can identify perhaps two who had such firm beliefs in their own social convictions—as it happens, two Scots, Watson Thomson and James Mair, who were at the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum" ("Foreword," Ron Faris, The Passionate Educators (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1975), p. ix).


CHAPTER ONE

PERILOUS JOURNEY

At the turn of the century Glasgow was proud, prosperous and class-divided. Her abundant coal and iron resources and disciplined and educated work force created the basis for the marine engineering, shipbuilding and general heavy engineering that grew up along the Clyde, producing its distinctive form of entrepreneurship and labour outlook. With its convenient estuary, the River Clyde, providing access to the Atlantic, Glasgow produced ships and locomotives of very high levels of performance for a world hungry for its products. Other elements grouped around marine and locomotive engineering and the shipbuilding of the Clyde: machinery manufactured for coal-cutting, sugar processing and many other uses, all with their ancillary trades. The label "Clydeside" summed up Glasgow's self-confidence and she celebrated her prosperity and technological prowess in two great exhibitions dedicated to art, industry and science in 1888 and 1901.1

But in Glasgow's industrial success lay a critical weakness. It is not misleading to suggest that Scottish capital from 1870 to 1914 tended, in its marked reliance on a heavy industry base, towards obsolescence. During these years a long-term price decline in the mid-nineties and pressure on profits resulting from relative over-production in international markets was not being met by investment in technical advances. To be sure, slackening growth rates were counterpointed by the still continuing expansion of output in the leading Scottish industrial sectors--jute, steel, chemicals, engineering, coal. And
shipbuilding only managed to escape the recession of 1873-1896 because of the absence of foreign competition and the switch from iron to steel ships. But when the general crisis of the 1880s in the world capitalist economy shattered demand patterns around the globe, Scottish heavy industry was stripped of profitable markets and caved in.\(^2\)

William Thomson, Watson's father, was one of the victims of the shift from iron to steel in shipbuilding in the late nineteenth century. At the time of his marriage to Jane McKean in 1886, he had been working as secretary-treasurer of an iron foundry company. But this company went bankrupt shortly after his marriage. When the Thomsons' only son, Watson, was born in Glasgow on March 11, 1899, his father was running a small printing business with a partner. But this venture was barely successful. For the first few years of Watson's life the family scrimped along close to the poverty line.\(^3\) The annual stock-taking was a particularly stressful time. "It was at these times," Thomson remembers, "that we heard mother muttering 'We'll finish up in the work-house yet,' or words to that effect. Needless to say, the morale of the children was profoundly affected."\(^4\) During Thomson's early childhood the Thomson family (Watson and two older sisters, Harriet and May) escaped the work-house; thousands of other Glaswegians did not. However, like most other Scots they did not escape the squalor and drabness of urban tenement living.

Glasgow, for all its social harmony in the pre-war period, was a city containing enormous differences in income and quality of life. There was increasing geographical segregation on a class basis, reminiscent of the youthful Engels' classic depiction of the "two" cities of Manchester.\(^5\) The millionaire industrialists and businessmen
who made their fortunes on the heavy industry that followed King Cotton's decline lived in solid houses in pleasant suburbs of Kelvin-side and Pollokshields, enjoying large gardens and a view of the river and smoking city below. The city centre (Old-Town) had been abandoned to the slums.

By 1900 Glasgow had a population close to 800,000; of these one in four lived in single room houses, and one in seven of those houses had lodgers as well. Thus, overcrowding was endemic (particularly among recent immigrants, the Irish and Highlanders), and tuberculosis (15/1000) and infant mortality rates (135/1000) abnormally high. The Royal Commission on Housing in 1917 described conditions in parts of Scottish cities, especially Glasgow, that were desperate: "Clotted masses of slums...farmed-out houses, congested back lands and ancient closes." Glaswegians were packed into their houses to a degree unimaginable in England and most parts of the continent.

Most middle-class people, in contrast, lived very comfortably in tenement buildings, usually four storeys high, the flats containing from seven to eight rooms. The rooms were spacious, with high ceilings and wide windows and were, in the opinion of the Glasgow middle-classes, infinitely superior to the rooms of the small terrace homes of their counterparts in England. Next to the affluent middle-class lived the lower middle-class who occupied half as many rooms. The first few years of Watson Thomson's life were spent in a drab three-storey red sandstone tenement building with only three rooms and a kitchen. Not until Watson was in his late twenties would his father be able to fulfil his "pursuit of respectability" and escape to East Kilbride, a pleasant suburb ten miles outside Glasgow.
Family life in the Thomson household was pious and loving but rather restricted culturally and intellectually. Thomson's earliest memory of his childhood--age three perhaps--is of a rocking chair breaking while his father dangled him on his knee one evening, and of both being tossed to the floor, with shrieks of laughter from all as they recovered from a momentary shock. Reflecting on his childhood in later life, Thomson observed that

> there must have been a good deal of harmony and kindness in the home, though this quality does not come through to me now in concrete form. I deduce it from the vividness of my memory of the shocking dismay with which Harriet and I overheard some harsh words passing between my father and mother. It was as though the sky had been rent apart. Our cozy little universe suddenly quaked in its foundations. But the effect could hardly have been so cataclysmic if there had been many incidents of discord preceding.8

The main conflict between William and Jane Thomson, it seems, centred around Jane's somewhat resentful contempt for his ineptitude in business.

Jane Thomson was descended from a line of aggressive, hard-headed businessmen, butchers and Loch Lomondside farmers. Her adopted United Presbyterian pietism tempered her aggressive, worldly background and enclosed her in the narrow provincial world of Scottish lowland Calvinism. For Jane Thomson, hard, competitively-edged work was a virtue. Watson Thomson recalled,

> I used to think that mother would have been a pretty tough character if she hadn't met and married father. He christianized the rather pagan McKean. Certainly, mother made much of her Christian ethics, preaching at us (or at least at me) right to the end. When I was age 38, she sent me a long letter of solemn warning against the moral evils of 'the drink.'9
Jane Thomson appears to have been moralistic in a petty punitive way and rather possessive of her only son. In spite of considerable ambivalence regarding his mother's affection and moralism, Thomson concluded, after years of "trying to imagine good grounds for hating my mother—that we were in fact deeply affectionate, in the good old Oedipus way,..." Jane Thomson’s correspondence with her son in the last three crippling years of her life, from 1937 to 1939, reveals that she had little understanding of her son's social philosophy, but was happy that he was "doing well" and serving others. Even though her son had long left orthodox Christianity, Jane Thomson continually sprinkled her letters with pious hopes that Watson would not forget the principles he had been taught at father's knee. There can be no doubt, though, that Jane Thomson cared for her restless and complicated son's welfare through the many twists and turns of sickness and searching.10

William Thomson was an unworldly man of deep Christian conviction. Unsuccessful in business, he had wished that he had been able to become a medical missionary; it was one of the great disappointments of his life that his son, for whom he expected great things, did not choose to fulfil his unrealized desire. The son's sympathies were towards the father and against the relatives on his mother's side who seemed to "have all the crude materialism of the 'capitalist money-gruber' and were identified in my mind with a status quo to which I was (from age eighteen onwards) passionately opposed." Though disappointed at his life's course, William Thomson was by no means a defeated man.

He achieved his fullest stature through assertion of his moral authority in the household and service as an elder in the local kirk. (The United Presbyterian joined with the Free Church in 1900 to form
the United Free Church of Scotland.) Each Sunday, at about 10 o'clock in the evening, when he announced, "Time for the Book now," all the family laid aside whatever they were doing and gathered around the fireplace. With the big family Bible laid open on his knees, he would announce the Psalm he had chosen for the family to sing, read a passage of his choosing (he had a strong preference for St. John's gospel) and then lay the bible aside.

The earnestness and poignancy of this experience on such occasions as Watson's last Sunday on "draft leave" (before going to France in World War I) and again just before his first departure for distant lands, remained sharp for Thomson fifty years after. By his teens Thomson would begin to loathe the "narrow dourness of a Puritanical religion," rejecting the orthodoxy of his father's faith but not the profound sensitivity to the sacral dimensions of life and the Calvinistic ethic of serving God through serving others. And, like most Scots, Thomson was steeped in Biblical rhetoric and imagery.  

Perhaps the most significant formative experiences in Thomson's early life were his childhood illnesses. He was small for his age, rather delicate, and had more than the normal share of poor health. At age eight he was taken to the hospital with scarlet fever. He remembers the experience of being deprived of his mother at that time as "agonizing and terrible. I can still feel the horror with which I watched gigantic shadows cast by a small night-light in an enormous ward." At age ten or eleven he contracted rheumatic fever. To compensate for what Alfred Adler termed "organic inferiority," as Thomson would suggest in his later years, he threw himself into reading and study. He was a very successful student ("Watson, you can thank
your stars you have brains") but became accustomed to an image of himself as a physical misfit in athletic affairs and as the smallest and youngest lad in the class, but who felt superior in academic matters. He wrote in his memoirs:

Yet there is one important qualification of this—important because it persisted in various ways throughout most of my life. I never quite abandoned hope of gaining the respect of the sporting boys, and managed occasionally to achieve it by making recklessness do duty for strength and skill."

In adolescence Thomson began his emigration from the faith of his fathers to the "wide untapped territories of a total agnosticism." One could hardly avoid questioning religious orthodoxy in the intellectually cataclysmic first two decades of the twentieth century. The problem of religion had become the topic of keen scientific, political and sociological discussion—everywhere voices were being raised for and against religion. Thousands, from both the working class and the bourgeoisie, were defecting from the churches. Religion was clearly losing its hold on the European mind. So, with his close friend and fellow student Jimmy Learmouth, two and a half years his senior, Thomson discussed Walt Whitman, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Edward Carpenter and Ernest Haeckel. The first four were in the nineteenth century romantic socialist tradition; the last, one of the most robust anti-clerical rationalists writing in the early twentieth century. Haeckel's work, *The Riddle of the Universe*, first published in 1899 and made available in cheap edition by the Rationalist Press as early as 1902, shook the questioning boys to the core. This skepticism was harder for Thomson than for Learmouth: Jimmy's father was a tough-minded, somewhat alcoholic, school teacher who had long since joined
the ranks of the unbelievers. Thomson chafed against the devout faith of his good father, arguing with but unable to break from him openly. Hemmed in by the grey ugliness of an industrial city of the north and the narrowness of Scottish Presbyterianism, Thomson felt doubly imprisoned.

But this cloistered feeling did not prevent him from giving careful attention to his school books. Although free thinking intellectual currents had not slipped into the secondary school curriculum (which was still quite formalistic and traditional), Thomson's report cards for the school years 1910 to 1915, where he attended Hamilton Crescent Higher Grade School (Govan Parish School Board) and then Hyndland Secondary School (Glasgow School Board), from which he graduated with a Higher Education Leaving Certificate, reveal that he excelled in all subjects (90s and often 100 in Latin, Mathematics and Science, high 80s in everything else). Simon Fraser, headmaster at Hyndland Secondary School during Thomson's tenure, wrote on his behalf in 1923:

I have pleasure in stating that he proved himself one of our best and most successful students. He distinguished himself in the various term examinations and carried off quite a number of the class prizes. He is possessed of first rate abilities, is thorough and painstaking in his work and will, I am sure, do well in such a situation as that for which he is at present an applicant.

Global events beyond the youthful Thomson's control would soon break him out of his cultural prison. Easy summer days of gathering blackberries and making long cycling trips to Bulloch, Loch Lomond and Killeam were soon forgotten in the clatter and song of the 9th Highland Light Infantry marching through the streets of Glasgow en route to the battlefields of Europe in the glorious summer of 1914. The earnest
schoolboy saw gigantic recruiting posters in downtown Glasgow announcing—
"Thousands of Glasgow Territorials Have Covered Themselves With Glory. Still Wanted to Take Constantinople At the Dardanelles. Call 46 Bath Street For Participation." The Great War had erupted! The British public was caught unaware and Lloyd George unprepared. What did it mean? For Thomson,

Something real was happening at last! No longer did one need to feel inferior to the history books with their tales of battles long ago. Now it was happening around us. Most pleasurable excitement! One's eyes brightened. One stepped out with a more decisive rhythm. I envied deeply two cousins who, by being 'Territorials,' went out on Active Service within the first month or so—and were duly killed, one in France and in Mesopotamia.18

Naïve as these sentiments were, they reflected quite accurately the heroic and sentimental notions of war held by many youth born between 1900 and 1905.

Watson Thomson now faced two choices: attend university or do war work. During the summer of 1915 he worked as a farm hand in Ayrshire. But he got rheumatic fever again and was forbidden by his doctor to run, play any games at all or even ride a bicycle. By the time he had recovered from rheumatic fever it was too late to enter university for the 1915-16 session. So he did war work as an office boy in Nobel's Explosives Co. Ltd. (Glasgow), later Imperial Chemical Industries, from January 24 to September 30, 1916. His superiors judged him "thoroughly conscientious, careful, and in every way satisfactory in the performance of his work. His personal conduct has also been excellent, and we are extremely sorry to lose his services."19 For Thomson the drudgery of the job was offset by the fascinating glimpses of inter-personal
relations in large organizations and, more important, the relative independence the war-swollen wages gave him. Thomson felt more entitled to his own opinions than ever before.20

In October 1916 Watson Thomson matriculated at Glasgow University on a Carnegie scholarship. (Andrew Carnegie had founded his trust for Scottish Universities in 1901; one-half of his ten million dollars was directed to help pay students' fees.) But his studies were interrupted in March 1917 when he was called up for military service. His doctor had stated emphatically that he would never be accepted for military service because of the effect of rheumatic fever on his heart. So he went for his medical, expecting his family doctor's prognostication to be verified. But these were desperate days for the Allies and army doctors had, Thomson suspects, been given orders not to be too fastidious. "They hardly noticed my heart, with its allegedly bad valves—and pronounced me Al."21 In 1917 the army doctors were indeed deliberately careless. They were more conscious of the need for replacements of the heavy casualties of that period of the First World War than of any obligation to protect the individual.

Thomson's acceptance into the army was ridiculous from a medical point of view but it was the most liberating thing that had ever happened to him. "Now at last," he thought, "I could be a man amongst men. For years I had been calling myself a weakling, but now, no more!"22 Now he could hold his head erect. A week or two later Thomson took the eye-glasses he had worn since his first year in school and smashed them. Not until after Armistice would he wear his glasses again. Ironically, Thomson's acceptance into the army enabled him to drop the
burden of his organic inferiorities, which had haunted him since his early childhood. He was now Gunner Watson Thomson—No. 22749 of the Imperial Army Royal Field Artillery.

By the winter of 1916 a new image of the war and the generation who was fighting it began to replace the heroic images of the fourteen-year-old boy who thrilled to the marching Highlander regiments. The old image, propagated largely by officers fresh from schools and universities that educated them in a cultural tradition which translated unpleasant reality into rarified sentiment, sanctified the pouring out of the "sweet wine of youth" in defence of the threatened virtues of purity, honour and nobility. But this emotion could not survive the reality of the Western Front, a nightmarish moonscape where men lived underground like rats and died collectively like hordes of swatted flies; where death was impersonal and wounds unpretty; a desolate hell surpassing Dante's worst imaginings.... For two and a half years the war was represented as exciting, glorious, noble, beautiful, gay, and all in all, great fun. Death in battle was, for the British soldier, 'the greatest of all adventures; the journeying, by a long, long trail of which no sure chart exists, into a land more wonderful and remote than that on the unseen side of the moon.'

Innocent of the front with its battering noise of artillery fire, trench fatigue, filthy living conditions, stench of rotting corpses and endlessly attentive lice, the older generation bathed their fallen youth with a "resplendent beauty" and celebrated their deaths as the culmination of heroic action.

The post-1916 image of war was borne among those officers and men who had begun to feel kinship with the enemy and a loathing skepticism about the aims of the war. And it was confirmed, irrevocably, during the Battle of the Somme in the summer and fall of 1916 where 400,000
men lost their lives in a botched attempt to penetrate German offensives. "On these churned-up and blood-drenched fields," writes Richard Wohl, "the dream of an imminent victory died. So did faith in the wisdom of the General Staff. The fact of mass and meaningless death seared itself on the consciousness of the survivors and was never to be removed."25 Siegfried Sassoon, the leading exponent of the new war poetry, rent the veil of escapist sentiment and Oxford Anthology of English Literature rhetoric that had enveloped the early war poetry. Sassoon's poetry was filled with "Disconsolate men who stamp their sodden boots/And turn dulled, sunken faces to the sky/Haggard and hopeless"; soldiers who, bereft of noble purpose, dreamt of "Sundays at the fair"; who "put bullets through their brains" and were not heard from again; and who longed to turn their "trusty bombers" to "clear those Junkers out of Parliament."26 The myth of a lost generation of golden youth sacrificed in battle by a gerontocratic élite has more than a touch of truth to it.27

After a weekend walking tour with his father (Thomson recalls the unforgettable moment of father and son sharing a cigarette in silence), a lad exultant at no longer being condemned to physical inferiority was suddenly propelled into a "big, wicked, and terribly masculine world." He reported first to the Mary Hill Barracks where he was assigned to the Royal Field Artillery. After a few days, riding school training began at Redford Barracks in Edinburgh where he was put through the paces by an obscene and blasphemous drill sergeant. "Ride! You couldn't ride my sister! Soldiers! I've seen better looking soldiers crawling out of cheese!"28

From there he went to the Wellington Barracks at Aldershot, one of the oldest, ugliest and most prison-like barracks in all Britain. The
barracks at Aldershot nauseated Thomson: the food was revolting and
the swearing, drunkenness, illiteracy and insensitivity of the soldiers
morally repugnant. After a week of ten parades a day with five-minute
breaks between, the nausea passed. From Aldershot Thomson and his unit
went by train, horses and all, to Salsbury Plains to learn to fire their artillery, arriving at midnight among the strange chalk embankments. The end of Salsbury Plains came; those over nineteen went to France, the rest to a Home Defence Unit in Norfolk. During this period, Thomson tells us, the dominant feature of his mind, was

not the pull back to home and mother and all the standards associated therewith, but a conflict between that and a new confused groping towards independent existence—a universal experience, but quickened and distorted by the exigencies of war.  

In the spring of 1918—dark days for the British and allies—Thomson, after being shipped to Swanage on the Dorset coast for another signalling course, was posted to the 76th Battery, Third Division, in the line near Bethune, France. The Third Division was an old British Regular Army unit originally composed entirely of peace-time regular soldiers, all of whom were illiterate, had travelled half the world, spent time in India and talked a unique language interlarded with 'pidgin Hindi'. More highly educated than most in his Division, Thomson proved useful as official amanuensis for the illiterates of the battery. The Division pulled out of Bethune, moving to a point near Arras. Roads were jammed with troop movements. Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders were all in evidence in preparation for the great offensive of August 8, 1918. New experiences crowded in on Thomson, one shock after another. Wounded came passing back, in every kind of mutilation and disfigurement. Dead bodies were commonplace, stumps of
dead horses, bloated and stinking, with legs forced upward by the pressures of the gases of decomposition, became the standard insignia of the road.\textsuperscript{30}

The first days of the great offensive, the beginning of the end of the war, were for Thomson days of "vast confusion, sudden danger and interminable movement and fatigue." He was scared, he says, "not once but fifty times a day." He began to fear this fear and what it might lead him to. Life was becoming intolerable to his whole nervous- psychic-moral system. Then, suddenly, the fear was removed by a simple, deep conviction, which came to me from nowhere one of those August days, that I was going to be killed....I was going to die. It was inevitable, obvious. I embraced inevitable death willingly, gladly. And from then on the haunting nervous panic was gone.\textsuperscript{31}

More bombardment, more advance, the enemy retreating faster and faster till his guns no longer fired back, no more sudden deaths, only harnessing up, moving forward, digging in for the night, moving again, endless movement, unspeakable weariness. Suddenly on November 11, 1918 news that the war was over reached Thomson and his Division in a small village, Obies, near the Franco-Belgian border. Most of the men greeted the end of the war half-heartedly, with a sense of ennui. Sick with weariness, sick of the bloody trade, sick of the tension, the men were overcome by a strange listlessness, punctuated by bursts of furious irritability; and finally it found collective expression in the mutinies that flared up spontaneously in nearly every unit of the victorious Allied Forces in December 1918. Staring at the rafters in the barn he was billeted in on the eve of Armistice Day, Thomson repeatedly said, as many survivors did,
But I didn't die. Why didn't I die? It was in the plan that I should die. But I didn't die. What is this life I now have to face? Do I want it? I know the bestiality and the hideousness men are capable of. Is it to be a life-time of that, even in the prettier disguise of peace? Or is there some way of changing it so that all men live together in the fraternal decency that war has established as normal between comrades in arms?\textsuperscript{32}

This latter question, posed by the nineteen-year-old Thomson on Armistice Day 1918 would remain central throughout his life as educator, social activist and philosopher for the people.

Thomson's thinking about war, admittedly primitive, was simple, absolute and passionate: he was against war, totally. Like many others of the Fighting Forces to whom the disasters of war had taught disgust for "muddle-through" politicians, bitter anger against the General Staff, who from safe billets behind the line condemned hundreds and thousands to useless butchery, and contempt for the notion of a providential, all-wise deity, Thomson developed a perverse sympathy for his fellow-victims who "had endured the same indignities and miseries as ourselves and with as little conviction about the meaning and purpose of the whole sordid business."\textsuperscript{33} Thomson also shared the general belief that the common soldiers were "victims of some monstrous forces in both countries over which neither we nor they had any control" and the widespread hope that après-la-guerre-finie, with the German army defeated and their government in check, Britain could be swept clean of all "oppressors, cheats, cowards, skrimshankers, reactionaries and liars who had plagued and betrayed him during his service."\textsuperscript{34}

Few veterans, according to Graves and Hodge, wished to build a new world, the general intention was merely to cleanse the old one. The average man thought fondly of stepping back into civvies and
resuming his original job, with the sole difference that he would no longer be 'b--d' [sic] about by people in authority. And the emancipated women war-workers, some millions of them, thought the same.35

Thomson was one of a significant few who did want to get rid of the government, or rather of the old politics. "I knew," he says, "that it had to be a radically different government, with very different principles if we were to have any hope of abolishing war."36 Any survivor of war-trauma (the realm of death and breakdown), says Robert J. Lifton, must evolve

new inner forms that include the traumatic event which in turn requires that one find meaning or significance in it so that the rest of one's life need not be devoid of meaning and significance.37

The survivor will seek vitality both in immediate relationships and ultimate meaning, the one impossible without the other.

It is these war experiences early in Thomson's life that generated one of the dominant motifs of his whole life—a "total disaffection towards the status quo, a conviction of the necessity of total and radical change"38 and an "even stronger yearning for fellowship, community."39 Thomson became an outspoken socialist in conviction who believed that "nothing less than a totally new social order would suffice" to prevent another world war. Soon after entering Glasgow University (1919), he became an active member of the University Fabian Society (and later, when the Fabian Society dissolved, The New University Labor Club), alive with controversy at that time about the kind of socialism needed in a spiritually exhausted world. There he met John Grierson, who was studying moral philosophy, a meeting that would be renewed in the 1930s and again in Canada during Grierson's National Film board days.
After staying on in Germany most of 1919, a year when revolution seemed to be looming all over Europe, Thomson arrived home to a Glasgow seething with political and industrial unrest. He was now twenty and in excellent physical health. He had slept in shell-holes and wakened up to find himself lying in six inches of water—and survived! All the boyhood sickliness and consequent inferiority feeling were in abeyance. Full of vitality and the presumptuousness of youth, Thomson was fully prepared to throw himself into his study, reorganize his family, put his father's business on its feet and generally revitalize his whole environment. 140

The ancient University of Glasgow, founded in 1451, was now the focal point of his life. With hundreds of servicemen coming in on government grants, the university undergraduate body had doubled in size from the pre-war years. In 1913-14 there had been 2900 matriculation students; in 1919-20 no fewer than 4200 matriculated. Staff and accommodation were short, and uncertainty felt about whether a policy of expansion would be justified. Classes were enormously large (two hundred attending the lectures on logic and history) and the veterans raucously hard on unsympathetic teachers. Many veterans criticized their professors who, with rare exception, gave no indication of any understanding whatever of the psychological gulf life in active service created between a service and civilian life.

Those students with socialist sympathies resented the political bias apparent in some of their professors' lectures. Sir Henry Jones, a staunch Liberal who was irritated when the Scottish socialist Keir Hardie was nominated as the Labour candidate at a Rectoral election, interlarded his lectures with "what he considered conclusive swipes at
Socialist doctrine" and "orated with great eloquence upon how Socialism had failed in ancient Greece and Peru." These young men were a new kind of generation. They had been directly involved in world problems that had nearly killed them. As John Grierson expressed it,

The world was quite certainly...entering into a new phase of development of a crucial sort in which it would be decided whether or not war between people could be prevented. It was wrong to treat us as school boys, to try to accommodate us to the old ways, as though nothing had happened.⁴¹

Out of class, too, the atmosphere was unquiet, full of intellectual and political ferment of those years, with the Russian Revolution the central fact to be digested, and socialism for Britain very much a lively issue. Up to 191⁴ the Scottish trade union movement had achieved only modest levels of militancy. Visiting Scotland in 1892, Beatrice Webb found Glasgow's working men's leaders without enthusiasm. Just as Scottish "Moral Chartism" in the mid-nineteenth century had been moderate and mild, so too in the decades of high prosperity between 187⁵ and 191⁴ there was little militancy in Scotland. Relatively high levels of skills, income and employment in the engineering crafts, coupled perhaps with the traditional Scottish virtues of self-help and thrift, produced loyalty to the firm. The skilled craft workers felt little solidarity with the unskilled workers (who were periodically laid off), many of whom were Irish.

There was considerable activity in the Glasgow Branch of the Socialist League which gave evidence before the housing inquiry of 18⁹¹ and Keir Hardie was the first candidate to run on a labour ticket in the by-election in Mid-Lanark in 18⁸⁸.⁴² The Independent Labour Party (ILP) had a strong following in Glasgow (after 19¹⁹ Thomson's political sympathies lay here), this support reaching its apogee in the 19²²
general election with ten Scottish socialist candidates gaining seats to parliament. Nevertheless, before the war there was "relatively little response among the workers to the intellectualism of the radical middle class,...and little incentive to propound revolutionary solutions...." But a new labour militancy erupted on the Clydeside during the war, centring upon the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) which first attracted government attention early in 1915. The CWC, an "uneasy coalition between revolutionary syndicalism and craft conservatism," in response to the government introduced Munitions Act which called for the dilution of traditional craft skills, tried to organize strike action against the Act.

As it turned out, the Forty Hours Strike was the CWC's last fling. Few unions supported the strike, no serious attempt was made to spread the strike outside Glasgow, no sympathetic action followed elsewhere and unskilled workers remained suspicious at what appeared to them to be another craftsman's strike. The ill-fated strike ushered in a period of extreme government concern about industrial unrest, which lasted until the breakdown of the Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers in April 1921. Yet, in spite of the overly romanticized myth of the "Red Clyde," as Walter Kendall argues in *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, "the fact remains that Clydeside was unchallengeably the most militant section of the British proletariat in the First World War. Clydeside exerted a political influence quite disproportionate to its economic strength."

Settling down to real study was difficult in this restive milieu. Sympathetic to the workers, driven by a desire to make sense of the cataclysmic events of the war and wanting to expose himself to general
ideas about "life in the broadest sense." Thomson pursued a liberal-humanist course of studies in English Literature and European History. The University of Glasgow examinations in History and English for this period indicate that Thomson received a thorough, if traditional, training in History ("How far was the progress of the Reformation assisted by the political conditions in Germany?" "What do you consider the most lasting results of the French Revolution?") and acquired a literary education sensitive to the socio-historical context of the text ("Account for the popularity of drama in the age of Elizabeth;" "What new types of drama were introduced after the Restoration?"). Thomson's M.A. thesis, "The Relation Between Form and Content in Poetry," completed on August 16, 1923, reveals a keenly analytical mind committed to the liberal humanist ideal of the cultivated intellectual. The split between an elitist Arnoldian conception of culture and his proletarian sympathies remained unreconciled in the youthful university student.

In his second year (1920), because of a conflict with a government official over the handling of the "ex-servicemen's grants," Thomson's grant was not renewed. He chose to go out and earn some money and, on the recommendation of a professor, was appointed as an English teacher at the West of Scotland Commercial College, St. George's Place, Glasgow. The students, mostly teen-age daughters of well-to-do families who lacked ability or motivation for university, mainly needed to be "kept out of mischief." T. Pettigrew Young, Director of the College, described Thomson's role.

He has had to deal with mixed classes of young men and women preparing for business, and his tact and discipline were of the high quality
necessary for this difficult work. He succeeded in inspiring in his classes careful attention to the writing of English, and an appreciation of taste in literature.\textsuperscript{89}

Thomson returned to university the following year, wrote his M.A. thesis, and completed seventeen three-hour papers as well as the requisite oral examination. Although somewhat disappointed with his second-class M.A., he received commendation from his professor of Scottish Literature, M. Macneile Dixon.

He has literary taste and judgment, a natural gift of expression and unusual breadth of interests. Given the opportunity there are few things Mr. Thomson could not do well, and I could cordially recommend him for any teaching, journalistic or secretarial post. He has taken a considerable share in various student activities, and is at home with men no less than books.

He has learnt, too, at least as much from his war as from his academic experiences, and would be found a most valuable colleague in any undertaking. I anticipate for Mr. Thomson a highly successful and honourable career, and desire most cordially to recommend him.\textsuperscript{50}

Throughout the war Thomson had not defied his Christian moral code—he had not used the more indecent profanities, he had rejected the usual rations of rum and fornication. Now, along with rebellion against the faith and Liberalism of his father, he broke with his parents' moral code and began experimenting with alcohol and sex. By his third year he had combined the two previously forbidden pleasures, and begun to discover the Dionysian forces in life. In \textit{Turning into Tomorrow}, Thomson's mature statement of social philosophy, he provides a plausible analysis of the conflicts of his student days.

My urge to abundant living tied in (as I saw much later) with strong but unconscious oedipal needs and delayed adolescent rebelliousness, driving me to some pretty wild, even sometimes sordid,
experience experiments with women and wine. I was restless during these university years, a witch's brew of half-conscious emotions writhing within me.51

Thomson's father's business partner had introduced him to an old boyhood friend who was home on leave from Jamaica where he was a Protestant missionary. He was in Scotland with a commission from a family of wealthy Americans living in his parish: to find them a Scottish tutor for their two small sons, aged nine and twelve. Thomson's reading had convinced him that life could be freer, sunnier and more spontaneous almost anywhere than it was in the grey, puritanical milieu of a lower middle-class home in lowland Scotland. With the dream of social change losing its urgency and fading into the misty background, Thomson accepted the tutoring job. In September 1923 he embarked at Avonmouth on the SS Patuca, a Bristol fruit boat, for his first Atlantic crossing—a trip alive with the care-free magic of a house-party. After arrival at Kingston harbour, Thomson took the train to Montego Bay in the north-west, circling and climbing through a jumbled maze of hills, with little clearings and a few shacks in the valleys between, arriving two thousand feet above the water, a brilliant patchwork of blues, greens, and purples, the whole surrounded by the crimson, mauve and gold of a tropical sunset.52 There he was met by an emissary of Thomson's employer and plantation owner, Stuart Thompson, one of two white bachelors with whom Thomson was to share spacious quarters.

Thomson lived with the other two bachelors at Edgecliffe (one of three plantation houses on their six thousand acre coconut, banana and sisal hemp estate). Each morning he came over to Pembroke (where the
Stuart Thompson family resided) for school between 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon. The afternoons were given to recreation. Able to renew his passion for horses, Thomson and the boys, John and Philip, spent idyllic hours riding, swimming and scouting the surrounding area. In the evenings Thomson played poker, bridge and mahjong. Not an arduous regime—yet Stuart Thompson found his Scottish tutor "hard-working, conscientious" and was "pleased with the progress of his children."53 One day Stuart Thompson proposed that Watson stay with him for seven years until the boys went to college. Deciding against this offer, but still wanting to stay in Jamaica, Thomson wrote Mr. William Cowper, genial headmaster of Jamaica College, one of the oldest and largest of Jamaican grammar schools, having about seventy boarders and one hundred day-students, located on the outskirts of Kingston. In April 1925, after tutoring Stuart Thompson's boys from September 1923 to March 1925, he accepted a position as English teacher at Jamaica College.

The pupils in Jamaica College reflected the amazing ethnic variety of the Island (Black, East Indian, Coloured, Chinese, Syrian, Jewish). Thomson taught classes in English Language and Literature, his work ranging from essay writing with boys preparing for the Higher School Certificate examination, to the usual commonplace lessons with boys in the second form. Two articles written by Thomson for The Scottish Educational Journal in 1925 provide glimpses of a West Indian school in a complex colonial society. The twenty-six year old Thomson told his fellow Scottish educators that success as a teacher in the West Indies depended on one's ability to enter sympathetically into the psychology of those races which we are accustomed to think of, if not refer to, as "lower" races. It was not easy, Thomson argued, to enter into the
Jamaican mentalité empathetically: many of the boys were awakening to full self-consciousness and to the knowledge of other peoples' attitude to them. That knowledge induced a psychological state difficult to sympathize with. White educators should try to avoid running rough-shod over their new-born sensibilities. Thomson saw this "inferiority complex" as the chief cause of unpleasantness in a West Indian school.  

Thomson was highly critical of the parochial insularity of the Jamaicans and lamented the absence of a "higher culture" tradition in the dominant planter-class. "The planter-class have never been conspicuously intellectual," he suggested, "...their most conspicuous triumphs... have been in the dietetic and bibulous sphere, rather than over the hosts of ignorance." In a cultural milieu characterized by "slip-shod speech, American materialism and shallow morality," Thomson believed that it was difficult to "love the things of the mind for their own sake" and to "regard culture as an end in education and to teach in the classical tradition has all the desperate adventure of the forlorn hope." Struck by the extraordinary power of the environment on Jamaicans and reflecting his own liberal humanist educational ideals, Thomson concluded his first article.

In the heredity of these dark-skinned people, there is little to make one optimistic of their future. But with increasing frequency (as I believe) exceptions arise—men of intelligence and quiet manner and sound character—and such investigations as one can make always tend to establish these cases as triumphs of environment over heredity. From Jamaica College alone—a rare environment, for its headmaster is a scholar and a Christian gentleman revered by all—pupils have passed out with whom one was proud to shake hands, sportsman and gentleman.  

Thomson learned two things from the Jamaican experience. First,
that culture and race were "vastly and entirely separable matters" and second that when one ethnic group is intent "upon dropping their own culture and adopting the culture of another, more dominant ethnic group—that transition stage can show very unhappy signs of in-authenticity." 56

At the end of the school year in July 1925 Watson Thomson returned to Scotland to train as a teacher. Mr. Cowper, the headmaster of Jamaica College, felt that he had proved himself a good teacher and efficient disciplinarian. But Thomson had decided that though he would keep on travelling to see the world, in order to make it more economically feasible, he would acquire real professional teaching qualifications. "That certificate," he thought, "would be good for a job anywhere in the English-speaking world." 57 Thomson returned to his parents' home—-they now lived at 35 Falkland Mansions, Hyndland, Glasgow—and enrolled in the Glasgow and West of Scotland Teachers' Training College at Jordan Hill. Allowed to pursue a reduced course of study, Thomson graduated in March 1926. He had studied School and Personal Hygiene, Physical Training, Principles of Teaching, including psychology, ethics and logic, Experimental Education, Teaching Methods, Organization and Management of Secondary Schools, Theory and History of Education and Phonetics and Voice Training. Receiving grades ranging from good to excellent, the National Committee for the Training of Teachers in Scotland estimated his capacity as a teacher as promising. 58 His services were immediately in demand and in April 1926 he joined the staff of Ardrossan Academy, Ayrshire, as an Assistant Master teaching English and History. He taught at Ardrossan, an eastern seaport, until the end of June. After that he had a two month vacation, sailing with
old friend Tremellen on the South Downs and on the Norfolk Broads. In December he resigned when he answered an advertisement for a job abroad and was appointed as one of thirty Superintendents of Education in Nigeria.

In the spring of 1926, with the Clydeside once again seething with industrial unrest, the "greatest and most tragic episode in the history of the British working class" occurred. Shrinking overseas markets had led to attacks on the living conditions of the people and, as usual, the miners were the first victims. The miners refused to accept a further reduction in their wages and were locked out by the owners on May 1. At midnight on Monday, May 3, in face of the government's refusal to continue discussion, the General Council of the Trade Union Congress called out the Railwaymen and Transport workers and the general strike was declared. The strike ended disastrously: the leadership of the General Council, without having obtained from the government any definite agreement as to the terms set out by Sir Herbert Samuel, or the reinstatement of the strikers or the locked-out miners, called off the strike. The Clydeside miners, supported by Jimmy Maxton of the ILP, felt betrayed.59

Thomson found new meanings in the unrest of the spring of 1926 as he discussed events with a fellow teacher in the Academy who was an accomplished, if somewhat cynical, Marxist. Up to this point, Thomson says, his socialism had been "altogether moralistic and utopian". Now, his war-inspired longing for community and total change and experience of white colonial oppression of Jamaicans was informed by a Marxian class-analysis. He began to see that a "tougher-minded socialism was possible, much less dependent on individual idealism and Christian, or post-
Christian sentiment." This new understanding was reinforced one night when, in crossing the city of Glasgow to return to Ardrossan, he ran into the hideous sight of a labour crowd being dispersed by mounted police. "I had never been able to do other than sympathize immediately and passionately with the 'underdog.' Now, thanks to my Marxist friend, I was able to see what to hate as well as what to pity."^60

Events moved quickly for Thomson in the fall of 1926. On October 15 the Secretary of the State's Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa interviewed him for the position of Superintendent of Education in Nigeria. On November 3 the Colonial Office Secretary selected him for a probationary appointment with salary at the rate of £400 a year for three years. His appointment, for the purposes of reckoning service, would date from February 2, 1927. Thomson booked passage on the S.S. Aba and sailed out of Liverpool arriving in steamy and humid Lagos, his destination, two weeks later.

Shortly after arriving he met "The Department" (five or six members stationed in Lagos) and was immediately aware of the "complex stratification of Nigerian society." "What's your school?" If you were not able to answer Oxford or Cambridge, you were mentally placed somewhere below the apex of the social hierarchy. The longer Thomson stayed in the Colonial Service, the more it seemed to him to "epitomize an important ingredient in the essential iniquity of British Colonialism."

For the iniquity is not just that the colonial Englishman (there are some renegade, atypical Scotsmen of whom also this is true) does not grant an equal human dignity to the dark-skinned native whom, in his own way, he serves as well as rules; it is also that he carefully grades members of his own national group according to a few rigid (but yet also subtle) standards. In the Nigerian Government Service, for instance,
a distinction was made between Class A and Class B officials. The former tended to have professional standing and a higher upper limit to their salaries; the latter were more of 'technician' status and were found in Public Works, Railways and such departments. Each grade had its own club in Lagos and seldom did the twain meet.61

Other groups, traders and missionaries, each constituted an entirely segregated group from the point of view of general social life.

Although he was hired to inspect staff and teachers, his first job was actually teaching at King's College, Lagos—at that time the only government secondary school for the boys of the Nigerian elite who were preparing for entrance to an English university. Thomson taught Latin, French and English for the first few months under the principalship of Rev. W. M. Peacock, an old Wykehamite. King's College seemed to be an alien and dubious institution. "That Africans accepted it seemed to indicate only that they had not yet passed beyond the stage of slavish imitation of and subservience to the culture of the all-conquering white man." Unsatisfied with his geographically limiting role as teacher, Thomson kept reminding the authorities of his preference for inspecting staff. He was finally transferred to the Lagos office, and given responsibility for schools within a fifty mile radius. He soon learned that one of his tasks, disapproving of the "private enterprise" schools, involved journeying along trails cut through eighty foot high jungle or by canoe along the creeks and swampy ponds into "bush" schools. The dank climate, unsafe water and ever-present danger of malaria gave him the "sense of being in alien environment." At the end of his first tour, Thomson and all the other sick and weary coasters steamed westwards along the Bight of Benin. Thomson returned to a new family home in East Kilbride—a "substantial, stone
house of seven rooms with a large and most attractive garden, "Alma" by his family.

In December 1928 Thomson embarked for Lagos for his second tour. During this tour his health began to deteriorate seriously. Along with a good deal of malaria, halfway through this tour Thomson had to have an impacted wisdom tooth extracted under anesthetic. Unfortunately, the doctor broke off a piece of his jawbone which subsequently abscessed. As well, he began to have trouble with infected antrum (sinus) cavities which were treated surgically four successive times during his next home leave.

After a two months' extension of leave, because of these operations, I sailed back to Lagos, only to go into hospital for a fifth antrum operation a week after landing. This time the anesthetic transferred the infection to the right lung, giving rise to a furious septic pneumonia in the course of which I was so near death that they ordered a coffin for me. After about three weeks of delirium I came to consciousness, to find my own body unrecognizable since it consisted of little more than skin and bone. After thirteen weeks of convalescence, with leave extended for two months, the medical board declared Thomson unfit to return to duty.

Thomson's own assessment of his illness suggests a link between his diminishing self-esteem and the difficulty of adjustment to his work. He could see the role of the government, the trade and the missionary in relation to each other and vis-à-vis the African population. It seemed to add up to the old imperialist exploitation, even though dressed up in the kindly garb of "indirect rule" and often off-set by devoted, well-meaning service to the African people by many individual officials and missionaries. To Thomson, the African was being forced slowly but surely into a western "money-and-gadget" culture for the
profit of the British manufacturers primarily. Thomson thought that
the missionary was "particularly despicable" in his concern with the
inculcation of western mores rather than any genuinely religious values,
crude evaluation of efforts in terms of numbers and antipathy to the
use of African cultural forms in the churches. Membership in a mission-
ary school proved little, it seemed to Thomson, but the attractiveness
of the bribe—mission school—a chance to learn English, the lingua
franca of the emergent clerical bureaucratic class.

This sharply critical analysis of his work situation was not con-
ducive to zeal or contentment in his job. And this discontent was
reinforced by a growing sense of the unhealthiness of the white man's
own community—the snobberies, the petty gossiping, the intrigues
generated by the lack of any useful outlet for the energies of the
wives of officials. Thomson also began to resent the inhumanity and
unreality of the white man's personal relations with the blacks. Since
the social entertaining of Nigerians was condemned by the unwritten
laws of bureaucratic society, there was simply no medium through which
decent human relations between oneself and Nigerians could develop.
Add to this an unsatisfactory love affair and altogether he was in a
"wild, hectic state, with malaria and overdoses of quinine all con-
tributing to the emotional confusion and instability."\(^64\)

How to solve this problem of mounting resentment without any
constructive outlet? Thomson gained some support from two new members
of the Department—Kenneth Murray, an art specialist, and K.B. Forge, a
young superintendent (not Oxon. or Cantab.), who constituted a little
rebel group, though there was little enough they could do. Then Thomson
found a project that met some of his demands. The United Native African
Church (UNAC) and the African Church (AC), which had grown to quite a size over a decade or two, came to Thomson for assistance in establishing their own training school for teachers. These indigenous churches had either to take the cast-off teachers of the British and American missions (dismissed, generally, for "immorality") or train their own. Sympathetic with the aims of the indigenous churches, Thomson prepared a brief and passed it on to the Department a number of times. Eventually it was accepted; Thomson went to Agege, about thirty miles from Lagos where he lived continuously for the last six months of his second tour in a bamboo shack on the edge of the tropical rain forest. In the Agege District there were ten AC church schools and two UNAC. Including the Ita area, there were eighteen AC and two UNAC schools, including Ifako School and the Agege Training Institute. 65

This was a good and satisfying experience for Thomson. He could sit down and really converse with the church leaders. He learned something of what they felt and thought about Christianity and education. Together Thomson and the leaders worked out a curriculum for the training school which laid the groundwork for an education far better adjusted to the living needs of the rural African than anything the mission's schools had attempted. Concerned with effecting a more efficient and centralized organization of the church schools, Thomson appears to have succeeded in getting the AC and UNAC to agree that the principal of the Agege Training Institute (an AC institution) should have supervisory control over all the schools of the district. Thomson also organized monthly meetings with teachers, mostly black, many of whom worked in poorly equipped schools and had only rudimentary pedagogical skills for discussion of teaching methods. His proposal that school dress and
salutation be entirely Yoruba, after receiving assent from church leaders, was met by considerable objection from the teachers. This, Thomson believed, was caused "chiefly by the 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' complex, and also by an unwarranted respect for Lagos conventions." An annual competition, designed to encourage school gardens, handwork, Yoruba plays, songs, games and community service, was proposed, the headmasters suggesting that prizes be given only to schools and not individuals.

Something of Thomson's philosophy of native education is set out in an unpublished article, "Retrenchment and Education in West Africa," probably delivered as a speech in Scotland in the late 1920s. In this article Thomson examined some of the present problems and inconsistencies in British colonial educational policy. Should we, he queried, provide a little education for the many, or a really good education for the few? Should African education have a literary or a scientific bias? Should it be purely vocational, or should it also provide a 'training for leisure'? Should it be sectarian or secular? Use the vernacular or English? Are we to give the African what he wants or what we think is good for him? The answer, Thomson argued, depended on what sort of social future was envisaged for West Africa.

The test of any educational system must be the extent to which it assists a people to develop along their best natural line of progress. By that test, the type of education first introduced by the Missions, and extensively prevailing even now, stands condemned for its limited social objectives because no one wants a country entirely populated by catechists and clerks, especially if they are to be 'detribalized catechists and inefficient clerks.'

Thomson advocated a policy for rural education in West Africa which concentrated upon the rural agricultural class: centring the curriculum
around agriculture, arithmetic, hygiene and the local crafts, each of these being taught in a more practical way than was at present. This, he felt, implied a vastly different type of native teacher from what they had.

How to train a teacher with an intellectual outlook a little broader than that of his pupils or their parents and with the necessary technical skill in his work, yet without infecting him with the virus of Europeanized bookishness, which, as we know to our cost, is so desperately contagious and so harmful? How to get teachers who will take more price in the labours of their own hands in the school garden than in collars and ties and their ability to write a letter in florid bad English? How indeed! Yet, unless we can do so, we shall continue to have teachers totally out of sympathy with the tribal life of the community in which they function and whose influence will merely swell the flood of less than semi-educated youths to the over-crowded clerical markets of the towns and the ranks of the 'too-proud-to-work-without-a-jacket' brigade. 68

By encouraging a dual system of practical education in the vernacular for the majority of agricultural producers and the opportunity for a more bookish education for a small elite in the urban areas, Thomson knew he had opened himself to the accusation that he was trying to perpetuate the African's subordinate status. In fact, there is some similarity between Thomson's views and the controversial "adaptationist" education promoted, if not implemented, by the influential Phelps-Stokes reports of 1922 and 1925, written primarily by Thomas Jesse Jones, and given official recognition by the British Colonial Office in the 1925 memorandum, Education Policy in British Tropical Africa. The memorandum stated that "education should be adapted to the mentality, attitudes, occupations, and traditions of the various peoples, ...adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution." 69
While Thomson accurately pinpointed the educational distortions in the colonial society, he unrealistically assumed that a "wave of the policy wand could transform aspirations from academic to agricultural or technical education without a similar transformation of the social and economic system of the colony."\textsuperscript{70} Nigeria's political-bureaucratic and cultural elite had benefitted from the "revolutionary impact of British rule: the creation of new high-paying jobs within the colonial bureaucracy."\textsuperscript{71} Some West African intellectuals interpreted the British emphasis on simple, utilitarian and agriculturally-oriented education for the masses as an attempt to anesthetize the African's (and Southern U.S. black) nascent political consciousness.\textsuperscript{72} Nevertheless, Edward Berman correctly assumes that: "Had the colonial government made the rewards of an agricultural or vocational training superior to those of an academic education, there is every likelihood that the African would have responded with enthusiasm to it."\textsuperscript{73}

At the end of his second leave, still not well even though his leave had been extended two months, Thomson boarded the SS Accra for Lagos. He was gripped by a sense of ennui.

Again, the same old deck chairs, again, the daily sweepstake on the ship's run; the usual cocktails, bridge and poker. Again also the wonder of the setting sun in an empty sea building a path of pure gold across the limpid ultramarine. For the first time, I think, I sensed something of the existentialist's nausea. I was weary of the known world, desperate to find new meanings and purposes.\textsuperscript{74}

Thomson's third and last tour was a brief, stricken affair. He did less than one week's work, for he became sick again. His beautiful Arabian pony, Kili, he saw and patted but never rode. The new car stood idle. His friends of the African Church in Agege came to the
hospital time after time to enquire after his health, but they had no
talk together. Nursed back to health from champagne to sherry
egg-nog to Guinness stout by Dr. Aitken, a personal friend of Watson and
his sister May, after thirteen weeks he was ready for the return voyage.

His last glimpses of Lagos were from the window of the ambulance
in which he lay on a stretcher. All Thomson remembers about the voyage
was his painful efforts to walk a few steps and the pleasure of the
fresh watermelon brought aboard at the Canary Islands. In this desperate
condition, Thomson arrived home to his sadly solicitous mother, father
and sister. Harriet, his oldest sister, loved nursing and provided
tender care. His girl friend was shocked at his haggard and shrunken
appearance. Thomson had to admit that she did not love him. "I felt
deserted, alone and empty—more acutely so than I had ever felt before.
This period was perhaps the real nadir of my life." In the summer of
1931 after rest, sun and orange juice at "Alma," Thomson decided to go
to London. With an £800 gratuity from the Colonial Service, completely
without occupation or objective, he went to Britain's first city "so
that I could be as miserable as I wanted to be, with less remorse than
if I stayed at home under the anxious eyes of my family."75

Thomson arrived in London in the gloomy summer of 1931, his mood
of personal despondency and bewilderment converging with the prevailing
cultural mood among British intellectuals.76 He rented a garret room
in New Compton Street, Soho, saw the Tremellens, made a few half-hearted
attempts to buy a partnership in a small progressive private school
(along the lines of the Russells' Beacon Hill School), and tried to
make some sense out of the world economic crisis. Overcome with self-
pity, Thomson even considered suicide.
Every other night I walked down to the embankment or into some slum to find humans for whom I could be more sorry than I was for myself. When the inner tension became unbearable I drank or slept with some girl of the streets.

Contact with people worse off than he was rekindled his "socialism of the heart" and Thomson decided to help the "outcasts" in some active personal way. His first impulse was to write and talk to Jimmy Maxton, the ILP leader, whose brother John he had known at Glasgow University. Nothing, apparently, came of this contact. Next he sought out Sir Wyndham Deedes, a grand Quaker gentleman, who was a devoted friend of London's poor and needy, living among them in Bethnal Green, an old, poor working class borough in East London. Deedes acted as well as secretary to the National Council for Social Service. After a series of lengthy talks, Deedes persuaded Thomson to work as a helper at Docklands Settlement.

But he found this work so full of the most nauseating hypocrisy and social snobbery that I could hardly bear to stay out my first month. The clients (mostly in boys' and girls' clubs) obviously despised the whole affair and came mainly for the various bribes. Most of the helpers were 'gentry' trying to do a conscientious job of 'slumming' but succeeding only in forcing wider the gulf between themselves and their proletarian customers.

Discussing his disenchantment with Sir Wyndham, Thomson received a rather wistful reply. "What better can we do when there are so few who really love their fellowman?" Thomson concluded that nothing but a violent assertion of the human rights of 'the lower classes' could possibly clear a situation so filthy with hypocrisy and class-superiority. All this confirmed me powerfully in the conclusions I had drawn from my colonial experience.
At thirty-two years of age Thomson was at a critical turning point in his life. Feeling an acute need for a new, integrating vision of things, Thomson admitted that if a good Communist Party man had got hold of him he could easily have been persuaded into their activity. Indeed, for many troubled middle-class intellectuals the Communist Party seemed to provide "direction, purpose and certainty." In a vertiginous world, the granite certitudes of a deterministic Marxism providing the key to understanding the economic crisis and the rise of fascism as well as the means of escaping from the "nihilism of the wasteland." But, despite this attraction, Thomson was critical of the Communist Party's commitment to inevitable class war and to the State control of society. And, as his writings of the early 1930s also reveal, he believed that the economic and political crises were manifestations of a deeper moral and spiritual crisis of civilization and the human person. Throughout his life Thomson would maintain an ambivalent relationship to the communist movement: attracted by party members' steely dedication and passionate sacrifice, repelled by their rigid orthodoxy and depreciation of the subjective aspects of life.

But no persuasive communist appeared to entice Thomson into the Communist party. With his own existential crisis still unresolved, he went from the Dockland Settlement to the teaching of unemployed youth in the borough of Bethnal Green. Boys from sixteen to eighteen years of age were compelled to take their "schooling" in an ugly, condemned building which had been re-opened to house their classes. There he taught fifty or so rebellious youth: no recess, no curriculum, no books and no equipment except blackboard and chalk. Facing this group of alienated youth was a heaven-sent challenge to Thomson's very will to
live. "Either one quit or one pulled together every resource of mind and will and projected it into this desperate situation. I found myself doing the latter—and liking it." Classes were a one-man theatrical performance—class discussions on forbidden topics (sex, politics, religion), gaps in the three hour block periods filled in doing crossword puzzles or playing games. Exhausted and stimulated, Thomson would arrive home and lie flat on his back for hours before arising to prepare a meal. Plunging into work proved to be a good antidote for self-pity.

It had been a perilous journey from the uncertainties and insecurities of a lower middle-class Scottish lowland family to the slums of London. The world-view inherited from his father—a patchwork quilt of religious pietism, individualistic moral precepts and mildly liberal political notions—could not withstand the onslaught of the rising doubts about the old religious, intellectual and moral verities and the conflagration of the First World War. While Thomson's university studies in history and literature no doubt deepened his understanding of the collapse of Europe's supremacy, they did not provide him with a new world-outlook. Even though he returned from the war avowedly committed to "total change," his "socialism of the heart" was not yet translated into a coherent social philosophy. His experience in Jamaica, of the General Strike of 1926 and the traumatic time of Nigeria gradually eroded the idealistic elements in Thomson's socialism. But, by 1931, a new synthesis had not emerged. Thomson was desperately in need of both a new "vision of things" and personal healing.
CHAPTER ONE

FOOTNOTES


3 Watson Thomson Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia (hereafter WTP), box 2, file 4 (hereafter 2-4), p. 2. Box 2, files 2, 4, 5 contain Thomson's memoirs which were written in the 1960s.

4 WTP 2-4, p. 3.


8 WTP 2-4, p. 1.

9 WTP 2-4, p. 1.

10 WTP 2-4, p. 4.

11 A few examples will suffice. "I'm wondering if you are going to one of the churches [sic] there are some very good preachers in Montreal I believe"—(November 4, 1937, WTP 1-4). "I think I see you looking pretty shabby your clothes all creased up with so much knocking about and no time to see after them at all—you must now see about getting a new suit of clothes to start nice and smart in this new appointment" (October 31, 1938, WTP 1-4). "I thank our Heavenly Father for the way he has preserved [sic] you and kept you safe through all these perilous paths you have been through on your long journyings [sic] now coming to an end" (May 8, 1937, WTP 1-4).

12 WTP 2-4, pp. 2, 3, 6.
13 WTP 2-4, pp. 2, 4, 5.
14 WTP 2-4, p. 6.
16 WTP 2A (unsorted personal documents). Included are certificates, letters of recommendation, old examination papers.
17 Letter of recommendation from Simon Fraser, October 10, 1923, WTP 2A.
18 WTP 2-4, p. 7.
19 Letter of commendation from M.B. Milne, September 30, 1916, WTP 2A.
20 WTP 2-4, p. 8.
22 Thomson, Turning into Tomorrow, pp. 2-3.
28 WTP 2-2, pp. 2, 10.
29 WTP 2-4, p. 2.
30 WTP 2-4, pp. 6, 8.
31 WTP 2-4, pp. 10, 11.
32 WTP 2-2, pp. 13, 12.


38 Thomson, *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 2.


40 WTP 2-5, p. 15.


43 Checkland, *The Upas Tree*, p. 31.


47 WTP 2-5, p. 23.

48 WTP 3-16.

49 Letter of recommendation from T. Pettigrew Young, August 22, 1923, WTP 2A.

50 Letter of recommendation from W. Dixon, October 4, 1923, WTP 2A.

51 Thomson, *Turning into Tomorrow*, p. 3.

52 WTP 2-5, p. 28.

53 Letter of recommendation from J. Stuart Thompson, June 14, 1926, WTP 2A.

55 Thomson, "Race Complications," October 30, 1925.

56 WTP 2-5, p. 35.

57 WTP 2-5, p. 35.

58 Letter from G. Burnett, Director of Studies, September 4, 1926, WTP 2A.

59 McNair, James Maxton, p. 157.

60 WTP 2-5, p. 40.

61 WTP 2-5, p. 48.

62 WTP 2-5, pp. 50, 51, 55, 58.

63 WTP 2-5, p. 60.

64 WTP 2-5, pp. 60, 62, 65.


66 "Report on Visit to Agege District."

67 "Retrenchment and Education in West Africa," WTP 2-7, p. 3.

68 "Retrenchment and Education," WTP 2-7, pp. 5-6.


71 Abernethy, The Political Dilemma, p. 90.


Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930 (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 402, characterizes the 1920s as a time when "it might still be possible to live and to philosophize as though the times were in some sense 'normal.'" However, he goes on to say, "The War has revealed the fragility of civilized values among the populations of Western and Central Europe. The advent of Bolshevism had cut off Russia from the community of liberal intellectuals. And the triumph of Italian Fascism had shaken up consciences at least as deeply by bringing a major Western country, for the first time in a half-century, under a government strenuously hostile to free speculation."

Watson Thomson, "To James Maxton: A Call for Co-operation," New Britain, April 18, 1934, p. 668. "It becomes a choice between two sorts of Socialism which are poles apart. One is rationalist, dialectic-materialist, highly disciplined and organized, knowing only how to work for the destruction of the old order in a revolution of blood and vengeance. The other is an older tradition, the Socialism of Owen, Ruskin, Morris and Whitman....The time is ripe now for the renewal of that spiritually-based Socialism, carrying with it all the
Marxian realism but refusing its technique and deadly mechanization; imitating not a dubiously scientific organization, but an infallible and inspired crusade; concerning ourselves not by violence of the body to destroy, but by violence of the spirit to create, and to conceive the New Whole."

82"My essential quarrel with communists was then—and still is—primarily philosophical and only secondarily political. I objected to their glib way of depreciating all the subjective aspects of life; and their setting up a system of absolutes and universals which, like the dogma and apparatus of the Roman Church, called for obedience rather than genuinely free and creative participation. In short, London had given me 'personalist' convictions which I could not shake off but which, on the contrary, all my experience seemed to confirm " (WTP 2-2, pp. 97-98).
One evening in the spring of 1932 an old friend from Nigeria days, Phyliss Murray, invited Thomson (who was still teaching in Bethnal Green) to a group which met two or three evenings a week in Gower Street in Bloomsbury, famed for its celebrated "Bloomsbury set" and numerous lecture societies. "Watson," Murray said, "I'm going to get you out of here....I'm going to get you in touch with the real, living world of ideas and intellectual activity where you belong. Just you wait and see."2

The first lecture Thomson attended was sponsored by the Adler Society for Individual Psychology, founded by Dimitrije Mitrinovic in 1927 after Lilian Slade, a follower of Mitrinovic, had introduced him to Alfred Adler.3 Philip Mairet, a substantial English intellectual and journalist with long-standing psychotherapeutic credentials, describes the Adler Society as a brilliant show, with an enormous number of brilliant people occasionally appearing in it. At one time, John Strachey came a good deal, and his sister, Mrs. Clough Williams-Ellis, was also a keen supporter....It was the eloquence, personal magnetism and tremendous intellectual brilliance of Mitrinovic that turned Alfred Adler into a sort of 'movement' in London.4

The same people who ran the Adler Society were also promoting another series of lectures under the auspices of the New Europe Group. On his second or third visit to 55 Gower Street, at New Europe Group lecture, Thomson met Mitrinovic in a drawing-room, with original fire-
place and other fixtures, transformed into a lecture hall. Between the fireplace and the lecturer's table sat this extraordinary figure: a large man, dressed in frock-coat, grey-striped trousers, pearl-grey vest and an old-fashioned stocktie with hard, winged collar. The most striking feature was the shape of his head, enormously high-domed yet flat at the back, all clean-shaven like any billiard ball. The eyebrows were jet-black and full, the eyes dark and magnetically compelling.  

Philip Mairet, who first met Mitrinovic in 1914 and remained a close associate until the early 1930s, felt that Mitrinovic had the "intensity of consciousness, the immediate intuition, of those few individuals whose instinctive, emotional and intellectual centres work in unison,..." This certainly was also the experience of Paul Selver, translator of Czechoslovak poetry and associate of A.R. Orage, the influential editor of *The New Age*. In his first meeting with Mitrinovic, Selver was shocked that he had found himself "so affected by his mere presence that I nearly lost consciousness. This had never before happened to me, nor did it ever happen again." No doubt Mitrinovic's strikingly unusual physical and spiritual presence contributed to the "aura of legend" attached to him and others like Gurdjieff, Cuspensky and Aleister Crowley.  

Physically and emotionally broken, in search of a life philosophy and cultural home, Watson Thomson had, it seemed, found his teacher and spiritual guide. It is no exaggeration to say that working and struggling with Dimitrije Mitrinovic through the depression years from 1932 to 1937 was the "central experience" of Thomson's life. During this period his life philosophy crystallized: Thomson found a way to integrate the varied strands of his experience and thought into a
unified whole. Although Thomson would discard the more esoteric elements of Mitrinovic's eclectic teachings, the elements of Thomson's "communitarian socialist" vision of the world were formed in the Mitrinovic circle. Thomson's ardent commitment to personal authenticity in small intentional communities also emerged in these years. Thomson's later thought and practice as a Canadian adult educator are understandable then only in light of the emotional depth of his relationship with Mitrinovic, and of his participation as a radical adult educator in the New Britain movement. Throughout his life, but particularly in the late 1930s and the war years, Thomson struggled with the meaning of Mitrinovic and the New Britain movement. Thomson would eventually replicate Mitrinovic's group experiments in Canada. Moreover, the mode of discourse and central themes of the New Britain movement provided Thomson with an intellectual arsenal throughout his controversial eight years as an adult educator on the Canadian prairies.

What kind of person could exercise such great authority over Watson Thomson? Dimitrije Mitrinovic was born in 1888 into a Serbian Orthodox family at Donje Poplat, a village near Stolac, Hercegovina, the eldest of ten children. In the early twentieth century Mitrinovic had played an important role in the intellectual and cultural ferment of the "Young Bosnia movement" which "opposed itself to the conservative spirit of laissez-faire" and had as its credo "the humanistic ethic of national unity and freedom, social justice and creative truth." While a student at Mostar high school, one of the "intellectual cradles" of the Young Bosnians, Mitrinovic organized a secret library which promoted liberation through cultural awakening. He later edited several literary and political reviews, meanwhile working in a conspiratorial
society, Rad (Work) to protest Austrian domination and to bring about a renewed consciousness of the unity of the South Slavs.¹²

In 1912 Mitrinovic composed a Programme for the Unification of the Peoples' Youth Clubs, which he took to Belgrade and presented to the Preporod group, a group of youth who believed in republicanism and refused to join any political party. Unanimously accepted, the program called for "radical anticlericalism,...elimination of destructive alien influence,...[and] a national defence against alien spiritual and material forces; [as well as] national offensive to reawaken the subjugated and half-lost parts of our people by spiritual and material means."¹³

In 1914, while studying the History of Art at the University of Munich, Mitrinovic became associated with Wassily Kandinsky and was present at the birth of the "abstract" movement in painting.¹⁴ Through Kandinsky he was introduced to a distinguished group of thinkers from several different countries who aimed at establishing a spiritual and cultural leadership for the decadent west. Since the turn of the century the old norms of rationality and scientific objectivity had collapsed. Finding themselves before the "dark gate of utter uncertainty,"¹⁵ many intellectuals turned to the new modes of thought that held out the promise of salvation beyond the present chaos and hopelessness.

With Eric Gutkind, the visionary German author of Sidereal Birth (1910) who believed that the world was passing through its "noon-tide terror" when "all that was previously thought to be sufficient is seen to be insufficient" and Frederick Van Eeden, well-known Dutch author and communitarian, Kandinsky was engaged in building a deep and personal
association which they planned to extend to a number of leading thinkers in different parts of the world. Mitrinovic joined the "Blutbund" and immediately began preparations for a yearbook, with himself as editor, and with Kandinsky, Gutkind, Van Eeden and Giovani Papini, as editorial committee. They hoped to include as collaborators Upton Sinclair, Rabindrathe Tagore, Sun Yat Sen and many others. However, after the assassination at Sarajevo at the end of June 1914 plunged Serbia into war, Mitrinovic, facing conscription into the Austrian army or internment, decided to escape to England.  

During the war Mitrinovic worked for the Serbian legation in London and moved among avant-garde cultural circles in the country. He actively promoted the works of Ivan Mestrovic, the internationally acclaimed Serbian sculptor. Mitrinovic saw him as the "most adequate figurative expression of a cult of physical strength, health, determination, national élan, dynamis, struggle and revenge." Early in 1916, while in Paris for a Mestrovic exhibition, Mitrinovic contacted Edouard Schuré, Anatole France and Henri Bergson to collaborate on an "Almanac." Mitrinovic's idea was to "form a spiritual alliance of all the principal men, institutions or movements capable of thinking for the rebirth and reconstruction of Europe." For Mitrinovic, and later his disciple Watson Thomson, the cultural and political situation seemed open to direct transformative action. This apocalyptic expectation, and the affirmation of the leading role visionary imagination in global transformation, would remain central to Thomson's Weltanschauung until early in 1945.

Mitrinovic was constantly preoccupied with the basic problem of Europe's crisis, a crucial moment, he believed, in the history of western civilization. The London group gathered round Mitrinovic in the
1930s tended to believe that Mitrinovic deliberately came to England when World War I broke out to try to prevent World War II. Mitrinovic wanted to induce changes in insular Britain to make possible British initiative towards the federation of Europe. This initiative, Mitrinovic believed, was the "necessary condition for a general renaissance in Europe and the West—the only answer, as he said and as we verily believed, to Spenglerian 'decline of the West.'"

Paul Selver had introduced Mitrinovic to A.R. Orage, who had been publishing pioneer articles on Guild Socialism (G.D.H. Cole, S.G. Hobson) and Social Credit (C.H. Douglas). Orage, Mairet reports, immediately recognized Mitrinovic's knowledge and judgment in the arts, modern and ancient. By this time Mitrinovic believed that to be modern one could not be "cold and unmoved" regarding the "new strivings of the liberated but puzzled human spirit." One had to feel the "hunger and the lack of justice for our poor masses..."

In the summer of 1920 Orage made the momentous decision of inviting Mitrinovic to contribute a series of weekly articles to *The New Age* under the pseudonym of M.M. Cosmoi, called "World Affairs." With the editorial help of Orage (who had to re-write Mitrinovic's "towering abstractions, metaphysical allusions and extraordinary neologisms"), Mitrinovic proclaimed his vision of the spiritual unity of humankind, a unity which provided a transcendent mission for each nation as well as for science and secular development. The essence of Mitrinovic's vision is articulated in his first article published in *The New Age* on August 19, 1920.

*Why should the world, meaning all of us, seek peace?...Mankind is One Man;...every man is at one and the same time individual and universal,*
both Man and Mankind.... That beneath the individual consciousness and at the back of our individual organs and functions lie collective, racial and perhaps even deeper levels of consciousness, floating on this ocean of world-consciousness, is unaware for the most part of the common life to which it belongs; it does not self-consciously realise that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth with it.\textsuperscript{22}

Conceiving, intuitively, the "world as one great mind in process of becoming,"\textsuperscript{23} Mitrinovic considered, in a series of remarkable articles, the various nations as different organs of one great world-body.\textsuperscript{24} Europe had a leading role to play in the functional organization of a world divided against itself.

The restoration of the concept of Europe as a living actuality, and as an object of policy to everybody charged with responsibility, can alone save the world from a decline in values, and in the quality of life.\textsuperscript{25}

Within this grand cosmological scheme Britain had a vital role to play.

Mairet comments:

[Mitrinovic] saw the soul of England (which, like Blake, he called 'Albion') as angelic in its vocation for moral and political order, diabolical in its arrogance and Pharaisaism...\textsuperscript{26}

Many New Age readers probably found Mitrinovic's "exalted ruminations"\textsuperscript{27} dense, abstruse and mystifying. James Webb in The Harmonious Circle claims that Mitrinovic's incomprehensible rhapsodies mystified its readers and wreaked havoc with the already tiny circulation. "Few contrived," he says, "to make sense of his ecstatic parentheses, and fewer still have come away feeling greatly enlightened about world affairs."\textsuperscript{28} Perhaps, but Mitrinovic's ruminations cannot be understood as ordinary journalistic commentary.

Mitrinovic's Weltanschauung was the age-old dream of Europe as Christendom, the nucleus and pattern of some future ideal civilization
of all humankind, projected into cosmic dimensions, rich with theological and gnostic embellishments.\textsuperscript{29} Mitrinovic, as American philosopher H. Leroy Finch has suggested,\textsuperscript{30} was essentially a Vladimer Solovyov Christian theosophist. Mitrinovic shaped Solovyov's dominant ideas—of humanity as a complete, living organism, faith in the cosmic and universally historical process of the deification of the world through Christ's presence and belief that each people must serve in its own way the goal of uniting the world into one living body—in light of contemporary historical events in Europe.\textsuperscript{31} Mitrinovic's writings may have offended positivistic minds, and no doubt dismayed the reason-minded Thomson. Yet Mitrinovic's voluntarism, idealism and holism were reflections of a widespread rebellion against a mechanistic world-view and belief that humankind could willfully choose to renew the world. Mitrinovic's passionate attempt to comprehend the world as a unified whole resonated with Thomson's spiritual need, deepened by war experience, for community and brotherhood. Then, too, Mitrinovic was preaching in exceedingly hard times and Thomson was predisposed to accept his leadership, at least in the first years of their association.

During the early 1920s Mitrinovic was engaged in speaking to small groups of people in England, giving lectures and writing on a variety of subjects, exploring in particular the relationship of psychoanalysis to Social Credit. Although he supported, initially, the ideas of C.H. Douglas, he later favoured the work of monetary reformers Arthur Kitson and Frederick Soddy, both of whom he drew into his New Britain movement in the early 1930s. By 1926, struck by the dismal failure of the General Strike to generate any imaginative action or radical change in Britain's industrial system, Mitrinovic believed that a new attitude towards social problems was necessary.
Believing that this would come through the study of psychology and its application to social and political problems, Mitrinovic adopted Alfred Adler's psychology, relevant, he thought, for two elements: (1) a personality theory that emphasized the importance of a unitary, goal-directed creative self striving to overcome inferiority feelings and establish self-worth and personal power; and (2) a concept of "social interest" that emphasized that the self could only be realized in social interaction. From the latter notion Mitrinovic drew his emphasis on the therapeutic function of the group and the belief that individuals could thereby break through their egoistic individualism to become "fully socialized" human beings.

After the Adler Society had been in existence for four years, as the economic and political questions in Europe became more and more critical, some of the founders of the Adler Society drew attention to Europe's future. The New Europe Group was started, meeting at 55 Gower Street, while the Adler Society meetings still continued every Thursday. Widening its circle by holding a series of public lectures in Caxton Hall in 1932 under the title of "Popular Myths Explored," the New Europe Group (whose first president was Sir Patrick Geddes) invited John MacMurray, Frederick Soddy, Arthur Kitson and Clarence Joad to lecture. At the last series of meetings the New Europe Group put forward its own proposals; some members of the Society wanted to take their experiments in community to a practical conclusion by engaging in political action. It was from this that the New Britain Movement emerged in 1932. Its aim was nothing less than to inspire Britain to lead the way towards solving the social, economic and political problems for the sake of Europe and the Western World. The prophet's dream of a renewed Europe was taking a concrete, political shape.
After his early meeting with Mitrinovic, Thomson was struck by Mitrinovic’s apparent wisdom and ability to make every person feel included, uplifted and drawn closer to all the others....Here is the kind of wisdom the world desperately needs. Why have I never heard of this man? Why is he not proclaimed to the world? Why is he wasting his time with a little Bloomsbury lecture-society? Who is he anyway?35

Thomson's attendance at 55 Gower Street soon became more regular. He became acquainted with some officers of the two societies (Adler and New Europe), developing a close friendship with the practical and idealistic Winifred Gordon Fraser, like Thomson a Scot and university graduate, who was secretary of the New Europe Group. Through Fraser Thomson received a formal invitation to meet Mitrinovic. Welcomed with dignity by Mitrinovic, Thomson was questioned about his background and asked to give a general account of himself in the presence of Lilian Slade, a fastidious, compassionate, white-haired frail woman of fifty; Rosa Graham, the wife of novelist and translator Stephen Graham; and Rex Campbell, a rather gaunt but extremely friendly Englishman in his early thirties.

Thereafter Thomson became increasingly involved in the practical affairs of the lecture societies, learning something of and identifying himself with their ambitions. By the fall of 1932, Thomson's teaching job had ceased to be challenging though continuing to be "exhaustingly hard work." He resigned and set £500 home to pay off the family's mortgage. In September he presented himself at 55 Gower Street. "Well," he said to Winifred Fraser, "Here I am, a free man! Got any jobs for me?" Fraser gasped and then threw her arms around Thomson. "Watson! this is just providential. Do you know that just last night we decided
to start a quarterly, our first periodical? And you can write. It fits just perfectly!" The first issue of *New Britain*, quarterly organ of the XI\(^{th}\) hour group, appeared in October, 1932. Shortly after, Thomson was initiated into Mitrinovic's inner circle of devotees, a group of twenty or so, through a little ceremony. One had to know the password, "P.A.", which stood for Personal Alliance, meaning that they believed that human beings should be allied, not because they belonged to the same tribe or church or party, but just because they were human. Mitrinovic's aim was to prove that the reconciliation of opposites in persons of deeply rooted and differing convictions was possible. At that, S.G. Hobson recalls, Mitrinovic was a past master, combining knowledge, spiritual power, persuasiveness and humour.

Never had Thomson known that human fellowship, live and friendship could be so rich and warm. He realized for the first time in his life what genuine community was as distinct from a mere aggregation of individuals. He felt the power of this fellowship, for positive and therapeutic purposes, right then and there. He had found the acceptance he craved, the affirmation of his person, even while his weaknesses and oddities were acknowledged. The desertion, loneliness and emptiness that had overtaken him in the terrible summer of 1931 disappeared. Thomson had found in Mitrinovic what more than a few broken or depressed individuals had experienced—"their one perfect experience of Christlike love and understanding." From this point in his intellectual and emotional development Thomson was convinced that people didn't just want bread and security—in the usual sense of that term; they wanted personal recognition and a sense of belonging to something alive and growing, something that desired their own growth and fulfillment, and had room for it.
A new sense of confidence and good health returned to the renewed Thomson. He began to address public meetings, a feat which would have been unthinkable to the withdrawn and apologetic creature he had become. Now began a period of five years when Thomson, earning no money whatsoever in the usual sense, received his first practical experience as an adult educator. Thomson was already a gifted and resourceful educator. He had taught youth in a wide range of institutional settings (Scottish commercial college, an elite Jamaican secondary school, African bush schools, and most recently, in the slums of Bethnal Green). To his store of pedagogical knowledge and skills he now added those of the adult educator—a knowledge of group dynamics, how to organize ideas and facts for easy learning and mechanical techniques of various sorts (platform skills, perceptions of audience receptivity, etc.). Most significantly, Thomson's philosophy of education—self-learning with others towards world transformation—was taking shape within a coherent world view.

During this period Thomson was greatly preoccupied with the problem of integrating his new understanding of community with his more traditional socialist sympathies for the ILP, then still a force in his native Clydeside. He could only be content, for a time, with the "individual re-orientation" of his experience. This was precluded, partly because of his political conscience and partly because the "group" (Gower Street terminology for all the intimate, inter-personal aspects of their affairs) had its own political ideas and purposes.

The group argued that without the intimate inter-personal experience, socialism would just be a technical change in societal institutions that would leave individuals as isolated and unrecognized in their factories
and their own organizations as they are now. Creating a "society of fellowship" was the goal and should therefore be incorporated in socialism's beginning. Thomson was deeply impressed. This belief in the importance of the "co-personal" group, which has affinities with both the anarchist and romantic socialist traditions, and achieved some popularity among the New Left in the 1960s would remain the central informing principle of Watson Thomson's social philosophy throughout his life.

Nevertheless, Dimitrije Mitrinovic's world-outlook was not clear to Thomson in the first weeks. But he did learn that the group was embarked on a double-sided project: exoteric and esoteric. On the one hand, the group was running lecture series and starting a newspaper; on the other, they were getting themselves thoroughly "personally allied." This involved intensely intimate talk in small groups, about themselves and the group, as well as listening to Mitrinovic cover the "universe in one evening." Alan Watts, who was on the fringe of the New Britain group in the 1930s, thinks that Mitrinovic's method of "personal alliance" was "doubtless...one of the principal origins of what we would now call the 'T group' or 'encounter group,' a no-holds-barred-psychoanalysis..." Philip Mairet did not think that Mitrinovic had an integral system to impart.

His methods were highly intuitive and, at first, they seemed much kinder and more encouraging to aspirants or neophytes. Rarely was there any of that sharp, often wounding contradiction of one's previous ideas and ideals that enquirers and pupils had so soon to endure from Gurdjieff or Ouspensky....His characteristic method was to allow and even help the pupil to go feeding his own favorite ego-ideal (despite warnings he would not heed) to the point at which it burst, and left him in a void with nothing but the ultimate resources of his own being. This was sometimes effective.
Watson Thomson, as it turned out, was acquiring a method and an outlook he would later transport to every city and place he lived to the end of his life.

Thomson's training as an initiator of a new kind of personalist revolution, non-violent but radical, also involved "training in universalization," chiefly, says Thomson, by learning the central religious and philosophic teachings of each of the major cultures—especially the Orient—but also by understanding all we could think of their art and mores, even to systematically eating the food of one country after another. We spent a great deal of time on Vedanta, Buddhism, Taoism, Rosicrucianism and Gnosticism....We studied all the relevant political creeds of the day, specializing in guild socialism and monetary reform, but taking a long, hard look at Marxism.50

Mitrinovic, it appears, could be rather autocratic in pedagogical style. Group members tried, unsuccessfully, to reconcile "superior quality and greater personal stature with the egalitarian demand that is strong in our culture."

By 1933 desperation and misery pervaded the whole western world. Millions of Britons were unemployed and Hitler had risen to power. This unrest constituted, in Mitrinovic's eyes, both an opportunity and a danger for the new political group. Mitrinovic acquired a considerable sum of money from Mrs. Gladys Macdermott and launched the New Britain weekly on May 24, 1933. C.B. Purdom, the editor of the popular paper, Everymen, was persuaded to edit the new paper, which in typography and layout presented some interesting innovations such as the use of Bodoni bold for titles.51 Among the contributors of the New Britain weekly were John MacMurray, Frederick Soddy, Ernest Rhys, S.G. Hobson, John Grierson, Herbert Palmer, Philip Henderson, J.T. Murphy and Karl Polanyi.
Illustrious figures on the British left like G.D.H. Cole, who contributed articles on guild socialism, and Bertrand Russell, who told readers why he rejected both communism and fascism, contributed to the lively debates. The first issue (subtitled "A Weekly Organ of National Renaissance") announced in its leading feature, "The World We Live In," there ought to be a new Britain; such is our hearts' desire, and such is the announcement. A new world and a better humanity must arise out of the present upheaval in human existence if that existence itself is not to be fatally thwarted. The moment has come for British men and women to take charge of their national destiny. In the dark labyrinth of the human crisis it is right for this Britain to lighten the darkness and find the way.

The anonymous author of an article entitled "What We Mean by a New Britain" proclaimed that:

The old Britain has passed away. Whether we like it or not, whether we accept it or not, the old Britain has come to an end....Humanity is ripening towards conscious guidance and world-planning, but Western civilization is divided against itself and threatens to function dangerously against human interests.

Readers responded to the New Britain call, and within three months the paper was selling 32,119 copies a week. The New Britain movement was thereby launched as a non-party association concerned with political, economic, and social subjects in the spirit of national renaissance. Groups were spontaneously established throughout the country, gaining many thousands of adherents. At the height of the movement, 400 New Britain groups functioned in England, Wales and Scotland. From 1933 to 1936 Thomson was one of the chief organizers of these groups. He travelled around England at the movement's expense, with occasional forays into Scotland and Wales, speaking to groups and explaining the
New Britain movement to people like Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, "heroic figures of labour's earlier struggles." Advertisements in the New Britain weekly, beginning on June 14, 1933, reveal a flourishing network of clubs, luncheons and special lecture series. The New Britain movement can, I think, be understood as a "social pedagogy" aimed at awakening "public consciousness to the issues that have to be faced, and to spread conceptions and principles of the Movement." What was the programme of the New Britain movement? According to Watson Thomson, Mitrinovic believed that there were partial and incomplete expressions of the 'new order' emerging in all sorts of places and that the ultimate ideology and form of the new society would come out of the dialectical interplay of these partial elements, but their synthesis should come, not clumsily and destructively through a conflict of political parties, but creatively by a meeting of persons and minds, a mutual understanding worked out between the chief exponents of these political or economic ideas.

Mitrinovic felt that the proffered solutions of the Labour parties, Keynesian liberals and communists were woefully inadequate. He wanted a complete philosophical system "infinitely more politically sound than Fascism (which, he said, was mere nihilistic opportunism) and more philosophically sound than Marxism, which was already outmoded." The New Britain slogan--"Neither Fascism nor Communism--but Above and Between" captures two essential dimensions of the New Britain movement: (1) its personalism (the Above) and (2) its dynamic eclecticism, synthetizing what was normative from both Fascism and Communism (the Between).

The New Britain movement was based on the assumption that the technological revolution had made material plenty possible for all, and on the need to re-order society so that the necessary co-operation for the realization of plenty could be achieved together with the
greatest possible individual freedom. Like their counterpart organizations in France, L'Ordre Nouveau and Esprit, New Britain aimed at effecting a personalist revolution—measuring all institutional arrangements and value-systems in terms of the fulfillment of persons.

Personalism was a diverse twentieth century movement. In part, it belonged to no one school; and in part it belonged to everyone who believed in man as a personal and communal being mortally endangered by his own political, social, economic and ideological creations. Anyone, in fact, who in the name of man's worth sought simultaneously to save man from isolation and tyranny, and from the furies of individualism and collectivism, could consider himself a personalist. Defined in this loose sense, personalism included a whole array of people and movements. Often without official program, personalists were committed to man's transcendence. They were the enemies of all individuals, ideas, societies, and states that denied man the needs of his body, the dignity of his spirit, and the presence and sustenance of a true human community.

The New Britain Movement based itself on the following principles: first, the devolution of power and responsibility to the smallest possible units of society and the federation of these units into progressively larger units, all the way out to the whole world; secondly, that power and responsibility should be given to individual persons and groups only on the basis of their function, whether economic, cultural or political; thirdly, that the realm of economics, culture and politics should each be autonomous, so that economics should be separated from politics, and culture no longer dominated by either economics or politics. The practical program aimed at radical change of the financial
system based primarily on the work of Frederick Soddy; workers' control in industry through National Guilds as proposed by S.G. Hobson; and the creation of Britain as a "Three-fold State" with a parliament of three chambers, based on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. 66

Rejecting the collectivist conception of society proposed by both the Fabians and the Communists, the New Britain movement called for the creation of a "Social State." Convinced, like the syndicalists and early guild socialists, 67 that geographically-elected parliaments were irrelevant to the problems of the day, the New Britain movement argued that the economic, civic and cultural functions of the community should be differentiated in administration in order that they may co-operate instead of conflict. 68 But unlike the syndicalists, 69 the New Britain movement wished to preserve parliamentary institutions. They proposed that there should be three chambers, not elected on the basis of geographical constituencies, but concerned with the actual conduct of economics, politics and culture. 70

Industries were to be self-governing units (or guilds) within the community. They would include manual, mental and administrative personnel who would control conditions of production. Ownership would be vested in the community. 71 These guilds were to be represented in the "House of Industry," where estimates for production would be based on the needs of consumers, which would be the only motive for, and limit to, production, national or international. The Civic Chamber, once economic ordering of society occurred, would allow politics to become the expression and organization of fraternal life, not as workers but as citizens in towns, municipalities and regions.

To the Civil Chamber would fall the task of deciding: (1) the
degree of regional and municipal self-government; (2) legal issues: constitutional, civil, criminal and marriage laws; (3) national foreign policy and (4) the amount of currency to be issued on recommendation of the Economic Chamber. A third chamber, embodying a third aspect of communal life not reducible to either the economic or political spheres, would be called the Cultural Chamber, the "meeting place of the elected leaders of the sciences, the churches, the arts—the psychiatrists, the educationalists, the poets. Here are all the national decisions involving questions of value would be made."\(^72\)

This conception of the "Three-fold State" abolished representational democracy as we have traditionally understood it. But the New Britain movement did reserve a role for "Senate" which would consist of representatives of all three chambers and have the function, in the transition to the New Order, of controlling currency and credit, compensating present owners of industry and forming National Guilds, and after the transition, of co-ordinating the work of the three chambers.\(^73\)

The model of the "Social State" was not so much a rigid blueprint for a new order as an attempt to free the imagination and create the will to bring about a New Order. "It is clear," the New Britain manifesto declared, "that it is for want of VISION that people are perishing. Only for something greater than what is, will man change old habits of thought and action."\(^74\)

The New Britain movement presented a picture of the kind of social order that "should be." In this sense they were indeed utopians and visionaries.\(^75\)

The New Britain weekly, in Marxist literary critic John Middleton Murry's opinion, gave a "definite focus to the velleities and aspirations" of a growing "mass of opinion" in Britain, "which, sensitive as it has
never been before to the defects of the national and international organizations of the world, is 'radically' inclined as no body of opinion in its class has been before. This mass of opinion is, in the main, middle class."  

The New Britain movement gathered together dissident Labour party people, strong-minded Quakers and pacifists, political theorists, some workers in industry and some technicians—all of them feeling that something was radically wrong and that a fundamental change was necessary. But, despite the growing numbers and a highly successful first national conference held at Leamington Spa over the Easter weekend of 1934, such an amorphous and diverse movement obviously contained disintegrative tendencies. New Britain ideology confused many Britons, the movement had serious leadership problems and, most important, was hopelessly naïve, not to say politically inept, in believing that the "Social State" could be achieved.

The "House of Industry" idea attracted mainly old "original" communists like Tom Mann, a leader in the syndicalist upsurge of the early twentieth century, and J.T. Murphy of the Socialist League, a proponent of "workers' control." Both were conscious, however, that the New Britain movement's "House of Industry" could take on something of Mussolini's corporate state pattern. Recognizing this problem, the New Britain weekly explored the issue of the "guild versus the corporate state" in a number of articles. Attempting to clarify the issue and to establish the exact difference between the Guild and the Corporate State, New Britain editors declared that guild socialists wanted society to be organized and developed upwards. The fascist state, in contrast, negated individual responsibility. Karl Polanyi, though not a member of the New Britain movement but sympathetic to Rudolf Steiner's economics
and the idea of the Three-fold State, agreed with New Britain editors that the "root of the crisis is to be found in a functional maladjustment, in the mutual incompatibility of our political and economic spheres." Sharply critical of communism, where the political state is supreme, and fascism, where the state loses its independence and dwindles into a mere accessory of the "Corporate State," Polanyi worried that in a society lacking any moral unity the three chambers could disintegrate into separately warring parts. Nevertheless, the notion of a "Political chamber," with its emphasis on regional devolution, received support from Scottish and Welsh nationalists and economic geographers.

In a cultural milieu polarized between fascism and communism, the eclecticism and esotericism of the New Britain movement was bound to confuse some followers. The influential editor of Adelphi, John Middleton Murry, was not clear about what the New Britain movement actually stood for. Social Revolution? Social Credit? The Social State? But Murry was particularly confused about the New Britain movement's commitment to "self-socialization." He concluded his rather patronizing critique by suggesting that Marx would have dismissed the idea of self-socialization as a "new form of petty bourgeois self-delusion, and merely relegated it to the category of 'hole-and-corner reforms'." But the most serious criticism that the New Britain movement had some difficulty erasing, in spite of endless criticism of fascism issue after issue, was the accusation that they were "secretly fascist in tendency."

J.T. Murphy, trade union activist and labour journalist, warned the New Britain movement that

if a movement by its policy creates the outlook for Fascism, develops impulsiveness, rouses false passions, rejects reason as its weapon, creates illusions instead of destroying them, fosters the
idea that people can be 'swindled' into Socialism, substitutes 'intuition' and 'instinct' for realistic analysis and honest persuasion, it becomes Fascist in character whatever it may have on its programme. 86

Murphy was troubled at the "hysterical proclamations" of Mitrinovic in the July 11, 1934 issue, which he felt might have been written by Hitler. 87 Murphy rightly identified a mystical strain in New Britain publications (particularly the New Atlantis and New Albion) which roused the suspicions of Britons educated in the common-sense tradition of British empiricism. This suspicion that the New Britain movement was "secretly fascist" was no doubt partly responsible for the ILP's censure of the movement. 88

Murphy also accused the New Britain movement of lacking any "clear statement of policy in relations to how the political and economic changes proposed by the New Britain movement will be achieved." 89 Though perhaps demanding the impossible, this was a telling critique. I. Knowles, a young man who responded to New Britain's call to effect a revolution in people which would fit them to bring into being and inhabit a new world, wondered if the New Britain movement really understood the imperative of organizing for revolution against a ruthless enemy.

The New Britain movement hoped to ignite individual flames which in turn would ignite other sparks until the whole society was ablaze with desire to effect a New Order. But more than passionate initiative and social pedagogy were required to transform a social order. In assuming that the owning class would be idle or submit to education for expropriation, the New Britain movement failed to confront adequately the question of class power. And the Labour Movement, traditional ally of the guild socialist advocates, 90 was not very receptive to workers'
control of industry in the hungry thirties. Finally, with S.T. Glass we might argue that the demand for a "functionally socialist" society had been rendered impracticable by the trend in capitalist development towards centralization and bureaucratic control from above.91

But perhaps the New Britain movement's most crucial problem had to do with the contradiction between the movement's central group and the growing body of New Britain groups.92 The central group, from Thomson's point of view, had an inner, esoteric aspect not made explicit to the membership at large—and this central group was directed by a single dominant person. The central group wanted to be a "growing body which would...act as the saving leaven within New Britain groups. Yet it wanted to keep effective control of the public movement in its own hands, "without arousing suspicion and jealousy."

At the first national conference at the Leamington Spa the central group had maintained control; this was less easily managed at the second conference held at Glastonbury, August 4 to 12, 1934.94

There was, of course, an intrinsic incompatibility between our method and the conventional machinery of 'democratic procedure'...We kept control in our own hands at this conference by devious, quite undemocratic devices; but only with difficulty and in ways which pleased none of us and earned us only scathing contempt from D.M. Daily, the inner group had to endure "recriminations and mounting storms of fury from Mitrinovic (alternating, however, with the very opposite) as well as talk sanely with 'men of the world,' publish papers and conduct the affairs of a public movement." Added to this, Mitrinovic was calling for the rearming of Britain to stop Hitler which threw the inner group, most of whom were pacifists, into further confusion and turmoil. Balancing the inner and outer life in this atmosphere of "kinetic intensity" was appallingly difficult.95
The New Britain movement was in the process of being destroyed by its "messiah." Mitrinovic summoned the original inner circle and accused them of being utterly incompetent to create any New Britain. They were, he claimed, building the "old perfidious Albion all over again, that it would turn against Europe and humanity and defend our own British and imperial interests." The group was mystified and stunned. Shortly after, the New Britain weekly ceased, and the movement itself dispersed and died.

Dimitrije Mitrinovic's will and purpose did not, however, die. Nor did the central discussion group. Setting the group in a new direction, Mitrinovic proposed to

- deepen the breakdown of the 'oldness' in us....
- They would tackle that oldness at its central point, the point of property; and they would tackle the property sense at its most sensitive point, the point of marriage and sex-relations.

The group was to "learn all the flowers"—submit themselves to experiences within the group which would express all the modes of erotic expression, each of these being symbolically represented by one of the flowers—rose, orchid, tulip and so on. All marriages were suspended; each individual would experience modes of erotic experience considered perverse or taboo; couples who wanted children could withdraw and then resume intercourse exclusively with each other. The women, Thomson recalls in his memoirs, gave themselves to the task with "immense devotion,...self-effacing maturity,...superb dignity." Thomson felt that these experiences made him a more effective male, with each new experience my confidence as an effective male grew, the inhibiting moralisms of my upbringing began to recede into the background. I made many discoveries. I learnt that, within limits of course, age has little to do with a
woman's competence as a lover and obvious attractiveness of face and figure little enough too. I learnt something about the restraints necessary to the fullest mutuality of pleasure. I learnt, as indeed Mitrinovic had told us, that in every man there is an ambition to be potent, immediately the sex occasion is present, not just to this or that inamorata but to each and every woman, to Women; and that a woman is a richer woman and a fuller person if she is frigid to no man.97

Thomson also discovered that these erotic experiences gave him a new inner assurance. As he put it,

it is impossible to convey the precise quality of inner assurance that comes from sitting around a room (circularly, as we always did, and most of us on cushions on the floor) with a dozen or so men and women all of whom have given and taken the freedom of each other's bodies... But there was an ease, an absence of the background of physical resistances which are present in any ordinary mixed group; a certain kind of graciousness. It was that ultimate bye-product [sic] of 'flowers' which D.M. had called 'hyacinth.' Barley, cactus, hyacinth. It became a slogan, a chant, a reiterated summation of our goal and our method as a group.98

But as the emphasis shifted more and more to the occult and esoteric in the months immediately following the collapse of the New Britain movement, Thomson's Scottish "sense of the rational gave him acute mental discomfort."99 He began to revolt against the irrationalism which seemed to pervade increasingly Mitrinovic's teaching as well as against his totalitarian authority. With his relationship to the London group deteriorating, Thomson began to stay away from the group for lengthy periods. During this confused period, Mitrinovic, sensing that Thomson needed building up as a self-sufficient self-moving person, felt that marriage might help him overcome self-defeat. Following Mitrinovic's advice, Thomson married Eileen Ryan, an extremely intelligent woman of Catholic background who had done some political work for the New Britain
movement. They had a week-end honeymoon in Sussex and visited Thomson's parents in Scotland. Eileen continued to teach in Birmingham. She saw her husband only at weekends.

Thomson still had no job in any ordinary sense. Although he proposed going out to seek employment in the larger society, the group rejected this consideration. They thought that he should stay around to resolve his conflict with himself and the group. But Thomson's depression deepened; periods of "thunderous gloom" in the general life of the group became more frequent, with occasional interludes of "reconciliation and gentleness and warmth." Thomson's memoirs suggest, none-too-subtly, that Mitrinovic's mental state during this period was unbalanced and apocalyptic, lending strength to Dedijer's characterization of Mitrinovic as "talented but unsteady" and Janko Lavrin's depiction of him as a man with a "home-made Messiah complex." Apparently Mitrinovic thought that he might be betrayed or go mad. When Mitrinovic announced that the supreme obstacle to the culmination of group as a group lay within the men and consisted of their unresolved homosexuality, a "blackness and horror and despair" descended on Thomson such as he had never known.

In a state of panic, Thomson fled the group, crossing London by underground and coming up somewhere in South London. After drowning his sorrows in drink, he decided to see Philip Mairet, who until his break with Mitrinovic had the same kind of status in relation to Mitrinovic that Thomson had had for years. While Mairet could understand Thomson's spiritual plight, he had little to say. Thomson decided to leave London immediately even though he had only ten shillings and was wearing a "city gentleman" suit of black jacket with striped pants. Picked up as a hitchhiker, he was driven to Bedford and then, by truck, to Newcastle where he arrived in the early morning.
I walked the empty streets, tired, infinitely alone, filled through and through with dull psychic pain. I had broken my vows, I had deserted the best friends I ever had as though I despised their friendship, I had run away, in despicable cowardice.104

After spending the night in a Newcastle jail because he had nowhere else to sleep, Watson Thomson arrived home in Glasgow to a family deeply relieved that he "had broken with Mitrinovic whom they feared and hated." For reasons not open to full clarification, plans were quickly made to leave Britain. He went through Canadian immigration processes, booked passage by CPR boat and wrote his wife Eileen. (Three years later, Thomson's divorce would be granted on the grounds of desertion.) Within a month of leaving the London group in April 1937 Thomson boarded the SS Montcalm bound for Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Canada. To all intents and purposes, Canada for Thomson was a "great, empty unknown."105

What did Watson Thomson learn from Dimitrije Mitrinovic and his London experience? The answer is complex because Thomson's physical flight from Mitrinovic should be construed neither as a rejection of the fundamental tenets of the New Britain movement nor as a final ridding of himself of D.M. Indeed, Thomson would spend his life grappling with the meaning of Mitrinovic and would replicate Mitrinovic's group experiments in Canada. As late as 1960 Thomson would be haunted by Mitrinovic. Harry Kohlberg, a friend of Thomson's from the New Britain days, wrote to Thomson in the fall of 1960.

While we were in London under D.M.'s influence it was impossible to be one's self and I often attributed to others greater personal freedom of expression than they had when in reality they were totally conditioned in their replies and attitudes, perhaps even more so than you and I....
Often there was that deep fear which is supposed to be synonymous with unconscious hatred and rage against him and contained the wish that D.M. might be dead, maybe, some day or to-morrow and then one could breathe free again. How we enjoyed it when he was away on a journey!

It may well be that the Mitrinovic incubus that is still sitting on you is due to the still unconscious guilt feelings about one's long past unconscious murderous wishes. I can well imagine that in a more barbarous age D.M. might not have survived.

I and you, dear Watson are trying to fulfill our own messianic urge in our present position in the world....To fulfill ourselves rightly we need to be free from D.M. also. It is time to throw him off our backs! 106

Thomson believed that it was near impossible to encompass the personality of Dimitrije Mitrinovic. "The patent fact," says Thomson, was that here was a man whom we simply could not claim to comprehend. Intellectually, and even more emotionally, he met you on your own ground, encouraged you to go as far as you could go, and then carried you further, on wings of superior knowledge, or imagination, or intuition, into realms you had not known existed.

Although Mitrinovic would challenge people to get him to step down from his "miserable throne," nobody could or did. Thomson recalls making a few attempts to take issue with D.M., generally from a rationalistic standpoint, expressing my discontent with the amount of intuition and scientifically unverifiable content in his philosophies and cosmologies.

But Mitrinovic easily brushed these objections aside. Then, too, as Kohlberg noted, group members feared him, "having seen anger come tearing out of him with such volcanic force that one wondered how the walls of the house would stay standing." 107

Challenging, or doubting, Mitrinovic was doubly difficult because the group knew from first-hand experience the therapeutic and uplifting
effects of Mitrinovic's impact on their individual lives. Knowing this, says Thomson, "they could never for a moment doubt the beneficence of any public program he could create. Yet we had to admit this wasn't any usual kind of democracy. Might it not be that fascism was lurking in it somewhere?" Here was a group--some of whom were convinced socialists and automatically antagonistic to any Fuhrer principle--"with our whole lives centred on a small community which was prepared to give unquestioning obedience and as absolute a loyalty as any Hitler would demand, to a single 'leader'." Thus, Mitrinovic's superiority was not merely "functional and specific," but total, which complicated rather than simplified matters.

Thomson's socialist convictions crystallized in the years of "kinetically intense" activity as social pedagogue with the New Britain movement. His preoccupation with the theme of wholeness (personal, group, societal, national and international), easily discernible in his writings, published and unpublished from 1933 to 1969, and conviction, passionately avowed, that the nucleus of a new society could be built around the "primacy of persons," are anchored in the New Britain experience. Thomson's socialism can, I believe, be accurately described as "socialist humanism," "personalistic socialism," or, as I prefer, communitarian socialism. Like the romantic socialists in the often maligned tradition of Ruskin, Morris and the guild socialists as well as the anarchist communalists in the tradition of Kropotkin, Landauer and Buber, Thomson envisaged a society of fellowship that would disperse "both economic and political power" making "each local unit competent to control its own affairs" so that "the ordinary man (would have) a personal say in the conduct of affairs immediate to himself both in his
work and in his community life" and attain "a new sense of his own worth and a new courage to demand his true freedom, the freedom of self-governance and self-fulfilment in creative expression." 109

Thomson believed that revolutionary change in the external structures of oppression would be impossible without change in individuals; masses could not bring about fundamental change. The co-personal group had an absolutely crucial role to play here: individuals had to choose freely to be initiators of a new revolution and had to learn, in face-to-face interaction with others, to break with their egoistic individualism and become "personally allied" with others in mutual love and care. One had to both be and build the new world.

Believing like Martin Buber that twentieth century humankind lived in an age of "homelessness" and disintegration of truly communal structures (the state devouring society), Thomson thought that every man needed to find a "place of belonging, a place where he could love and be loved, affirm and be affirmed, knowledgeably—and that no such place exists (not in the tribe, the nation, not even the family) until he creates it for himself." The co-personal group could be such a place of "therapeutic power" and "mutual affirmation." 110 This belief in the primacy of the co-personal group in social change, seldom found, or if found, repressed, in traditional socialisms, would be one of Thomson's distinctive contributions to Canadian socialist practice.
CHAPTER TWO

FOOTNOTES


2 WTP 2-5, p. 71.


4 Bottome, Alfred Adler, p. 212.

5 WTP 2-5, p. 72.


11 Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo, p. 179.

12 "A Short Account of the Life of Dimitrije Mitrinovic" (no author, no date), in my possession.

13 Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo, p. 217.

14 "A Short Account," p. 10.


16 "A Short Account," p. 5.

Examples of Mitrinovic's neologisms include: anthropogenesis, pan-humanity, epigenesis, planes of evolution, logoic aspects, Sophian ideals of the world.


In New Age,"'World Affairs' column," August 19, 1920, p. 244.

M.M. Cosmoi [D. Mitrinovic], New Age, August 26, 1920, p. 255.

For a flavour of Mitrinovic's thinking—"Beneath the Chinese calm lies an ocean of power. Below the smiling waves of Chinese psychology sleeps the dragon of the deeps; and it is more than a coincidence that the flag of the most peaceful people in the world should contain the emblem of the dragon" (New Age, December 9, 1920, p. 63).


Mairet, A.R. Orage, p. xviii.

Mairet, A.R. Orage, p. xviii.


Mairet, A.R. Orage, p. xviii.

H. Le Roy Finch states: "Mitrinovic was Vladimir Soloviev Christian (also close to Joachim of Flora). One might call him a Christian theosophist. Eric Gutkind started out as a Christian theosophist, inspired by the 17th century illuminate Jacob Boehme, but, as he got older, became more and more Jewish and Kabbalistic. This was a divergence between them. Mitrinovic did not like Eric's shift to Judaism, which he regarded as a step backwards. Mitrinovic felt that Trinitarianism and the divinity of the individual were the essential Christian and European ideas. And of course the Jews do not accept this, however highly they value the individual as Eric did. They continued to respect each other, but the New Atlantis people felt Gutkind's Sidereal Birth to be his important book, not the Absolute Collective" (letter to M. Welton, February 28, 1982).

The most useful introduction to Vladimir Solovyov [sic] is the "Introduction" in S.L. Frank, ed., A Solovyov Anthology (London: SCM Press, 1950). Mitrinovic, in a New Age "World Affairs" column, June 23, 1921, p. 87, speaks of Solovyov as "the last of the Fathers of Christendom and the prophet of the Sophian Christianity,... Only a new
dispensation altogether, only a motive of a New Aeon can lead Europe and the world into a transcendence of Solovyov's synthesis."


33 John MacMurray was a leading Christian socialist theologian; Frederick Soddy, an influential physicist who turned to monetary theory; Arthur Kitson, an economist with an interest in monetary policy, and Clarence Joad, a well-known rationalist philosopher.


35 WTP 2-5, p. 73.

36 WTP 2-5, p. 75.


39 Hobson, Pilgrim on the Left, pp. 76-77.

40 Mairet, A.R. Crage, p. ix.

41 WTP 2-2, pp. 97-98.

42 WTP 2-2, p. 78.

43 WTP 2-2, p. 78. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, History and Truth (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 144: "Here is the core of the debate: the conviction of personalism is that one does not progress toward the person if the person is not in the beginning what demands, what presses on in the midst of the revolt of the famished and afflicted. The danger in a revolution which does not take its own end as its source and proper means is to debase man under the pretext of liberating him, and merely to alter the form of his alienations."


WTP 2-5, p. 82.

Watts, In My Own Way, p. 128.

Mairet, A.R. Orage, pp. xxv-xxvi.

Thomson, Turning into Tomorrow, p. 12.


G.D.H. Cole's three articles were published in New Britain, July 4, 11 and 18, 1934.

See Bertrand Russell, "Why I am Neither a Communist Nor a Fascist," New Britain, January 31, 1934, pp. 311-312.

New Britain, May 24, 1933, p. 1.

New Britain, May 24, 1933, pp. 3-4.

C.B. Purdom, Life Over Again, p. 156.

WTP 2-5, p. 83.
Some examples of New Britain lecture series. The July 5, 1933 issue of the New Britain advertised lectures sponsored by the New Britain Group, New Europe Group and The International Society for Individual Psychology as well as a series of weekly lectures to be held at the Masonic Buildings, Oxford, beginning July 17. The New Britain Group advertised three lectures: J.V. Delahaye "New Britain Principles, Plans and their Achievements"; B.N. Langdon Davies, "The Decay of the Party System"; and Hugh Quigley, "The New Economic Order."

Paul Ricoeur uses the term "communal pedagogy" to describe the project of Emmanuel Mounier. See "Emmanuel Mounier: A Personalist Philosopher," History and Truth, pp. 133-161.

WTP 2-5, p. 83.

WTP 2-5, pp. 90-91.

Thomson offers these observations on the meaning of "Neither Communism nor Fascism but Above and Between." Mitrinovic, Thomson says, saw validity in both creeds, but "that these valid elements had to be transposed and incorporated in a new social pattern, different from those proposed either by the communists or the fascists, before their rightness could be fully realized" ("Notes on brown paper," WTP 2-5, p. 5).

See, for example, Frederick Soddy, "The Paradox of Plenty," New Britain Eleventh Hour Quarterly, October 1932.


The concept of function was the central principle of social organization for the New Britain movement. As applied to social organization, the idea of function stresses the separation of powers and institutions according to their functions. See G.D.H. Cole, Social Theory (London: Methuen, 1920), pp. 49-55; G.D.H Cole on function in the New Britain, July 18, 1934, and S.G. Hobson's five articles on "Function", New Britain, May 9-30, June 6, 1934.

For a brief introduction to Rudolf Steiner's social philosophy, see Rudolf Steiner, The Threefold Social Order (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1966 [originally published in German, 1919]).


Syndicalism refuses to recognize the necessity of a co-operative relationship between the state and the industrial associations in a
socialist society. S.T. Glass, The Responsible Society (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 23, comments: "The guild socialist version of an industrial democracy, which provided for producers to share control over the broad questions of economic planning, was anticipated by Penty's scheme...rather than by the syndicalist claim for the exclusive authority of the organized producers."

70 New Britain, April 18, 1934, p. 673.
71 New Britain, April 18, 1934, p. 673.
72 WTP 2-5, pp. 96-97.

73 Thomson points out that the issue of "expropriation or compensation" was a contentious one. Orthodox Marxists were not satisfied with the New Britain movement emphasis on "generosity and reconciliation as a necessary part of the ethics of a movement intended to usher in the potential 'Age of Abundance'" (WTP 2-5, p. 102).

74 "A Statement of Aims of New Britain Movement," New Britain Quarterly 1, no. 1 (new series), Autumn 1934, pp. 4-5.
77 J.T. Murphy, Remarks made while at the Leamington Conference in New Britain, April 11, 1934, p. 651.
78 The First National Conference of the New Britain Alliance was held at Leamington Spa from March 29 to April 2. See New Britain, April 11, 1934, pp. 651-656, for details of agenda.
81 Karl Polanyi was interested in Rudolf Steiner's economics. See his article, "Rudolf Steiner's Economics," New Britain, August 1, 1934, p. 311. He also contributed the following articles, "Corporative Austria--A Functional Society?" New Britain, May 9, 1934, pp. 743-744; "Fascism and Marxian Terminology," New Britain, June 27, 1934, p. 159; "Marxism Re-Stated" (part 2), New Britain, July 4, 1934, p. 187.
83 WTP 2-5, p. 102.

85 New Britain, November 15, 1933, p. 816.


87 Murphy responded to these comments in New Britain, July 11, 1934, p. 223. "Wake up, India! Become Indian and British! India, hold the scales of the East and West! Become modern and remain eternal, O India! Join the Empire Albion. Join Christendom. Decide for the West, for the sake of the world! For the Americanized Russia, the Communist and Technocratic Soviet Russia--the New Russia which is against Europe and against Christendom--will betray the West, and will betray--yea, she will betray humanity and the World of Mankind, unless India sides with the West for the sake of the world. India, remain eternal and re-become eternal and supreme by becoming modern and Christian! India, save humanity! Save the world and save Mankind by joining Britain-to-be, the New Britain of the Future!"


93 WTP 2-5, pp. 99, 100.

94 The Second National Conference of the New Britain movement was held at Glastonbury, August 4 to 12. Delegates discussed the New Britain constitution ("A New Constitution for Britain and the Empire-I," New Britain, July 11, 1934), manifestos to trade unions ("New Britain Appeal to Trade Unions," New Britain, August 8, 1934), Labour Party and the churches, the New Britain compensation scheme and International
and Imperial Relations. The Summer School, held from Tuesday, August 7 to Sunday, August 12, included a wide range of lectures on "The New Politics," "Regionalism," "National Guilds" and "European Federalism."

95 WTP 2-5, pp. 100-101, 104, 103.
97 WTP 2-5, p. 108.
98 WTP 2-5, p. 110.
99 WTP 2-5, p. 115.
100 WTP 2-5, pp. 120, 121.
101 Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo, p. 231.
103 WTP 2-5, p. 121.
104 WTP 2-5, p. 122.
105 WTP 2-5, pp. 124, 125, 126.
106 Harry Kohlberg to Watson Thomson, November 22, 1960, in my possession.
108 "Notes on brown paper," WTP 2-5, pp. 4-5, 7.
109 Watson Thomson, "Democracy is not Freedom," The Eleventh Hour, December 5, 1934, p. 37.
110 WTP 2-5, p. 129.
CHAPTER THREE

A NEW AFFECTION

On March 20, 1937 at 4:30 p.m. Watson Thomson sailed from Princess Pier in Liverpool on the S.S. Montcalm. He arrived, after a stormy voyage, at the Dock Station in Halifax at 9:00 a.m. on March 27. Unlike large numbers of immigrants from the United Kingdom, Europe and Asia who flooded into Canada in the early decades of the twentieth century, Thomson had not left poverty. To be sure, Thomson had left reluctantly. Mitrinovic had withdrawn from the New Britain movement just when it appeared it might become a significant political force. Thomson's journey across the Atlantic did not by itself sever him from familiar surroundings, values, mores. Rather, his emigration from the dominant values of his own regional culture had begun in his 'teens. These values had been consumed in the conflagration of the Great War. His experiences in colonial Jamaica and Nigeria merely deepened his alienation from British society, his feeling of homelessness in his own homeland. And his involvement with the avant-garde Mitrinovic circle in the 1930's certainly reinforced Thomson's sense of himself as an outsider.

But this is not to say that Thomson did not share the feeling of uprootedness common to most immigrants. Thompson's home had been at 55 Gower Street; his "family" all those who had chosen to ally themselves for personal and social transformation. Thomson was, then, uprooted from his cultural home. He was in flight from Mitrinovic, yet haunted by his spectre. He was glad to be free from the group, yet guilt-ridden that he had abandoned his family.
Like other immigrants who had played important roles in the early twentieth century trade union and socialist movements, Thomson did not arrive in Canada ideologically empty-headed. He was thoroughly conversant with the political and cultural scene in Europe and the globe. He had travelled widely. He was an experienced cultural radical—journalist, propagandist, organizer, educator. Thomson was certain to test the Canadian waters—what possibilities did Canada present for a restless and radical social pedagogue? Would Canadians be receptive to a communitarian socialist vision, tinged with elements of mysticism? Would he ever be able to recreate the warmth, passion, idealism and hope of the New Britain days?

New impressions crowded in on Thomson in those first anxious days as he travelled by train to Montreal. In just under twenty-four hours he would see more snow than in all the rest of his previous thirty-eight years, more pines and firs, more rocks and tumbling rivers than in all Scotland. Thomson rambled through Montreal's vibrant streets with Gunter Light, an acquaintance he had met on the ship. Climbing Mt. Royal, he was struck by the vitality of the new world. An irresistible sense of light-hearted zest seemed to pervade the whole place. His mood was lifted beyond anything he had felt in years. Thomson was particularly impressed with Montreal as a vital point of impact between two great cultures at different stages of development.

On the one hand, he saw the British-American Protestant man of commerce, a new North American Anglo-type both utterly secularised and frankly materialist. Though Anglo-Canadians were interlopers in Catholic and clerical Quebec, their financial power was great—symbolized in the Sun Life skyscraper-cathedral. Yet, Thomson observed, this dual
Montreal did not just survive, but increased mightily. Its commercial control in English-speaking hands, political control in French; bourgeois respectability rampant at one end, and Gallic "sallaciousness" at the other. And Thomson took careful note (perhaps as a result of a luncheon meeting at McGill University with F.R. Scott and several others) of the illiberal Duplessis government, which had just recently passed the infamous Padlock law.

A week later (April 3) Thomson arrived in Toronto, immediately establishing himself in a rooming-house at 59 Tranby Street. Here he lived cheaply for the next two extraordinary months. In Toronto, a city he profoundly disliked for its graceless commercialism, middle-class smugness and willingness to adopt the worst of American culture and manners, Thomson met Alan Kennedy, an old army acquaintance living in rather straitened circumstances. Kennedy introduced him to an official, Philip Horkery, of the Canadian Club: through Horkery (and possibly at Kennedy's suggestion) he contacted E.A. ("Ned") Corbett, director of the fledgling Canadian Association of Adult Education (CAAE) since 1936. Through Corbett Thomson met H.H. Hannam, an ardent spokesman for co-operative activities who had sparked the development of United Farmers of Ontario study clubs and made a modest beginning in residential adult education in the early 1930s. He also met Drummond Wren, former United Auto Workers activist and militant socialist who had become the secretary-organizer of the national Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in November 1929. When the WEA was founded in Ontario in 1918, its main purpose was to organize non-credit night classes for workers. By the late 1930s, the WEA had evolved into a pro-labour organization whose purpose was to provide workers with more knowledge to help them
improve the political and economic system. Both Wren and Hannam were part of a luncheon group of fifteen to twenty persons who met weekly with Corbett for discussions. Here was the beginning of what would become two islandic networks—one in Ontario consisting of influential educators and public figures, the other among Western Canadian humanist radicals.

There can be little doubt Watson Thomson received from these influential and experienced men an intensive crash course on the potentially liberating role of adult education in a crisis-bound democracy. By accident of birth, war experiences, coming of age in revolutionary Europe, teaching in colonial outposts of the British Empire and in the crucible of the Mitrinovic circle, Thomson had acquired the conviction that British society was in crisis. Now, he was persuaded that the 1930s was a period of massive contradictions for Canadians as well. Millions were out of work and on relief; many were hungry and anxious for the future. The government, though it abolished the notorious relief camps in 1935, was widely perceived to be callous toward the suffering, hysterically anti-communist and bereft of practicable social policy. For those on the left, section 98 of the Criminal Code, the miners' strike at Estevan in 1934, the Dominion Day riot at Regina in 1935 and the critical strike at the Oshawa plant in April of 1937, were the central symbols of revolt against a capitalist society without either a human face or much of a brain. Canadians, too, had to make some sense of Hitler and Mussolini's rise to power, the presence of Communist Russia, and the Spanish Civil War. Canada was an insecure, colonial, bi-racial society. Yet she was not as encumbered by tradition as Britain. Her newness, federated political system and populist
stirrings enticed Thomson, the restless and dislocated intellectual.

Despite the apparent contradiction, Thomson soon learned, economic distress and spiritual dislocation on an unprecedented scale had precipitated a cultural awakening of significant proportion in Canada. Henry Munro, president of the CAAE, in 1938, spoke for many social observers in a CBC broadcast when he stated that "Canada, like other democracies, had been caught in a tidal wave of social awakening." The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a political synthesis of farm and labour groups, had been created in Regina in 1933 to articulate the aspirations of the dispossessed and exploited. A number of eastern intellectuals had already broken with their timid colleagues and created the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), a Fabian-inspired think-tank for the emergent democratic socialist CCF.

Nor were the churches exempt from the cultural awakening. Sir Robert Falconer, president of the University of Toronto, was appointed by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church to determine how the social order could be christianized. His report, Christianizing the Social Order, appeared in 1934. The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCSO), fusing two small groups, the Movement for a Christian Social Order in Toronto and the Fellowship of Christian Socialists in Montreal, was founded in Toronto in April 1934. Both the FCSO and the LSR carried on a busy round of adult education activities. An "agit-prop" workers' theatre emerged in the mid-thirties, first in Toronto, later spreading across the country, to dramatize the plight of Canada's working class.

Everywhere voluntary organizations—some old like the Canadian Institute for International Affairs (CIIA) and the Workers' Educational
Association (WEA), some new like the Canada Youth Congress (CYC) and the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy (CLPD)—were engaged in the study of all sorts of things: government and economics, co-operatives and credit unions, child psychology and public speaking, health and community service. Canadians studied, listened to lectures, attended forums, summer schools and watched films and gathered around their radios as they never had before or have since. In 1938 Corbett estimated that 100,000 people, mostly in rural areas, were involved in non-credit informal study groups. Sensing that individualistic, laissez-faire values were collapsing, many Canadians struggled to find new ways of making sense of their world and new solutions to the host of problems flowing in the wake of capitalism's crisis.

The CAAE had been formally organized in 1935 at a national meeting held at Macdonald College, St. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec to spearhead the movement of some forty voluntary associations and university extension programs. Though the CAAE was organized primarily to coordinate activities and serve as a clearing house for information, it soon became evident that the energetic Corbett had other ideas. A child of the manse, trained as a Presbyterian minister at McGill University, Corbett had been assigned by the Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church to a mission field in northern Alberta in 1908. After working there, he went to the University of Alberta's extension department as A.E. Ottewell's assistant in 1920. In 1928 he was appointed director of the department. His working philosophy was based on the "conviction that the desire for knowledge is a normal human appetite, and that the capacity to acquire knowledge continues throughout life." Through study, discussion and planning together people could change their social
and economic environment and in so doing, he thought, change them-
selves.  

Corbett believed that adult educators in the crisis-ridden 1930s
could not be satisfied with either "enlightening individuals" or
"disseminating technical knowledge" to isolated farmers. In a brutal
world that had witnessed the "successful" mobilization of the Russian,
German and Italian masses for totalitarian ends, Corbett was convinced
that Canadians must "acquire somehow the realism of the dictator and
establish our educational system in accordance with the principles of
democracy. In that task adult education can help."  

In his commitment to educate for social change, Corbett was echoing
the words of Peter Sandiford, the director of an important survey of
adult education in Canada, who wrote in 1935:

Formerly, adult education worked slowly and
patiently through the individual student. The
leavening of a few individuals who would tend to
leaven others was the method it followed. Now,
to combat present social disorganization, a much
more comprehensive program is needed—one that
envisages the whole of the adult community in
place of the hand-picked few. And if our
diagnosis is correct then we are on the eve of
a great mass movement in Adult Education, the
like of which the world has never seen. The
reform of society will come, not through the
indoctrination of the young, but from the in-
tellectual conversion and convictions of the
adult. If this be true, then Adult Education has
an important future. It is the agency whose sole
purpose is to provide the people with the vision.  

Believing with Sandiford that adult education could be a "vitalizing
force in any movement toward the realization of social justice through
democratic methods," Corbett actively encouraged, in the late 1930s,
the experimental community development projects directed by Mary and
Harry Avison (Le Pas project in northern Manitoba), David and Edith
Smith (The Community Life Training Institute in Barrie, Ontario) and Alex Sim (A project in rural adult education in the Eastern Townships of Quebec), all of whom were activists with Christian socialist backgrounds. These projects would serve as models of what could be accomplished by community development programs patterned along the lines of the Danish folk high school. Well-organized adult education, Corbett hoped, could unite the citizens of the community, promote economic rehabilitation and develop a participatory civic consciousness.

During the war years, more convinced than ever that Canadian society was being run by a small elite in Ottawa, Corbett would turn his considerable energy and influence to countering "totalitarianism" by promoting "fearless and open-minded study and discussion": expanding the CAAE's publications division, starting Food for Thought, a monthly magazine, co-operating with voluntary associations like the Canadian Institute for International Affairs (CIIA) and, most significantly, working with farm organizations to create and promote the National Farm Radio Forum and, more broadly with citizens' groups, to create the Citizens' Forum.

In 1943 the CAAE would commit itself to a "democratic socialist" manifesto (drafted by Watson Thomson as it turned out) and attempt, through imaginative and wide-ranging utilization of the "great new instruments of public education—the film and radio" to involve citizens across the nation in serious analysis of the kind of social order they wanted in the post-war world.

By the late 1930s the burgeoning Canadian adult education movement was ideologically open to a radical reconstructionist educator such as Watson Thomson. His social pedagogy, forged in the fires of the New
Britain movement, with its personalist orientation to awakening individuals to co-personal commitment and political action, resonated with that of avant-garde educators like Moses Coady of the Antigonish Movement and E.A. Corbett who saw education as a "practical movement of social reform based on the principles of self-education and action by the people themselves, organized in community groups."\(^{16}\)

Thomson was aware of the limitations of community development as a global reform strategy. Community development without personal transformation was superficial and, ultimately, communities could not be transformed without structural changes in regional and national political economies. Nevertheless, Thomson's commitment to building up from below a voluntary cooperative society placed him in critical sympathy with the experimental projects aimed at revitalizing rural communities. Thomson, like Corbett, was a passionate believer in awakening the masses through educational means to social and political action. Both men believed that Canada was at a turning point in her cultural history—a time when the great majority of people recognized that knowledge brings the power to shape human destiny.

If Thomson was receiving an education in the realities of Canadian life and the possibilities of building a better world through adult education, he was also finding himself "dated up' to address all sorts of little groups."\(^{17}\) On April 27, the day after meeting Corbett, Thomson spoke at the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCSO) annual conference in Toronto. "Christianity," Thomson said,

ceases to be a disturber of one's peace if treated strictly as a private and personal matter and one only to be realized in its perfection in another world. Not a few troubled by the difference between Christianity and ordinary ways attempt to secure peace by splitting the difference...\(^{18}\)
On May 3 Thomson shared his reservations about the co-operative movement with Corbett's luncheon group, which featured Father Jimmy Tompkins, pioneer of the Antigonish movement.

On May 14 Thomson addressed the Lindsay Ontario Canadian Club on "The British Empire and Her Place in World Affairs." "The British Empire," Thomson declared, "must become clear voiced; she must be decisive in dealing with world problems. She must say to Hitler and Mussolini, 'There must be no wars of aggression.'" The success of this lecture (and others to Canadian Clubs) led to an invitation for Thomson to consider a national lecture tour under the auspices of the national Canadian Club office in Ottawa. And on May 17 he spoke to a WEA group.

These busy days of reflection and discussion must have heartened Thomson. His diary for the spring of 1937 records a schedule full of meetings with Corbett, Hannam, Wren and W.J. Dunlop, then the director of the extension department at the University of Toronto. It was Corbett who first suggested that Thomson might find work with the WEA—since the WEA did not have any full-time organizers or tutors working with any of the local committees which had been established during Wren's western tour in early 1937. Discussions about job possibilities continued through the summer months. But it was not until the completion of his hiking tour across Western Canada (also suggested by Corbett) and lecture tour for the Canadian Club that Thomson's job as tutor with the WEA in Calgary would be formalized.

Still somewhat guilt-ridden and lonely from the London experience and grappling with what he was to do with his new sense of freedom, Thomson's hiking tour across Western Canada provided him with the much
needed reflective space. Since the tumultuous last days of London Thomson had only wanted to lose himself in impersonal life and to "become reconciled to life from the bottom up, and the bottom was the natural world [sic] and my own muscles and tissues (too long ignored and neglected)."

Camping among the spruce trees and lakes, hiking through vast areas of untouched terrain and savouring the sweet-smelling cleanliness of the conifers of the Pre-Cambrian country were balm to his soul.

Travelling across the Prairies, Thomson saw what should have been the "waving golden grain of the CPR publicity films but which were in fact dusty wastes under a relentless sun, with farmers sitting around with slumped shoulders and the look of beaten men." Never had he seen such "utter desolation in nature and man alike." After travelling from the dustbowl through the red sandstone country of Montana, Thomson arrived in Calgary on July 3, two days before the opening of the Stampede, carrying with him two letters of introduction from Corbett to important western adult educators and social activists.

In Calgary Thomson met W. Norman Smith, editor of The Western Farm Leader, and Alexander Calhoun, head of the Calgary Public Library. Both men knew the culture and politics of western Canada intimately and were UFA and CCF supporters. They were to become life-long friends, spiritual confidants and political advisors. Alex Calhoun was a man of wisdom, warmth and compassion. He had received his university training at Queen's University in Classics. After teaching in Fort William for four years, he became interested in public libraries and their enormous possibilities for creating an informed citizenry. In 1911 he became head of the Calgary Public Library.
Active in the small but lively freethinking intellectual circle of Calgary, Calhoun participated in William Irvine's Unitarian Church, by 1916 the centre for public discussion of democracy and socialism, war and peace, religion and morals. He was deeply interested in social problems and had an absorbing interest in foreign affairs. He was a member of the CIIA, key member of the influential Round-Table Club of Calgary and well-known speaker in farm, labour and progressive circles. Under his direction the Calgary Public Library became a centre of adult education—providing classes for the unemployed during the depression. Years later, recalling his first meetings with Thomson, Calhoun remarked that Thomson seemed to be experiencing considerable fear and distress, as if he were running away from something evil.23

Watson Thomson established a particularly close bond with Norman Smith, their correspondence between 1937 and 1958 revealing a warmly affectionate and mutually respectful relationship. Smith had come to Canada from England in 1906 to work on a newspaper. After working for papers in Winnipeg and Edmonton, he joined the Regina Leader in 1912. He left the Leader in August 1914 to serve with the Machine Gun Corps until demobilization in 1919. Upon return to Canada, he joined the staff of the Calgary Morning Albertan until 1921 when he left to become the educational secretary of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA). In 1921, Smith was appointed editor of the UFA. As editor, Smith covered the farm co-operative movement and the political theories expounded by the party—Irvine's influential notion of "group politics" capturing most of the attention. Smith knew the writings of A.R. Orage and The New Age circle. He was probably the first western Canadian to be conversant with the monetary ideas of Major Douglas. After the UFA became the
United Farmer in 1934, and ceased publication in 1936, Smith became the publisher of The Western Farm Leader, assisted by his wife, Amelia Turner Smith. Thomson published his first Canadian articles in The Western Farm Leader in 1937.

For Watson Thomson these meetings with Calhoun and Smith were deeply satisfying from the first moment. Struck by their hospitality, humanist sensibility and profound understanding of personal and public affairs, he was able to talk more candidly with them than he had with anyone else across Canada. He discovered that both men shared his personalistic orientation to the building of the co-operative commonwealth, aversion to centralized collectivism and commitment to the "value of small co-operative efforts, as bricks for the larger building, which is to be." Smith was particularly sympathetic to the aims of the New Britain movement. These men provided Thomson with much needed personal affirmation. Through the help of these experienced and well-connected men Thomson was able to integrate himself remarkably quickly into Alberta CCF and socially-experimental circles. The dislocated intellectual was finding a new home.

Through Smith and Calhoun Thomson met others—labour leaders and keen liberals of Calgary. Smith took him to a CCF meeting where he met I.F. Fitch, a prominent lawyer, who in 1937 was chairman of the Round-Table group. (Calhoun had been instrumental in founding the Knights of the Round-Table in 1925, a luncheon club devoted to a critical examination of contemporary problems.) As part of their activities, the Round-Table broadcast on public affairs over CKUA and CFCN in Calgary.

On July 7 Thomson decided to travel to the Alberta School of Community Life being held at the Olds School of Agriculture, an
experimental summer school loosely patterned after the Danish folk high school. There he conferred with Donald Cameron, who had succeeded Corbett as director of the University of Alberta's extension department, about the possibility of a job with his department. Thomson spent July 8th at the school, gave an evening lecture, and conversed with Cameron and Mrs. Jessie Montgomery, extension librarian, until quite late at night. A few days later Thomson met with the Calgary WEA committee, chaired by H.J. Evers. They were anxious to have him in Calgary "if it were financially possible."

Thomson then travelled to Edmonton on July 15th or 16th with Cameron to meet Mr. Panabaker, WEA board chairman, to discuss the possibility that Thomson might be able to work as a WEA tutor under the sponsorship of the Department of Extension, given the WEA's shortage of funds, or work with the Department full-time with part-time responsibilities for WEA work in Calgary and Edmonton. Wren, no doubt, was scrambling to find some money for Thomson.

A rather fortuitous event took place just before Thomson set out for Vancouver from Banff. The manageress of the YWCA hostel introduced him to Alex Sim, a senior at the University of Toronto who was active in the Canadian Youth Council movement and the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Sim had organized a cross-Canada tour for three high school boys (Don Kyle, eighteen, from Toronto; Frank Stewart from Kingston; and Charles King, a young Jewish lad of nineteen) as a means of raising money for his next year at university, investigating youth hostels and introducing the boys to the social and economic plight of Canadians. Sim also had a contract with the CBC to interview rural people, whenever and wherever possible, to discuss their listening interests and preferences.
ences, and report his findings in a weekly syndicated column, "Country Life from Coast-to-Coast." The expenses for the travelling seminar were covered by the affluent parents of the three boys.

Sim recalls his first meeting with Thomson.

I beheld a small anxious looking man, an inward man, who would come alive with great charm, and camaraderie, then suddenly enclose himself in his private thoughts. Later I was able to distinguish in these withdrawals, between a meditative posture having no relation to me or awareness of my presence, and hostility. On this Sunday morning he was mostly charm, yet salted with some strangeness and mystery...28

Thomson joined the five men and they set out for Vancouver, travelling down to Kimberley along the Windermere Trail, then by single track to Trail, and finally, on August 7, triumphantly reaching Vancouver. Thomson loved Vancouver's magnificent environs from the beginning. During the trip Thomson and the younger men shared their spiritual biographies. Sim remembers that:

One night in relays they talked all night. The boys took turns sleeping but Watson kept going all night. The next day he missed the delicate beauty of the Okanagan as he slept off an oral marathon.

Sim also recalls talking continuously with Thomson on the first day of their trip.

Finally his ideas began to unfold, and I began to disagree and to question. After all I had just finished three years of undergraduate work. For the rest of the years I knew Watson, I admired him and counted him a friend. We never again discussed ideas. We discussed actions, and strategies related to the CAAE but never ideas. I was soon to learn that he liked disciples, not debating partners.29

Sim, who had many friends in Vancouver, introduced Thomson to a number of Vancouver youth who were active in the S.C.M. Though by no means an ideologically unified movement, by 1937 the Christian socialists
were the dominant force in the national SCM. During the 1930s the SCM was very much concerned, as was the LSR and the FCSO, about developing a personalistic socialist alternative to capitalism and the problem of belligerent nationalism.

The cry of the youthful heart for world peace and a new order was also heard at the second all-Canadian Youth Congress held in Montreal in May 1937, initiated jointly by The League of Nations Society and the Canadian Youth Council, and attended by many SCMers as well as representatives from many other youth organizations. Against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War and the threat of another global war, the conference discussed issues of world peace (national and international problems), social justice (problems of economy and their effect on peace) and youth policy (how can youth assist in the defense of peace and in economic improvement). The Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program was one policy outcome of the first two Canadian Youth Congresses.

The Vancouver SCM group (Bob Tillman, Frankie Montgomery, Frank McNair, Norah and Bill Gibly, Sheilah Hutch, Ernie Bishop, Effie Keays, Bob Henderson, Frances Matheson, Fro Synder and Alf Carlson) were anxious to have Thomson talk to them, especially when they knew he had worked with Professor John MacMurray, one of the intellectual heroes of the international Christian socialists, in the New Britain movement. Thomson received an invitation to speak at the SCM spring camp, to be held from April 29 to May 6, 1937, on Gambier Island. Throughout his Alberta years Thomson would continue to work with many young people from Youth Council, Labour, SCM and UFA organizations.

The result of the meeting of the thirty-eight-year-old world traveller with activist youth was a happy convergence of interests.
Thomson's gentle openness to others, his radical questioning of the whole world economic system and belief in the primacy of the co-personal group as prolegomenon to social change obviously appealed to youth in a world that had lost its familiar benchmarks. Bob Henderson, who met Thomson at the University of British Columbia while in his late teens, was in touch with him until he was twenty-two or twenty-three, writes of the influence of Thomson on his life.

Part of the influence also must have been because his life-style and much of his thought was so in contrast to the values that were represented in my up-bringing. Probably the most important person in influencing my own thought and value system had been my father until the time I went to university. My father was a liberal clergyman, educated at Glasgow and Edinburgh universities, distinctly liberal in theology for his time, but Watson was, in contrast, a rather radical skeptic with respect to institutionalized religion. My father was very active during the depression of the 30's in relief and welfare work in our small town, working on committees of the municipality, etc. but Watson, in contrast radically questioned the basis of the whole world economic system. My father was British and 'modestly-proud' of the traditions of British life and of the place of 'Great' Britain in world affairs. Watson really hated the injustices of the British class system and, from his experience in Nigeria, scorned much of Britain's 'colonial' policy. I had grown up in a small town at Haney in the Fraser Valley and although it was not far from Vancouver, it was still a Western Canadian mostly rural, small town background. Watson always appeared very much a 'man of the world' and talked of his experiences in the army (which he also regarded with a good deal of skepticism), in Africa and Europe. He talked often in a 'world context' in a sort of familiar way, which was quite new to me. 32

Henderson thought that Thomson's strongest appeal to him and to many others was his open acceptance of any person, and his commitment to that person's well-being. Small groups of persons gathered around the
charismatic Scot. And Thomson sought to meet their needs in a deeply personal and selfless way, giving of his time and energy, skills and possessions for the shared life of the group. As a member of such groups, Henderson knew the extent to which he had benefited from the very deep level of trust that made one feel accepted and affirmed.

Alex Sim and Watson Thomson parted at the end of their week trip knowing that they would meet again. After graduating from the University of Toronto in 1938, Sim went to work with McGill University's extension department to initiate a project in rural adult education among the English-speaking communities in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. The relation between the two men would not be close, however. During the early 1940s Thomson became increasingly convinced that he and Sim did not share a commitment to radical social change.

When Thomson picked up his mail in Vancouver, a letter from the Ottawa Canadian Club national office setting out a forty-three point itinerary and a cheque for $100, an advance on his expense account, awaited him. Overjoyed at the invitation, this assignment convinced him that he had something to give Canada which Canada wanted to take from me. The concurrent talks with these groups of eager, questioning young minds was further evidence of that. I felt that, though I was not yet a Canadian, the basis for my belonging in the Canadian community had now been laid.33

The Canadian Club lecture tour began on September 6 at the aristocratic Empress Hotel in Victoria, with the hobo of yesterday lecturing to 600 women of Victoria's Canadian Club. A day earlier, while visiting distant relatives in Seattle, Thomson had a recurring bout of malaria. After spending most of the day in the Seattle General Hospital, fed with quinine, asperia and continuous hot drinks, the fever broke at 11:30 p.m.
Fortunately, he was able to make travel connections to Victoria, arriving weak but free from fever. Thomson surmises that his fever was an expression of an unconscious desire to provide myself with an excuse for evading the challenge of this lecture-tour, the results of which, I was pretty sure, would determine the kind of career I would have in Canada.\textsuperscript{34}

Thomson gave, essentially, two inter-related lectures on his cross-Canada tour: one on "Canada, the Empire and World-Leadership"; the other on "The Art of Being Human." In his lecture on Canada's role in the world community, Thomson appealed for a new and vitally different interpretation of the British Empire. In a world torn to pieces by the violent extremes of fascism and communism, perhaps Britain, with her traditional sense of fair play and strong desire for impartial justice, might be the driving force toward a reconciled world. The driving force toward such an attainment would be a passionate interest in one's fellow-man, not merely a passive desire for peace, but an overwhelming desire for the building of a constructive co-operative commonwealth of nations in which all conflicting attitudes of mind would be fused.\textsuperscript{35}

Calling for a re-interpretation of the meaning of the British Empire, Thomson argued before his attentive audiences that the "real meaning" of the British Empire was to point the way toward world federation and fill the role of something more effective than the hapless League of Nations in bringing about a federated, co-operative human family. The British Commonwealth was to become a real federation, and within her own boundaries, Britain was to begin to resolve the great conflict of classes by reorganizing industry on a planned, functional and socialized basis as distinct from a competitive, chaotic and individualistic one. Canada, he suggested, could practice within
herself the first principles of federation by bringing about a better cohesion and understanding between her own nationals. Britain should approach other nations in terms of equality, and for the future of the empire, should combine humanity with justice. 36

Thomson argued that the starting point for attaining planetary peace and security lay with individuals. "Two thousand years ago," Thomson declared in his lecture on "The Art of Being Human," we were told to 'Love your enemies.'...If we, as individuals, would live without suspicion of each other, would not be always on guard as it were, we could go about this planet feeling at home everywhere, without embarrassment in any company." 37 The way out was to create a new social order through groups which should enter into a sort of "conspiracy of truth-telling" in order to break down the sense of separation dividing individuals. People had to come together feeling, deeply, a common need for understanding and expression. They had to learn to be themselves, sharing with others that inner life which is common to all. They had to learn to fear nothing but hypocrisy and insincerity and band together against those enemies of human development. Thomson urged his audiences to assume that the "other" is one's equal, that every individual has unlimited potentialities. The "art of being human" was to become "members one of another"—the only security that was permanent. 38

Thomson finished his rather hectic tour (which also included numerous press interviews) on November 1 in Port Arthur, Ontario. From all reports, the tour was a success. For one thing, Thomson was invariably received with friendliness, sometimes with candid approval and only occasionally with suspicion. One bewildered individual wondered why a communist had been chosen to lecture before the respectable
Canadian clubs. And, more significantly, he felt personally affirmed—Canada did appear to have a place for him.

On November 6th Thomson was back in Toronto conferring with Corbett and Wren about job possibilities. On October 1st and 2nd, while in Calgary lecturing to the Canadian Club, he conferred with Norman Smith and Alex Calhoun, both of whom attended his lecture. They urged him to consider coming back to Calgary to teach labour classes, claiming that there was a "great demand" for classes from unionists. The idea of working in the same milieu as Smith and Calhoun appealed to Thomson. So, when Corbett encouraged him to return to Calgary and Wren, a fellow Clydesider, managed to convince him to work for $20 a week, he accepted.39

In just over six months since arriving in Canada Thomson had travelled 14,000 miles and would soon be on his third crossing of Canada. He had experienced the "warm relationship and quiet confirmation of Norman (Smith) and Alex (Calhoun), men older than I, experienced in the radical tradition, and had had the satisfaction of being accepted as a teacher to many young people." "Canada," Thomson concluded in the fall of 1937, "had gone far beyond my original hope that here I might find the 'expulsive power of a new affection.'"40

When Watson Thomson began his work as an adult educator based in Calgary in November, 1937, the progressive movement was still licking its wounds from the devastating defeat of the UFA by the Social Credit party of William Aberhart in 1935 and lacked any unifying political centre. After its defeat, the UFA, increasingly hesitant and uncertain about its political orientation, gradually abandoned its commitment to some form of delegate democracy, reverting to "its position in the years 1909-1917."41 By 1939 the UFA would be only a shadow of its former self, with only 300 active locals compared to 1200 in 1921. The
vacating of the provincial political field by the UFA in 1937 forced the CCF, organized as a federation of labour, farm and CCF clubs, to opt for separate provincial political action. At the 1938 Alberta CCF convention, held in Edmonton, delegates committed the party to "full-scale political activity within the province" and proceeded to the "setting up of local club organizations throughout Alberta."\(^{42}\)

Though the progressive movement had lost its political centre and momentum as a mass movement, Alberta radicals in farm, labour and voluntary organizations carried on a lively round of social pedagogical activity. Some of the UFA locals whose left-wing was captivated by the "utopian co-operative" vision\(^ {43}\) sponsored study groups and lecture series, carrying on an earlier tradition of education for social change.\(^ {44}\) By 1939, approximately one hundred CCF clubs, though committed in the last analysis to promoting CCF ideology, also explored economic, political and global issues in open-ended fashion. The Canadian Labour Party (CLP), which had a vital educational program in the early 1930s, continued to sponsor some study groups.\(^ {45}\) The University Women's Club of Edmonton, fashionably liberal in sensibility, tipped leftward in the late 1930s, including study groups on international affairs and economics in its essentially literary program. Leading peace activist Mrs. F.C. Casselman, chairman of the Alberta Peace Council, and Marian Gimby, active on the CCF speaking circuit, taught the international affairs and economics courses respectively.\(^ {46}\)

The Education Society of Edmonton, under the leadership of H.D. Newland, discussed the radical ideas of the American social reconstructionist educators George Counts, Harold Rugg, William Kilpatrick and others who were attempting to transform society through
transforming the school curriculum. Newland was convinced that if the economy and our society is to be planned and controlled in the interests of the many, the many must understand it. They can't control what they do not understand. But if the many do not control, the few will. The great question is, 'Who shall control and for what purposes?'

And the Department of Extension of the University of Alberta, in response to the crisis of society and stirrings in the rural areas, began to organize an extensive series of study circles in 1937.

The Alberta peace organizations were at the cutting edge of promoting public dialogue on social issues. The Canadian League against War and Fascism (later renamed the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Calgary Women's Peace Council, the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy and the Local Councils of Women organized public discussion of international issues pertaining to war and peace in conferences and forums. Some of the more active CCF locals sponsored open forums in Calgary and Edmonton.

Although the "social gospel" did not prevail in the majority of Alberta churches, left-wing Christians like Rev. H.H. Horricks, the Rev. A. Rowe, Rev. F. Harbach and others like the controversial Rev. Warwick Kelloway used their churches as centres of adult education to promote critical discussion of pressing issues, opening their lecterns to men like Norman Bethune on his fund-raising cross-country tour of western Canada. Two newspapers, The Western Farm Leader, the paper replacing the UFA in 1936, and the People's Weekly (formerly the Alberta Labour News), edited by Elmer Roper, interpreted the news from
a CCF point of view and served to tie the radicals and progressives together in a loose network.

Two important summer conferences—the Alberta School of Religion, founded in the 1920s to explore the nexus of religion and social change, drew such luminaries as Reinhold Niebuhr and Harry Ward of Union Theological College in New York, and the Alberta School of Community Life, started by Donald Cameron to revitalize rural life, brought reform-minded adult educators, intellectuals and active citizens together for mutual encouragement and deepening of social philosophy. The UFA youth and the miniscule Alberta Communist Party held their own summer schools. It was not at all surprising to find Norman Priestley, non-practicing Methodist minister, long-time UFA vice-president, supporter of the "utopian co-operator" vision, member of the FCSO and one of the original members of the national council of the CCF, speaking on co-operatives, democracy and social gospel themes at the Alberta School of Religion. Nor was it surprising to find Norman Smith or Alex Calhoun in attendance at the Alberta School of Community Life or speaking to a gathering of the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy.

For the next three and a half years Watson Thomson would play a vital, even leading, role in this network of social pedagogical activities including study groups, civic forums, media, conferences and summer schools. For many progressive-minded Albertans this network nurtured their critical awareness of global issues and provided a communal setting for mutual support and comfort in spiritually and materially insecure times. Although this network never evolved into a coherent social movement, it kept alive the dream of a society structured towards developing a voluntary co-operative society.
Rejecting both collectivist and individualist conceptions of society, the vision of a voluntary co-operative society had many elements in common with the personalist movements in France and Great Britain in the 1930s.

However, establishing a dynamic WEA chapter in Calgary, a city of approximately 6000 union members, was no easy task for Thomson and his able district secretary H.J. Evers, a man who had close ties to the CCF, CLP and union movement. For one thing, the Alberta Federation of Labour had not played much of a role in promoting either vocationally-oriented or social education among its constituents or the general society. To be sure, the Labour Party, to which a number of unions were affiliated, organized a few study groups and forums and the CCF clubs, which were rather unorganized and ineffective in 1937, had a sprinkling of trade union members.51

Secondly, there was considerable public opposition to and misunderstanding of the purpose of the WEA. Correspondence between Evers and Wren indicates that few trade unionists attended the public meetings organized to explain the WEA's purpose. One meeting, organized in the late fall of 1939 to announce the season's programs, reveals something of the public attitude to the WEA.

We had our public meeting and while there was a good attendance there were not at that meeting the people I wished to contact, that is members of trade unions. We had a few who seemed antagonistic to the name 'Worker.' One lady said that her husband told her that she was going to a 'Bolshevist meeting.' Another got up and said could we not change the name to an adult educational association. I told them if that were done then we would lose the whole purpose of the movement, and that the university should do this work but it would not get the very people that we wanted....52
Nor was the local press friendly to the WEA. Evers had tried unsuccessfully to get an article about the WEA published in the *Calgary Herald* for two years. Another paper, the *Calgary Albertan*, garbled reports sent in by Evers, who had stated at a public meeting that the business press did not "want the workers educated because they might then demand a change in our present social system." Evers' criticism was carried to the press and a reporter promptly dispatched to "do" an article on the WEA. Although the reporter "wanted to soft pedal the worker name," Evers insisted that the article present the WEA as it was and not as some people would like it to be.

Both Evers and Thomson were committed to the social education of the "common man." But Thomson was willing to open the WEA classes to other than the industrial working class. This disturbed Evers who wrote to Wren that he was not giving his time "to give education to people who would in all probability be our enemies." The conflict between the two, and Wren and Thomson as well, stemmed from Thomson's conviction that the "absolute condition for the success of Socialism is that it should be guided from the centre whose concern is not merely with the ingetritiy of one class...but with the human whole..." Nevertheless, Thomson was clearly at home with the WEA's commitment to teaching workers "how to think, not what to think." And he was critically sympathetic with Wren's optimistic belief that the application of critical judgment to existing social and economic wrongs would eventually eliminate from our society all injustices, and would deprive those who create them of both their powers and opportunities. Workers' education is social education for intelligent and effective citizenship, as opposed to education for his personal aggrandizement."
Within one week of arriving in Calgary Thomson had established his local WEA committee. But he had gained enthusiastic support from only a few progressive unions like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, local 348. In January 1937 the IBEW had received a letter from the Calgary Trades and Labour Council regarding the possibility of establishing a WEA association in Calgary. The IBEW, which was affiliated with the Canadian League against War and Fascism, involved with the Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy as well as the CLP, moved actively to found a local chapter, sending three representatives to an organizational meeting held in early February. Thomson addressed the IBEW local on November 24 with classes beginning two days earlier.56

From November 1937 to the spring of 1938 Thomson taught WEA courses in Elementary Economics, Psychology, International Affairs and English Literature and Composition. His New Britain experience had given him a "smattering of all kinds of branches of knowledge, a considerable degree of confidence in myself as a fluent and persuasive speaker—and perhaps also the illusion that I knew more than I did."57 The tutorial classes commenced in the Western Canada High School on Monday, November 22 at 8:00 p.m. No materials, or course outlines, exist in archival sources. But we know that Thomson used one of Alfred Adler's books in his Psychology class, suggesting that he explored in depth some of the issues he had set out schematically in his Canadian Club tour.58 And it is safe to assume that he drew on his New Britain-inspired commitment to a voluntary co-operative version of an economic democracy, which provided for producers to share control with owners over the broad questions of economic planning. In his International Affairs course of 1937/38, if one extrapolates from the one he taught the following year, Thomson
provided a detailed and lucid analysis of the economic and political reasons for the collapse of world order.

During the week of November 15-20, 1937 Thomson conducted a series of evening classes for study group leaders, dealing with the place of the study group in the community and how to organize successfully. These classes were designed to prepare leaders for the extensive system of study circles and listening in groups, the study circles differing from the regular classes in being composed of six to ten members only and meeting when and where they wished. The material for these subjects—Parliamentary Procedure, Elementary Economics, Consumers' Co-operation, Psychology, History and Practice of Trade Unionism, General Economics, Social Planning and International Affairs—was provided by the WEA, supplemented by weekly bulletins. Thomson also conducted classes for the unemployed, sponsored by Calhoun and held at the Calgary Public Library. Besides his regular classes, Thomson also led the Eighth St. CCF Club's study of economics.59

Two articles published in the CAAE journal Adult Learning provide insight into Thomson's view of the social function of the study group, ideas he probably communicated to those who attended his leadership training course. Juxtaposing a collectivized life with "individuality all sunk and lost" to "individuality magnified into individualism," Thomson argues that the study group has an important socializing function to play in creating a co-personal society. Thomson refused the either/or dilemma of individualism or collectivism. Like the later Buber, Thomson pointed to the resolution of the tension between the two poles through a creative third alternative—the relation between human and human. "This relation," comments Maurice Friedman,
takes place not only in the I-Thou of direct meeting but also in the We of community. Similarly, it must be based not only on the personal wholeness of the individual but also on a social restructuring of society. Relation is the true starting-point for personal integration and wholeness and for the transformation of society, and these in turn make possible ever greater relation.  

Thomson perceives a deep meaning in the "study group" phenomenon in western societies. For him, the desire for "intimate co-relatedness"—where each member feels recognized and appreciated in an atmosphere of co-personal interest—stems from his generation's experience of personal isolation, social disintegration and cultural instability. There is, then, a spiritual, humanizing depth to what may appear on the surface as a prosaic matter: people coming together to study economic or psychological "facts." The study-group, says Thomson, sets "Human Relations squarely in the centre of the picture."  

To facilitate "intimate co-relatedness", however, requires not only the will but also the technique. Groups, Thomson claims, should organize themselves in a circle

  each point in the periphery giving itself totally, either in words or in concentrated attention to the common centre of discussion; the absence of jealousies; of inferiority feelings; the light and quick passing of the ball of discourse from one to the other; the flexibility of mood; the enrichment of thought with feeling; and finally, the creative flash from this mind or that...  

If the principle of the uniqueness of each human being is taken as first principle, then the study group provides opportunity for individuals to learn to share their fears, doubts, hopes and desires because, says Thomson, "when fears are held not privately but 'in
They are thereby translated into something altogether different, into the realization of that eternal crisis and pressing forward which is the Spirit of Man.\textsuperscript{65}

These two articles are rhapsodic pieces that would have chilled the "dialectical materialists" in the Communist Party, yet containing ideals that were integral to Thomson's vision of social change. He struggled to put these into practice the rest of his life as an adult educator; in his co-personal experiments which, in Canada, began in Edmonton in the spring of 1939, continuing in the co-operative housing venture of 139 Roslyn Road in Winnipeg from 1941 to 1944; and, in a land-based intentional community in B.C., and numerous group experiments in the 1950s and 1960s.

The second focus of Thomson's work in Calgary was his involvement with youth from Youth Council, Labour, SCM and the young people's section of the UFA. They often met in the home of a young accountant and his wife, Ted and Jean Jenkinson, who were active CCFers, and spent many long evenings with half-a-dozen or more youth discussing world affairs and human relations. There he met Eldon Wilcox, who would later join the Edmonton group and follow Thomson to Winnipeg in 1941.

At the SCM spring camp ("Ideals in Action"), held from April 29 to May 6 in British Columbia, Thomson along with other invited animators, most of whom were university people or "social gospel" ministers (Dr. W.F. Kelloway, Miss K. Kinney, Rabbi Cass, Rev. M. Talnikoff, Dr. H.R. Trumpour, Prof. F. Soward, and Dr. W.H. Smith), explored topics such as "Christianity and War," "Towards International Community," "Crisis in Canadian Democracy," "Christianity and

Thomson also participated in the first annual joint Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement (CCYM)-UFA summer camp, attended by sixty youth, held at the west end of Sylvan Lake, Alberta from July 30 to August 6. The committee for the conference (Elvins Spencer, Helen Breckenridge, Bill Runte, Margaret Archibald, Marguerite McCollum, Bill Thornton) organized discussions on such topics as the task of Canadian young people, relation of farmers to labour, Marxism, Fascism and the rise of Hitler, the rise of the corporate state and Social Credit. At the morning beach symposium Thomson spoke on "War and Peace" and in the evening led a discussion group on "How to be Happy though Human." The CCYM, who had used political drama for social educational purposes first in the Edmonton performance of Elsie Park Gowan and William Irvine's You Can't Do That on March 13 and 14, 1936, performed Gowan's Help Yourself at the conference. 66 And B.C. CCFer Harold Winch, an eyewitness to the police raid on the unemployed who were occupying the Vancouver Art Gallery and Post Office, told of the stirring events of the Sit-down Strike. 67 Political theatre, social psychology, first-hand reports from the flamboyant Harold Winch, discussions of war and peace—a heady elixir for farm and CCF youth.

During his period as a WEA tutor, the enormity of the world situation gave a sense of urgency to all reconstructionist adult educators. Thomson discussed international affairs daily, both in public and private groups, drawing on the "synoptic view of things which was (his) legacy from those six years of intensive experience
In early December 1937, to illustrate, Thomson addressed an open forum held at the Calgary CCF headquarters on "What Hope for the Future?" and spoke on "Collectivism" at the Three Hills UFA and WFWA lecture series.

He carried his message of "peace begins at home" to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on March 11, 1938. Before problems could be solved a new pattern must begin among persons rather than parties or societies. It was small use for people, Thomson said, to seek united action in the government when they themselves left the meeting at which they sought such action to "pursue lives of intense individualism, lives in which co-operation had no part." In his address the same day before the Edmonton University Women's Club on "Fascism in Theory and Practice" Thomson declared that

we cannot afford to be merely against fascism. We must be actively for democracy. If defending democracy means only defending possessions, comforts, complacency and irresponsibility, it will fail. Democracy must achieve confidence to extend itself to the economic field, courage to face tension, and determination to solve the basic problem of human frustration.

Setting out an analysis of fascism similar to that of Erich Fromm in *Escape from Freedom*, Thomson anchored the origins of totalitarianism in Germany in the psychic frustrations of people who sought satisfaction in the glory of the nation, submerging their individuality in the state. Fascism, Thomson said, reinforced group consciousness at the expense of the individual and exploited people's pride in folk culture. Germany's leaders may call themselves socialists, but
no real socialism can exist where control is entirely from above in every aspect of life.\textsuperscript{72}

On March 24, 1938, in response to Mackenzie King's policy of preparing to support a British war effort while continuing to deny such intention\textsuperscript{73} and the evident passivity of the public response to King, some Alberta progressives, led by Norman Smith and Watson Thomson, organized the Provisional Committee for International Affairs. They criticized Great Britain's present foreign policy and demanded the maintenance of collective security through a strengthened League of Nations. They also urged Mackenzie King to make an immediate declaration of Canada's own policy. Hundreds attended the Calgary meeting, which was addressed by Thomson and Smith as well as several other speakers.

Criticizing Great Britain's foreign policy, Thomson urged a more idealistic foreign policy and a strong support for the League of Nations. But there would have to be a strong League, backed by force—an international peace-keeping agency. Thomson called for the adoption of higher moral principles and the abolition of secret diplomacy. Arbitration and not violence was the best way to settle international disputes. Norman Smith, citing a statement by George Ferguson, a leading Canadian radio commentator, that Britain's foreign policy since Anthony Eden's departure was being directed by a small group of Englishmen who wanted to see a strong Nazi Germany, castigated Great Britain for her vital interest in the oil wells of Mesopotamia and lack of concern for Czechoslovakia's protection. Smith made a strong plea for collective security for peace and demanded that the Canadian people be informed of Canada's foreign
policy and that a debate on that policy be permitted on the floor of parliament. A declaration should be made as to the purpose of the money voted for defence, Canada's commitments, and Canada's foreign policy. This initiative in civic education, a new strand in Watson Thomson's activities, culminated in a September rally, organized by Smith and Thomson, which was attended by 900 citizens. 74

During the summer of 1938, with his WEA teaching responsibilities ended, Thomson lectured at the Alberta School of Religion. The aim of the School of Religion, which met that summer at the Fairweather Christian Fellowship Camp, was to provide Christian ministers and laymen with an opportunity to "gird their loins" to the end of social action and the building of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. 75 Rev. H.E. Gordon of Shepard, Alberta and Rev. Douglas Telfer, of Calgary, led the devotional period. Paul Schilpp, long-time member of the American peace organization Fellowship of Reconciliation, supporter of Norman Thomas and professor of philosophy at Northwestern University, gave ten lectures on "A Christian Ethic for Today."

Schilpp, speaking with "exceptional frankness and courage" according to newspaper reports, laid bare the contrast between a subservient institutionalism which must necessarily even if unwittingly, be dominated by the evil motives uppermost in our present societies; and, on the other hand, a vital Christianity which restored to the ideas of the spiritual its essential dynamic and revolutionary content. In his series of eleven lectures, Thomson covered topics such as "Christianity and the Class Struggle," "The Convergence of Christianity, Science and Marxism," "Conflicts of Class, Race, Family, Sex and their Resolution," "The Privilege of
World Responsibility." He dealt "widely and deeply" with the problem of relating Christianity to politics and social action in the present world situation.

One of the most significant themes articulated by Schilpp and Thomson in the ten days' discussion had to do with the possibility of creating social "cells" which would act as a basis for voluntary collectivization of people's lives and which might be the only true, because the only thoroughly personal, solution of the fundamental conflict between the individual and the collective. Creating social cells, Thomson contended, might be the way to a "service which is perfect freedom" and a retraining of people into the true human relationship of being "members of one another." The gathering was characterized by a "warm friendliness", and the mood one of commitment to struggle for "Jerusalem/In this, our green and pleasant land."76

Thomson was by no means an orthodox Christian. But it would be incorrect to suggest that Thomson was merely using the Alberta School of Religion for his own purposes. Thomson's "Jesus" was no personal saviour or gyroscope for inner stability. Rather, he saw Jesus as the embodiment of human potential to be God-like. He took seriously Jesus' message to "love one another" and the early church's commitment to "Share all things in common." In the "coming of the kingdom" message Thomson found a powerful metaphor: humankind's task was to build the kingdom of justice on earth, now. In the small but influential "social gospel" circle in Alberta Thomson found a ready receptivity to his communitarian socialist vision. His theology, in today's parlance, was a theology of human liberation.
The second year of the Alberta School of Community Life began with great hope and expectation. Just two weeks before the school opened, Norman Smith wrote in the *Western Farm Leader*:

The Olds School is an experiment. If it succeeds, (and if this year a sufficiently large number of Albertans take advantage of the opportunities it provides it will succeed), it may mark the beginning of a movement that will do for Albertans what the Folk Schools of Scandinavia have done for the vigorous, liberty-loving, progressive people of Denmark, Norway and Sweden—countries which stand as sentinels in North-west Europe of the best traditions of free peoples.

The curriculum included international affairs (taught for the second year by H.L. Stewart of Dalhousie), Social Psychology (Watson Thomson), Appreciation of Modern Literature (F.C. Butterworth), Dramatics (Edna Skene) and Modern Homemaking (Helen McCaig). As well, a special weekend course was held on July 8-10, including Stewart, Thomson and Dr. Rufus Coleman from the University of Montana. And John Grierson visited the school for a day, speaking on the necessity of "bringing the community alive" to its global responsibilities.

Each morning Thomson lectured—the present age, he declared, is evolving new patterns of behaviour, new forms of relation between the individual and the collective: in work, in home, in marriage, in social and community life. What are the methods to make constructive use of human conflict? What are the conditions of social integration and creative living in the modern community? What light is shed on these initial questions by the new science of Psychology and Sociology? Once again, judging from books available at the literature table, Albertan audiences heard something of the ideas of
Adler, Trigant Burrow, Fritz Kunkel and John MacMurray. 78

Although a spirit of friendliness and enthusiasm pervaded the conference, the proceedings were not without contention. In a weekend panel discussion on "The clash of ideologies in the world today", Dr. Stewart vehemently opposed Thomson and most of the students who argued that economic motives dominated international politics. For Thomson, when economic life was satisfactory, it was the least important aspect of life. But when it was unsatisfactory, it acquired first importance as an obstacle to progress and good social or international relations. In fact, in progressive circles H.L. Stewart was a bit suspect. E.A. Corbett wrote confidentially to Cameron, wondering why such a reactionary was speaking at the Alberta School of Community Life.

By the way of criticism, I can't see this man Stewart. He is as unpopular on the radio, as that dreadful "Friends of the Sunday Evening Hour" employed by Henry Ford, on Saturday Nights. I read a paper last Thursday before the LSR here (Toronto), in which I lambasted hell out of both of them ie. Cameron and Stewart, and had to stop reading to let the applause die down—Believe it or not. Aren't you afraid that old sidestepping buzzard will give your school a wrong slant. Enlighten me about this. It was my suggestion that put G.V. Ferguson on the air, I know he makes the big shots as mad as hell, but it's the sort of thing we need in Canada. 79

Both Effie and Bill Harper, UFA activists who were in attendance at the 1938 school, even went so far as to suggest, perhaps a little too harshly, that Stewart was a "fascist" and had "very little to say." 80 This view, they claim, was widely shared by those in attendance. Some confusion remains on this issue; Stewart was not, however, invited back for a third year.
In his report to William Kerr, president of the University of Alberta, Donald Cameron assessed the 1938 School. Although pleased that the school had attracted 102 people from a wide range of vocational interests (thirty-one housewives, sixteen teachers, nine students, fifteen farmers, etc.) and high level of education (thirty-three had one year to complete university, forty-seven part or complete high school and eleven Normal School Training), Cameron contended that the school had to attract more young people "who can be trained and encouraged to take an active part in leadership work in the communities in which they live." All in all, Cameron felt that the 1938 School was a "decided improvement over the first and that it succeeded in developing to a high degree a spirit and community of interests and a measure of participation in all phases of the school life and activity which left little to be desired." Norman Smith, who spent one weekend at the conference, concurred with Cameron.

For my part I have experienced nothing just like it before. It was attended by quite young and by middle-aged people and by some who had passed middle age; yet there was no sense of these differences; but a frank enjoyment on the part of all of the comparison and clash of ideas and in mingled study and play.

The adult school movement, I believe, has come to stay in Alberta, and its wide expansion, which there is good reason to think will prove possible, will be one of the major factors in the creation of a spirit of community. I think that the creation of such a spirit is vital to the preservation of our civilization from the suicide which threatens it.

Two significant developments for Thomson's career as an adult educator occurred in the spring of 1938. First, Thomson was invited
to broadcast on a news-commentary program on CKUA, the University of Alberta's radio station. Although this was not his first radio broadcast (he did twenty-one broadcasts on "Living and Learning" from October 1, 1937 to May 13, 1938 over CKUA), it was his first news-commentary. Thomson had a natural liking for the "mike" and a voice and style suited to radio. Later that same year the CBC asked him to broadcast on a national network—first on psychological aspects of everyday behaviour, then on the "Week-end Review," the top commentary program in Canada, which he continued to perform fairly regularly until 1946.83 Second, Donald Cameron invited Thomson to join his staff as a lecturer. He would continue overseeing the WEA classes in Calgary, organize something similar for Edmonton and, most significantly, launch a major study group program in the rural areas.

Cameron wrote to Thomson on July 29, 1938 asking him to join his full-time staff from September 1 to May 31 at the salary of $125 a month. On August 1 or 2 Thomson wrote to Cameron accepting his offer, in view of the Department of Extension's extremely generous attitude towards the WEA work. "I look forward," wrote Thomson just before heading to the CCYM camp at Sylvan Lake, "to this prospect of working with you and going ahead with many of such projects as we began to speak of in the early part of the summer."84

Correspondence between Cameron and Wren indicates that, although Wren was glad to hear that Thomson had accepted a post in the Extension Department, he was confused as to Thomson's relationship to the WEA work. "I understand," Wren wrote to President Kerr, "that he is to be given freedom to work with and under the direction of the WEA."85
Writing to Wren on September 1, Cameron told Wren that he was unclear as to Thomson's position with the Extension Department. Referring to Wren's letter of March 19, in which Wren wondered if there was any chance that the University of Alberta could engage Thomson for the next winter, allocating him for specific periods to the WEA, Cameron replied that he was implementing Wren's proposal, subject to ratification by the Board of Governors. Apparently, Wren thought Thomson was to be appointed as a WEA tutor by the University of Alberta.

Scarcely concealing his anger, Cameron stated that Thomson was to be "appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Extension, and in order to assist what we believe to be good work, we are willing to allow him to devote a portion of his time to WEA activities, if you so desired." Thomson would look after the work in Edmonton, supervise activities in Calgary, but would no longer tutor any classes in Calgary.

Thomson was furious that Wren had written to Kerr, a man, incidentally, who was very conservative in outlook. Accusing Wren of trying to force Kerr's hand and of political ineptitude, Thomson told Wren:

There was nothing in the circumstances or in the terms of my letter to make the latter conceivable. On the contrary, the whole point of the business was that, by virtue of the personal and political understanding between Don Cameron and myself much could be done—for the WEA and the whole progressive movement—which, if it were forced to the attention of officialdom, would be rendered impossible. At the best, it will be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the WEA to use a minor concession as a means
of forcing their hand. I hate to think of it, but it may even give them a pretext for questioning the good faith of the whole organization (which few of them know anything about).87

Thomson went on to affirm his loyalty to "certain social tasks amongst which is workers' education: but workers' education and the WEA are not co-terminus and identical propositions. In Alberta here you might be astonished to discover the extent to which the work is going on in spite of the National Office as well as because of it." Thomson also expressed shock at Wren's New Year's letter to H.J. Evers, whom Thomson described as the "central nerve of the Calgary work." "In my view," Thomson countered,

there is in our world of educational activity no inevitable class-struggle and when I see the expectation of exploitation breeding suspicion and counter-suspicion, it make (sic) me kind of angrily sad; it's so unnecessary."

Thomson clearly did not want Kerr or other university authorities, to whom education for social or political action would be anathema, rummaging around asking too many questions about workers' education and the "real" purpose of study/action groups or the Alberta School of Community Life.

Although Thomson would enter work in Edmonton under a small cloud, he would look back in late summer 1938 with satisfaction at important work well done in a new land. He was now in close and productive contact with at least four national networks of social activists: the adult education community renewal network; the SCM/social gospel network among church people; the labour movement; and the UFA-CCF-structured politics of the Left. He had been able to utilize effectively his skills as a platform speaker and knowledge of group dynamics. He
had acquired a new means of spreading his message, radio. In the process of adapting to a new environment, Thomson discovered that Albertans were receptive to his communitarian socialist vision. Many progressive-minded Albertans as well as youth in SCM circles believed that personal and social transformation had to be linked. They believed that one had to begin, within oneself and in inter-personal relations, to live the newness of the fully co-operative social order so earnestly desired. Individual personalities had to be transformed; only then could one begin the long march to world-wide co-operative federalism. But the question was—how would this be received by Edmonton's powers-that-be?
FOOTNOTES


5. WTP 2-5, p. 134.


14 See R.S. Patterson and LeRoy Wilson, "The Influence of the Danish Folk High School in Canada," Paedagogica Historica 14 (1974), pp. 64-79, for a general discussion of Canadian interest in the Danish folk high school. In an interview with the author in Regina, July 28, 1981, Edith Smith said that the Community Life Training Institute was "influenced greatly" by the Danish model. Alex Sim's memoir on residential schools in Canada describes the influence of the model on his own work out of Macdonald College. And the Avisons' work in Le Pas was certainly depicted by the press as Scandinavian-inspired.

15 Corbett, in CAAE Annual Report, 1941.


17 WTP 2-5, p. 135.


19 Lindsay Daily Warder (Ontario), May 15, 1937; See lecture synopsis, "Canada, the Empire; and World Leadership," WTP 3-4.
Dates from Thomson's diary. April 30 at Wren's office; May 5 lunch with Corbett; May 6 meeting with Philip Horkery; May 7 Thomson takes synopses of speeches of possible Canadian Club talks to Horkery; May 17 a long talk with Hannam; June 7 lunch with Corbett; June 10 saw Dunlop of the University of Toronto Extension Department.

WTP 2-5, pp. 136-137.

WTP 2-5, p. 138.

Mary Thomson to Harry and Goldie Penny, September 27, 1976, in my possession.

A. Calhoun, "Why I Believe in Co-operation," The Western Farm Leader (hereafter WFL), June 2, 1939.


Diary, WTP 2A.

H.J. Evers to Drummond Wren, July 21, 1937, Workers' Educational Association Papers, Archives of Ontario (hereafter WEAP), Wren files, box 1 (B-1).


Sim's recollections.


Gertrude Gillander, "Youth Crusade for Peace," WFL, March 12, 1937, p. 11.


WTP 2-2, p. 86.

WTP 2-5, p. 146.


Paragraph constructed from newspaper clippings of Canadian Club tour in Red scrapbook, WTP 8-1.

Port Alberni Advocate, September 8, 1937.
The phrase "conspiracy of truth-telling" from Cowichan Leader, September 10, 1937.

WTP 2-5, p. 149.

WTP 2-2, p. 88.


See Mardiros, William Irvine, pp. 208-209.

Ian McPherson, Each for All, distinguishes among occupational, pragmatic and utopian co-operators. And he makes a division between the three kinds of utopians: the democratic socialists, the co-operative purists and the marxists. The picture is compex.


See Donald Cameron, "Report to American Association for Adult Education on Adult Education in Scandinavia," Donald Cameron Papers, University of Alberta Archives (hereafter UAA), Edmonton (hereafter DCP). In his "Report on Adult Education in Alberta," prepared for the Sandiford Report, Cameron noted that the Canadian Labour Party had "large numbers of study groups whose main emphasis is on a study of economic questions and labour legislation but who also spend a certain amount of time studying education, literature, history and travel." The Canadian Labour Party was formed in 1921.

The University Woman’s Club of Edmonton Papers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton (hereafter PAA) provide general information on their study group program. Report of Study group project for 1933-1934 lists three new groups organized—Social Problems, and Economics group led by Marian Gimby, who studied Cole’s Intelligent Man’s Guide to the World Chaos, and Biology.


Quotation from Newland taken from an undated article entitled, "Adult Education" in H.C. Newland Papers, UAA.

The Edmonton Journal, July 3, 1939, reported that 500 attended a Communist Party picnic held in South Edmonton Athletic Park and that a provincial school of communism would be held during July and
August at Sylvan Lake. About twenty-five were expected to attend the school.

50 Interview with Bill and Effie Harper, January 15, 1982. Bill Harper suggested to me that Thomson was the unifier of the network from 1937-1940. That is quite interesting, but an overstatement.


52 Evers to Wren, December 14, 1939, WEAP, Calgary file.

53 Evers to Wren, December 14, 1939.


55 Wren's typescript speech to WEA conference in Vancouver, Spring 1945, WEAP, Vancouver file.

56 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Calgary Local 348, Minute Book, 1936-1939, Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

57 WTP 2-5, p. 151.

58 "Mr. Watson Thompson [sic] was "one of the finest persons I ever had the pleasure to meet. I did attend 2 years of his lectures under the auspices of the Workers Ed. Assoc. in the basement of the Calgary Library 12th Ave. S.W. in 1938--and I think 1937. He lectured in Psychology and used a book by Alfred Adler (Relationships was the subject)" (Paul Anderson to M. Welton, January 28, 1982). In an undated letter, written after that of January 28, Anderson commented: "W.T. was a rare person and could qualify for sainthood."

59 People's Weekly (hereafter PW), February 12, 1938.

60 Watson Thomson, "More Study than Group," Adult Learning, October-November 1938, pp. 18-21, and "This 'Group' Business," Adult Learning, April 1939, pp. 2-6.

61 "This 'Group' Business," p. 2.


63 Thomson, "This 'Group' Business," p. 5.


66 See Mardiros, William Irvine, pp. 202-204, for Gowan reference. Toby Ryan's memoir on political theatre, Stage Left, captures some of


68 WTP 2-2, p. 98.

69 FW, December 11, 1937.

70 WFL, November 19, 1937. Calhoun spoke to the local on February 9.

71 Calgary Daily Herald, March 12, 1938.


74 Calgary Daily Herald, March 25, 1938.

75 "School of Religion faces Challenge of Today's World Need," WFL, April 19, 1938.

76 "Timetable for the 18th Annual Session of the Alberta School of Religion, August 9-19, 1938, H.H. Horricks Papers, Saskatchewan Archives, Regina.


78 Calgary Albertan, July 6, 1938.

79 E.A. Corbett to D. Cameron, May 7, 1938, E.A. Corbett Papers; UAA.

80 Interview with Bill and Effie Harper, January 15, 1982.

81 "Report on the 1938 Alberta School of Community Life," DCP.


83 WTP 2-5, p. 152.
84 Thomson to Cameron, c. August 1, 1938, Alberta, Department of Extension Papers, UAA, Watson Thomson file.

85 Wren to Kerr, August 24, 1938, William Kerr Papers, UAA (hereafter WKP).

86 Cameron to Wren, September 1, 1938, Alberta, Department of Extension Papers, UAA, Watson Thomson file.

87 Thomson to Wren, letter dated subsequent to August 24, 1938, Alberta, Department of Extension Papers, UAA, Watson Thomson file.
CHAPTER FOUR

VOICES IN THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS

The international crisis cast portentous shadows over Thomson when he assumed his position as lecturer in the Department of Extension in September 1938. The Munich Crisis, which saw Chamberlain abandoning the Czechs because he believed that Hitler was a "normal, reasonable and responsible statesman," had thrown him into an almost hysterical gloom. Appealing to his good friend Norman Smith on the eve of his assumption of the "dreadful responsibility of starting to talk weekly on the air on International Affairs" Thomson asked Smith if there should be "resistance to the aggressor" only if it is "by the right people (i.e. the People) and for the right reasons." As for resistance only "by the right people," Smith argued that it was the left who would have been prepared to back the government "if France, Britain and the Soviet Union had been drawn into a conflict in defence of Czechoslovakia..." Smith concluded that the "outlook today seems blacker than it has been at any time during the century..."

Thomson agreed with Smith that the "general situation is the worst yet." But he also felt that the crisis opened up educational possibilities for social reconstructionists. "One thing is certain," he wrote to Smith, "and may in the long run be a more significant fact than many of those more immediately preoccupying—that 'world-political consciousness' increases in intensity by leaps and bounds at such a time. It's the best chance we've ever had for educational
work on these lines..."\textsuperscript{5}

The educational task, as Thomson perceived it, was to use war for the even more important internal end via movements of protest, refusal, disturbance of patriotic fervour and complacency. The two [crippling Hitler and transforming society] look irreconcilable but I don't think they are and I think the internal end would require our energy and courage more than the external.\textsuperscript{6}

The educational goal was nothing less than a "new and deeper justice, a more co-operative way of life...to be established within our own bounds internally."\textsuperscript{7} Smith echoed Thomson in an editorial in The Western Farm Leader. Munich, he thought, had "shattered a great deal of indifference" and "aroused the people to understanding of the need for action."\textsuperscript{8} But Thomson's own part—"preparing study group material and getting ready to go on the air on 'Inter. Aff.' did not give him any thrill of enjoyment." On September 27 Thomson had confided to Smith that he was weary and downcast, that his nervous system seemed "extended over into that dark and epileptic continent of Europe." "I cannot tell you," he wrote,

how weary of it all I sometimes feel these days, how hopeless of anything even remotely worthy of men's dreams coming out of mass-action and war. I hunger for some little truth and kindness and integrity--half-a-dozen people and the barest pittance so only there might be a little genuine caring, a little genuine emotional and intellectual honesty.

Weary or not, urgent pedagogical activities in the Extension Department and in the cultural network (the peace Movement was demanding his services) pressed in upon Thomson.\textsuperscript{9}

Thomson had become a member of one of the pioneering Canadian Departments of Extension. Organized in 1912 under the direction of
A.E. Ottewell, a graduate of the University of Alberta, the "university" had been taken to the untutored in remote rural areas, mining camps and lumbering villages. In 1923 an agricultural secretary was appointed to lecture on agricultural subjects and to look after the supplying of agricultural bulletins and general information to farm people. The university also initiated that same year the first educational broadcasting.

In 1928 E.A. Corbett succeeded Ottewell as director. By 1934 the Department of Extension had a staff of twenty, including Donald Cameron, who had been appointed Agricultural Secretary in September 1930. Under Corbett's direction the Extension Department concentrated on the development of culture in the rural areas--travelling libraries, encouragement of dramatics, circulation of slides, moving pictures and endless lectures. Corbett felt that Nova Scotia represented "adult education at its best when working along economic lines. Alberta is leading in development of culture." After Corbett left for Toronto to direct the CAAE in 1936, Cameron took over as director, at first in an acting capacity, of the Department.

Donald Cameron's life was deeply rooted in farming and politics. His father, who homesteaded near Pine Lake, was one of a group of western farmers who had founded the Alberta Non-Partisan League in 1916/17, agitating for a better deal for western farmers. He was also instrumental in getting the UFA to enter politics and in the provincial election of 1921 was elected, serving the Red Deer constituency from 1921 to 1935. Following in his father's community-spirited footsteps, at age eighteen Donald Cameron was elected president of the Junior Branch of the UFA in 1921, a position he held until he entered the
University of Alberta in 1926. During those five or six years he travelled the province organizing junior locals, meeting many prominent figures in government, co-operative, dairy pool, livestock pool and United Grain Growers circles. After he graduated in May 1930 with a B.Sc. in agriculture, he was appointed lecturer in the Department of Extension, responsible for carrying technical information to the rural areas of the province.11

When Cameron applied for one of the six Carnegie scholarships to study Scandinavian adult education in December 1932, he was deeply concerned with the pioneer settlers' lack of attention to the aesthetic side of life. To the youthful and idealistic Cameron, the settlers, primarily preoccupied with material matters, had made "little attempt to build and beautify permanent homes." The Danish folk high school, as Cameron then understood it, was "primarily concerned with teaching people how to live and to get the greatest enjoyment out of life." And Cameron believed that the "people of Alberta were in a receptive frame of mind for this type of education now."12

Cameron returned from his tour of Scandinavia more convinced than ever of the need for a spiritual awakening in rural Alberta. "It appears to me," he stated in his Report to the American Association for Adult Education on Adult Education in Scandinavia, "that the Folk School system with its stress on education for life, its emphasis on cultural and spiritual values, is the thing we need to awaken the people of this country to a new sense of values in education." Cameron believed that the Danish folk system could be adapted to Alberta's mixed population, widely and thinly scattered over a vast area, with its many religious groups or denominations (which contrasted with
Denmark's homogeneous population, thickly settled in comparatively small areas, belonging to one church). In 1933 Cameron was recommending that "schools for the people" might be co-operatively owned by such organizations as the UFA, marketing pools and the educational section of the CLP. Study circle work, at that time, was going on sporadically through YMCA, church, labour and farm groups as well as the University Alumni Association.¹³

For Cameron the spiritual awakening of the Danish people under Grundtvig's leadership in the nineteenth century had given rise to a co-operative movement, out of which had arisen a high standard of living, and to a people's political movement which emphasized the need for active and informed participation in public affairs. As Cameron expressed it in a radio broadcast on "Adult Education and the Challenge of Youth":

> Probably nowhere else in the world today is there a greater degree of economic and political democracy than in the three small Scandinavian countries, and there are many educators there who freely state that their high standard of democracy is a result of the program of popular adult education so well established in the last century by the great Danish educator and philosopher Grundtvig.¹⁴

When Watson Thomson arrived on the Alberta adult educational scene late in 1937, Donald Cameron was still working to encourage a cultural awakening in Alberta. A humane, moderate and politically cautious man, Cameron was convinced that

> no program of social reform and no program of economic betterment can be successfully carried through unless the masses of the people are capable of bringing to bear on those problems, sound thinking and critical judgment. Those qualities can only be achieved for the masses of the people through a well organized system...
of popular adult education which is within their financial reach and is at the same time capable of being taken without too great an interruption of their productive work.\textsuperscript{15}

"The study group," Cameron hoped, "was the most effective way of reaching the masses and by this means it is possible to carry on a very valuable program at a very small cost."\textsuperscript{16}

Although it is clear from Cameron's writings that he was a progressive in educational theory, Cameron seemed to believe that improvements in the quality of life were attainable within the framework of the capitalist order. Nowhere, at least in his published writings, does he ever mention the formidable class barriers to instituting the "ideology of the middle way." Cameron comes close, at times, to arguing that individual change must precede social change and that if enough individuals change, then society will inevitably change too as a natural outcome. By contrast, Thomson's social pedagogy, while stressing the primacy of a person's awakening to communal responsibility, maintained that individual change and social change interact upon one another, moving forward in a kind of lock-step. Nevertheless, Cameron and Thomson developed a mutually respectful relationship, sharing a commitment to awakening rural Albertans to build actively co-operative communities characterized by a generous spirit of brotherhood.\textsuperscript{17}

Donald Cameron recognized the skills that Thomson had in working with people. In this sense, Thomson was the right man to make the Department of Extension's study group program work. Although the study group program had got underway in 1937 with approximately 200 students pursuing study circle courses in General Economics, Political Science, Social Planning (a course written by Thomson) and Co-operation,
Thomson's main task in September 1938 was to give special attention to more general lecture and study group work. Six lecture classes were organized: International Affairs, Social Planning, General Economics, Political Science, Psychology and Co-operation. Nearly 2000 Albertans, mostly in rural areas, took part in the extension program, which included both those in the study circles and tutored classes.

In response to demand from citizens who were giving earnest consideration to the problems of international relations and war and peace, the course in International Affairs, taught by Thomson, was given special prominence. Thomson's lectures were linked up with a weekly series of radio broadcasts which would answer students' questions and attempt to relate the general principles outlined in the study bulletins to current events. The International Affairs course was divided into monthly topics, each of which was the subject of an open forum discussion and, later, a group broadcast by combined study groups in some of the larger towns.

The course sought to co-ordinate three agencies: (1) separate study groups, (2) combined forum discussions and (3) radio. This innovative approach, Cameron reported in his Annual Report of 1939, "together with the critical situation in Europe has resulted in a much larger number of sets of materials on this subject being issued than on any other subject." Some CCF clubs also studied the International Affairs course, the Edmonton Victoria Park and Norwood clubs commencing their study in January 1939. And the Edmonton Local Council of Women and a few UFA/UFWA locals also tied in to the courses offered by the Department of Extension.

The International Affairs course began in November with a discussion
of "The Treaty of Versailles and its Consequences," followed by monthly analyses of "Economic Causes of War—are they basic?" (December), "What went wrong with the League?" (January), "For and Against Pacifism" (February), "Canada's place in world affairs" (March), concluding in April with an examination of "The Alternative to Power Politics."

Only three bulletins (of a possible twelve?) exist. But they provide some insight into Thomson's thinking during this period. In his analysis of the economic causes of war, Thomson was particularly concerned with the consequences of the collapse of world trade on Germany, which had led after 1929 to the rapid expansion of the National Socialists. Germany, Thomson contended, was only a "very acute case of a disease which is well-nigh universal in the mechanized world."

The League of Nations collapsed, Thomson argued before his large Albertan audience, because it "built an elaborate and ambitious political structure of international co-operation on top of an economic foundation more shaky in its inequalities and distresses." To the question of what the basic difficulty in achieving world economic co-operation was, Thomson replied:

> It is ridiculous to expect co-operative relations between nations whose internal economy is built upon the opposite, competitive principle. Nations naturally extend into the international sphere the habits of thought and action which govern their economic lives within the nation. It is also pointed out that just as the logical conclusion of free capitalist competition internally is monopoly-control of prices and production at the expense of the consumer, so also, externally, the 'Have' nations tend to get together in the same kind of (always rather unstable) monopoly-grouping at the expense of the weaker nations and 'subject races.'
But how does a society change from a production-centred, profit-motivated, privately-controlled process to a consumer-centre, welfare-motivated, socially-controlled process? Rejecting any form of "enforced collectivism," Thomson maintained that this shift should happen by "general demand, popular consent and voluntary institutions." The voluntary co-operative economy, which could only be built up from below, was superior to compulsory planning and control, which was imposed from above. But there were "hardly any historic instances" of nations pooling resources and accepting a common framework of law and order.

Moreover, people were psychologically attached to the nation-state, which, he felt, inevitably took on an exclusive colouring, rendering people suspicious or contemptuous of other nations. Thus, the enormous task facing reconstructionist educators was to convince the public that nations could not be held together in a "framework of discussion and law unsupported by physical authority or adequate moral prestige." The basic, vital elements of social existence—armaments, currency, trade, etc. could not be left outside the anarchy of separate national sovereignties. And perhaps more fundamentally, people had to be schooled away from their exclusive attachments to the nation-state.23

In February 1939 Thomson considered the case for and against pacifism. Drawing on the works of N. Angell, Preface to Peace, A. Huxley, Ends and Means and Encyclopedia of Pacifism, R. Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society and B. Russell's Power: A New Social Analysis, Thomson analyzed the marked increase in pacifist sentiment and organization since the World War, which Thomson felt was due
"doubtless to the exceptional and obvious failure of that war to give either the victims or vanquished what they wanted." Although Thomson was clearly sympathetic to the "intelligent pacifist's" position as expressed in the Manifesto of the War Resisters' International, he argued that pacifism "had to justify itself by its social effects rather than merely by its demonstration of personal refinement."

Thomson doubted whether non-violence, given the realities of the world, could be effective as a means of settling great social or international conflicts. Nevertheless, though he did not think that non-violent resistance was a panacea for all social ills, it was an effective instrument, immediately applicable to less global situations such as labour relations. However, a "full and widespread attainment of skill in non-violence involves a process of schooling ourselves out of our present psychological immaturity (especially in the western world)...."

Thomson concluded that:

Perhaps the synthesis of the mind of the East with the science of the Western world is very much the same thing as bridging the gulf between realism and idealism by showing how, as in the case of non-violent resistance, the highest moral forces can be made efficient, practicable instruments for our finest purposes.

The International Affairs broadcasts stirred up enough public reaction that the UFA executive wrote President Kerr in support of Thomson and the editor of The Western Farm Leader wrote an article praising Thomson's broadcasts. Jack Zubick, editor of The Rebel, an idiosyncratic right wing newsletter, attacked Thomson in an article on "Professors and Politics."

'Political propaganda' also describes much of the 'stuff' coming over the air from the extension department of the University of Alberta in the
weekly 'round-table' discussions, but, particularly, in the special talks given by Watson Thomson. Communist Russia—where we understand he spent some time—could not have a better propaganda agent than Mr. Thomson. We do not suggest that he is being paid by Moscow; but if not, Moscow is cheating him. His addresses are straight political propaganda with just enough camouflage to put the 'Red' stuff across as something that it is not.  

Whether or not Zubick was speaking only for himself is not clear. But the criticism must have been significant enough because at the UFA meeting held in Calgary on March 27-29, Mr. H.E. Spencer drew attention to the criticism that Thomson was receiving on his broadcasts. The executive agreed to send Kerr a letter of appreciation. This vote of confidence indicates both widespread UFA support for Thomson's viewpoint on international affairs and the effective links that Cameron, and no doubt Corbett before him, had established with the UFA.

UFA vice-president Norman Priestley wrote to Kerr on April 4, 1939. Priestley told President Kerr that many UFA locals had grouped their studies around Watson Thomson's Monday evening talks and expressed appreciation for his scholarly analysis of the European situation and world affairs. Speaking on behalf of the executive, Priestley hoped that the Department of Extension would secure Thomson's services for the following winter.

Norman Smith defended Thomson in an editorial in The Western Farm Leader on March 17.

What Professor Gilbert Murray and other distinguished men have been doing in the British Universities, Mr. Thomson has endeavoured, with marked success, to do for the people of this province—particularly for the rural people. The adherent of no political party, the blind partisan [sic] of no school of nationalistic thought, he has been able to present a picture
of the unfolding pages of history of our distracted age which is proving of the very greatest value in interpreting the news as it comes from overseas from day to day.  

Although Kerr gratefully acknowledged the letter from the UFA, judging from Kerr's letter to Cameron, written after Thomson resigned in June 1940 to return to England, he was not happy with Thomson's radicalism and association with left-wing individuals and organizations. "I am not wasting any tears over the departure of Watson Thompson," [sic] he wrote to Cameron, "and think that we can get somebody who does not need quite so much watching." Commenting on Kerr's attitude to himself, Thomson wrote to Smith six days after his editorial in *The Western Farm Leader*:

His revenge for all the trouble I've been in is to make it [his appointment] only for another year and not permanent. That is, I'm still on the temporary staff with all the insecurity of tenure that implies. Who cares! Anyway, I'll stay on--I didn't want to go East and have decided not to, at least not this year.

In March 1939 Thomson was also embroiled, indirectly, in another controversy involving the University of Alberta and the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple organization (ULFTA), a left-wing organization affiliated with the Communist Party. The ULFTA approached the University to arrange for a lecturer to address a concert dedicated to the memory of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, whose works are "cherished by all Ukrainians, and recognized as a contribution to literature as a whole by all nationalities." Donald Cameron advised the ULFTA that Thomson would address the meeting.

Although the ULFTA argued that its purpose was cultural and educational in nature, and not "political," a public controversy erupted when P.J. Lazarowich, an Edmonton barrister who was president of the
Ukrainian Self-Reliance League of Canada, charged that the Canadian
Ukrainian Youth Federation and the ULFTA were Communist institutions
which were attempting to gain support of the Canadian public by hiding
its real purpose behind a series of musical concerts and by association
with well-known personalities. Lazarowich was especially concerned
that Thomson, representing the university, was advertised as the main
speaker.

Anxious to keep the university free of "political" controversy,
President Kerr put pressure on Thomson to cancel the lecture. On
March 3 Thomson wrote to the ULFTA. "It has become evident to the
University authorities that there are many controversial political
questions involved in such an engagement and for that reason they feel
it would be wiser if I withdrew." Replying to the Board of the
University of Alberta, the ULFTA responded:

What are the reasons we are to state to the
Edmonton public that Mr. Watson Thompson [sic] will not address them? Why, for instance, cannot
Mr. Thompson [sic] speak when (as we understand) he agreed to? We did not ask of the lecturer
to lecture on any other subject but the life and works of T.H. Shevchenko. Therefore, where, if
any, do the 'controversial political questions involved' come in? We are not aware of any; and
did not propose that your lecturer should go into any...We state that this has no controversial
bearing on the University in our Democratic
country, especially in our Province of Alberta.

"I am sure you will understand—and I hope agree—that it would
defeat its own high purpose," President Kerr replied, "if an address
given for the benefit of a certain linguistic or ethnological group
were not welcomed unanimously by all of the persons to whom it might be
deemed to appeal." Kerr revealed his reason for cancelling Thomson's
speech in a letter to Chief Justice Harvey, chairman of the University
of Alberta Board of Governors. Expressing his disappointment that Cameron had let the university in to this controversy, he stated:

> From what I hear however there would have been nothing but grief for us if we had permitted Thomson to go on with his lecture. The Ukrainians here are apparently split into two savage divisions and anything that the one does is poison to the other. Each of them would like to hook the university, I feel sure, in some fashion and if possible use us for their own propaganda purposes. Our business I feel more and more is to keep away from both of them.\(^34\)

Like many university presidents of his time, Kerr did not want the university, or his teachers, to be involved in politics.\(^35\) It is also likely that Kerr suspected that Thomson was sympathetic to the aims of the ULFTA. At any rate, Thomson did not have any objection, as he put it, "to collaborating...with communists, or with anyone who seemed to (be) heading in the same direction. So in Edmonton I found myself associating with groups like the League for Peace and Democracy which was, I don't doubt, communist-controlled."\(^36\)

Besides overseeing the study group program, the centerpiece of which was the International Affairs course, Thomson supervised the WEA activities in Edmonton and, though no longer tutoring in Calgary, taught a leadership training course in the fall of 1938. The WEA had been introduced to Edmonton early in 1937 when Wren had visited Edmonton and addressed the Trades and Labour Council. Following Wren's visit, a provisional committee was formed consisting of D. McLeish, C. Seivers and Robert McCreath.\(^37\) In January 1938 Thomson had visited Edmonton; following his visit the association was formally started with R. McCreath elected as chairman and McLeish, Seivers, W.T. Aiken and H.D. Ainlay as committee members.

Like his Calgary counterpart, H.J. Evers, Robert McCreath was the
central nerve of the Edmonton WEA. McCreath had come to Edmonton from England in 1911 where he immediately gained work as a printer. In 1912 he was elected delegate from the typographical union to the Trades and Labour Council, serving in that capacity for thirty-five years. He was also a delegate to ten conventions of the Alberta Federation of Labour. And he was active in community service, serving on the city's board of public welfare, working for the Edmonton Red Cross society, and sitting as an elder on the board of session of Central United Church for thirty-one years. McCreath was an indefatigable worker on behalf of awakening trade unionists to build a co-operative commonwealth. 38

The Edmonton WEA held its main organizational meeting for the 1938/39 season in October, with the unions choosing to nominate members to attend the WEA classes. For example, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, local 1325, nominated J. Logan, president of the local, R. Grady, G. Armstrong, W. Failby and W. Green. Only J. Logan and R. Grady attended the International Affairs course taught by Watson Thomson on Sunday afternoons. 39

The classes in both Edmonton and Calgary appear, from the limited evidence available, to have been quite successful. The Edmonton WEA sponsored five classes in Economics (taught by H.D. Ainlay who was active in the CLP), Psychology (H.E. Smith), International Affairs (Thomson), English (C.M. Simpson) and English for New Canadians (M.V. Ross); 105 students attended these lecture classes. 53 The class list for the Edmonton WEA International Affairs course indicates that prominent figures in local labour and political circles attended the class—men like W.T. Aiken, founder of the Civil Service Association of Alberta, A. Familo, secretary of the Trades and Labour Council and
member of the executive of the AFL, W.H. Thornton, prominent Albertan CCFer, and union leaders like J. Logan. The Edmonton WEA attracted the "cultural aristocracy" within the union movement; it was unable to reach below to the rank and file. Union leaders like Logan, upon finishing the course, were "expected" to address their locals.  

The 1938/39 season had been a busy and contentious one for Thomson—the International Affairs course and broadcasts, WEA work, lectures to rural groups and the Youth Training Program, speeches on the world crisis at CCF meetings, discussions on "Freedom of Speech" on the University Round-Table program and addresses to the UFA convention and the UFWA annual meeting on "The Present Outlook in International Affairs." Now, with the world about to be plunged into the hell of another war, Thomson's 1939 summer was once more full with lecturing engagements. He spoke at the UFA and university-sponsored Farm Young People's Week, held in June, lecturing on "Democracy in Theory and Practice," and at the Alberta School of Community Life and the Alberta School of Religion.

Thomson returned, for the final time, to the Alberta School of Community Life to lecture on social psychology. As in the previous year, the curriculum was divided into two categories, social and cultural. Norman Mackenzie, professor of Public and Private International Law at the University of Toronto and later president of the University of British Columbia, lectured on the causes leading up to the Munich Pact, the development of power politics, the part the U.S. might play in the clash between authoritarianism and democracy and Canada's role in the British Commonwealth. The courses on Co-operative Principles in modern economic society and Rural Sociology were taught.
by Professor W. Drummond, head of the Department of Economics at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph.

In line with Cameron's commitment to precipitate a cultural awakening in rural Alberta, the third School of Community Life invited Mary Atwater, head of the America Shuttle-Craft Guild, to teach a course on the preparation of materials, colour and design principles. Gwen Pharis, who had been awarded a Carnegie scholarship to continue her studies in the field of drama with Dr. Koch, head of the Department of Drama at the University of North Carolina, taught play production. As part of her commitment to write "plays for the people," Pharis produced one of Elsie Gowan's plays about the Rochdale experiment.44 A.T. Kemp, who had been involved with experimental horticultural work at the Olds School of Agriculture since 1922, presented his imaginative ideas on home floriculture. Miss Christine MacIntyre, who was on the staff of the Provincial Schools of Agriculture, taught a course on Modern Homemaking, focussing on modern trends in nutrition, diet in relation to health, child care and principles of home decoration.45

The Lac Ste. Anne Chronicle (August 10, 1939) devoted an entire issue to the Alberta School of Community Life. The interviews with some of the leaders of the school and its participants provide valuable insights into the hopes that many had for the school. Donald Cameron felt that it was "easily the most successful of the three such schools so far held." The School, which attracted 125 participants from forty-seven communities and a wide range of occupation (with housewives, teachers, farmers and students predominating),46 had, for Cameron, succeeded in "arousing a new sense of social responsibility which will undoubtedly be reflected in more intelligent community leadership in
those districts represented at the school."

Norman Mackenzie saw the Alberta School of Community Life as one of the most interesting experiments that I know of. If our rural population is to enjoy life in its cultural aspects, it can only do so through the organization and training of the communities which compose it. That is what this school is doing. I was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and free spirit of all those who attended it,...

Watson Thomson saw the School from his personalist perspective. At Olds, Thomson believed, individuality was recognized in an atmosphere of "good will and the leisure to understand." In this supportive environment everybody had begun to realize how much "potential decency, capability and worthwhileness" there was in the "generality of men and women." For Thomson it was especially significant that representatives of seven or eight groups had courageously faced the conflicts existing in Canadian society. Thomson thought that he had caught a glimpse, on a small scale, of the potentiality of a more "generous social order."

Delegates to the School, like Thomson, were particularly struck by the experience of intimate fellowship and the pervasive spirit of understanding that suffused the conference. Speaking for many in language reminiscent of the "agrarian utopian" outlook of an earlier day, Olaf Hansen, a farmer residing in Olds, thought that "mutual understanding and friendship are qualities without which any attempt in democratic life is doomed to frustration. Co-operation, understanding, friendship, are qualities that are definitely fostered by a school of this kind." F. Elsie Laurence of Edson articulated the significance of the School of Community Life. It not only inspired
a "newer and deeper sense of co-operation in the individual but it constitute[d] an experiment in community living, which we hope, may be significant of the beginning of a new social order."

Elsie Laurence (whose son Jack married the writer Margaret Laurence and became involved with Thomson in the Roslyn Road co-operative house in the 1940s) and Watson Thomson were indeed kindred pioneers in community. Writing to Mary Jackson Thomson a few years after Watson's death in 1969, Elsie Laurence recalled Thomson's impact at the Alberta School of Community Life.

Watson in his own person was somehow unique. If he had been physically stronger and lived longer, if he had not leaned a little too optimistically toward the 'Left'--easier then and now perhaps again in the 1970's--he might have been able to carry on,....He believed sincerely in the possibility of applied democracy, of 'sharing,' where perhaps the majority of us fell by the wayside.

I was privileged to attend that brief course--'crash' decidedly, only lasting about a week--held at Olds in the summer of '39. It provided a smattering of Social Philosophy (Watson's subject), Rural Sociology, Co-operatives, International Affairs, etc. and there Watson shone in the purity of his own faith, speaking to the gathering of lay persons with such admirable lucidity that they could hardly help gain something to light the years that followed.47

Not everybody, of course, was in tune with Watson Thomson. Gwen Pharis Ringwood recalls that Thomson's charisma was seen as threatening by many people.

I myself think he was ahead of his time in many of his ideas, but when I knew him in the early forties I was conventional enough to feel suspicious of ideas that seemed radical...and deliberately refrained from fully learning about his philosophy and sociology.48
The Alberta School of Community Life was an eye-opening experience for people in rural areas. "We realized," says Bill Harper, "that there were a lot of people like us wanting information about books, theatre, international affairs, social philosophy and that perhaps something could be done..." The "Olds" School of Community Life closed in 1943; its place was filled by four community-life conferences held at Lake Saskatoon, Lake St. Vincent, Sangudo, and Gooseberry Lake.

The most momentous event of the spring and summer of 1939 was not the controversy over his broadcasts or even the excitement of intellectual engagement and political reflection. Rather, it had to do with the non-professional half of his life: private involvement with other people in ways particularly associated with the words "group," "co-operative" and "co-personal community." Since arriving in Canada it had taken two years before Thomson was ready to admit two things: first, that New Britain ideology had penetrated so deeply that he could not talk or think on any subject without at least approaching the New Britain concepts and motifs, and second, that his negative attitude to the New Britain movement did not represent his ultimate feeling about the creative process which was expressed by group in his mind. "Perhaps," he thought, "only by living it and acting it could I ever find how much was objectively real and valid—to other people as well as myself."

What finally decided Thomson to initiate a group experiment in Canada? For one thing, he was deeply impressed by the strength and authenticity of the response of the ideas of group when he presented them to young Canadians in their twenties and thirties.
It seemed to meet a very genuine need. Maybe, quite objectively, 'group' required, for its successful fruition, social and psychological conditions which just might be more favourable in Western Canada, 1939, than in London, 1930-1937.52

Another reason was that Thomson had established many close relationships, most of them with young people who were struggling to make sense of the world situation—Depression, Spain, Munich, Hitler—and eager to find comrades. The deepest of these relationships, one that lasted through a range of communal and educational experiments, was with George LeBeau. Born into a poor family in Claresholm, Alberta in 1913, the youthful Lebeau had bounced around a number of small Saskatchewan towns (Wetaskawin, Conquest and Humboldt), finally settling in the tiny village of Freemont in 1928 where he completed part of his grade nine. After apprenticing as an auto mechanic in Battleford, LeBeau returned to Freemont to open his own station. But this dream collapsed in the depression.

For LeBeau, the early 1930s was a "period of grasping for something" and "trying to figure out what was going on in the world." Facing the choice between entering politics or the ministry, LeBeau chose politics and became actively involved with the CCYM, rising in the youth organization to become president of the Alberta branch (2500 members in 1934). He signed up for a tour of Spain, but as a result of RCMP interference with his mail, never received his passport. Upon invitation from a former secretary of the CCYM, LeBeau accepted an offer to work as a provincial organizer for the CLPD.53

LeBeau was working for the CLPD and quite active in the Youth Council movement (he became vice-president in 1939) when Thomson met
him. Both moved in Edmonton's cultural network, saw each other often (groups from the university were on the Edmonton Peace Council) and shared a common personalist orientation to socialism. Thomson was impressed with LeBeau's "immense natural gifts of intelligence and dexterity." "One day, over a cup of coffee," as Thomson recounts the incident, LeBeau and Thomson talked about the meaning of socialism.

But now, wouldn't it be really something if a bunch of us got together and agreed: Let's cut out the socialist talk and the Christian talk. Let's just do the thing—the equality, the fraternity, the brotherly love, the 'having all things in common.'

Why don't we do it? We looked at each other. 'Maybe we will.' We smiled and looked at each other again closely as though to estimate how much each of us meant it.

On his fortieth birthday—March 11, 1939—Thomson decided to see what he could do to make a reality of group, beginning right away with those to whom he felt closest and who were without countervailing obligations (this excluded people like Alex Calhoun and Norman Smith who were place-bound). One evening Thomson rented a hotel room in Edmonton, purchased some drinks and collected all the young people he had got to know well and put the proposal he had first broached with LeBeau to all of them. The practical aspect of the proposal was that those who came in should pool all their wages and material resources, live in close proximity (possibly under the same roof), talk every issue through ("all the cards on the table") until an unanimity had been attained from which we should act (politically, for example) as seemed good to the group. And there were to be no ulterior loyalties: no dogmas, no predetermined goals. The group would create its own
system of values, purposes and codes of behaviour.\textsuperscript{56}

After lively discussion and gay festivities far into the night a nucleus formed. George LeBeau and Marguerite (Grete) McCollum, a woman of exceptional organizational skills and down to earth radicalism whom LeBeau married within the year, said "yes" immediately. Others needed more time. In a few months the committed core group consisted of George LeBeau, Grete McCollum, Eldon Wilcox from Calgary (part of the Jenkinson group in Calgary), Leone Roach (a young student), Mary Jackson (a graduate Edmonton teacher whom Thomson married in 1942), David and Bertha Freifeld (he a Jewish chemical engineer who was unemployed), Stanley Rands, a Rhodes scholar (then with the Alberta Department of Education), a man who would become a prominent social reconstructionist adult educator in the 1940s. They were joined by several others, mostly youth in their late teens and early twenties.\textsuperscript{57}

For a while, out of a group of eleven, only three (Mary, Stan, Watson) were earning any income at all. But this helped to generate loyalties and weld the group together. The group acquired a house with room for most of the group in the fall of 1939; others joined in regularly on weekends for long hours of music listening and discussion.\textsuperscript{58}

World events impinged upon Thomson in dramatic ways as he resumed his public role as social educator in the Department of Extension. On September 1 he sat in his little suite when the news of Germany's invasion of Poland came through.

All night, I stared into the hell that was opening up before mankind. I knew enough about war and I had put enough of my life into the attempt to prevent another such holocaust, another abysmal degradation for humanity and defeat for everything most sanely and decently human. And now here it was.\textsuperscript{59}
England, and particularly the London group, became central to Thomson's thinking during these dark days. He became convinced that "in the face of this massive collective movement towards destruction, hate and death" that he should make some personal gesture of reconciliation toward the 'group' who had more than any others pioneered in the psychology and techniques of the co-personal integration, which I had come to see was the necessary beginning and foundation of peace among men and federation of nations.60

Thomson would resign his position in the Department of Extension in June 1940 and return to England.

But in the meantime, the Department of Extension, in spite of the difficulties presented by the outbreak of the war, offered Thomson's services for a wide range of programs (a short course in community leadership; starting co-operative recreation and entertainment schemes; organizing inter-racial festivals; building inter-denominational youth leadership oriented towards social service and sociological survey and discussing library, hospitalization and Home-and-School projects), including perhaps the Department's most ambitious attempt to link study with action, the "Community Problems" course. The course was described in Thomson's own words as "simply the study of social living in such areas as our own, showing how attitudes of mind and institutions came to be as they are, and what needs to be done in order to make them more co-operative, happy and abundantly alive."61

The Community Problems course represented Cameron and Thomson's attempt to lay the groundwork for community action projects by closely linking their course with a sociological survey of rural communities. Drawing on growing, largely American, sociological literature
concerned with analyzing the rural community in order to revitalize it, Cameron and Thomson began their study with a brief survey of the social and economic history of western Canadian communities. One of the conclusions Thomson drew from the past was that the full achievement of Canadian unity and the creation of a "real spirit of community" was not so easily achieved in a society where there was no organized plan of settlement and little understanding of the moral and cultural problems of adapting to a new environment.

Thomson and Cameron believed that political, religious and racial differences of conviction ought not prevent decent human relations or split the community. Both men saw the variety of denominations and the intensity of religious sectarianism as particularly divisive features of Western Canadian rural life. They felt that if people had some conception of the conditioning forces creating sectarianism this knowledge could temper "sectional opinion" and help create a more tolerant society. In line with the course purpose—to understand how conditions of life create attitudes of mind—Cameron and Thomson introduced their students to conceptual distinctions between race and nationality, folkways and mores as well as discussing the cultural roots of the fear of the foreigner. Thomson argued that one could not attack directly the problem of moral exclusiveness so evident in evangelical, pietistic churches. Rather, it was necessary to find and/or create community agencies to "bring people together simply as citizens." The best results seem to have been reached in those communities where each denomination deepened the significance of its special form of worship while joining with other denominations in many services in which these matters of
ritual and doctrine were not involved.

In the final section of the course the authors analyzed what they felt to be some legitimate social goals for the rural communities of western Canada. Before doing so, however, Cameron and Thomson thought it necessary to set their discussion within the context of the changing rural community. Urbanization, they maintained, had had a largely disintegrative impact on many communities. They pointed to the fact of the loosening of familial bonds as prime example. In Thomson's view, the

basic (if frequently unconscious) motive behind all modern movements for 'getting together' in co-operatives, Oxford Groups, etc. is to recreate the primary-group quality of human association, only in that deliberate way which will enable it to be inclusive and not exclusive, both in its personnel and in its ideology.

Drawing support from "many sociologists," Thomson observed that the very fate of our civilization may depend on the attempt to build social units of neighbours and fellow-citizens (above race, above sect, above class and party) which shall have the intimacy and personal human concern of each for each of the early primary group, without its undesirable exclusiveness and partiality. Unless we can so learn to be 'members of one another,' not as British, or Catholic, or worker or liberals, but as fellow-human creatures, it is difficult to see how there can be any spiritual and moral security for the individual or stability and constructive growth for communities.

For Thomson there was no going back to the primary group (submergence of the individual to group). People had to go forward to a new relationship "where neither the individual (as separate) nor the group is the centre of the picture, but the individual-in-the-context-of-the-group or the group with grown-up self-responsible
What could rural communities do practically to counter the communally destructive tendencies of modern capitalism? First, communities could create community councils. These councils would serve as an informal rallying-point for the best social leadership—those with concern for the community as a whole; those who were above sect, party, nationality. Second, communities could build a network of co-operative enterprises extending "outwards from the unshakable base of the personal, neighbourly, 'mutual self-help' of the local community." Third, if there was an underlying sense of human unity and solidarity in a community, community political conflict could be constructive; if absent, there could only be politically divisive conflict. And finally, communities had to create their own artistic forms "related vitally to their own lives and expressional needs."

The authors saw the study group as catalyst in awakening rural communities to create a dynamic democracy. Cameron and Thomson commented:

That is why sociologists and adult educationists give the study group a fundamental place in any scheme for a revived and dynamic rural democracy. The ideal is that the general body of the citizens recognize all public affairs from the local to the international as their own affair; that they will be willing to submit themselves to a period of reading, enquiry and discussion, and that, through that discipline, they will become able and willing to state their convictions clearly and intelligently in front of the full assemblage of their neighbours in the Forum.... And, in all this, be it noted, the rural community is of that manageable size which makes it far more suitable than a large city to become this kind of actively-participating democratic unit.

The Community Problems course (which bears the inimitable
The stamp of Watson Thomson's thinking was a remarkable attempt to analyze the social forces at work in rural communities, suggest ways that community leaders could proceed to create actively co-operative societies and provide a systematic interpretation of the role of the adult educator in this revitalizing process.

The vision inspiring the Community Problems course did not capture the rural Albertans. Only a few groups utilized the questionnaires that accompanied different sections of the course. Cameron and Thomson, it seems, were utopian voices crying in the Alberta wilderness. What became of all the magical words?

Besides preparing the Community Problems course, supervising the study group program, lecturing, once again, for the Youth Training Program and the Department, Thomson continued his weekly news commentary to social studies classes of intermediate school children. H.C. Newland, Supervisor of Schools and friend of Thomson, believed that the broadcasts were a "great boon to pupils in rural areas." He wrote in his 1940 Report: "The Alberta broadcasts in music and social studies have been very successful during a period of two or three years." The radio talks by Thomson and Cameron on Community Problems were discontinued in mid-season after thirteen broadcasts. Thomson also broadcast on the CBC Review ("The World Today") from May 19 until July 7.

And Thomson, for the last time, worked with the WEA in Edmonton and Calgary. But all was not well with the WEA. In his annual report of 1940 Cameron observed that the co-operation of the organized Labour Unions had been cordial, especially in Edmonton. This Department, which had offered its best services to the WEA in Alberta
since its inception, continued to co-operate in a number of ways. The Director served as provincial representative of the National Council of the WEA. And Watson Thomson, who first established WEA classes in Calgary, had again tutored one of the weekly classes in Edmonton. Both Cameron and Thomson had served on the local Board of Management. However, in the following year Cameron would write:

"Probably no other phase of voluntary adult education has been more seriously affected by the war than workers' education. The reasons for this are, of course, more employment and a general speed-up in all forms of industry, which leaves the worker little energy for intellectual pursuits after his day's work is done. More important than this, however, is a general lack of interest in continuing education on the part of a large number of industrial workers. This is one of the serious problems that must be faced by labour leaders."

Indeed, as Robert McCreath reminded Wren in a letter written in late December 1941, the Edmonton WEA formed its association with "small support from the local unions." In the 1940/41 season the Edmonton WEA would be able to mount only three classes. And in the following year the WEA sponsored one class on Economics. This class brought a number of leading labour and political activists together, including McCreath, H. Pallot, who was active in Communist party concerns, and a number of trade union militants (Metcalf, Thornton, McLeish). This decline of interest led the national WEA to question the old method of tutorial classes.

The Calgary WEA began its 1939/40 season on a pessimistic note. The fall meeting, held in October in the Labor Temple, attracted few trade unionists and the hundreds of letters sent out to workers met with little response. "It seemed hopeless," Evers wrote to Wren, "and
felt that we would have to quit the whole thing and I am not ashamed to tell you the tears came to my eyes when I thought of the time, the efforts, and the appeals I had made to the unions and the trade and labor council personally.² But another appeal to the unions which pointed out that the classes would have to shut down if there wasn't more response, led to enough response that four classes were held. Watson Thomson conducted the Leadership Training course in October and the Calgary WEA also offered study circle courses and encouraged its members to listen to WEA-sponsored radio talks.³

Resigning his position as lecturer in the Department of Extension on June 30, Thomson left Edmonton on July 3 by train bound for an England threatened by an imminent invasion from Germany. He wondered if that took place, where would he find himself? And even if there were no invasion, what would his return mean to the London group and Dimitrije Mitrinovic? Would he be well received? Violently rejected? Would he get caught up in some significant political action? The immediate future was dark with "unknowns and intangibles," and not a little fear.⁴ Why had Thomson decided to return to England in the summer of 1940? Two factors seem crucial—Thomson's role in the group experiment had awakened unresolved feelings regarding Mitrinovic and the German threat of an invasion pulled him back to his endangered homeland.

Thomson travelled with Elsie Laurence from Edmonton to Olds, and met Bob Henderson and Gerry Hutchinson, SCM friends, on the platform at Calgary before setting off for Montreal where he was to do his "final" broadcast for the CBC "Weekend Review" on July 7. The broadcast turned out to be "hellishly difficult" to write, taking him much
longer than usual to formulate. Thomson challenged Canadians to consider the meaning of democracy.

Whatever the outcome of this war, the basic mould in which our civilisation was set, is shattered, and the new pattern not yet established.... All that we read in the press and listen to in the newscasts is not a nightmare that will mercifully pass. It is a death-agony of one social order and the birth-trauma of another. But who it is that shall set his definite seal upon the new order, that we do not yet know.

The Edmonton group had gathered together in its communal house to listen to Thomson's broadcast. Immediately after the broadcast, the group composed a letter which reveals how deeply they felt about their "teacher." Bertha Freifeld believed that Thomson's speech was guaranteed to create an explosion, over the air, I really expected you to be interrupted by the powers that be. You weren't but still, I'm sure it'll arouse a great deal of comment. You've probably made people think who have been trying hard not to think.

Stan Rands, who was in the midst of preparing a lecture course in Adolescent Psychology for the University of Alberta summer school, spoke for the group when he wrote:

How deeply we all feel about your broadcast today. We felt that it was the truest and strongest Watson we had known who was speaking. It may be too late for your challenge to be met in terms of immediate historical developments, but in any case some of us see it as so essentially right and eventually inevitable that we shall endeavour to live it no matter how long delayed be the fulfilment.

We have learned much from your going—deepening of feeling and accepting fuller responsibility all round. God how you have changed life for us, Watson, and now that you are not here, I want to tell you how deeply grateful I am to you personally.

Thomson received the group letter on Board the Duchess of Richmond, which was sitting in the Montreal Harbour awaiting orders.
to sail. The letter was "one of the greatest joys" of his life.

Since getting the group letter yesterday and knowing definitely the boat was sailing, I've felt as strong and innerly contented as I ever felt in my life. I'm surely one of the luckiest of men. I've been remembering these last days how, when I first came to Canada, I thought there could never be any joy in my life again. Instead of which I had in Canada some of the deepest happiness in all my life--or the deepest I think. And you, with the group--or the group with you, Mary--as the crown of it all.78

Thomson arrived in Liverpool on July 19 and travelled to Glasgow to see his two sisters, May and Harriet, who were no longer living at "Alma." Both his parents had died. After a brief visit, Thomson made his way to London, with some trepidation, to meet Mitrinovic and the London group. He was greeted by Valerie Cooper, Winifred Gordon Fraser and Rosa Graham--then by Mitrinovic who toned down the excitement. Soon Thomson was sitting around Mitrinovic in the old way, listening to him expound some metaphysical point. The group had abandoned any possibility of political action, turning more and more toward "esoteric, philosophic and occult matters." Moreover, some of the younger members of the group were in active service and two of the earliest members, Lilian Slade and Rex Campbell, were in complete revolt, and Winifred Fraser and Valerie Cooper, relatively passive. Thomson discovered that Canada had reinforced his Scottish preference for the "public and verifiable." Although invited to stay, he left in mid-August in disgust, again, at certain "erotic practices which were outside of what was for me normal."79

A few days later, on August 20, Thomson—who had been seeking a job at either the Ministry of Information or the BBC but without success—began working as a civilian helper in a Canadián YMCA canteen,
dishing out tea to the troops. At the end of August he started his own canteen in Leatherhead, Surrey, for which he was thankful because the hearty "Y" Christians with the "pious and patriotic" humbug were getting on his nerves. During this time Thomson felt "desperately isolated, frustrated and kind of 'lost.'" The things I most wanted to do (New Britain, for short) I can't do with D.M." It seems that he had hoped that he might renew his quest for a New Britain; this proved impossible and the interminable activities of the canteen (filling out forms, ordering food, getting licences and permits, keeping records and accounts, humouring the local gentry, handling the lady helpers, mediating between Canadians and the English, listening to the woes of the troops) kept him occupied and even, at times, happy.

But Thomson was not yet ready to return to Alberta. He was fascinated with the "historic events unfolding around me, and particularly to a rather elemental feeling that these people were my people after all, these Britishers, and even if they were about to have Nazi paratroopers descend on them, it was no time for me to desert them." Indeed, the Battle of Britain raged just a week or two after he opened the canteen, the threat of a German invasion (Operation Sea Lion), scheduled for September 24, hinging on the outcome of the fiercely contested air battles. During "The Blitz," more than 300 bombs fell in or near Leatherhead. But there was no invasion. Thomson decided to return to Canada in the late fall of 1940.

Through contact with George Ignatieff, Third Secretary to the Canadian High Commission in London, Thomson was able to get an exit visa. Resigning from the YMCA, he returned to Scotland for a brief
farewell with his two sisters before sailing from Liverpool in a convoy (it was a bad time for submarines). Thomson arrived in December 1940 to Mary, George, Grete, Stan, Leone, Eldon and the rest of the group, still thriving through six months of intensive struggles to clarify their perspective and work out interpersonal conflicts. The moment was ripe for stock-taking.

I had also again broken with D.M. and his group, yet here I was back within the embrace (in my low spirits of these days, the very comforting embrace of another group, one made on my own initiative (and so on my own terms)) yet in so many ways fashioned on the London pattern. I think it was at this time that I first began to realize that my part in this Edmonton group project implied a strong unconscious need to be a little Mitrinovic on my own. How could I reconcile my disillusionment about D.M. with this current imitation of him?

Of course, I soon realized also that the group was no longer just 'mine.' It had an authentic life of its own. It had survived my six months' absence extremely well—George, Grete, Mary, Leone, Eldon Wilcox (from Calgary) and now Dave and Bertha Freifeld (our first Jewish couple) were living together under one roof in the second 'collective home' the group had rented since its inception. There were difficulties and tensions to be sure (chiefly in the differing housekeeping dietary habits) but nothing that the common zest and good will would not fairly easily absorb or turn to creative ends.83

The most serious of the group's difficulties centered around the perennial question of leadership. One faction was committed to the idea of a conspiratorial centre, where the "greatest" consciousness lay; another contended that the presence of an elite "inner circle" created a "feeling of set-apartness" in the group.84 Rands captured something of the group's internal dynamics in his letter to Thomson of November 11.
Having you with us again is going to be a tremendous thing. You will find us different from when you left. Individually we all all grown, there is no question of that. There are many, more complete persons and stronger individuals. As a group, the picture is less clear. There have been and are many difficulties. Sectionalism seems the greatest weakness and danger—our ability to be inclusive of really wide differences and to carry through highly emotional conflicts.  

One of the most highly charged conflicts the idealistic group had to face took place one evening while the group was sitting around the fireplace. One of the younger men announced that he was the reincarnation of Christ. The group tried to "snap him out of this," but to no avail. George LeBeau wrote to Thomson. "B. has left us. Yes to my sorrow he pulled out and has gone back to the farm....It seems insanity will creep in and defeat us."  

Thomson, as part of his belief (learned from Mitrinovic) that creative living demanded the direct and spontaneous emotional expression from the individual towards the greatest possible variety of others, had felt that B's fanatic streak (the desperate, extremist streak in him) was functionally valuable to the group, but intrinsically neurotic, a compensatory mechanism, indicating the existence of things in him exactly opposite to these appearances. In other words, all 'strong man' stuff from B. should be used to stir up the others, and at the same time taken by you with a pinch of salt. At the same time he should be consistently faced with realism about everyday things, like a job...  

Some three weeks or so after his return from England, Watson Thomson was offered a job in Winnipeg. "My good friend Corbett had recommended me to his good friend Sid Smith, President of the University of Manitoba, who was about to open a new Adult Education Office. Would I come and build the nucleus of a Department of Extension?" The Edmonton group was eager that Thomson resume his
public career. He thought that

If 'group' was ever to make any significant impact on Canadian life, it would have to be via the channels of influence which its members had in their jobs or via channels created out of nothing by the group itself and that as many of the group as possible should seek jobs in Winnipeg and join me there.

Watson Thomson went to Winnipeg at the end of December 1940 to open a new Adult Education Office and another creative period of social pedagogy and communal experimentation opened up along several avenues. Within a few months, Mary, George, and Eldon would find jobs in Winnipeg, Grete and Leone joining their respective husbands (Leone had married Eldon Wilcox). Dave and Bertha Freifeld could not leave Edmonton for family reasons. Stan Rands joined the group the following year as Assistant to the Director of Adult Education. None of the younger people followed Thomson to Winnipeg.
CHAPTER FOUR

FOOTNOTES


8. WFL, October 7, 1938.


10. See the Edmonton Journal, October 5, 1938.


13. D. Cameron, "Report to the American Association for Adult Education on Adult Education in Scandinavia," DCP.
14 D. Cameron, "Adult Education and the Challenge of Youth," radio script (c. 1936-1938), DCP.

15 Cameron, "A Balanced Adult Education Program: An Address for the conference on Adult Education, University of Saskatchewan, March 3, 1938, DCP.

16 Cameron, "Adult Education--the Need of Today," WFL, June 5, 1936.


18 Watson Thomson, "This Winter's Leisure," WFL, November 3, 1939.


20 PW, December 31, 1938, and January 28, 1939.


22 Watson Thomson, "International Affairs": December Topic: Economic Causes of War--Are They Basic? in my possession.

23 January Topic: What Went Wrong with the League. II (a) International Economic Co-operation and (b) National Sovereignty.

24 February Topic: For and Against Pacifism. I. The Case for Pacifism.

25 J. Zubick, "Professors and Politics," The Rebel, April 1, 1939, WTP 7-2.

26 Information about UFA executive meeting in Winifred Ross Papers, PAA, minutes of UFA Executive meeting held in Calgary March 27-29, 1939. Priestley letter in WKP.

27 Smith, "Editorial," WFL, March 17, 1939. "It is difficult to estimate the effect...of the course in international affairs on the air in study groups; but my judgment is that it must be very important, and that the basis for an informed public opinion is being laid" (Smith to Thomson, February 3, 1939, NSP, Watson Thomson correspondence file).

28 Kerr to Cameron, August 27, 1940, WKP, Watson Thomson correspondence file.


30 Andrew Padvinsky to President Kerr, March 4, 1939, WKP, ULFTA file.
Thomson to the Secretary of the ULFTA, March 3, 1939, WKP, ULFTA file.

N. Leschynsky to the Board of the University of Alberta, March 6, 1939, WKP, ULFTA file.

Kerr to Radvinsky, March 8, 1939, WKP, ULFTA file.

Kerr to Justice Harvey, March 8, 1939, WKP, ULFTA file.

The most celebrated case of conflict between a university president and a left-wing professor is that of Frank Underhill. See Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction*, ch. 10, "Professors in the Public Eye."

WTP 2-2, p. 97.

"Robert McCreath," Biographical files, PAA.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners Minute Book, July 1938-1941, PAA.

There is some discrepancy regarding total attendance figures. President Logan of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners reported that 109 people had attended the various classes.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners Minute Book, April 7, 1939.


This concern for home beautification and better child-care techniques has origins in the early twentieth century. See Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).
"Statistics on the Alberta School of Community Life, July 3-15, 1939, DCP."

Elsie Laurence to Mary Thomson, c. early 1970s, in my possession.

Pharis Ringwood to M. Welton, February 19, 1982.


Patterson and Wilson, "The Influence of the Danish Folk High School."

WTP 2-2, pp. 97, 98.

WTP 2-2, p. 99. Bob Tillman wrote to Thomson on May 31, 1939, telling him of the "group" experiment in the Vancouver SCM group. "It is so hard, Watson, to tell you hurriedly what's been happening—the intimate fellowship, the ruthless frankness (sometimes a little too heavy on this side we feel—though consciously so) of which you spoke has been ours. Effie found a picture of herself to work at, concrete helps, and from reports from others up there at Nelson has made concrete gains. Frances and Reg found a similar thing—something some early experiences—sexual—which she'd never broached to anyone up till a year ago, and then to one other only—Norah" (WTP 2A).

Interview with George and Grete LeBeau, July 1, 1981.

WTP 2-2, p. 99.

WTP 2-2, p. 100. Emphasis in original.

WTP 2-5, p. 158.

WTP 2-5, p. 159.

WTP 2-2, p. 141.


WTP 2-2, pp. 101-102. Emphasis in original.

Draft Letter to Community Leaders, 1939-1940 season, DCP.

"Community Problems" course, section, "Religion in Rural Areas," DCP. The language is clearly Thomson's.

"Community Problems" course, section, "Agrarian Communities of the Future." It might be interesting to explore the relationship between thinking of adult educators and developments within sociology in the 1920s and 1930s.

This section of the course bears the stamp of Thomson's thinking. In fact, I would speculate that Thomson wrote most of the course.
"Community Problems" course, section, "Agrarian Communities of the Future."

"Community Problems" course, section, "Agrarian Communities of the Future." Cf. "Study Groups," The Western Producer, November 24, 1938. "The study group is a co-operative enterprise and like all co-operative enterprises it is intended to achieve the greatest possible agreement for the attainment of a given end. There may be some value in knowing for knowing's sake, but the study group is not an institution set up merely for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. It exists to help people to get knowledge for use; to get to know in order that one may knowingly act."

Alberta, Department of Education Annual Report, 1939, p. 42.

Alberta, Department of Education Annual Report, 1940, p. 42.

Alberta, Department of Education Annual Report, 1940, p. 10.

Alberta, Department of Extension Annual Report, 1941, p. 4.

McCreath to Wren, December 28, 1941, WEAP, Edmonton file.

Evers to Wren, December 14, 1939, WEAP, Calgary file.

FW, April 13, 1940.

Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, c. July 10, 1940, WTP 2A.

Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, July 8, 1940, WTP 2A.

Copy of radio script of July 7, 1940 broadcast, WTP 3-5.

"Group" letter to Watson Thomson, July 7, 1940, WTP 2A.

Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, July 10, 1940, WTP 2A.

WTP 2-5, pp. 164, 165.

Thomson to Jackson, August 25, 1940, WTP 2A.

WTP 2-2, p. 104.

World Almanac Book of World War II, pp. 75-76.

WTP 2-5, p. 170. Emphasis in original.

Mary Jackson to Thomson, September 17, 1940, WTP 2A.

Stan Rands to Thomson, November 11, 1940, WTP 2A.
86 George LeBeau to Thomson, August 30, 1940, WTP 2A.

87 Watson Thomson to "Group," September 22, 1940, WTP 2A.

88 WTP 2-5, p. 172.
CHAPTER FIVE

ON MANY FRONTS

Before Watson Thomson arrived at the University of Manitoba in late December of 1940 to participate in a Short Training Course for rural leaders and began laying the groundwork for his program, there had been no systematic attempt to provide Manitoba's rural communities with a coherent adult education program. To be sure, the need had been recognized since 1933 when three Manitobans, H. Trevor Lloyd, J.E. Robbins and Andrew Moore, returned from their American Association of Adult Education-sponsored tour of the Scandinavian countries. Andrew Moore, a Winnipeg inspector of schools, had been instrumental in organizing a preliminary conference in September 1934 for those who believed that education, particularly adult education, provided one of the surest means of solving the social problem.  

The 1934 conference set up a committee charged with the responsibility of cataloguing adult education activities in Manitoba, and of preparing the way for the formation of the Manitoba Association of Adult Education (MAAE). After a good deal of spade work, this committee, which included among others Robert England, Mrs. Anna Gray of the United Farm Women, Dr. J.E. Evans of Brandon College and Moore, formed the MAAE in May 1935. The MAAE leaders believed that the average Manitoban citizen was not adequately informed about local, national and global affairs. By providing some leadership in the inchaote field of adult education, the MAAE leaders hoped to develop a politically literate citizenry. It appears, however, that the MAAE
had little contact with rural community organizations.  

On November 4, 1935, the MAAE sponsored a round table conference, led by Oscar Olsson, the founder of the Swedish Study Circle movement, who spoke on "The Organizing of Study Circles" and "Adult Education in Sweden." After this initial organizational activity, the MAAE was unable to develop much momentum or provide energetic leadership to the small and struggling organizations promoting adult education.

The need for a systematic program of adult education had been long recognized by the University of Manitoba, particularly after 1922. With the arrival of Sidney Earle Smith from the Dalhousie Law School in October 1934 as President of the University of Manitoba at a time when public support was flagging, the adult education movement had gained a formidable, capable and genial ally. Confronted by a dispirited university faculty (as W.L. Morton later wrote, the "liberal arts" were in serious decline) and a rather lackadaisical public, Smith moved to increase the services rendered to the community. He multiplied and emphasized the specialized and technical training offered to the community and initiated a program of adult education. Smith was also committed to preserving the primacy of the liberal spirit in education.

Smith had met with his fellow Nova Scotian E.A. Corbett in January of 1937 to discuss the feasibility of conducting an experiment that would produce an indigenous program of adult education. At this time Corbett, who was travelling throughout Canada encouraging grass-roots community-oriented adult education, was optimistic about Manitoba's potential for adult education provided Manitoba developed a policy and committed itself to action. Corbett thought that the
Carnegie Foundation would rather support financially the university than the MAAE. Corbett was convinced that, if the Carnegie funds could be obtained, that the Rev. Harry and Mary Avison were the two people who could best direct an indigenous program in community education. Avison had studied theology at Montreal Presbyterian Theological College and received his B.A. and M.A. at McGill University. He had been active in the SCM, where he met Corbett, and had acted as chaplain of relief camps in northern Ontario. His work had come to the attention of some leaders in the MAAE who were considering offering him the job of director. Avison was not the only suggestion, though: Robert England thought that Andrew Moore was the right man for the job. But the MAAE could not find the finances. It also seems that Moore was not highly regarded by Esther Thompson, the influential director of women's work in the Manitoba Department of Agriculture who was in close touch with Avison and Corbett.

Unhappily ministering in Deloraine, Avison was considering a call to B.C. But he believed that there was a desperate need to help Manitobans to gain a renewed interest in life and was open to participate in a community-based experiment. Corbett's only problem was finding the financial resources; he was to meet with Dr. Frederick Keppel of the Carnegie Foundation in May 1937. All Corbett could do was counsel Avison to wait.

Smith agreed with Corbett that the university should be the spring-board for a systematic program of adult education. The publication of a report in late January 1937 quickly followed Smith's discussions with Corbett. Believing that there was a widespread desire to understand the depression and thereby tame it, the report
noted that a few study clubs had been organized for members of organizations such as the United Farmers of Manitoba and the Co-operative Conference. But these groups had "failed to attract a cross-section of the rural communities." The centre of Winnipeg, in contrast, had an array of formal and informal study groups and forums, carried on through clubs and community organizations.

Criticizing the traditional approach of the University of Manitoba extension program as being unduly unilateral and urban-biased, this seminal report called for a program that would "arise out of, or at least be related to, the life of the people." The report argued that rural communities should be provided with the tools for community self-development. By so doing, the rural way of life could be upheld, supported and revitalized. Study groups, the report contended, could possibly be the "spearhead of the extension program."

Smith envisaged that the program would require a director, who would travel throughout the rural areas to correlate existing activity, encourage local initiative in all forms of adult education, make available community resources and instruct local leaders. A survey of community need would have to be conducted by the summer of 1937 and an advisory committee struck by the Board of governors of the university. A supervisor, if funds were available, could also be hired to assist the director. The supervisor of the project would have an opportunity to train local leaders. He would become an inspiring force in the community, leading its members to realize the meaning of their environment, their individual resources and the resources of various racial groups within the district, to know their possibilities for living together, studying together and playing and working together. He would also be responsible for establishing in the
district a community centre to which people from all parts of his territory would come.... His centre could become a focal point for music or drama festivals, handicraft exhibitions etc.... These projects, besides serving the people within the selected districts, would strike the standard and indicate the course of the extension programme for other rural parts of the province.  

This vision did not arise primarily from the rural people's requests. It was a vision rooted in the hopes of an urban-based educational radicalism inspired by the folk school experiments in the Scandinavian countries and motivated by "social gospel" compassion for those suffering from the depression. It was, essentially, a populist initiative from above.

As it turned out, however, it was not until April 1939 when the Carnegie Corporation granted the University of Manitoba $10,000 towards the support of its extension work in adult education that Smith could think seriously of implementing the ideas adumbrated in the 1937 report. By early 1940 the situation still did not look promising. The newly formed Manitoba Federation of Agriculture (MFA) was organizing some study groups on co-operatives and credit unions and the Women's Institutes were promoting home-making projects. But Smith was more convinced than ever that programs based "merely on economic considerations, in time, may fail to satisfy deeper human needs in this decade of national and international turmoil and could not be conducive to the promotion of well-rounded citizenship."  

Mary Speechly, a prominent member of the University of Manitoba's Committee on Adult Education, believed that the University of Manitoba was in a "backwater and not, where it should be, in the full stream of a most vitalizing movement."
President Smith certainly wanted to bring the University of Manitoba into the mainstream of a rural revitalization movement, although that movement was not the key element in Smith's over-all strategy for the University. The time was propitious. But who could provide the leadership for such an ambitious project? In January 1938 the Avisons had gone to Le Pas, a mining town of 3,000 inhabitants with a Jack London frontier flavour. Receiving financial support from Mr. David Winton, a Minnesota industrialist, and symbolic support from the CAAE, the Avisons had attempted to build a "spirit of community" in a town with four ethnic groups (Anglo-Saxon, French-Canadian, Ukranian and Metis). Though this project in rural community development was celebrated in the late 1930s and early 1940s as a model project, it was an ill-starred experiment. Avison found that the people who were most ready to receive and utilize what he offered were the "Communist" Ukranians; and he found no good reason for discouraging them. The result was that Avison—and adult education—were soon labelled Communist and became victims of a rabid campaign of red-baiting with the French-Canadian clergy leading the offensive.1

By April 1940 Harry Avison had decided to leave Le Pas. In a letter to David Winton, Avison somewhat sadly concluded that the "tensions between the racial groups and the suspicions between the social groups are as strong as ever, and I don't feel that I have achieved anything as regards them."12 So, when the opportunity arose for Avison to join the staff of Macdonald College in 1940 as an English professor and editor of the Macdonald College Journal, he left the wrangling and chaos of a northern Manitoban town for a more secure future in Quebec. Avison would remain at Macdonald College for twenty
years, working closely with Dean W.H. Brittain, head of Macdonald College, promoting libraries and publications as well as playing a key "backroom" role in the CAAE's leftward shift in 1943–45. With Avison ensconced at Macdonald College, the way was open for the wily Corbett to convince Smith to secure the services of another innovative activist educator. One should not underestimate Corbett's role, at least in the late 1930s, of helping to place left-wing educators in strategic institutional settings.

Now freed from his work in the University of Alberta's Extension Department but seeking wider scope for his social vision, Watson Thomson arrived in Winnipeg in the uncertain winter of 1941 to assume direction of the University of Manitoba's Adult Education Office. Although the ideological gulf between Smith and Thomson was "wide enough in all conscience," Smith did not inhibit Thomson's work. In fact, Smith was "unfailingly supportive to the point of genuine friendship."13 Both men were roughly the same age, had fought in the First World War and were equally at home with ordinary farmers and urbane intellectuals. While Smith did not share Thomson's ultimate commitment to "total change," their interest in awakening a global civic consciousness and developing a "spirit of community" throughout Manitoba converged. Today one might think of Sidney Smith as a "pink tory." In early 1942 Smith expressed his view of Thomson to R. Lester of the Carnegie Corporation.

To a surprising extent he has the sympathy with, and the understanding of, the prairie farmer. Well versed in tried techniques and processes of adult education, he has demonstrated a capacity for experimentation, with due regard to local situations. Above all, he is motivated by a dynamic social philosophy.14
Smith ardently supported Thomson's commitment to making the study-group the centrepiece of a multi-faceted adult education program and would turn a blind eye to the criticism Thomson would receive throughout the Manitoba years. Occasionally Thomson would even have Smith as a travelling companion on one of his seemingly endless speaking trips to the little villages and towns scattered throughout Manitoba.

Before the Short Training Course for Rural Communities was launched on December 27 at United College in Winnipeg, the Committee on Adult Education had completed some preliminary work of organization. They had also prepared "Notes on Study-Group Purpose and Methods" and a study course for citizenship groups. Three major lines of activity were decided upon: training in Arts and Crafts, Drama and Study-groups with a citizenship orientation; all three were initiated in the Short Course. Thomson felt that the forty students, representing most of the settled areas of the province, who attended the course had been stimulated to a further effort of social leadership. He also felt that the demonstration of study-group methods by Dr. Schmidt of Ohio, who observed the "basic principles of democratic group discussion with such scrupulous fidelity," was particularly inspiring and instructive. The conference did not, however, create the expected unanimity of purpose and commitment. Students had little time to study the outlines, the MFA students were leery of the university's program and a number of delegates from rural areas were suspicious of urban-intellectual types. There was a "fairly difficult situation for a time." However, confidence returned in the last two days, a fact, Thomson thought, that would have valuable consequences in the
communities to which those students returned.

Thomson concluded that these difficulties did no more than testify to the need to find ways to break down the barriers between the university and the farm community. The course itself had some palpable results in this direction, laying a foundation for further construction. As a result of the Short Course, several active groups were started in Arts and Crafts, Drama and discussion of Professor Clokie's "What the War Means to Me." The total number of study groups increased slowly in 1941-42. By the season's end, there were forty-eight "spearheads of change." A number of groups—MFA, United Church, Home and School Association, Anglican Church, Free Masons and the Dominion Youth Training Program—used University of Manitoba materials. But Watson Thomson and others realized how tiny an effort this was in comparison to that which would reach the majority of Manitobans.15

Expansion demanded a rapid effort of consolidation; these fledgling study-groups, notoriously difficult to sustain, needed much encouragement. Thomson's strategy involved using the study-group to establish a beachhead in the community. It was hoped that the study-groups, though at first self-contained, would become the nuclei of responsibility for general community education. He did not believe that public education was the launching pad for social change. Study-groups, Thomson would repeatedly insist, should see themselves in the community context and strive to move towards greater social responsibility on the local, national and international level, initiating wherever possible social and political action. But the immediate, and most pressing task in the winter and spring of 1941-42 was to create a network of study-groups in as many towns and villages as possible.
Faculty resource leaders such as professors H. Clokie and Robert McQueen were coaxed to visit communities near Winnipeg, and Thomson made thirty-one visits to rural communities, travelling 3,000 miles in the process. With the exception of Swan River and three communities which had begun study-groups late in the season (Erickson, Snowflake, Winnipegosis), all communities engaged in study-group activity were covered. This plan of using visiting "resource-leaders" justified itself, Thomson felt, both in stimulating interest in rural communities and integrating the whole program with the general life of the university. Though necessarily brief, the visits of faculty members undoubtedly prevented some new groups from languishing.16

Unlike the faculty "resource-leaders", Thomson was able to establish a more intimate connection with the leaders of the small communities. Arriving in a community, Thomson would meet with representatives of the local study-group or with individuals who might want to start one. Where possible, an evening meeting would be arranged with invitations extended to all members of the community. In late February Thomson made his first tour through the towns in the north-west of the province, visiting Franklin, Bethany, Neepawa, Eden, McCreary, Makaroff, Tummel, Roblin, Birtle, Newdale and Shoal Lake. In late March he visited the south-west corner of the province—Deloraine, Morden, Tilston, Pierson and Whitewater.

What did Thomson discover on his initial tour of the province? We turn now to consider Thomson's experience of several rural communities. In Franklin, Thomson went straight from the bus to a meeting in the United Church hall at 8:15 where he spoke for an hour to the Rev. H.T. Smith and twenty to thirty members of his congregation.
About fifteen people wanted to organize a study-group under the leadership of Smith and Mr. White, the school principal. "Some bright people, but it will be difficult to get a very cordial or lively atmosphere here. Anticipate only moderate success." From Franklin to Bethany. The Department of Adult Education contact, the Rev. Eric Whiting, met Thomson and after discussing the local situation with him, he attended the third meeting of the study-group. Thomson concluded that if the farmers could be persuaded to drop their rationalization for not reading, their discussions might be of "very good quality." The group was, however, a little too homogeneous; all were Anglo-Saxon and over twenty-seven.

Neepawa, Thomson discovered, was an extremely interesting community, full of resources, both material and mental, but somewhat self-satisfied and "without much social consciousness." Thomson met with nearly all of the town leaders—lawyers, doctors, two ministers, bankers and teachers. A number of these met as the Economics Club, which had been meeting every two weeks for discussion for the past eight seasons. Thomson discussed the town situation fully with Rev. Dyker, a socially-minded ex-SCM president, Gordon Walker, W.H. Hamilton, municipal secretary, and Ted Fryer, president of the United Church youth society.

The upshot is that two groups will start within a week—one of the Young People's Society under Dyker's guidance, with Ted Fryer as leader; the other around Mr. Harrison, a great reader and active thinker. There may be interesting and socially valuable developments from this start.

No preliminary work had been done in Eden, but both of the Department's correspondents, Rev. N. Pattison and Ivan Hamilton, a school principal, were sympathetically skeptical. Fifteen people showed up at
the evening meeting (of a population of 150). Thomson later caught a bus taking him to Makaroff, a small town near the Saskatchewan border. In Makaroff, the study-group activity was under the dynamic and competent leadership of Muriel Boyce, a MFA activist who had been at the Short Course. Thomson had an afternoon meeting with about fifteen (the local bonspiel was on) and an evening meeting with about thirty.

Next Thomson was taken to Tummel in the Rev. McKillop's snowplane. At McKillop's invitation, Thomson spoke at this morning service. Then the study-groups, and community in general, met in the afternoon. The members of the study-group were the youth of the church and the junior MFA—which included practically all of the young people of the district.

Although the community is scattered, with only a school, a church and a store in one of the homes as central features, the people are of fine type, active, co-operative and very warm-hearted. The procedure here, owing to road difficulties, in such a winter as this, is to study at home one week and meet and discuss together the next.

On the following day, Thomson arrived in Roblin, a "good town," he concluded, "badly spoiled by political antagonisms." The narrow outlook of a few of the most powerful citizens, including the mayor, Thomson thought, had inhibited every decent social movement for many years. "In many directions—including adult education and the creative hobbies—the surrounding farm areas are much more alive than the town of Roblin."

Thomson spent some time discussing the local situation with Rev. McKillop, Inspector of Schools Kerr, Mrs. C. Brydon, school trustee, Mr. Stinson, school principal and several others. An evening meeting gave Thomson a surprisingly large and varied audience of fifty to sixty, with seven or eight intimating their willingness to join a study-group at once.

On the following day, Thomson spoke to the Roblin high school
students on current events, and was taken out to Tummel to talk to the whole school. During the rest of the day Thomson discussed the local situation further with Mrs. Brydon, Mrs. Yeo, president of the Women's Institute, McKillop, Kerr and Mr. Westwood, ex-MLA and active study-group member of the MFA. And for the first time, Thomson had been able to talk "group" to McKillop. At the end of this hectic tour, Thomson observed:

I felt at the end that a nucleus of the most socially-minded could be established here which could give a totally new direction to the social and cultural life of the town. This is undoubt-edly a place that should have intensive work over perhaps a continuous week or two.17

Only six weeks earlier Thomson had started on his new job. During these weeks Thomson had been struggling with his relationship to the Edmonton group and worrying about the "general political situation a lot--invasion,...[and] our collective inadequacy (moral, social, etc.) to meet it; my own responsibility to convey to people some of the things I know which they need to know." He was terribly dissatisfied with himself. "I can't feel," he wrote to Mary Jackson, "that what I'm doing is any degree adequate to the situation....I'm beginning to wonder if I shall ever again live 'all out.' Which is a desperate feeling." And Thomson expressed one of his recurrent fears to Mary.

One of my recurrent dreads these days is that I'll never see anything right through, that I'll just start up a number of things (I'm thinking of 'social action') and never see any of them through to any fruition. There are so many things I propose to people, all of which would be worth following through: yet so little happens. Is it to be my fate to throw out premature and still-born ideas? Is it that I'm more interested in 'getting things off my chest' than in relating them appropriately and therefore effectively to the society around me here?19
But the flurry of activity and hopefulness of his visit to the Roblin area had perked up his spirits and given him the feeling that "in about a couple of years I could become a sort of factor in the Manitoba situation. But events may take me elsewhere I suppose."20 Manitoba seemed to hold out some promise. The Rev. McKillop wrote to Sidney Smith on February 26.

We have just enjoyed a most remarkable week-end with Watson Thomson. He spoke eight times in three days to well-attended meetings. His keen analytical and scholarly mind coupled with his intense humanitarianism, puts him in touch not only with the heads, but the hearts of all who contact him. Something has happened in this community as the result of his visit.21

But this response was hardly satisfactory to the restless radical educator.

Something of Thomson's intense dissatisfaction with his own activities dispelled in early March. He was "doing his stuff" again. Some of the contacts looked hopeful from a co-personal group point of view. Thomson had been warmly received at the Phoenix Club, which had grown out of a study group called the Round Table of Philosophy. A group of nine young men had been brought together by William Conyers, actively assisted by Ernest Court and Will Dougall, in October 1933. In the heyday of its success in 1939, the Phoenix Club operated as many as sixteen study-groups in the arts, sciences and languages. They sponsored weekly Open Forums, Saturday afternoon luncheons and social activities. Their purpose was to formulate from a study and synthesis of the latest findings of science, an ideal but practical philosophy which would give universal purpose and meaning to life so that men and women could more intelligently direct their social and personal lives.
"They're all sort of 'intelligentsia' types of a great variety academically, politically, etc. And they've been hammering away at important issues for years,..." Thomson wrote to his friends in Edmonton. In the summer of 1941 Will Conyers, his wife Alice and two children would join Thomson and the Edmonton group, and a number of others from the Winnipeg area in establishing a co-operative house at 139 Roslyn Road. Will Dougall would work closely with Thomson, LeBeau and Jack Wilson as assistant regional agent for rural film circuits, beginning in the spring of 1943.

In early May Thomson wrote enthusiastically to Mary Jackson that opportunities seem to be opening up. I had a talk to the FCSO group here (about twenty earnest souls, some of them really good stuff) last night. No time for preparation, so I just 'let them have it' more recklessly than I've done for a long time. It really started something. They talked long after their usual time, and some wanted to get going at once as a body dedicated to equipping themselves for action, (revolutionary) leadership by first of all 'coming clean' amongst themselves. Stanley Knowles and others of their number stand pretty high in CCF and Labor Union councils. I know I could get the best half of that group and that they would accept my leadership, at least for the present.

Presumptuous or not, through this meeting Thomson met Rev. Elliot and Kay Bolton, Muriel James, Jack Wilson and Ruth Caldwell, all of whom had been involved in the preparation of the LSR-sponsored Pioneers in Poverty (1938), an empirical study of the political economy of Manitoba. All would join the co-operative house at Roslyn Road.

In the spring of 1941 Thomson contemplated the results of the season's study-group program. He saw evidence that the study and discussion of "What the War Means to Me" brought considerable individual "enlightenment," especially in regard to understanding the foundations
of a democratic order. But the important social role of the study-group in breaking down social barriers and working towards a general community integration had hardly begun.

These groups were insufficiently daring: no alternatives to individual ownership of land and machinery, no truly participatory local government, no attempts to take over the apparatus of the state. Moreover, lack of experience in study-group techniques and insufficiency of good leaders as well as minor inefficiencies in the preparation and distribution of material, due to the hurried and belated start, decreased the chances of the whole project's success and popularity in the first year. And, most important from Thomson's perspective, too much ground geographically, had to be covered in too short a time. Without an intimate acquaintance with local situations, an efficient central organization was "ultimately of little value."25

What were the prospects for adult education in Manitoba? First, Thomson contended that generalized attitudes of discouragement, suspicion and resentment still prevailed amongst farmers. They believed, consequently, that their political energies should be concentrated exclusively on the removal of farmers' economic grievances and the promotion of alleviating co-operative enterprises (co-operatives being conceived as applying only within the occupational group). On the other hand, the attitude of many small townspeople was no less sectionally interested. Thomson thought that many neighbouring farmers were divided into cliques, and a plethora of competing organizations inhibited the development of "real community spirit." Second, denominational overlapping and rivalry constituted a serious anti-social factor in some of the small towns. In a few places, notoriously Fisher Branch and
Whitewater, there was a complete absence of integration between the race-groups (in Whitewater's case, hostility between the Anglo-Saxons and Mennonites had been exacerbated by the war). In other towns, the chief anti-social force was the rivalry (political, personal or both) between several old established and influential families.\textsuperscript{26}

Despite these perceived difficulties, Thomson saw an immense reserve of intelligence and good will waiting to be "tapped and catalyzed." The war, Thomson thought, was just beginning to disturb the minds of many agrarian communities seriously. This is itself created a new opportunity. Under the impact of global events, the lethargy of the last decade, so evident in Manitoba, was beginning to vanish. Another positive factor was the attitude of many teachers, inspectors of schools, ministers and priests. The professional people had given invaluable support to the department's work. In Thomson's estimation they had shown a genuine, sometimes elevated, community spirit. The potential leadership among this class in the small towns was considerable both in quantity and quality. And the gravity of the national and international crisis was just beginning to energize it in above-party directions.\textsuperscript{27} Thomson may well not have been entirely accurate in his assessment of rural Manitoba. But as sociologist W.L. Thomas has observed, a "social situation is what it is defined to be by its participants."\textsuperscript{28} And Thomson was building his strategy of adult education on his definition of the Manitoban situation, namely, that the work of general community integration had hardly begun.

For the immediate future, Thomson concluded, given that the war had already made the adult education movement a much bigger affair than it ever was in peace-time, the Department of Adult Education should have
the double aim of fairly rapid expansion combined with the careful
building of foundations. Thomson thought that it was reasonable to
expect that within a year there would be one good study-group in every
town or village in Manitoba with a population of 150 or more. As for
foundations, the objective would be to build a small leadership nucleus
in as many communities as possible who would be imbued with a common
social vision and purpose.

Thomson offered these specific suggestions for the future:
(1) offer several courses. Emphasize one and run weekly radio series
integrating talks and round table discussions; (2) do more field work in
all divisions. Recognize that the only solid foundations are personal
friendship and detailed knowledge of each community situation;
(3) start breaking down the town/country barrier in week-end "Community
Schools" where town and farm will meet in forum. Correlate films, art,
crafts and drama and lecture discussions in program to be held at
selected centres such as Roblin, Deloraine, Carman; (4) use film to
attract "non-intellectual elements." Films can be followed by panel
discussion or lecture and (5) stimulate the desire for voluntary
community service in undergraduates and the graduating class. Appeal
to alumni and bring program to notice of teachers at summer school,
ministers in conference and municipal secretaries in convention.29

A beginning had been made in laying the foundations for a systema-
tic program of citizenship education aimed at creating more fully
co-operative communities. Thomson believed that the process of working
together, first in study groups and then in community projects, could
perhaps set in motion a movement, deeper and broader, towards a funda-
mental restructuring of the social order. He had to try to create the
basis for community action by encouraging individuals to form "spearhead" units in each community. While Thomson obviously supported the MFA's work to establish co-operative institutions such as credit unions, he was primarily interested in bringing all citizens together to articulate more "global" development strategies for local communities and the region. Moreover, he particularly wanted rural Manitobans to understand their task in the light of the "war for democracy" raging in Europe.

But it was painfully clear to Thomson, as well as members of the Adult Education Committee, that even if the study-groups proliferated significantly, the main problem facing the Department was just how to reach a much "wider cross-section of the rural population than the more or less intellectual minority who respond to the usual adult education projects." Early in October Thomson reported to the Adult Education Committee that rural people had been greatly responsive to the documentary films, especially of the war, which he had shown on his tour of the south-west of the province. Professor Osborne and Dr. J.W. Dafoe of the Winnipeg Free Press moved that the Committee endorse the use of documentary films as were supplied by the National Film Society and the National Film Board (NFB) to the full limit of available resources. With the consent of the Committee, Thomson became the regional agent for the NFB and, during December, organized four rural circuits in Manitoba covering eighty points monthly.

Thomson also moved to fulfill his other recommendations for the 1941-42 season. Two new study outlines, "Canada and the Post-War World," prepared by R.O. MacFarlane, and "Democracy Begins at Home," an outline very similar in content to Thomson's "Community Problems" course, which
he had had prepared with Dr. H.C. Grant, were added to Clokie's "What
the War Means to Me." This may be an appropriate moment to consider
Thomson's excellence as a social commentator and educational writer.
Thomson had a rhetorical flair for casting complex issues in clear and
colourful language. An urban-born and bred intellectual who had never
farmed in his life, Thomson, almost uncannily, could size up a rural
audience and frame his language appropriately. He could write quickly
and lucidly, a journalistic skill that served him well, given the heavy
demands of public speaking, radio broadcasting and study material
preparation.

Further, in an innovative attempt to publicize the University of
Manitoba's adult education program, Stan Rands (appointed as Thomson's
assistant in March 1942) and George LeBeau (hired in October 1942 by
the University as film librarian and projectionist) would tour the
summer rural fair circuit, competing for Manitobans' attention amidst
the glare of midway lights and the bark of fair hustlers. And Thomson
would expand his arena of action beyond the Department in three signifi-
cant directions. He resumed his "Weekend Review" broadcasts for the
CBC, began to play a leading role in the affairs of the CAAE and, in
the summer of 1942, prepared, with Rockefeller Foundation financing and
the assistance of two American rural agricultural specialists and
E.A. Corbett, the provocative study *The Northern Plains in a World of
Change.*

The Adult Education Office reopened in late August and the two new
study outlines were in the process of completion. MacFarlane's course
provided discussion on the failure of the League of Nations, universal
versus regional international organization, international law, the
nation state, and changes in economic society necessary to achieve international order. A weekly radio discussion accompanied this course. "Democracy Begins at Home," a course of discussion and research on local conditions, was designed to answer the following question:

(1) How did rural communities grow? (2) What effect has the automobile and the radio had on rural life? (3) What difference in the quality of community life is made by the existence of different national groups? What does science say about the "race" problem? (4) What are the most serious conflicts in rural communities—between families? between townspeople and farmers? between national groups? between older and younger generations? (5) What are the effects of the war on rural life, and how can we best prepare ourselves for the future?

In spite of some difficulties (a number of community leaders offered their services to the armed forces), fifty-one groups were started, thirty-four studying "Canada and the Post-War World" and fifteen "Democracy Begins at Home," with two groups studying last year's course "What the War Means to Me." Although fairly small numbers were involved, Thomson believed that the social and intellectual value of the study-group was so great as to justify the Department's continuing support. Many "thoughtful and responsibly-minded" citizens in the province were now associated in study-groups. The Deloraine group, consisting of a Belgian Catholic priest, a radically-inclined United Church minister, the local Pool elevator man, a school inspector, banker and high school principal discussed "Canada and the Post-War World." These same men met on the local committees of the Victory Loan, Red Cross and Salvage campaigns. "Their relationship in the study-group," Thomson noted, "affected their other relationships in a positive way."
But not all communities had such coherent and activist study-groups. In Tillston, a small town tucked into the south-west corner of the province near the Saskatchewan border, the study-group dramatized a state of affairs characteristic of the community as a whole. Although a few were well-informed, they were not committed to any sustained collective action. Lacking effective leadership, the study-groups tended to fracture and split along individualistic lines. This was understandable, Rands contended, because Tillston showed the effects of years of severe drought and depression. The people felt isolated, both geographically and in interests. Rands thought that Tillston's attitude to the April 27 plebiscite on conscription [Are you in favour of releasing the government from any obligations arising out of past commitments restricting the methods of raising men for military services], was due to a lack of any real identification of themselves with Canada as a whole. "These are chiefly Anglo-Saxons. It is not only the recent Europeans who need to be Canadianized!"^{33}

A related positive development, Thomson observed, was that the best study-groups tended to become aware of themselves as a kind of unofficial community council. This was particularly true of the groups who studied "Democracy Begins at Home." In Gladstone, for instance, the stimulus to active community work had been so great that the studying tended to be neglected. The three Newdale study-groups conducted a substantial amount of research into the life of their community, past and present. These groups spent a good deal of their time canvassing the best means by which they themselves might initiate and carry through such projects as a youth recreational centre. Stan Rands thought that these study-groups had realized something fundamental
about their community: namely, that the
organization in existence for local self-
government, namely, a municipal council, has
become stereotyped as a method of getting certain
things done by certain people and is no longer
an organic expression of community feelings and
needs....They have grasped the key-function
which voluntary groups can and should exercise in
a democracy, namely formulating thinking on
community issues and bringing about appropriate
constructive action either by pressure on the
existing authorities or by voluntary action-
agencies ad hoc (such as a recreation-centre
committee).34

Developments in towns like Gladstone and Newdale were encouraging enough
that Thomson could conclude in his annual report for 1941-42 that
despite the draining away from rural communities of much of their best
human resources, rational democratic discussion of war issues could be
kept alive.

The study-group phenomenon presents educational historians with
some interpretative problems. The proliferation of study-groups on the
prairies, indeed throughout the country, is an important part of the
social context of the period. But it is exceedingly difficult to link
directly their existence and activities to social policy formation.
What difference did they really make in people's lives? Nonetheless,
examining the study-group phenomenon provides historians with a window
on prairie life. We can understand something of the living conditions
in rural towns and the issues that bothered people enough to come
together to solve their problems.

The 1941-42 season concluded with a regional conference of 125
delegates at Killarney on May 30 and 31. It consisted mainly of panel
discussions, but opened after a brief welcome from the mayor of
Killarney, with a speech by President Smith. He outlined the aims of
the university in its rural adult education program. Thomson spoke on adult education in time of war. From the opening session, and increasingly throughout the conference, as Thomson wrote in an article for the Winnipeg Free Press, it was evident that here was a body of citizens deeply concerned about the problems of local and national and world citizenship. Over and over again the discussion came around to two major issues: How can we help towards the winning of the war and of the peace? and, what can we do out of our own initiative and by the pooling of our own resources to build communities 'fit for heroes to return to'?

In the working sessions where the conference divided up according to the outline studied during the winter, the "Canada and the Post-War World" group discussed International Economic Co-operation and Federal Union versus the League of Nations. On hand as resource leaders were Prof. MacFarlane and Mr. Poole of the University's Political Economy department. In the other group, discussion centred around the questions: What kind of communities are we trying to create? What are the economic prospects for Western Canada? What is the function of the study-group in a community? Is the study-group more important for its intellectual benefits or for its effect on the quality of human relations; or as an exercise in what Prof. Clokie called one of the highest and most civilized of arts, the art of communication?

On the final day, Sunday afternoon, the conference met in general assembly to view the brilliant documentary, "The City," which was followed by a panel discussion on the problems of city versus country raised by the film. After that discussion, the threads of a day and a half of intensive talk and exchange of opinion were tied together in the final session—"Where do we go from here? Plans for next season."
Thomson reminded the delegates that their work and action would be creative in so far as it bore some intelligent relation to the significant events of our time—to the war, to the kind of future being shaped by the war, and to the actual community conditions of the present. Events in England, China, Russia and elsewhere showed that the victory of democracy was likely to coincide with a great revival and extension of democracy as a force in social and economic life.37

The discussion which followed revealed that the study-groups desired material which would assist their thinking about problems of reconstruction in Canada and give them guidance in regard to practical projects in the community. Significantly, the idea of the film as a most potent instrument of public education was seen as full of "rich possibilities." "Town meetings in every Manitoban town" was one of the closing cries—"town-meetings of the screen," and "town-meetings" to which the study-group would contribute its clear thinking and substantial knowledge.38

Although Thomson and Rands' energy was poured into organizing study-groups, the University of Manitoba's Adult Education office also carried on active programs in crafts and drama. In spite of unsettled conditions and the war's unusual demands upon people's time and energy, thirteen groups—nearly 250 persons—carried on project work in the arts and crafts. In Roblin, for instance, one group established a community crafts centre; a very successful effort had been made to enlist the New Canadian groups. In reviewing the year's work, Thomson felt that the Department's arts and crafts program had to emphasize the importance of home beautification.
It may be time for us to think of the broader aspects of the subject of art and home beautification and attempt to relate our work to community planning....We need colour and activity as a release from the gray gloom of war. We must have a program of art and crafts work arranged for our returned men who will need the mental-relief of work with their hands, to counteract the depression of their wartime experiences.39

Thomson concluded that the possibilities for craftwork seemed limitless for the development of an indigenous artistic consciousness.

The special aim of the 1941-42 season in drama was "to stimulate throughout the Province of Manitoba a wider appreciation of good plays and to assist technically in the matter of voice, acting, direction and stage craft." To accomplish these ends, Prof. John Russell, the chairman of the Drama Division, and his assistant Edith Sinclair, published "The Prairie Call-Boy," a mimeograph newsheet of eighteen pages, enlarged the Drama Library (it now consisted of 2,382 separate volumes) and prepared biographical material and synopses of plays for the eighteen play-reading groups. Twenty listening groups and nineteen play-production groups also functioned throughout the province. This activity did not fully satisfy Edith Sinclair, however. She believed that Thomson was not giving enough sympathetic support to both arts and crafts and drama.40 As John Russell openly admitted to President Smith in a letter written on July 13, 1942, Edith Sinclair was "entirely out of sympathy with Mr. Thomson's socialistic programme for Western Canada." Since she realized that work in her subject could not readily affiliate itself with his program and purpose, she resigned.41 Russell added that he knew that Thomson was not particularly sympathetic to Sinclair's ideas.

In fact, Thomson was opposed to Sinclair's urban "Little Theatre"
bias—producing plays that reflected other people's experiences and not the writing and production of plays with a regional setting, themes and characters. "There have been such plays," Thomson wrote in "The Prairie Call-Boy", "—one thinks of Gwen Pharis' *Still Stands the House* and two or three more—but so few that they hardly constitute a genuine body of living Prairie drama. Yet there is no doubt that that is the test of whether Theatre is really alive in any region."  

Thomson, it is likely, was familiar with the Workers' Theatre Movement that flourished in England and Scotland from 1928 to 1936. And one of the interests of the New Britain movement was in the development of regional folk cultures. Drawing on his knowledge of people's theatre, Thomson wondered if Western Canada might come, dramatically speaking, alive.

So long as people felt that the black soil of the Prairies was a natural resource to be exploited by the individual in his lust to 'get rich quick,' there could be no Prairie drama, because there was no building of real communities, no sense of the significance of life in the region: the group life as something larger than the individual life. So long, also, as farms remained isolated—each as far as possible from his neighbour—and neighbours were often 'foreigners' whom we hadn't really decided to accept, there could be no drama because there was only the thinnest and most meagre sense of community.

Thomson concluded his article by stating that post-war reconstruction would be empty of meaning "unless it means a revival of local initiative and responsibility, a new sense, for the people of the Prairies, that this Prairie country is theirs to build, that it is a country of fascinating, unprecedented experiment..."

Regarding Edith Sinclair's criticism of Thomson's "socialist programme," Smith wrote to John Russell that her views of Thomson's
socialism were unwarranted.

His programme has been approved by the Board of Governors, by the Carnegie Corporation through the renewed grant. The best endorsement of his programme has come from the Rockefeller Foundation. Two weeks ago he attended with George Ferguson of the Free Press a meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska, called by the Rockefeller people. He outlined his programme and John Marshall and Marshall's chief Mr. Stevens wrote to us and asked if we could give to Watson Thomson a six-week leave-of-absence to visit American Directors of Extension in Great Plains region and then with an American collaborator to be selected by him prepare a study-outline similar to his 'Democracy Begins at Home.' The Board of Governors, Carnegie and Rockefeller are not 'Red organizations.'

By far the most exciting development in the Department of Adult Education was the experimentation with documentary film as an educational tool. After brief experimentation in documentary film in the fall of 1941, Watson Thomson was soon convinced that very effective work could be done in the rural areas by using documentary films, especially those dealing with the war. Thomson was in touch by telephone with John Grierson and corresponded with the NFB. The Board was planning, in co-operation with the Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship, a wide scheme of Public Information in the rural areas.

On May 2, 1939 the Canadian parliament passed the National Film Act creating the NFB and John Grierson became its first film commissioner. From 1939 until 1945, when he would leave under a cloud of suspicion, the Film Board was under the inspired leadership of Grierson, the famous British documentary film-maker and producer. Grierson's world view had been shaped from the iron strands of Calvinism and Scottish moral philosophy. The son of a poor Scottish parson schoolmaster who never lost his feeling for the exploited
working class of the Clydeside, Grierson was passionately committed to the common good. After graduating from Glasgow University, where he had been the leading figure in the Socialist Club, Grierson did graduate work at the University of Chicago studying communications theory with Professor Charles Merriam. During the late 1920s the core of his theory crystallized in dialogue with Walter Lippman; Grierson rejected Lippman's pessimistic belief that the citizen had neither the time nor adequate information to make informed judgements on world affairs. All of Grierson's experimental work with documentary film was motivated by one central conviction: it was imperative, in a brutal world that had witnessed the Nazi's brilliant use of film for evil purposes, to "inform, to motivate and to involve people everywhere in the country in a grand common project of discussion, action and co-operation—and films were the best available tools to do the job." Education, for Grierson, was the "key to the mobilization of men's minds to right ends or wrong ends, to order or chaos;...If men's minds have not been mobilized aright; the educational process has not been good enough." Art, Grierson was fond of saying, was a hammer and not a mirror aimed at rousing the "civic heart and will."

The chief aim of the Dominion Film Commissioner and the Director of Public Information, Herbert Lash, was to present vividly the different aspects of Canada's war effort—to unite Canada's scattered and varied population in an informed support of her military actions abroad. The two theatrical film series (each released monthly) which emerged in Canada during the war were "Canada Carries On" and "The World in Action." These were group efforts directed by Stuart Legg, one of the pioneers in British documentary film-making. "Canada
Carries On" began in 1940. Although these films dwelt didactically on the themes of transportation and communications, they avoided hate-mongering, parochialism and vilification of the enemy. Instead, they stressed the importance of a broad military strategy. "The World in Action" series started in June 1942. This series had two main goals: 1) to relate local strategies to the global and 2) to influence and direct the political attitudes of North American audiences towards an internationally oriented post-war ethic.
individual creative citizenship and we must organize all communications which will serve to maintain it....And, in the process of creating our democratic system of communications, in bridging the gaps between citizen and community, citizen and specialist, specialist and specialist, we shall find we have in the ordinary course of honest endeavour made the picture of democracy we are seeking.\(^5\)

Like Grierson, Thomson was very keen to use films to stimulate action in communities. This commitment appealed to Rands very much; he too was convinced that drastic change was needed, for equality and richness of life depended on raising the consciousness of people in various communities so that they could solve their own problems.

George LeBeau, Jack Wilson and Will Dougall thought in the same terms as Rands and Thomson. As a result, Thomson and Rands threw themselves into film distribution work with "a good deal of enthusiasm," using a film as a stimulus to social change and social awareness and achieving a high degree of coordination between film circuits and the adult education program in Manitoba.\(^5\)

In late autumn the NFB gave Donald Buchanan the mandate to develop the rural circuits. Buchanan approached existing 16 mm. film distributors (university departments, audio-visual bureaus in Departments of Education) and appointed the heads of selected agencies, usually Extension Departments, as NFB provincial representatives. These provincial agents were given authority to direct the rural circuit operations during an experimental six month period. Three regional agents (of whom Thomson and, from March 1, 1942, Rands was one) were instructed to recruit operators at salaries of $130/month, plus travelling expenses and car mileage. Almost miraculously, in January 1942 thirty rural circuits came into operation. Public
response to the film program was so great that, in May 1942, the NFB decided to continue and expand the program the following September. In Manitoba a beginning was made on January 5. From that day until the end of the season in April the travelling units operated continuously giving two shows a day at five points a week. Monthly attendance figures for Manitoba give some indication of the scope of the NFB rural circuits: January 29,447; February 32,704; March 29,098; April 27,960. During April a fifth circuit was opened up in co-operation with the Manitoba Pool Elevators. A hundred points in the province were now covered.

From the beginning the University of Manitoba had recognized the possibilities of using film as an instrument of mass adult education. But, Thomson noted rather ironically, the pedagogical form of the great new instruments of education posed serious problems for democratic educators.

No, our reservations about national propaganda-education refer more justifiably to its form rather than to its content. In the nature of things, it uses the great instruments—radio and film chiefly—which appeal to the masses of people in their generality. And, again in the very nature of things, the characteristic feature of these instruments is that they are mechanized and that they demand no active personal response at the receiving end. Just about the time it began to seem we had realized, as a first principle of pedagogy, that the best learning was by doing, we produce new and irresistibly attractive instruments such as the movies and the radio which involve less doing than ever!

How could film be used as an active pedagogical instrument? The solution Thomson decided upon, and Rands implemented, was to elaborate a feature of these film-shows which had been introduced from the beginning
by the none-too-dynamic Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship (CCEC). The CCEC prepared lecture-notes written around the main film of the month to assist a local speaker in preparing a short "citizenship" address which would be given during the evening performance.

Thomson's proposal, which eventually worked, in his opinion, with marked success at many points, was to transform the single speaker's stilted talk to a community forum discussion with maximum audience participation. These discussions, initiated in thirty of the communities on the film-circuits, proved most successful where there the study-group decided to take responsibility for guiding the thinking of the community at large. In each community, the procedure and success of the forum varied according to the local conditions and personnel.

In Beausejour, for instance, visited by Rands on April 10, though inspector Warkentin and school principal Burzminski had done some preparatory work towards holding a forum discussion, both men lacked the conviction needed to bring the experiment off. By scouting around the town with Mr. Burzminski, Rands brought to the platform a very mixed group: the Polish school principal, a young Jewish lawyer, a Ukrainian teacher and an English banker. This group found it difficult to come to grips in any collective way with the problems raised. The conscription plebiscite was the question at issue, some excellent points were made, but in an individualistic way and not as a product of collective discussion. Rands concluded that

in order to make these public forums successful, it was almost a prerequisite that the group taking part in the panel should meet in advance for some preparation. Without some understanding of a goal, and the means of achieving it, discussion tends to lack continuity and direction. The formation of such a study-group core for the forums at Beausejour will take time but the men are there...56
Other communities, in contrast, managed to have more carefully rehearsed panels. Nevertheless, in most cases film forum discussion was freer than the skeptics had anticipated. Through the film-forum, Thomson concluded, a new type of movie-experience could be created, and a new version of that most democratic North American institution, the town meeting, could be brought to life. For his part, Rands thought that the idea of discussion has taken root well at a number of places. Only the limitations of time prevent the rapid and large-scale development of the community-forum idea.... Never has there been such a wonderful opportunity to introduce a large number of people to adult education activities. Exhilarated with the results of the film-forum innovation, Rands wrote to Donald Buchanan: "The film-forum experiment which we talked of when you were here shows promise of remarkable success. Taking a lead from Mr. Thomson, I attempted this at a number of points which I was able to visit on the day of the film-showings." Commenting on the discussion following the showing of "Tools of War," Rands wrote: Very constructive consideration of social issues relating to the war not only stimulating general interest in public issues, but increasing the people's feeling of the possibility of taking more initiative and responsibility in their own communities for making democracy more effective. I believe we have something in this set-up of great potentiality in utilizing the documentary film as a basis for a vital kind of democratic adult education. So, apparently did Buchanan, who wrote to Donald Cameron in early April. It is proving possible to make the film-showing and accompanying discussion a real community undertaking sponsored by a responsible committee.... My concern is to build up in as many centres as possible the kind of local
community and community-spirit about the whole venture, that will ensure the fullest development of such features.60

Canada was on the verge, it seemed, of developing an indigenous technique of mass education of great significance. But it was also clear that the rural circuits were not as effective as they could be. During a hectic four day visit to Ottawa (June 14–17), Thomson expressed his concern to Ross McLean (in the absence of John Grierson), Don Buchanan and other officials of the NFB that the "Canada Carries On" films were not "well-adjusted to the interests and mentality of the rural people nor are they readily conducive to the kind of community-forum discussions we wish to encourage." Visiting Dr. Barton, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Thomson registered his conviction that, in general, public information regarding the war (especially in films) had not been related "vitally and effectively" to the western farmer. "We need more films regarding the farmer, especially the western farmer, and his responsibilities in time of war; but the Film Board has to await the initiative of the Department of Agriculture."61 This criticism was taken to heart by the NFB.

Two practical problems presented themselves at the outset in the monthly film showings of the NFB rural circuits: there were not enough local people trained in discussion leadership, and few members of panels or discussions had an opportunity to view the film in advance of the public showings. Recognizing these problems, as well as others, the NFB commissioned the Macdonald College Adult Education service to establish some guidelines for the circuits. In August Stan Rands went to Quebec to meet with Eleanor and Alex Sim. They concluded that "discussion outlines," which would give some idea of the film's contents and suggest
lines of argument on the issues raised, should be prepared. To overcome
the lack of skilled leaders and the general unfamiliarity with dis-
cussion methods, they also suggested that "discussion trailers" be made
to follow specific films. The trailers would show how either a panel, or
a general audience might embark on discussion of some of the issues
presented in the film. Thus, the Sims and Rands argued, when several
thousand film showings were given each month across the country, these
devices would provide some impetus toward widespread use of film-forums.
These suggestions (and several others) were carried to Grierson and
Buchanan in September 1942.62

There was very little rest for the rural educational evangelists
in the summer of 1942. Thomson was deeply involved in preparations for
the ambitious Northern Plains study and Rands and LeBeau were busy
preparing an adult education exhibit to be taken to fourteen Manitoban
fairs from June 29 to July 24. The exhibit consisted of handicrafts
(including fifty articles loaned by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild),
samples for Art Appreciation groups, displays of bound sets of the radio
series "Consider the Play" and study course outlines (as well as a large
selection of books and pamphlets). The most prominent feature of the
exhibit from the standpoint of drawing the crowd was the showing of
documentary films, largely the war films—"Churchill's Island," "London
Can Take It," and the "Road to Victory"—issued either by the NFB or the
British Ministry of Information. To make these showings possible, a
30' by 30' marquee tent was used for the exhibit. In seventeen days of
fairs ninety-six programs were shown with a total attendance of 7,211.
Each audience was also given a short talk on the purpose of the exhibit
and the nature of the adult education program of the University of
Manitoba. Attention was directed to the handicraft exhibits on the walls, to books and study materials. The dramatic and emotional atmosphere, produced by the war films, allowed Rands to challenge people to take a keener interest in public questions.

Though it was difficult to assess fully the impact of this novel experiment, Rands thought that probably in no other way could so many people have been brought into contact in so short a time with the adult education facilities of the university. At all places, except the Brandon Provincial fair, enough was accomplished, in one way or another, to make the venture worthwhile. Unlike the agricultural fairs in the small towns, the midway at the Brandon Fair had become the main centre of attraction, so much so that the "whole event has much more the spirit of a carnival than of a fair." The Fair's management charged a high concession fee and placed their tent in an out-of-the-way corner. At those fairs where there was no midway, the adult education tent was outstandingly conspicuous, and in some cases, the chief centre of attention.

Without the film showings, however, the adult education exhibit would have reached a fraction of those who did come. Rands thought the film showings had successfully stimulated awareness of the war, enticing people to get in touch with the program. The exhibits of handicrafts attracted attention from many female visitors; a number were interested enough to talk of forming groups in their own communities. Less noticeable and effective, the drama exhibit led few people to make any inquiries. And the study course, too, produced in plain mimeograph form, did not attract wide attention, though hundreds scrutinized the free loan books on war topics. Well over one hundred books and pamphlets
were sold. Rands did not think that the exhibits had much effect in creating new interest in people. The exhibits were too lacking in dramatic pointedness and excitement to accomplish that; but people already interested in handicrafts, drama or current affairs were offered guidance and assistance.

For Rands the kind of results which justified the tour beyond question occurred in those towns were a definite personal relationship was established with some of the people. In Arborg Rands and LeBeau made new contacts and in Rossburn, they developed further their contacts from previous visits. But Rands' chief criticism of the whole performance was that the mechanics of handling the exhibit, with too small a staff, left far too little time for establishing lasting relationships with people towards developing adult educational activities in their communities.

Despite some stirrings at the grassroots and glimpses of the potential for social action in a number of communities, the necessary conditions for a rural movement for fundamental social change did not seem present. Unlike the Antigonish movement, where study was closely linked with concrete economic projects, Thomson's strategy was one or two steps removed from action. Recognizing the limitations of the study-group as change agent, Thomson sought other means of involving more Manitoban citizens in rational discussion of war issues. To reach the masses, Thomson promoted the NFB rural circuits and devised, with Rands' assistance, the film-forum as a democratic pedagogic device. By the end of the summer of 1942 Thomson could only hope that his Department of Adult Education was setting in motion a "consciousness-raising" process that would lead Manitobans to challenge the status quo.
and begin building more "fully co-operative" communities and regions.
It did not, however, look overly promising.
CHAPTER FIVE

FOOTNOTES

1 The Canadians favoured some Canadian adaptation of the Scandinavian scheme. Residential forms of adult education did not catch on in either the United States or Canada. But the Canadians, like the Scandinavian folk school proponents, wanted to precipitate a "cultural revitalization" movement. For insight into the American experience, see Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Education Movement in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), ch. 4, "The Development of Institutions for the Education of Adults in the Modern Era (1921-1961)."


7 See Appendix to section on Manitoba in Peter Sandiford, ed., *Adult Education in Canada."

8 "University Extension Programmes and Budgets" (no author, 1937), Sidney Smith Papers, University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg (hereafter SSP), box 10, file 1 (hereafter 10-1).

9 Sidney Smith to R. Lester, February 9, 1942, SSP 50-4. See also Report of Fine Arts Committee of Manitoba, "Manitoba Enters the Field," *Adult Learning*, March 1939.

10 Speechly letter, SSP 10-1.


17. Notes on visits to south-west corner of province, SSP 22-3.

18. Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, February 2, 1941, Roslyn Road co-operative house papers in my possession (hereafter RRP).

19. Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, February 20, 1941, RRP.

20. Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, February 26, 1941, RRP.


22. Will Conyers, "Brief History of the Phoenix Club," in Will Conyers Papers, in my possession (hereafter WCP). Watson Thomson to Edmonton group, Sun. 26th, the 'Y,' RRP.

23. Isabella Dougall to M. Welton, December 1981. She wrote: "Watson was a man who was always where things were happening; he also was a man who made things happen. He was knowledgeable about the political scene and world events. He was dynamic, full of new ideas. He instilled self-confidence in others and encouraged people to break out of their ruts and to try new roles....He encouraged people to make the most of themselves and by so doing they would make a better contribution to the society in which they lived. He had a great love for people and inspired trust." Her husband, Will Dougall, joined the NFB in 1943 and was later appointed Supervisor for Northwestern Ontario in 1946. Will belonged to the Phoenix Club and was part of the 139 Roslyn Road group (although he did not live there). He knew J.S. Woodsworth and John Grierson personally.

24. Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, May 6, 1941, RRP.


29 "Report of Study Group Progress (January-April 1941)," SSP 10-1. See also University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1941-42.

30 In the year ending April 30, 1941, forty-six new co-operative charters were issued in Manitoba (The Credit Union Way, September 1943, p. 12).

31 University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1941-42.

32 University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Adult Education Committee, minutes, October 27, 1941, SSP 10-1.


34 Stan Rands to Sidney Smith, May 8, 1942, SSP 36-2.


37 Black scrapbook, WTP 8-2.

38 Black scrapbook, WTP 8-2.

39 University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1941-42.

40 Edith Sinclair to Sidney Smith, October 23, 1942, SSP 10-2.

41 John Russell to Sidney Smith, July 13, 1942, SSP 10-2.

42 "I had a very good talk with Arnold's son at Fargo (in the absence of his picturesque and famous father) which confirmed me in all my anti-urban Little Theatre suspicions" (Watson Thomson to Sidney Smith, July 25, 1942, SSP 36-3). Copy of Thomson's article, "Prospects for Prairie Drama," in SSP 50-2. See Geraldine Anthony, Gwen Pharis Ringwood (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), ch. 2, "ProfK Koch and the Folk Plays" for discussion of origins of indigenous prairie theatre.


Watson Thomson, "Prospects for Prairie Drama."

Sidney Smith to John Russell, June 24, 1942, SSP 10-2.


Dooley Gray interviews with Stan Rands, George LeBeau and Will Dougall, c. 1968-1970, NFB Archives, Montreal. Stan Rands wrote to Jack Wilson: "Not only the rural circuits but the whole Film Board venture is at a most critical point in that a machinery has now been established, techniques developed and a personnel built up—even the attention of the country has been won, and yet the really vital decisive steps are yet to be taken that will relate production of films intimately to their distribution and use, and relate both closely to the needs of communities and of the groups which make up the nation—so that films may really be a medium in an adult education, social reconstruction movement that will both express 'the people' and give leadership to them. I know that this dream has been a very vital part of your own thinking and feeling, Jack" (Rands to Wilson, June 20, 1943).

John Grierson, "Searchlight on Democracy," Food for Thought, April 1944, p. 4.

Gray interview with Stan Rands.

Gray, Movies for the People, p. 41.

University of Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1941-42, notes on film circuits A-E.

Stan Rands to Sidney Smith, May 8, 1942, SSP 36-2.

University of Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1941-42.

Rands to Smith, May 8, 1942, SSP 36-2; University of Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1941-42.

Rands to Smith, May 8, 1942, SSP 36-2.


Watson Thomson, Report on Ottawa Visit—June 14-17, SSP 36-1.


In late 1942 and 1943 the war entered a new phase. Rommel's attempted breakthrough to Alexandria had failed and, in November 1942, Field Marshall Montgomery had won the battle of El Alamein. Shortly after, Allied forces landed in French North Africa. If the Allied war machine was gradually gaining momentum, so were the progressive forces within Canada. The Depression had weakened faith in free enterprise; war and collectivist controls had restored a prosperity of sorts and a sense of common purpose. To many the importance of the rough equality of wartime seemed to demonstrate the real possibility of social justice in the post-war world. Unlike the pessimistic generation that emerged from the First World War, many Canadians were confident that "collective action could and should create a far more stable and equitable society." In Reginald Whitaker's words, "The war brought with it many changes in public attitudes towards politics and political values, not the least important of which was the striking shift to the left in public opinion."

Popular demand for a new social order reflected itself in the dramatic increase in support for the CCF. In 1941 the B.C. CCF had won a plurality of votes, forcing the Liberals and Conservatives into a coalition and becoming the official opposition. In the York-South by-election of February 1942, described by historian J. Granatstein as the turning-point in Canadian politics, Joe Noseworthy, an unknown high school teacher, defeated Arthur Meighen, the regal leader of the
Conservative Party. And in the Ontario election of 1943 the CCF became, under the leadership of the scholarly "Ted" Joliffe, the official opposition. In 1944 Saskatchewan elected the first democratic socialist government in North America.

From the ruling federal Liberal party's perspective, the high tide of CCF popularity was only a symptom of a massive shift in public opinion toward the left—a shift which was, on a much smaller scale, even sweeping a few Communists to electoral success in some of the larger cities. But the context was broader than Canada alone. Throughout the Western world, with the apparent exception of the U.S., a radical political trend was emerging out of the war—a trend which was later to result in the defeat of Churchill by the Labour party in Britain at the war's end and was to establish the French and Italian Communist parties as mass parties of national electoral importance.

By the fall of 1943, the Liberal government appeared headed into a political abyss; indeed, in the late years of the war it seemed that Canadian politics might change significantly. In theoretical terms, at this historical juncture, both the "accumulation and legitimation functions of the state were in question."

Since the outbreak of the war in 1939 Thomson had been deeply concerned about the kind of social order that might emerge after the shooting ended. As a man of the left, he saw promising, if erratic, evidence that many Canadians longed for a more stable and equitable society. Thomson was preoccupied, one is tempted to say obsessed, with the need to mobilize Canadians to reflect profoundly on post-war reconstruction. He was particularly committed to awakening western Canadians to understand the peculiar nature and needs of their own region.

Nor did Thomson find it all surprising that the present war, being
a struggle in which the very existence of democracy was jeopardized, was also a time when adult education had to accept changes which altered its character and might even transform it out of existence, at least so far as any liberal understanding of the term was concerned. The depression decade had undermined traditional liberal forms of adult education (a fact also pointed to by Grierson) as "tendenciousness of one sort or another" undermined the "straight, factual objectivity beloved of scholarship." When the war broke out, Thomson recalled thinking to himself that adult education was finished. But, very quickly, new currents began to set in: the CBC's Labour Forum, the Farm Radio Forum, educational material emanating from the War Information Board (WIB) as well as the Information Bureau in Ottawa and the NFB rural circuits. Adult education found itself drawn into the national preoccupation, compelled to gear itself to the single-purposed national drive and to utilize instruments and materials related to this central national purpose.5

How did Thomson assess the effects of the close linkage of adult education with national unity? To be sure, the horizons of many had been widened. Because of the National Farm Radio Forum, Thomson maintained, there was now "more recognition of the complexity of social relations in which the farmer's problem is embodied." But much of what was happening was not education at all, but propaganda. Thomson's reservations about propaganda lay more with its form than content. The great new instruments of radio and film, unless pedagogical innovations were developed, could easily contribute, because of the one-way flow of communication, to the depersonalization so evident in the modern corporation with its "tens of thousands of workers,...time-clocks and
assembly-line methods." The evolution of the film-forum, Thomson contended, could turn the "one-way traffic of the mass-conditioning process into the two-way traffic of a sturdy democracy," bringing "active participation and personal contribution back into the picture."

Adult education conceived of as either vocational training for the individual or as "objective" fact-gathering was now, more than ever, "overwhelmed by a type of adult education coloured by collective purpose and designed to issue in collective action." But, Thomson asked, what kind of collective action? Adult education faced two choices: one road lead unquestionably to the totalitarian state.

Thither, and nowhere else, will drift and inertia lead us, for all the characteristic instruments and institutions of our age make for the creation of the mass-man responsive only, in a sub-human automatism, to the crude stimuli of a centrally-controlled propaganda machine.

The social goal on the other road would be that minimum of central control and planning necessary not only to preserve the national society from disintegration but also to create those orderly and progressive conditions out of which can proceed further devolution of authority and control, the stimulation of free and creative impulses from below, and the growth of self-sustaining individual personality.

Thomson was convinced—and proclaimed so in numerous speeches, talks to community groups and articles in popular magazines—that the shape of the world had to be decided now. What kind of post-war would people want, and what kind was coming? he continually queried his audiences. In an address to the CCF Aircraft Lodge No. 719 in Fort William on June 19, 1942 Thomson said that he had just returned from Ottawa profoundly saddened by the blatant inadequacy of the outlook of the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, appointed by an order-in-council
in late February 1941. They think, he stated, in terms of public works projects, but not of a new pattern for society. It is not right to send men to their death, as ours are going, that we might receive public works with which to keep us quiet on some pittance or another.9

What Canada needed was a forthright stand for democracy in terms of basic human principles and a new vision of the world. It must be the new era and not the old for which "we stand and give ourselves."
The youth of today, he told the National Council of the YMCA in February 1943, must be able to "look forward to a new society...based on a foundation of new ethics, new economics, new politics, and new education,..."10 "It was possible," Thomson thought,
to be both visionary and practical about the future. But the element of vision had to be stated in the form of objectively and universally valid social principles. These principles would then serve as stimulating goals in regard to the whole world crisis and at the same time as criteria for the solution of immediate problems which does not widen the gulf between opposing economic classes, but begins to bridge it.

Thomson wondered if such principles could be related together to form the "germ-seed of a pattern of a New Order which is neither Hitler's nor Stalin's, and as such initiate the process of integrating such a democratic society as Canada?"11

Drawing on the dialectical method ("above and between opposites") learned from Mitrinovic during the New Britain days, Thomson suggested that there were two normative principles that ought to guide post-war reconstruction. The first, the principle of function, articulated by several European guild socialists,12 provided reconstructionists with a principle that cut across interest group subjectivity. In essence, the principle of function shifted attention to the tasks to be accomplished
communally in organizations and away from the "right" of any group to dominate the other. The whole of industry, for example, must ultimately justify itself to the larger society in terms of service. Considering the application of this principle to the problem of economic conflict in Canada, Thomson argued that this principle envisaged:

a type of economic organization in which the power-conflict between an employer-class and an employee-class is replaced by a functional partnership in the interests of service to the community. It must also, by the standard of the principle of function, be one in which, in regard to major questions of policy, there is neither the arbitrary decision of the private owner nor the interference of a bureaucracy: for above all there must be 'know-how.' Is there an 'above-and-between' way in this argument between arbitrary enterprise and 'the dead hand of bureaucracy interfering in business'? There surely is. The functional answer is: self-government in industry.¹³

Some orthodox Marxist thinkers might have dismissed "above-and-between" as so much romantic obfuscation of the inherent conflict between Capital and Labour. But Thomson thought that the war had actually created, in the new labour-management committees, the germ of a more functional relationship and equal status for the workers. "Some day," he wrote in The Canadian Railway Employees' Monthly, we might see these processes carried forward still further to real profit-sharing and a national economic council of labour union representatives, managerial representatives and government. In such ways can come a progressive socialization, a central planning and a social control of industry which are at every point thoroughly and vigorously democratic. What is needful is the seizing of every opportunity to make economic life democratic now—in the factories, the department stores, and the farms—and to demand the extension of the area of public control till every monopoly corporation and financial trust and banking-house has to render account of its stewardship before the bar of the citizens or their chosen representatives.¹⁴
Another universally valid social principle, Thomson asserted, was the principle of collective responsibility. "We are our brother's keeper; that we are inescapably interdependent; that there is a mean between the opposites of a parasitic dependence and a neurotic insistence on independence."15 The right to complete independence for the individual and an isolationist policy for nations, must be renounced explicitly as contrary to ethics, psychology, and practical political science. Committed, ultimately, to a federated world of interdependent nation-states, Thomson saw an urgent need for mutual understanding between Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, for the eradication of colonialism in the oppressed Third World and the elimination of racism throughout the globe.16

To work actively for the ideal of global brotherhood, Thomson joined the executive of the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society. In April 1943, with the Great Powers literally forced against their will to acknowledge responsibility for solving the Jewish refugee question, Thomson offered his skills as publicist in the fight against anti-Semitism to the Winnipeg branch of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees (CNCR).

Passionately convinced that the shape of the world to come had to be decided upon now, Thomson launched the Northern Plains project in the summer of 1942. This study-action project enabled Thomson to particularize his views on post-war reconstruction. The purpose of the study was to search for "answers to broad questions of policy and action which have been rising in progressive minds for years and are crystallizing in the crucible of war."17

Unlike the NFB rural circuits and the Citizens' Forum, initiated in
the 1943-44 season, the Northern Plains study focussed on a particular region of Canada and the U.S.: the area bounded by Brandon, Manitoba; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Lethbridge, Alberta; Livingston, Montana; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Greely, Colorado; Hastings, Nebraska; Aberdeen, South Dakota and Jamestown, North Dakota. The premise of the study was that a region needed to find its proper character and distinctive meaning, not in order to "assert itself against other regions, but in order, to give its best contribution: the particular kind of production (including art and social services) which it is uniquely fitted to make to the larger life of the nation and the world." Farm movement leaders, agricultural activists and academics in the U.S. and Canada greeted this idea with enthusiasm.

One of the reasons for this enthusiasm, Norman Smith suggested in a Western Farm Leader editorial, was the "nation-wide recognition of the role which the farm people are playing in the struggle to defeat the enemy..." Many feared for the "position of Agriculture in the post-war economy in this country" and were anxious to "invoke major policy discussions on the future of the Plains region at the grass-roots community level." The Northern Plains study, then, aimed at arriving at a description of the region, an enumeration of its problems and their likely solution. By this means it was thought that the people of the region might eventually come to a better understanding of their situation and of ways of improving it.

It appears that the idea for such a regional study had been discussed in a series of conferences called by the offices of the Rockefeller Foundation's program in the humanities. At the second such conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska in June 1942 it was decided to press
ahead with the project. Much of the original initiative for the project came from Watson Thomson. Sidney Smith granted Thomson a leave of absence for July 15 to August 31. The Rockefeller Foundation approved $2500 for the project towards expenses for a four month period beginning on July 15. The grant was to cover travel and cost of mimeographing materials for testing in actual extension work; Watson Thomson was to visit North and South Dakota, Missouri, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana through July and August to gather materials. A preliminary manuscript was to be completed by the end of September; in the latter part of September, a meeting would be convened in Saskatoon to discuss critically the manuscript before its final completion, and experimental use in rural study-groups. Sidney Smith saw the Northern Plains study as having "importance and significance to the Great Plains Region and to American-Canadian relations, not only for the days of reconstruction, but also in wartime, when international understanding and co-operation are so essential." Watson Thomson married Mary Jackson on July 12, 1942—an occasion celebrated by 139 Roslyn Road on a little farm outside Winnipeg. Shortly after, Watson and Mary Thomson left on their whirlwind honeymoon tour of the north-west states to gather materials, make contacts with agricultural workers and discover something of the area's culture. By early August their sight-seeing and study trip through N. Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota was completed. With Dr. Carl Kraenzel and Glen Craig, assisted by E.A. Corbett for about a week in mid-August, Thomson got down to the business of preparing a manuscript for the Saskatoon conference at Montana State College in Bozeman. The draft was
completed on August 25, 1942.

Kraenzel and Craig were well-prepared for the study of rural life in the Plains. A son of the former Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Alberta, H.A. Craig, Glen Craig had grown up in an atmosphere of discussion about drought area feed, seed relief and free freight. After completing his B.A. at the University of Alberta and obtaining an M.A. at McGill University, he returned to Alberta where he taught for two years. He also spent eighteen months doing land utilization studies of the "Dry Belt" for the organization set up to administer the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation program. In 1939, after graduate work at Harvard University, he went to The State College in Bozeman to teach Agricultural Economics.

Like Craig, Carl Kraenzel had deep roots in prairie life. Born on a prairie farm near Hebron in the western part of N. Dakota, Kraenzel grew up during the years when farmers in general were passing through gravely difficult times. He obtained his B.A. in Economics and Sociology in 1930. In 1933 he received his Ph.D in Rural Sociology from the University of Wisconsin. Since 1935, Kraenzel had been teaching at Montana State College, doing research at the Montana Experimental Station specializing in population characteristics and immigration in Montana; relief and dependency; sugar beet farm labour conditions; community organization among farm people and family living conditions of low-income farmers.  

The three authors formed an able team: Thomson's social theory clearly evident in the overall orientation of the study; Kraenzel and Craig's intimate knowledge of the details of prairie community life and economics provided the scholarly underpinnings. With the rough draft complete, the authors met in Saskatoon at a conference convened by
David Stevens, Director for the Humanities of the Rockefeller Foundation, who had invited a number of Canadian and American farm leaders, agricultural specialists, economists and sociologists as well as adult educators to discuss the book. Conspicuously absent from this gathering were female activists in the farm movement. After the conference, Corbett presided for four days over an editorial committee meeting which went over the study page by page.  

By October 1942 *The Northern Plains in a World of Change*, published under the joint auspices of the Northern Great Plains Agricultural Council of the U.S. and the CAAE, was ready for use in study-groups in Alberta, Sasktchewan, Manitoba and the north-western states. The study actively encouraged study-groups to investigate conditions in their local areas; the findings were to be submitted to the authors for their guidance in future studies. In 1943 Stan Rands was given the task of preparing a report assessing the study's impact throughout the region. This "Report on the Use of the Study in the Canadian Prairie Provinces" was completed in December 1944 and provides valuable insight into the social consciousness and political currents of the Great Plains region, grass-roots responses of ordinary farm people to the issues confronting them and the role of adult education in the process of planning for the people.

In many ways a remarkable document, given the haste and the complexity of the politics of its preparation, *The Northern Plains in a World of Change* eschewed a merely factual setting-out of the issues and problems facing Plains dwellers in favour of an advocacy stance. "People are ready to consider their wider responsibility to the world, the nation, the region and the community," the authors declared,
"and the time is ripe to deal with these things called depression, international relations and war." "Plans for social reconstruction, after the victory of democracy in the field of battle," the authors argued, are the business of those who say on the Home Front....There must be plans for the people who plow the earth, for people who raise some of the best wheat and livestock in the world. There must be plans for the Northern Plains and they must come primarily from the pooled experiences and the earnest thinking of those who have enjoyed and endured life in this region.25

The Study was divided into four parts: I—World Issues and the Plains Farmer; II—The Uniqueness of the Plains; III—Plains Agriculture at the Crossroads and IV—Challenge to the Plainsman.

Central to the report was its frankly regional approach. Setting their position against "individualist and sectionalist democracy," the authors argued that a region needed to find its proper character and distinctive meaning (which was rooted in an unique geography, modes of production, social institutions and culture), not in order to assert itself against other regions, but in order to give its unique contribution to the larger life of the nation and the world. In a democratic nation, there was no place for an exploited hinterland, for the blind submission of one region to another or for kindly paternalism. Rejecting a narrowly-based class perspective and pressure-group politics, the authors contended that one of the essentials of a sound policy of reconstruction was the establishment of an equitable relationship between all productive groups within the region. But the authors also asserted that the "concentration of the control of capital—a long-standing tendency—has progressed even further in the war economy and
this will not be easy to change." One of the major problems prairie dwellers had to confront was the question of the relationship between agriculture and industry and between the primary producer and big business. The authors were convinced that any democracy which functioned mainly by the "interplay of vested interests, and the sectional politics of the pressure group, is incapable of playing any successful part in building an international co-operative world."

National and international policies needed to be built up from a regional base, and regional life had to be understood in the context of national and international trends.26

Within the context of regional development, the Northern Plains study invited its readers to ask what kind of rural community life was compatible with the present trends toward increased urbanization, mechanization and ever more widely diffused cosmopolitanism. After considering briefly some of the factors which had affected the growth of rural community life, the authors observed that the "region, in the sense of being a dynamic force, must become instrumental in building the kind of socially vital and culturally rich communities which are possible and fitting to the special conditions of the Northern Plains."

This latter concern, indeed, lay at the heart of The Northern Plains in a World of Change. Many of the changes advocated in techniques of farming, patterns of land settlement and ownership and forms of local government were aimed at eliminating the isolation of many farmers. The machinery proposed for the social control and planned direction of farming operations by Thomson, Kraenzel and Craig included in every sphere the formation of local committees or neighbourhood councils. And these councils would, somehow, be integrally related
with national and international procedures, giving public policies a
final democratic basis in the face-to-face personalized relations of
the primary group. 27

One of the advantages expected from the "area diversification"
plan, for example, was the establishment of "more co-operative
relations within the community as a natural accompaniment of this
form of land use." In the chapter on "Social Institutions in the
Plains", the authors pointed out that one of the reasons for the social
disintegration in the region was that the development of intimate
community relations was prevented by the arrival, very soon, after
agricultural settlement took place, of modern means of automobile
transportation, diverting the allegiance of settlers to a variety of
distant centres. 28

Building communities integrally related to the region was the
chief outcome of the social changes recommended in the text. The
particular problems discussed in Parts II ("The Uniqueness of the
Plains") and III ("Plains Agriculture at the Crossroads") were
regarded as ancillary to the central issue of developing community.
But the monopolistic system of finance and marketing practices placed
a formidable barrier before agricultural communities. And as long as
the Plains farmer was so far removed, geographically and economically,
from the larger centres of industry, he would not attain a just price
either for his primary commodities or for the goods purchased from
Chicago, Detroit or Toronto. Regarding the prickly question of land
ownership, the authors perceived the issue as "not so much whether there
should be private or public or co-operative ownership of land but rather
how the land which now already is in private, public or co-operative
hands can be controlled by the individual, the region and the nation."

For Thomson, Craig and Kraenzel, then, the concern lay with the utilization of land by local communities in the light of regional and national objectives. "Eventually," the authors hoped,

farmers, labour and industry will be forced to recognize the interests of each other, and their common interests, to plan their fundamental basis of operation. When each attempts to use its monopoly of power of price control and restriction to gain more from the other, usually at the expense of the consumer and taxpayer, the economy cannot operate to full capacity.

Stan Rands assembled his "Report on the Use of the Study in the Canadian Prairie Provinces" from a detailed analysis of the reports received from groups and individuals and by visiting with study-groups after they had spent a period of time with the book during the winters of 1942-43 and 1943-44. These discussions with individuals who had previously sent in written comments provided opportunity for detailed checking and for estimating the effect of the book on the thinking of the individual reader as distinct from study-group members. Although the majority of the groups visited were in Manitoba, Rands was able to visit individuals in all three Prairie provinces who had read or commented on the book. Rands also discussed major issues with representative individuals in the Prairie provinces, including officials of the Dominion and Provincial Departments of Agriculture, leaders of farmers' movements, newspaper editors and a wide range of rural townspeople and farmers. By this means Rands was able to check the general line of thinking in the Northern Plains against the thinking of a representative cross-section of prairie people.

The Northern Plains in a World of Change did not secure very wide
use for study purposes. Rands attributed this failure to the distractions of war, shortage of farm labour, gasoline rationing and in part to the smallness, at the best of times, of the numbers of people who were interested in serious study. But the small number of groups, Rands thought, was due in large part to the lack of real promotion of the study in the Canadian section of the Northern Plains. Although actively promoted in Manitoba, in Saskatchewan and Alberta promotion depended on Donald Cameron and K.W. Gordon, the assistant director of the University of Saskatchewan Extension Department. They were not fully identified with the project from the beginning and gave only half-hearted support. Rands concluded that no decisive benefits were reaped from the consideration of the book by leading individuals of the region. There had been no attempt to bring such individuals together for discussion of further programs of education and action. 

Nonetheless reactions to the study provide historians with a cultural barometer to measure the social consciousness of the Prairie region during the war years. Though there was generally favourable response to the kind of search for new social patterns advocated in the book, a small but important minority of individual readers disagreed with the general approach of *The Northern Plains in a World of Change*. They felt that the economic factor had been overemphasized and that more attention should have been given to the need for improving farm techniques. However, only one commentator made clear and explicit criticism of the study's co-operative, anti-capitalist orientation.

The views expressed by leaders of farm organizations and by the farmers themselves, particularly by study-groups including farmers, contrasted sharply. Farmers, Rands claimed, usually presented a
balanced appreciation of a diversity of factors and something of a broad social approach. The leaders of farm organizations, on the other hand, tended to express a narrow, pressure-group point of view. But Rands thought it only natural that an official spokesman for a producer co-operative like L. Nesbitt of the Alberta Wheat Pool should criticize *The Northern Plains in a World of Change* on the ground that its discussions ranged over too wide a field instead of concentrating on markets and farm income.\(^{32}\)

A number of adult educationists objected that the book was dominated by a particular social philosophy. This, they felt, undermined its educational value. One member of the University of Manitoba faculty responded by saying that to him "Adult Education in method and philosophy is the antithesis of indoctrination and propaganda." He was concerned that citizens should become "intelligent co-operators." But he did not think that educators ought to plead for the Wheat Pool any more than defend the Grain Exchange.\(^{33}\)

Not all professors felt that the book was unsuited to study-groups because it did not simply present the "facts" and leave members of study-groups to draw their own conclusions. A professor of history included it with Webbs' *The Great Plains* as a text in a course on "The Northern Great Plains." A supervisor of schools wished to use the book in the Social Studies curriculum of his province. A senior high school teacher of Social Studies used it satisfactorily as a basis for teaching economics. An extension worker in the same department as one of the book's critics wanted to see the book "used very widely throughout our rural communities."\(^{34}\) Significantly, none of
the Canadian study-groups indicated that a special point of view had
been thrust upon them.

Rands noted, no doubt reflecting his sympathy with Thomson's views,
that only a minority of the "academic" people, and none outside of them,
were troubled by the fact that the book presented a social theory. But
it must be recognized, Rands stated, that those few had raised an issue
which was extremely vital at this time, not only in adult education but
in all education.

It is the question of what really constitutes
'objectivity' in educational method; how educators
can give leadership while still fully respecting
the thinking and the judgment of the individual;
how a teacher can be 'impartial' without in
effect supporting the status quo rather than
encouraging change and progress.35

Commenting on the discussions of the Lewiston Montana study-group,
most of whom had disagreed with the book's anti-capitalist orientation,
Dr. Carl Kraenzel believed that individuals had been challenged to thrash
out their divergent viewpoints. The authors had opted for a "leadership
position." They hoped to make "their case strong enough, courageous
enough,...to get people to break away from the ideas that are surrounded
by all their prejudices."36 For Rands the authors' position was justi-
fied: the study had stimulated vigorous, imaginative and constructive
discussion. Norman Smith concurred: "Study groups," he thought,
provide a method by which the people most con-
cerned may consider these matters in the light
of their own experience, dispassionately, without
dogmatism and free from the sort of prejudice
which is frequently aroused by public controversy.
It is the undogmatic approach which the authors
seek to encourage. When, as in this instance,
obody has any kind of axe to grind, other than
the achievement of a sound basis for the good
life, discussion is likely to be fruitful.37
How did the readers respond to the study's central premise—the "regional idea?" While the majority of groups and individuals responded positively to the regional approach, Rands found much evidence that even groups and individuals who responded favourably had not really accepted or understood the idea. The majority, it seemed, reacted in piecemeal fashion to the book's discussion of particular problems, missing the "new and distinctive pattern of the total regional approach." Rands identified three chief obstacles to the recognition and acceptance of the regional approach. First, the failure to think in terms of indigenous culture. Only one group, comprised of female graduates of Brandon College, showed any enthusiasm for the prospects of developing a distinctive regional culture. The almost universal absence of this appreciation gave strong support to the book's contention that the ideas and institutions of the Plains region had been imported from without, being only slightly adapted to distinctive regional conditions.

The second obstacle, the dominance of sectional points of view, was more obvious and equally general. Comments from rural study-groups and from leaders of farm movements pointed almost universally to the conclusion that the strongest single factor in the thinking of the prairie farmer was his feeling of belonging to an occupational group which had been exploited. Consequently, they believed they had to struggle for their rights against other occupational groups with conflicting economic interests. Few of the farm study-groups, farm leaders or even trained agriculturists thought that the interest of the Plains region involved anything but the interest of the farmers of the region. Repeatedly, farmers indicated that the "industrial East" was their greatest enemy. To be sure, the Northern Plains had identified metropolitan exploitation
of the hinterland as a serious problem; but it had recommended a total approach to the society as a whole. In spite of the strong sectional bias, a few study-groups in Alberta and Manitoba gave examples of economic interdependence of regions within Canada. They concluded that no region should attempt to solve its problems either in isolation from, or in opposition to other regions. Rands saw more hope of a regional awakening being born through the study activities of the farm people themselves than through the present leadership of the farm organizations.

The third obstacle to a regional way of thinking was the restriction imposed on everyone's thinking by the present political and administrative divisions so largely at variance with natural regions. And those Canadian groups committed to a regional point of view showed little inclination to include the Northern Plains states in their thinking. Somewhat less strong was the effect of the provincial boundaries of the Canadian prairies. When discussing the price of wheat or other marketing problems, the groups apparently thought of the west as a whole. But when considering matters of education, health or the development of natural resources, they thought in provincial terms. That is not at all surprising. Rands concluded that the artificiality of governing and administrative units and the partly arbitrary division of functions among local, provincial and federal governments, had made it extremely difficult for citizens and officials to take a whole view of either their community or the natural region. Faced with the specific question of whether plans and policies could be worked out for the Northern Plains region cutting across state and provincial and even international boundaries, most groups thought it was possible but tremendously difficult.
By September 1943 it looked very much as if the Northern Plains project was in danger of becoming a war casualty. Only nine groups had used the study in Manitoba for the 1942-43 season and in Saskatchewan and Alberta the use was not much greater. Writing to John Marshall on September 23, 1943 after he had returned from the "Education for Reconstruction" conference at Macdonald College, Thomson stated:

I don't want our Northern Plains project to become a war casualty. Although I could persuade myself that what we have already accomplished has had some useful influence, I still think that our original vision of the thing and the intrinsic potentialities of the idea demand that some further action be undertaken in direct continuity with the earlier effort.\(^39\)

President Smith was anxious "that the use of the study be made more extensive."\(^40\) He was also interested in having a systematic analysis of the study prepared.

Thomson was convinced that the Northern Plains study "stirs people (in some cases to wrath!) and probably starts the most of them thinking in a new way about the physical environment of the Plains and its meaning." Consequently, Thomson wrote to Marshall and suggested that he lay plans for a permanent "Northern Plains International-Regional Study and Research Council and a permanent Research Unit, of location, personnel and general character which would be discussed at the summer conference."\(^41\) But John Marshall did not see the Northern Plains project as on-going. Had the Northern Plains project become too "political" for the Rockefeller Foundation? One can only surmise. But by the end of the war, the Northern Plains study would be just one more controversial book scarcely available to social studies teachers and agricultural extension workers. Indeed, the fate of the Northern Plains study lends support to
Thomson's fear, expressed in early 1941, that he was fated to start up a number of things but never see them to fruition. The fighter against his times was also, it seems, out of step with them.

With the writing of the Northern Plains completed in time for inclusion in Manitoba's adult education program, Thomson plunged into the myriad of tasks associated with the expanding activities of his department. As if this were not enough to keep him busy, E.A. Corbett invited Thomson, now a member of the CAAE council, to chair a Special Committee on Education for Reconstruction. The purpose of the committee, which deliberated at Macdonald College from December 27 to January 2, was to prepare a report which would set policy for the floundering CAAE in the remaining war years.

The Manitoba winter of 1942–43 was exceptionally grim. Severe weather, labour shortages and transportation difficulties made visitation to rural communities more difficult than ever. The almost complete absence of youth, anxiety concerning those who had gone overseas and the abandonment of many recreational and cultural activities contributed further to the low morale in many communities. Only a fairly high level of prosperity, Thomson observed in his Annual Report, and a steadily increasing interest in social issues, counteracted the prevalent gloom. National projects, especially in film and radio, now occupied an increasingly large place in the general picture; study-groups and the three community conferences centred their interest around the manifold problems of post-war reconstruction. 42

Building on the groundwork laid so painstakingly in the previous two seasons, Thomson and Rands continued to urge study-groups to see themselves not as isolated phenomena but in the community context as part of
a widespread movement towards greater social responsibility on the local, national and international level. The number of active groups increased by eighteen to sixty per cent. Groups chose from two previously offered studies, "Democracy Begins at Home" and "What the War Means to Me," and four new offerings, The Northern Plains in a World of Change, "Post-war Reconstruction: Immediate Post-war Problems" (prepared by the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace in New York), "Canada's Wartime Economic Policies" (prepared by the CAAE) and Jean Morrison's "Post-war Reconstruction."

Thomson thought that many study-groups were becoming "nucleic of responsibility" for general community education. But the field reports for 1942-43 reveal that the latter goal was difficult to accomplish. Some of the small towns like Ochre River, set in an economically marginal district, had only one or two citizens interested in study-groups. Two other towns, Strathclaire and Pilot Mound, illustrate other kinds of difficulties. A sharp rift between the farmers and townspeople in Strathclaire forced Thomson to talk to Wheat Pool leader F.W. Ransom to see whether they could "devise means of breaking down the town/farmer barrier." In Pilot Mound, a notably civic-minded town, the Home and School Association (HSA), the original impetus for study-group work, had been abandoned. There was now a subdued tone without the enterprising spirit Thomson had remembered two years ago. All Thomson could do in towns like Pilot Mound was to suggest new, imaginative lines of action.

But not all Manitoban communities were so divided and defeated. Rands visited the town of Russell, 120 miles north-west of Brandon, on March 7 and 8. "This visit was encouraging," Rands wrote to Sidney Smith,
in that it showed how much can result in one 
community from the attitude of one person at a 
weekend conference. George Guilbault, a high-
school teacher in Russell, had returned from the 
Shoal Lake conference with sufficient enthusiasm 
to start immediately a study-group of the entire 
teaching staff in Russell.14

Other members of the community--chiefly business and professional men 
and their wives--showed interest in forming a similar group. To 
initiate these groups, the teachers had invited Watson Thomson to address 
a meeting of those interested in adult education. Unable to attend 
because he was in Winnipeg as a participant in the "Of Things to Come" 
broadcast on "Planned Society," Thomson sent Rands in his place. Seven­
teen "extremely interested people" attended the meeting--the number low 
because of sickness and inclement weather. The theme uppermost in 
everyone's mind was "Post-war Planning." At 4:00 on Sunday afternoon, 
Rands turned the gathering into a listening group around the CBC broad­
cast. Those present, Rands observed, were impressed by the effectiveness 
of this experiment in the listening group technique. They felt that 
they had got more from the broadcast than if they had listened 
individually in their own homes.

In Piney, a small community of just over a hundred, the majority of 
whom were Scandinavians (mostly Icelandic), surrounded by sub-marginal 
farms with Ukrainian and French-Canadian blocks on three sides, Thomson 
found the study-group "steady and enthusiastic in a not very democratic 
way." But they were anxious to expand and were interested in the 
Community Council idea which would combine study in small groups with a 
general forum and both of these with social features. They were also 
planning their first panel discussion at a film-showing. "I discovered 
how much the monthly film-show can mean to a community of this kind.
It is most eagerly patronized and supported, there being no commercial theatre within forty miles." Thomson anticipated "steady growth...and continuous friendly relations with a somewhat underprivileged and isolated but none the less socially-minded little community."\(^45\)

Thomson was also encouraged by the liveliness of Gilbert Plains. Invited by the HSA (the focus of civic consciousness in the town) as guest speaker for their closing session, Thomson addressed seventy-five members in the evening. The idea of the study-group as an integral part of the HSA had been taken up with real enthusiasm. This group, able to generate a "warm sense of community," had sponsored orchestras, the "best" boy's band in Manitoba, Boy Scouts and clinical services.

Similarly, in Basswood, another small town to the south of Gilbert Plains near Minnedosa, Thomson was encouraged by the imaginative way the Farm Radio Forum listening-group was conducting its meeting. In spite of extreme difficulties of transportation, R.D. Chase, the Forum leader, would get his people, fifteen farmers, to mail or phone their comments on the broadcast. This turned out to be a surprisingly successful experiment. Thomson was able to meet with the group to plan a whole campaign of extending the listening-group to the larger community.\(^46\)

By themselves, community-based study-groups were unable to act as generating grounds for the creation of a deeper community-spirit.

Clearly recognizing this, perhaps more than he had when he began his work in January 1941, Thomson moved to expand both the Week-end Community Conferences and the rural film-circuits. The aim of the Week-end Conferences was, simply, to "bring together study-group members, community film-committees and others interested in creating more awakened and cooperative community relations."\(^47\) In place of the
isolated visit of a single faculty "resource leader," these conferences brought several members of the University of Manitoba faculty, including the historian W.L. Morton, a native of Gladstone recently appointed to the University of Manitoba's history department, and adult education staff to three district centres: Shoal Lake, Deloraine and Great Falls, representing three company towns, Great Falls, Pine Falls and Seven Sisters.

In late January Shoal Lake successfully presented an integrated program in the various divisions of the university's adult education department. The conference centred around the round-table discussions of three interest groups. In addition to Crafts and Drama, there were groups on "World Problems" and "Community Problems" engaged in dialogue; the World Problems group having Professor W.L. Morton and Watson Thomson as resource-leaders, Professor Lougheed of the Department of Commerce and Stan Rands performing the same function for the Community Problems group.

Thomson felt that the Shoal Lake conference was slower than Killarney in building up a strong corporate feeling. The scattered nature of the meeting-places, the absence of occasion for purely social mixing and the brevity of the gathering contributed to this absence of corporate feeling. Again, a number of farm-people found it difficult to become active participants in the proceedings. Thomson thought that perhaps if MFA or Wheat Pool leaders joined the university in leading the discussion and addressing them from a common platform, this problem could be solved. Finally, Thomson was satisfied with the use of the films "Inside Fighting China" and "Inside Fighting Russia," the latter of which Rands used to illustrate the film-forum method, as well as the
frankness and liveliness of the round-table panel discussion on "A Post-war Immigration Policy for Canada."  

The Great Falls conference, in contrast, was a one-day affair and had an entirely non-farm composition. Unlike Shoal Lake, the Deloraine conference organized itself around a general theme, "Economic Problems of Post-War Reconstruction." Delegates, assisted by Professors Waines and Clokie and F.W. Ransom of the Manitoba Wheat Pool, examined three fundamental issues:

1) The peculiar problems of Western Canadian Agriculture;
2) Social security as applied to western rural conditions; and
3) Post-war international settlements and Western Canada's economy.

The issue of "free enterprise versus social planning" turned out to be particularly contentious at Deloraine. At the final meeting of the conference, held in the United Church basement, Prof. Clokie, F.W. Ransom and Charles Johnson discussed the question—"Should study-groups lead to action, and if so, what kinds of action?" In his final address Thomson underscored the stimulus that new kinds of living relationships gave to carrying out social action on the community, national and international levels.

The rural film circuits of the NFB, which Stan Rands directed for Manitoba and north-western Ontario, were becoming an integral part of the adult education program. There were now eight rural projectionists, including Will Dougall (appointed as Assistant Regional Agent for Rural Circuits in March 1943), Jack Wilson (appointed by the NFB to work half-time as projectionist and half-time as Rands' educational assistant), all of whom were interested in making their circuit work a progressively creative project in adult education. In March George LeBeau was
appointed as Western Regional organizer for the NFB Industrial and Trade Union Circuits. The Manitoba Department of Education continued to co-operate fully in matters of rural film circuits and the National War Finance Committee co-ordinated the film aspect of its campaign with the rural circuits. In his role as Western Regional Director of the film circuits, Rands collaborated with the MFA, the provincial organizer of the Farm Radio Forum, integrating film with their listening-group program.

Film-forum discussion based on selected films was becoming an established feature of the monthly film meetings in an increasing number of centres. Discussion outlines, prepared in the University of Manitoba Adult Education Office by Rands, printed in Ottawa and issued by the WIB for use in the national circuits, were sent to each community in advance. They were used by individuals, committees and study-groups interested in promoting forum discussions. The preparation of "Discussion Trailers" also originated in the Adult Education Office. Seventy (of 250) of the circuit points held forum discussions, two-thirds of them being introduced by panels of local citizens. In a steadily increasing number of towns, Thomson reported, discussion was becoming an established feature of the monthly film programs.52

Several important by-products of the film circuits emerged. Individuals and groups, awakened to global affairs, requested reading material on current affairs. In a number of communities, study-groups had been formed as a direct result of the film showings, some registering with the University Adult Education Office and carrying through with study of one of the outlines. Others formed themselves into radio listening groups, usually in connection with the Farm Radio Forum.
Moreover, many of the local film committees which were formed to coordinate the various activities associated with organizing the showings represented the many organizations interested in community enterprises. For Thomson these committees represented a "very significant development"—pointing towards the formation of community councils to coordinate the activities of all groups taking responsibility for the cultural, social and educational life of the community.

In some largely non-Anglo-Saxon communities where discussion was not feasible because of the language difficulty, the projectionists developed innovative forms of activity. They successfully integrated ethnic music and dance into their circuit programs. At one point an experimental attempt was made to present, at successive showings, the cultural resources of the different ethnic groups in order to achieve greater mutual appreciation. The circuits also increased their usefulness in a broad program of adult education by showing films dealing with cancer prevention, dental care and the nutrition campaign. When special service films were carried on the circuits, the provincial organizations such as the Red Cross were notified; they in turn notified their local groups to arouse interest in the community.

In 1942-43 250 circuit showings were held monthly. The numbers were gratifying: the average monthly attendance for the winter season was over 32,000, increasing steadily from 27,000 in October to 38,000 in April. The approximate total audience for six months ending on April 30, 1943 was 228,000. The University of Manitoba film library also grew steadily throughout the season. The circulation of the library's films (162 prints) took a variety of forms: through companies, through the Volunteer Projection Service operated jointly by the Young
Men's Section of the Junior Board of Trade, and the Kiwanis Club in co-operation with the NFB and University Film Library, on the rural circuits as extras, at special meetings arranged by the Adult Education Office, at conferences and study-groups sponsored by the Adult Education Office and direct from the film library to organizations, with projectionist service provided by the Office. Marguerite LeBeau was appointed as Assistant Film Librarian on March 22, 1943 after Mrs. K. Russenholt resigned due to poor health.53

During 1943 Thomson was no less involved in the global drama than he was in the mundane nitty-gritty of community organizing in Manitoban towns and villages. On January 17 Thomson surveyed the world scene in his Week-end Review broadcast.

I could wish, too that the Jewish people everywhere would bring their cries of despair out into the open market place. It is not good for any of us that they suffer in silence mostly—keeping it to themselves for further proof they are a very special people. It isn't just their problem, it's our problem, the world's problem and like so many things that are happening in this human crisis it raises a universal moral issue. If we faced this with the Jewish people out in the open, maybe we would find that the faith of the Crucified One and the faith of the Crucified People are not irreconcilable.54

Whether the problem lay with Jewish failure to bring their cries of despair to world attention or the indifference of Allied governments, the horrifying truth was that by the spring of 1943 the Nazi death camps were working overtime. From all over Europe, Jews by the hundreds of thousands were being shipped in crowded cattle cars to Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka and other German murder chambers. In the Warsaw ghetto alone, well over a million Polish Jews had been murdered.55

Although the pogrom against Jewish people had begun on the infamous
Kristallnacht, it was not until the end of 1942 that the nature of the Nazis' "final solution" had been disclosed to the Allied governments.\textsuperscript{56} From 1938 until 1943, Jewish organizations and the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution (CNCR) had worked tirelessly to promote a pro-refugee movement that would force changes in what appeared to many as an openly anti-Semitic government policy. By the end of 1941, in spite of numerous delegations to Ottawa, the Canadian government had decided not to accept any more refugees for the duration of the war. Though there was some pro-Jewish support in English Canada, the combined efforts of the CNCR and Jewish organizations such as the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) had not been able to "successfully break the well-defended wall of government hostility, which deemed refugees, especially Jewish refugees, a divisive force in Canada and a potential tool in the arsenal of Quebec nationalists,..."\textsuperscript{57}

By the late fall of 1943 pressure from Jewish groups and concerned citizens combined with the ghastly evidence from Europe had forced the governments of Britain and the U.S., and to a much lesser extent, Canada, to consider holding a conference on refugees in April. Understanding that the conference would be held in Ottawa, the executive of the CJC held an emergency meeting in Montreal on March 9 to plan strategy for the upcoming Ottawa conference. The Congress decided to undertake the biggest petition campaign in Canadian history—aiming at half a million signatures. With their ally, the CNCR, the CJC and several other Jewish organizations would launch a campaign of public education—radio, pro-refugee speaking tours, articles in newspapers. "Not since the debate over whether to attend the Evian conference," Abella and Troper wrote in \textit{None is Too Many}, "had the Canadian government faced such fierce passion."\textsuperscript{58}
As long as the vast majority of Canadians remained silent, the equivocating Canadian government did not have to act. Little time remained to mobilize public opinion. Saul Hayes, executive director of the CJC, urged the CNCR to set up various sub-committees across the country. The Winnipeg branch of the CNCR, defunct for years, was reactivated. Watson Thomson assumed the position of vice-chairman, placing his skills as publicist at the service of the national campaign. On Easter Sunday, April 25, Thomson chose to speak on the CBC's "Our Special Speaker" program on the "The Jews in Europe." In his memoirs Thomson recalled the origins of the broadcast.

I read the stories and looked at the pictures of tortured and slaughtered Jews until I was sick at heart and nearly sick in the stomach. And then I would go into the next room to look at my month-old son in his crib. The contrast was intolerably painful, but the sharpened sensitivity and expression resulted in a broadcast more dramatic and creative in its effect than anything else I ever did on the air.59

Response to the broadcast was immediate. In the few days following the broadcast, four hundred letters came into the CBC. One older man in Halifax sent Thomson a cheque for one thousand dollars, a lady from Hamilton, one hundred; these were turned over to the CNCR. The CJC Bulletin of May 1943 stated that the "memorable address of Mr. Watson Thomson over the national network of the CBC has already become an important document in Canadian public expression." Requests to print the speech came from The Histadrut Quarterly, a London-based Labour Zionist publication, the United Churchman of Sackville, New Brunswick as well as several other newspapers and magazines.

In his contemporary pamphlet I Accuse Thomson elaborated in considerable detail on the themes sketched out in his "Jews in Europe"
broadcast. Accusing the Canadian government of "complicity in the most deliberate mass-murder in at least a thousand years of history," and of having a racist immigration policy, Thomson presented the terrible facts of the extermination of Jewish people. Thomson considered the reasons given for this reluctance to act swiftly—the possibility of enemy agents and fifth-columnists slipping through, shipping problems and the possibility of provoking an outburst of anti-Semitism—as utterly indefensible. Clearly, expediency was the decider: the vision of a "forward-moving world with a place for all, regardless of race, or creed, or of a world where there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, but only the deepening harmony of a great human brotherhood" had been cast aside.

Thomson identified three reasons why Canada had done so little for Jewish refugees. First, politically, Canada had accepted the federal principle, but socially the vast numbers of British and French stood for the "Nazi principle"—namely, that Canada should be unified on their terms, by the imposition of their standards, by the uniform acceptance of their style and culture. In "Beyond the Melting Pot," an article published in Public Affairs in June 1944, Thomson explored this provocative idea in more depth. The "two-Canada" ideology actually projected throughout the whole of Canada a consciousness of 'racial origins' beyond anything known, except in rare corners, in the U.S. It gives rise to constant talk about 'New Canadians' or 'Canadians of recent European origin' (an official phrase in current use), so that Canadianism seems always to be modified by some hyphenation....And each time and place these differences are stressed, there is the entirely natural but illogical assumption of basic superiority or inferiority.

For Thomson, all emphasis on racial origins was, in the strictest sense,
regressive and reactionary. The second specific resistance to Jews reflected the labour movement's deep-seated fears of a post-war depression—that a flood of immigrants would compete for scarce jobs. This fallacy, Thomson thought, was "based on a number of false assumptions about the nature of a modern economy." And third, he saw anti-Semitic attitudes in the Canadian populace as a "serious stumbling block to any really forthright action on the refugee issue as well as to our establishing an integrity as democracies before all the world."  

I Accuse achieved widespread circulation throughout Canada, particularly in progressive circles. Alberta CCFer William Irvine told his largely socialist People's Weekly readership that Thomson had "written this booklet with a great purpose. He sees the implications of the democratic principle for which we are now fighting. And above all he sees the immediate suffering of our fellows in other lands. He urges us to act at once." Irvine believed that it was possible for thousands of Jews to be saved now. Louis Rosenberg, Western Canadian director for the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, reviewed I Accuse in The Israelite Press on September 10, 1943. "If only," he stated, "this pamphlet could not only reach into a hundred thousand, maybe two hundred thousand Canadian homes, but could also be read and understood by the men and women within them, so that they could break out of lethargy and indifference,..." On August 19 Constance Hayward, executive secretary of the CNCR, received a copy of the booklet and immediately began to arrange for its distribution to groups like the Federation of University Women's Clubs.  

The national petition campaign was, however, running into serious difficulties. The government's efforts to pacify pro-refugee groups
with the promise of saving refugees in Iberia (without revealing just how small would be its contribution or how selective its application) backfired loudly. In Manitoba organizations such as the IODE and Local Council of Women refused to promote the petition. Even the local CNCR chapters were uneasy about opening Canada's restrictive immigration laws. On November 28 Thomson wrote to Hayward:

I am writing you in some sense of urgency about the matter of the petition and how it is going both nationally and provincially. Several of us here feel pretty grim about the whole thing. Symptoms seem to suggest that it is not going well and that unless we can change the situation drastically in the next couple of weeks, it will not be an effective instrument for the purpose we have in mind.

Thomson also thought that the Winnipeg committee seemed to have lost its zest since the Prime Minister's comforting statement about the man in Lisbon. "I think the whole timing of that business was beautifully calculated to put a spike in the national petition, that suspicion also, I suppose, should be between ourselves." 67

The CNCR had hoped to collect half a million signatures by December 15. By December 6, the CNCR national office in Toronto had received only 26,000 signatures from all of Canada; 424 of these from outside Winnipeg (the Winnipeg office had 648). 68 By January 1944, when the petition was finally presented to Prime Minister King, a Gallup Poll indicated that the campaign of public education had failed in its aim. The national percentage favouring an open-door immigration policy fell from fourteen to thirteen per cent. Most shocking to the Jewish community and the CNCR, five years into their educational campaign, was that "those favouring a closed door grew by about eighteen per cent in Quebec and by a shocking fifty per cent in English-speaking Canada." 69
For Dr. Ernest Howe, a prominent United churchman and member of the Winnipeg committee, the "results of the petition showed plainly that Canada was not yet ready to receive even such a limited proposal as the petition contained. The opposition to the petition throughout Canada was a most sinister omen as to what may happen after the war."  

Throughout late 1943, 1944 and 1945 Thomson continued working with the CNCR, writing, speaking and doing what he could to receive those refugee families who came to Winnipeg in the fall of 1944. He also continued to urge the CNCR to continue its educational campaign among the Canadian people. But it was too little, too late.

In January 1945 advancing Soviet troops overran Auschwitz. Of the millions who had entered the camp, the liberators found fewer than three thousand people still alive. A string of smaller if no less shocking discoveries culminated in early April 1945, with the American entry into Buchenwald. What so many, including many Jews, had prayed was war propaganda, exaggerations or even hysteria now paled next to the reality. That which had seemed too horrible to be imagined, was not too horrible to have happened.

The Canadian people's cry for a more stable and just society had not been able to embrace justice for the Jewish people. A whole new world of generosity and of planned co-operative progress envisaged by Watson Thomson seemed distant indeed.
1. The phrase is used by Nietzsche in The Use and Abuse of History. "And if you want biography, do not look for those with the legend: 'Mr. So-and-So and his times!' but for those whose title page might be inscribed, 'A fighter against his times.'"


8. See clippings of speeches, black scrapbook, WTP 8-2. Some headlines were "Thomson talks about Crisis of Democracy," "It's Up to North America to Bring a New World Order;" "Means to Avert Third World War." This "New World Order" theme was central to a number of articles published in 1943 and 1944 in the Canadian Railway Employees' Monthly, National Home Monthly and Canadian Student.


10. Speech to National Council of the YMCA, February 1943, black scrapbook, WTP 8-2.


See CBC Week-end Review, March 15, 1942 and April 5, 1942, WTP 3-5.


NP, p. 15.


Sidney Smith to D.H. Stevens, October 1, 1942, SSP 36-4.


See Norman Smith articles on "The Northern Plains in a World of Change" in *The Western Farm Leader* on November 5, 20, 1942, December 18, 1942 and January 8, 1943.

See E.A. Corbett's brief comment on the Northern Plains Study in *We Have With Us Tonight*, pp. 162-165. Among the participants at the conference were farm leaders (Thomas Horsford, former head of the Farmers' Holiday Association and, since 1942, State Director for the Farm Security Administration at Bozeman; H.H. Hannam of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture; F.W. Ransom, secretary of the Manitoba Pool Elevators; George Robertson, secretary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; and Norman Smith, editor of *The Western Farm Leader*); agriculturals, sociologists and economists (Dr. Ben Cherrington, Director for the Foundation for the Administration of the Social Sciences at
the University of Denver; Prof. Elmer Ellis of the University of Missouri College, Ohio; Dean Clyde McKee of the Department of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan; Prof. W. Whitlaw of the Department of History, University of Saskatchewan); and adult educationalists (Don Cameron of the University of Alberta Extension Department; K.W. Gordon of the Department of Extension, University of Saskatchewan; and J.C. Taylor, Director of Extension, Montana State College). Dr. J.S. Thomson visited the conference shortly after leaving for Ottawa to take over the position of General Manager of the CBC.

25 NP, pp. 13, 18.
26 NP, pp. 18, 15, 169, 73, 43.
28 NP, pp. 133, 177, 158.
29 NP, p. 101.
30 NP, p. 147.
34 Rands Report, p. 40.
35 Rands Report, p. 41.
36 Rands Report, p. 42.
37 Norman Smith, WFL, October 18, 1942.
38 Rands Report, p. 47.
40 Sidney Smith to John Marshall, October 1, 1943, SSP 50-4.
42 University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1942-43.

Stan Rands to Sidney Smith on visit to Russell, March, 1943, SSP 36-1.

Watson Thomson to Sidney Smith, March 19, 1943, SSP 36-1.


University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1942-43.

See W.L. Morton's pamphlet, Building Post War Canada (Toronto: CIIA, 1943), for example of Morton's thinking in this period.


Critical report on Deloraine Week-end Conference, April 16-18, 1943, SSP 36-1.

See Stan Rands to Jack Wilson, June 20, 1943, RRP.

University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1942-43.

University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1942-43.


Irving Abella and Harold Troper, None is Too Many (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1982, p. 126.


Abella and Troper, None is Too Many, p. 65.

Abella and Troper, None is Too Many, p. 134.

WTP 2-2, p. 105. Full text printed in the Ottawa Evening Citizen, May 1, 1943.


Thomson, I Accuse, p. 15.


64 William Irvine, review of *I Accuse* in *PW*, September 19, 1943.

65 Constance Hayward to Watson Thomson, August 19, 1943, CNCR Papers, PAC (hereafter CNCRP), vol. 6, file 21.

66 Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, p. 158.

67 Watson Thomson to Constance Hayward, November 28, 1943, CNCRP, vol. 6, file 21.

68 Constance Hayward to Mrs. H.J. Stuart, December 6, 1943, CNCRP, vol. 6, file 21.

69 Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, p. 161.

70 E. Howse to Constance Hayward, March 15, 1944, CNCRP, vol. 6, file 22. In this letter Howse quotes Thomson as saying: "Professor Watson Thomson said that unless we undertook to do something much more effective than we have done yet, he would feel morally bound to return the money that had been sent to him on the ground that he could not profitably use it to the end for which it was given."


72 Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, pp. 184-185.
When the CAAE Council met in Toronto on November 6, 1942 to plot the organization's future, ferment was bubbling throughout Canadian society. A Public Opinion Quarterly article written in the fall of 1942 indicated that Canadians wanted to know how the government intended to create a better world. The ruling Liberal party, facing an internal organizational and ideological crisis, was not providing decisive leadership for the Canadian people. E.A. Corbett believed that unless post-war plans had the support of informed and vigorous public opinion, the masses could easily be manipulated. The CAAE hoped to guide the process of public enlightenment toward a more just social order.

The Council chose Watson Thomson to direct the Special Committee on Education for Reconstruction. The choice was significant. Only a few months earlier Corbett had worked with Thomson on the Northern Plains study which rejected educational neutrality. Corbett believed that the CAAE had to take a stand in favour of a more just society. So he marshalled his activist wing to devise strategy to tip the CAAE leftward. Thomson's role was to provide the needed perspective. The educational radicals wanted to create, through dialogue and the struggle of opposite opinions, a coherent general will committed to social justice. It is easy to understand why Thomson was in the forefront of those pressing for a national Citizens' Forum.

The Special Committee on Education for Reconstruction was initially comprised of Dr. W.H. Brittain of Macdonald College, Dr. Gordon Shrum
of the University of British Columbia Extension Department, R.E.G. Davis, executive director of the Canada Welfare Council and Neil Morrison of the CBC. After Shrum dropped out, Mary Ferguson, and Robert T. Mackenzie of the UBC Extension Department joined the committee which deliberated at Macdonald College from December 27 to January 2.

Three democratic socialist consultants—Dr. David Petegorsky, a recent graduate of the London School of Economics who had joined the NFB in October 1942 after teaching at Antioch College, Dr. Frank Scott of McGill University's law school, a leading CCF intellectual, and Harry Avison of Macdonald College—were appointed to assist in the deliberations. The Committee met in twelve hour daily sessions. After the others left, Thomson, Brittain and Mackenzie compiled a report of the proceedings as well as completing some unfinished sections of the investigation. Later, after he joined the WIB's industrial morale section in April 1943, Petegorsky would play a significant role in the Education for Reconstruction conference.

The resulting Report of the Special Program Committee, arguably the most important document in CAAE history, set the tone and direction for the London Conference in May 1943, which achieved ideological consensus around a democratic socialist manifesto, and the Education for Reconstruction conference in September 1943, which launched the Citizens' Forum listening-study-action groups across Canada. The CAAE was about to enter its most controversial and ambitious phase. As it turned out, Thomson would not be entirely pleased with the evolution of the Citizens' Forum. He felt that the actual program was far too timid and failed to address fundamental issues. Nevertheless, the essential premise of the Citizens' Forum—that popular initiative could lead to
the formulation of policy on the great interrelated issue of social and economic policy—was a bold attempt to influence the "political discourse" of Canadian capitalist society. The educational radicals of the CAAE, without actually advocating support for a particular political party, wanted Canadians to make political choices based on ethical norms and not expediency.

The Committee believed that unless Canadian public opinion and the public will was mobilized through every available agency and medium, Canada would drift into the post-war world without any clear social purpose. The Committee was also acutely aware of the "alternative danger of producing disillusionment and despair by pursuing a policy of offering facile promises of unrealizable immediate goals." If the war was now perceived as a "people's war," the Committee declared that the "peace must be a people's peace," broad-based on the "understanding and desire of the plain citizens of all the United Nations." To make this even barely possible, an "immense and urgent educational task" was required. The Committee thought that this critical situation demanded courage to pool what vision ("without which the people perish") they might have, and to face realistically the facts of the existing situation.

After affirming the personalist principle that social institutions ought to serve the ends of general human welfare and not frustrate human personality, the Committee examined some of the formidable practical problems facing reconstructionist education. Never was the term "democracy" in greater need of re-definition and re-vitalization than in contemporary Canada. The Committee contended that people believed that behind the "façade of democratic procedures" there were narrow controlling
interests. The great ideals of political equality were almost meaningless in the face of the oligarchic control of Canadian life. Thus, the meaning of democracy ought to be thoroughly examined: its economic meaning had now to be placed in the forefront. And the role of the "cooperative movement, community planning and 'collective action from below' as a counter-balancing force to minimize the danger of bureaucratic control" had to be carefully scrutinized. Citizenship in a democracy meant more than casting a ballot every three or four years.5

If Canada was to commit herself to building a stable and just world, it was essential to understand clearly what the major groups in Canada thought about post-war reconstruction—French-Canadians, Labour, the Farmer, Business, Armed Services and Women. The Committee thought that the emergent democratic collectivist society need not infringe on the historic rights of French-Canada, [and]...that a democratically planned society can help to solve the problems of grinding poverty of the habitant and the industrial worker and the insecurity of the small businessman.6

The Committee saw three stumbling blocks to full Labour enthusiasm for the war. First, Labour did not believe that it was adequately represented on the various war-planning agencies. Second, Labour resented the government's failure to enforce guaranteed collective bargaining. Third, Labour feared that the full employment of a war economy would be followed by a return to depression and unemployment.7 From the Committee's standpoint, the meaning of the war had to be re-examined and clarified from Labour's perspective.

The war had brought into stark relief the vital role of the farmer. But the development of education, health and welfare and social services in rural areas had not kept pace with advances in cities and towns.
Since the future of rural society depended on the co-operation of the whole population, urban dwellers had to understand the problems of the farmer. The Committee thought that the small businessman was especially concerned about his future prospects. If the war lasted long enough and the small businessman's position steadily deteriorated, there might be widespread support for a Canadian version of fascism. The Committee was less sympathetic to Big Business. They did not think that Canadian Big Business was willing to have effective economic control taken out of its hands and placed into "those of the representatives of the whole community." But perhaps through education Big Business would see "the utter necessity of accepting social control of economic power in the interest of achieving a stable and progressive society." An educational challenge indeed!

As for the armed services, the Committee thought that the CAAE should take whatever steps were necessary to bring them into the same process of democratic education about the meaning of the war. And the Committee recognized that women had had to face the implications of war more fully than ever before. Could effective educational policy be devised to create a more equitable and creative society for women?

In the final section of the Report, the Committee set out its recommendations for a CAAE reconstructionist educational program. Any reconstructionist educational program which remained aloof from the "urgent necessities of the moment" was foredoomed to failure. The new program must take its stand favouring change. It had to be willing to align itself with those social forces committed to social change. The CAAE saw its special role as directing Canadians to examine their future in the light of fundamental ethical principles. At the same time, the
Committee recognized that

It was therefore necessary to link the long-term goals with actual situations and trends in the present. In most cases, the concrete situation in the present would be the point of departure and our business would be to interpret that present situation in such a way as to show its generalized meaning in relation to a desirable future. For instance, the critically important matter of democratic participation in a planned society may be approached by discussing and interpreting such war phenomena as Civilian Defense Units with the new understanding of the local community situation and new kinds of civic responsibility; farmers' production committees (potential cells of the permanent democratic planning of agriculture in the future); labour-management committees--and so on.\textsuperscript{9}

The Committee unanimously agreed that the program which had begun to shape itself through the discussions involved a considerable broadening of the CAAE's base. If groups such as the Junior Board of Trade, Labour Unions, Civilian Defence groups and Women's War Service groups could be mobilized, a new basis of support for the CAAE--financial and other--would thereby come into existence. To arouse national interest and integrate these new groups with the CAAE, the Committee agreed that a conference should be held in early September 1943. The main purpose of the conference would be to give the co-ordinated educational campaign national publicity and to secure the close co-operation of interested organizations.

In their concern with planning and critique of production for profit, the Committee was clearly, in late 1942, ahead of the Liberals and convergent with the CCF. However, in their critique of bureaucratic organizational forms and insistence that more welfare-state distribution of national income was not enough, they pointed beyond both Fabian-CCF and Liberal "welfare-state" thinking. A theoretical weakness of the
Report's principles, from a Marxian perspective, lay in the avoidance of the question of how, in a class society, personalist principles become embodied in participatory institutional structures. Thomson must have returned to Winnipeg in January in reasonably high spirits. His central preoccupations about post-war reconstruction had been placed on the CAAE's agenda.

The Special Program Committee was unable to organize listening groups until the fall of 1943. But when study material was available, it wished to be associated with the CBC reconstruction series. The specific proposal for a program to be called "Post-war Canada--A National Round-Table" had been first discussed fully at a meeting held at the CBC national office on December 1, 1942. At this meeting Thomson presented the idea that Robert (R.B.) Inch, who had recently left a job with the League of Nations and was a CCF-supporter, take over responsibility for the venture. Thomson had written to Inch on December 6:

"Did J.S.T. offer you anything worthwhile as I expected? I hope so, because then we might do a real job together, which I would like." On December 17 Inch signed a letter accepting an appointment with the CBC. "It looks like a real opportunity," he wrote to Watson Thomson. A few days later, after being invited to act as a special consultant for the series, Thomson replied to Inch. "The understanding is that, after Macdonald College, you and I continue work on the radio series, possibly with some others added....I shall spend a second week with you on that."

Thomson's main work for the CAAE until the annual conference in May 1943 would be to serve on a radio sub-committee for the purpose of liaison with the CBC.

Watson Thomson and R.B. Inch conceived of the "Of Things to Come"
as a forum in which definite points of view would be represented. "It was to be completely independent of the government and any organization, an honest search for understanding, not 'loaded' in any hidden way."

J.S. Thomson appointed Morley Callaghan, no friend of the left, to help in script preparation and to moderate the broadcasts. Robert Newton, president of the University of Alberta, headed an Advisory Committee and advice was sought from a large number of individuals with specialized knowledge. The first of sixteen broadcasts began on February 28 in Winnipeg; subsequent programs were presented in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Windsor, Halifax, Regina and Vancouver. The issues of planning and social security were central themes of all broadcasts.

While it was clearly Inch's intention to conduct an honest inquiry into the post-war world, this was exceptionally difficult to achieve in the edgy political world of Ottawa. Robert MacKenzie wrote to Inch on February 1 commenting on the composition of the Advisory Committee and the proposed list of speakers. MacKenzie was upset that the Advisory Committee did not include "one out-and-out left-winger, well-known as such, eg. Prof. Underhill or Grube." Citing a Gallup Poll that indicated that twenty-five per cent of the Canadian people were intending to vote socialist, MacKenzie thought that the committee was "too unanimously 'respectable.'" Regarding the initial list of proposed speakers, MacKenzie thought that balance was lacking.

If you want anyone to listen west of the Great Lakes, you are going to have to show that you are not afraid to face left-wing opinion. Why not include at least one from F.R. Scott, M.J. Coldwell, W.D. Herridge, or yes...even Tim Buck. Why not include a trade union executive (eg. Millard) to balance Neal McLean of New Brunswick? On a broadcast such as that of D.G. McKenzie's on agriculture, it seems to me that you would also have to have someone like H.H. Hannam, Pres. of the CFA.
Alex Sim also felt that simply "getting a lot of big names and big men on the air to mouth over the platitudes that we have been hearing since the war begin [sic] still accomplishes nothing more than to confirm the misgivings of many of the common people." Sim believed, as did Corbett and Thomson, that radio ought to "report to the people of Canada the thoughts, aspirations, hopes, fears and misgivings of the common people who are really making the sacrifice." No doubt Inch agreed with Sim, but he was working with a CBC very sensitive to charges that it was a party instrument. And, as would become even clearer with the creation of the Citizens' Forum, the Liberals were not keen on supporting any scheme which might play into CCF hands.

Eugene Forsey, the Canadian Congress of Labour's Research Director since 1941, had been invited to act as one of the consultants on the series. Like MacKenzie, Forsey was disturbed that the Advisory Committee, as far as he could see, had no representatives of Labour or of the farmers, both of which seem to me serious omissions. The personnel seems also to be heavily weighted with members or adherents of the Liberal party. I should have thought that it might be wiser, safer, more prudent, and better public policy generally, to include somewhere a sprinkling of people of other parties. The Progressive Conservatives may be represented; the CCF certainly does not seem to be.

But this was understandable, Forsey thought, given that "plain speaking is out of accord with CBC tradition, and indeed with the tradition of public life in Canada for most of the last twenty years." And Forsey was incensed that P.C. Armstrong had been invited to participate on the panel -- "A Case for Free Enterprise." Identifying Armstrong as the man "who wrote an anonymous and particularly vicious and venomous and
distorting attack on the book 'Social Planning for Canada,' Forsey asked--"But surely the CBC can get someone better than this man Armstrong?"19

Inch defended his choice of P.C. Armstrong.

We consulted informally with people in the Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Manufacturer's Association and out of it came the suggestion that we should write Mr. Armstrong....I tell you privately that we went first to Mr. Zeller. Both Mr. Zeller and the Secretary of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce recommend Mr. Armstrong. He is to be billed as Economic Advisor of the CPR.20

Inch appears to have taken to heart MacKenzie's and Forsey's criticisms. Although no "known CCFers" were added to the Advisory Committee, a number of well-known socialists (Leonard Marsh, Donald Macdonald) and one communist (Dorise Neilson) participated in the broadcasts.

To assess the impact of "Of Things to Come," Inch sent out a questionnaire to members of the Advisory Committee, consultants and participants.21 There were two principal criticisms. For one thing, Inch thought that Callaghan had been given the impression that he had had "final and dictatorial powers over the script." Callaghan, Inch argued, felt that he had "something like veto power in connection with proposals and suggestions for these broadcasts no matter how much trouble had been taken in developing them." Saturday Night editor B.K. Sandwell thought that the "method of preparing the script had tended to iron out the personalities of the participants," leading Toronto professor Harold Innis to remark acidly that the series reminded him of Charlie McCarthy.22

Callaghan's overly aggressive moderating may have offended many, and the series, listened to today, does sound rather wooden. But the more serious issue, foreshadowing more serious problems to come, centred
around the political control of the CBC. Arthur Meighen, who had been outspokenly critical of Watson Thomson's Week-end Review broadcasts, in Inch's words, was "not convinced by what we did or by the defences of the General Manager that the CBC is anything more than a partisan organization." Meighen's reaction is scarcely surprising. Mr. John Bird, editor of the *Winnipeg Tribune*, also believed that the series had the appearance of a government-inspired Liberal party scheme. He was even reluctant to appear on the same program as Thomson. Nonetheless, Inch concluded that "Of Things to Come" demonstrated the possibilities of public service broadcasts by an organization owned by the people....It was in accordance with the idea of public service that we did not pay participants, that we got in touch with so many organizations (including all three major parties) and argued that as nearly as directly as possible we should turn the forum over to the people and give them the feeling that it was their show...."  

Inch concluded that the idea of a public service open forum had "erupted with considerable force through the crust of the conventional." He also recognized that one of the limitations of purely educational work was that political action was left vague and indefinite. Inch recommended that public opinion be organized through bodies prepared to present definite views to the people and to the government. If effective progress was to be made, all the national organizations must join in what might be called a National Post-war Study and Action Project. "Of Things to Come," then, successfully avoided provoking any major public controversy while bringing Canadians of divergent social outlook together to debate Canada's future. If "Of Things to Come" had failed miserably, the Education for Reconstruction program would have been seriously undermined.
Since the last CAAE conference, held in Winnipeg in 1941, Thomson thought that the CAAE had acquired a "momentum from within and a real existence as a corporate body." This process had been aided by the growth of national projects. All Canadian adult educationists had been interested in study-groups. But the purpose of study-group activity varied so greatly that educationists were often talking about "very different things under the same name." Now, at the London conference, held from May 19-22, 1943, dozens of adult educationists from across Canada met together to discuss "rural circuits" or "farm radio forum." Consequently, a "definite, uniform national framework evolved." There had been, to be sure, much discussion about the totalitarian threat in any uniform "national" education, especially that associated with government or publicly-owned agencies such as the NFB or the CBC. For Thomson and other education radicals, these very national projects were only dangerous if adult educationists went to sleep on the job.

If we make the farm radio forum programs or the film-shows in the rural circuits an opportunity for citizen-participation, for stimulation to new community action and for the conveyance of local opinion back to the centre, then the process becomes an invigoration of democracy, not the insidious beginnings of the regimentation of men's minds.24

The "great event" of the London conference from the educational radicals' perspective was the placing before the 230 registered delegates the results of the Special Committee's deliberations over Christmas week at Macdonald College. The challenge of the Committee—implying a radical transformation and extension of the structure and functions of the CAAE—came through clearly in the opening presidential address of Dr. Sidney Smith. "As an organization," Smith declared,
"we are at the crossroads. If we do not, in this annual meeting, formulate new plans and initiate new projects,...we will be guilty men and women."

President Smith thought that the CAAE could travel one of three roads. The organization could continue as a clearing-house, an option plainly unacceptable to Smith. It could become a government agency, a suggestion which Smith adamantly rejected. He did not want the rich diversity of adult education in Canada to be "standardized by any governmental agency, however benign....Formal, and informal, education in the adult field might be a tempting morsel for a government dictatorship, be it of the right or left." The CAAE, Smith contended, must assume the "leadership, and even direction, promoting or initiating for itself and its member organizations, policies and projects that will enable their respective commitment to foster national unity and strength of purpose, and that will transcend social, political and economic conflicts." Are we as the CAAE, Smith asked the delegates, going to harness this upsurge of vigor and creativity? That task could be performed by government officials and chancelleries. The CAAE should direct people to examine basic human problems affecting their own welfare, the welfare of the nation and, in fact, the welfare of the whole world. Smith's message was unmistakable: the CAAE should make its own stand clear on the basic issues of our civilization. It should go out to the people of Canada with the integrity of that declared position.\(^{25}\) If it did not, the CAAE would become "one of war's casualties because the swift-moving life of our times would find its existence unnecessary."\(^{26}\)

On Friday afternoon (May 21) Neil Morrison reviewed the proceedings
of the Macdonald College meeting. A short summary of the Report, dealing mainly with the section on "Fundamental Principles," had been circulated among the members of the conference. A small committee had been appointed (Avison, Stutt, Riggs and Thomson) to prepare a simplified version of the section of the Report with a view to its approval for publication as the CAAE manifesto. On the following morning, a draft Manifesto was presented and, after discussion and amendment, was unanimously approved. On May 23, one day after the conference ended, Watson Thomson wrote to his wife Mary.

Well the great Conference is over and Stan and I reckon there is reason to feel satisfied that something came through from Macdonald College (which couldn't have happened without Macdonald College). Did you see the new CAAE manifesto? It was let out to the Canadian press yesterday. They toned it down a bit from my original draft, but it still says quite a mouthful.\(^\text{27}\)

The unanimous acceptance of the CAAE manifesto by London delegates was, in fact, a personal triumph for Watson Thomson. Careful textual analysis of the "Fundamental Principles", and the abbreviated version, the manifesto, reveals that Thomson had been able to gain acceptance of his educational philosophy by the CAAE at a critical juncture in its history. Most important for Thomson, his own passionate concern for post-war reconstruction had been placed on the CAAE's agenda at that time when Canada's future appeared open to the strengthening of "those attitudes and understandings upon which a new Canada and world society can be founded."\(^\text{28}\) As a man of vision and ideas, Thomson was the right man for assisting in the CAAE's leftward tilt.

In his account of the London Conference written for Food for Thought, Thomson addressed these basic questions. Did it make any real difference
to the job the CAAE saw ahead for itself? Were not such "principles" too vague and general to be significant? Thomson was convinced that it was possible to reach some valid conclusions about the kind of society that was compatible with basic, verifiable principles of human relationship. Thomson told his *Food for Thought* readers:

> The Principles of the Manifesto are an attempt to express such a non-sectional view of the fundamental issues of the social crisis. They are not intended to be 'practical.' But surely it is evident that many existing plans and proposals about the future are vitiated by the fact that they attempt to deal with problems piecemeal and on a merely practical level when in fact the simplest citizen senses that the social crisis has roused far deeper, moral and spiritual issues. It is for that reason that no remedy can be considered adequate unless its plans are based on considered, comprehensive policies, and its policies on a clear understanding of the underlying human principles.

In short, the Manifesto is a necessary declaration without which the CAAE could hardly dare go to the citizens of Canada, regardless of race, class or creed. It testifies that, in this crisis, we offer men and women not only information, but something of vision and of faith. It testifies that, as for us, social change—radical social and economic change—is not something to be feared. Neither is it something to be promoted from the standpoint of any sectional interest. It is something to be demanded and fought for in the interest of the fulfillment of the deepest principles and the highest hopes by which men of good will are sustained.29

The *Globe and Mail* responded enthusiastically to the publication of the manifesto. "At its recent meetings," the editorial declared, the delegates saw fit to subscribe to a manifesto affirming its stand on the basic issues now confronting the world, and calling upon all interested individuals and groups to share with the association the urgent educational task of creating and strengthening those attitudes which underlie the social, economic and spiritual problems of our times.
The Globe and Mail agreed with the manifesto's critique of "academic aloofness and neutrality." They hoped that many individuals and organizations would endorse the principles of its manifesto in "formulating and executing a vigorous campaign of public education directed toward winning a people's war and a people's peace."\textsuperscript{30}

At London the CAAE had given itself a moral and ideological basis from which to act—the "beginning of a united program and a unified program of Adult Education for Canada."\textsuperscript{31} To be worthy of the content and spirit of the declaration, Thomson observed, the CAAE and its supporters had to make new contacts with groups everywhere, in factories and on farms. The Farm Radio Forum had 1200 listening-groups with an average of 17,000 listeners in 1942-43. The CAAE's new national campaign on the post-war world should have 5,000 groups in town and country with an average of 75,000 in organized listening-study-action groups. A challenging task, indeed, as George Grant would later observe—the CAAE was hardly known in the industrial east. "It is possible," Thomson thought, "and when one considers the resistances to the building of a more generous world and to change of any kind, it is also necessary."\textsuperscript{32}

To work! Thomson decided to stay in Toronto for several weeks following the conference. He had several speeches to deliver on the Jewish refugee question, the most important being a lecture on "The War and the Organization of the Peace" at the North American Institute in early June. And, as Thomson wrote to his wife Mary, the conference left "an awful lot of new work of planning to be done and I may have to stick around here to help Ned not to get discouraged or feel that we leave it all to him."\textsuperscript{33} Two weeks later, on June 3, Thomson confided
to Mary Thomson: "Ned and I get along swell just now, but how
anything ever gets done without me around, I can't imagine. (Would
you like to move to Toronto?—It could be done, I know—if that was
what you—and I--wanted)." Thomson's letter to his wife suggests
two things: first, that Corbett may not have been an effective "nuts
and bolts" man, and second, that Corbett and Thomson disagreed over
the direction of the CAAE.

Only fragmentary evidence exists on Corbett's relationship with
Thomson in this period. Mutually respectful of one another from
the days of their first meeting in the spring of 1937, Corbett and
Thomson had collaborated closely on a number of projects. And Corbett
had obviously trusted Thomson enough to choose him to chair the
Special Committee. The only evidence of conflict, gleaned from Thomson's
memoirs, suggests that Thomson and Corbett disagreed over the nature
of the proposed CBC-CAAE radio program. Thomson wanted to "advocate"
and not "present all the different view-points;" the precise timing of
this dispute is not clear, however. At any rate, the main job facing
Corbett and Thomson immediately after the London conference was,
ironically, "drawing up the case with which to extract money from
millionaires..." They were not successful. The other job was pre­
paring for the Education for Reconstruction conference in September
1943.

In their concern to mobilize the people's will throughout Canada,
the educational radicals were embarking on a venture unprecedented in
the western democracies. To be sure, intellectuals in Britain, France
and the United States were preoccupied with social welfare reforms.
One only need think of the influence of the Beveridge Report on Leonard
But in Britain there was no coherent attempt to involve grass-roots community organizations, Labour and Business in critical reflection on welfare issues. The educational project of the CAAE radicals, if not the social outcome, was unique.

During the summer months the planning committee for the proposed conference on Education for Reconstruction met. Harry Avison was appointed as organizing secretary of the committee and Alex Sim, Neil Morrison, George Edison, Gregory Vlastos, Gordon Rothney and Stan Rands, joined occasionally by others, mainly from the WIB, comprised the rest of the committee. This committee, it should be noted, was dominated by democratic socialists. At the July 10 meeting, held at Glenaladale in Quebec, Avison presented a draft plan of the conference. John Grierson, head of the WIB and NFB, had informed the committee that the program would have to be recommended by a much broader educational body than the CAAE before the WIB could undertake to finance it. So, the Canadian Council on Education and Citizenship was asked to undertake this sponsorship. The "nuts-and-bolts" organization of the conference would be undertaken by the CAAE in co-operation with the CBC and the CIIA.

The committee discussed the purpose of the conference at great length. Would the plan attempt to get existing groups to form listening-groups or would one or more groups be formed in a given locality, cutting across the natural groupings? The committee felt that emphasis should be placed not only on national and international problems, but also on community problems. The national program should indicate jobs that needed doing in the home community of the participants (public works, town planning, recreation, etc.) David Petegorsky and Neil Morrison
pointed out that "some of the best broadcasts of last winter were the ones that began with the facts about the situation in certain communities." Groups would learn, they thought, more about vested interests by studying the particular problem of housing in a particular community than by academic discussion. This could be accomplished by showing the link-up between local and national conditions. The committee agreed that the whole program would be presented in miniature at the conference. But, most important, they had to get "good people" at the conference. Representation from the people's organizations should be as broad as possible.  

The educational radicals now in control of the CAAE were walking on the edge of a political razor blade. The Citizens' Forum could not be launched without the support of the WIB, CBC and NFB. John Grierson was, of course, sympathetic to the CAAE's intentions. With the Grierson takeover of the WIB in February 1943, progressives in adult education believed they would find financial backing for their projects as well as moral support. And the CAAE had a much-needed ally in J.S. Thomson, now General Manager of the CBC, who supported CAAE goals essentially to prevent the polarization of Canadian society. Flans proceeded well until Gordon Rothney, an officer in the Background Section of the WIB, requested information for possible study material from Senator Turgeon, head of a Senate committee on reconstruction. Turgeon informed Mackenzie King who "angrily refused to support any scheme dealing with reconstruction which emanated from a source outside his government." As a result, the $25,000 originally promised by the WIB was withdrawn; the CCBC did, however, receive its $10,000 grant, channelling $2,500 to the CAAE to cover Isabel Wilson's salary. But the CIIA, sensitive
to any infringement on their constitutional prohibition of partisan activity, decided to withdraw as co-sponsor. They did continue assisting the CAAE by making their research library available.⁴²


Just when the promise of a grant of $25,000 from the WIB seemed about to be fulfilled, a couple of reactionaries in the Government heard of the scheme, took it to the Prime Minister, and along with two or three other of John Grierson’s favourite plans, ours was scotched. As you can imagine, this was disappointing to us, but it was provoking to several members of the WIB who had been working on it.

All the CAAE could count on was its relationship with certain individuals in the CBC. "The CBC is," Avison told Thomson, "of course, co-operating fully in the programme, and while we have not yet invited you to do so, we are counting on you being there, and within the next few days I will be able to be more definite about what we would like you to do."⁴³ On September 1 Avison informed Thomson that "as one of the authors of this whole plan," your "part on the panel would be as interpreter of its general purpose."⁴⁴ Dr. J. David Ketchum of the WIB, formerly a psychology professor at the University of Toronto, Dr. Eugene Forsey of the CCL, and Montreal businessman Francis Hankin were also invited to participate on this panel: each had been selected to represent a particular point of view (Forsey that of Labour, Hankin that of the "enlightened businessman," Ketchum the government’s perspective and Thomson that of the CAAE). Avison also told Thomson that:

With the Government still postponing its announcement of policy on reconstruction and rather obviously playing politics with the whole issue,
the purpose of our program becomes more significant every day. It is therefore pretty gratifying to have had as good a response to our invitation to this Conference as we have had, and to know that a really strong group will be present.

The Education for Reconstruction conference opened on September 10 at Macdonald College in a charged and expectant atmosphere. The Liberal government had, as Avison observed, postponed its reconstruction program. King's cabinet had responded to McGill professor Leonard Marsh's Report on Social Security, released to the public on March 17, with hostility and disinterest. With the CCF gaining more support than ever before, and the CAAE and its allies in government agencies set to "mobilize" the Canadian people in a direction that might well go beyond mere welfare-state amelioration, the moribund Liberals would be resurrected into action. But when the Education for Reconstruction conference began in September 1943, the Liberals had not yet arrived at their "solution." Not until January 1944 would the Liberal cabinet even approve of three new departments: Reconstruction, Health and Welfare and Veterans Affairs.

It was apparent that the Education for Reconstruction conference was the type of program many people had been waiting for—120 organizations represented by 165 delegates, many of whom had had no previous connection with the CAAE, were present. The fundamental task facing the delegates was to plan the campaign of public education, the groundwork of which had been laid in the summer months preceding the conference. Delegates learned that the CAAE had commissioned George Grant, who would serve as national secretary of the Citizens' Forum from 1943-45, and Jean Morrison, an FCSO activist who had prepared study materials for the CAAE in previous years, to prepare the study material to be used with each broadcast.
The Education for Reconstruction conference, in Thomson's estimation, proved to be an even more remarkable testimonial to the substantial existence of the CAAE than the proceedings at London. The general addresses by Dr. H. McCluskey of the University of Michigan, Dr. Walter Kotschnig, Professor of Education at Smith College, and a member of the U.S. Commission to study the organization of peace, Dr. J.S. Thomson, the CBC's General Manager, and Gregory Vlastos, Professor of Philosophy at Queen's University seconded to the WIB's armed forces information section, counselled the adult education movement to counteract the current trend towards the exclusion of ordinary people from political decision-making. The three commissions—Curriculum (the content of the study-outline prepared by Grant and Morrison); Methods (chaired by Petegorsky) and Organization (chaired by Donald Cameron)—succeeded, after some initial confusion, in clarifying the responsibilities resting upon individuals, local organizations and national bodies. The onus of listening-group organization would fall on regional or community committees. For B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, university extension departments would serve as provincial centres. Where possible, committees were to be formed in all cities and towns to co-ordinate the listening-groups with other associations. 48

An excerpt from Vlastos' concluding speech captures the central vision of the conference.

It is all too easy for a group of people like those of us here--most of us are leaders of one sort or another--to think that we are going to do something for the Canadian people. But we depend on them far more than they on us. We would not have this Conference or A [sic] Citizens' Forum, if it were not for the fact that the average man
in the country and in the services is now deeply concerned with the problem of reconstruction, anxious to know what will happen to him and to his country after the war. It is the people's interest in reconstruction which brings us here, and all that we can do is to take something that belongs to them and further it with their co-operation. Dr. Thomson said: 'The CBC belongs to the people of Canada.' We can say: 'This Conference and all that follows it belongs to the people of Canada.'

In E.A. Corbett's vivid phrase, every citizen in a democracy is an *ex officio* member of the government—and, we should add, of the government's Committee on Reconstruction and of every other policy-making body....Some years ago people were saying that the radio is necessarily undemocratic in its effect—that it is inherently One Voice talking to thousands or millions who never get a chance to talk back. But the Farm Forum, the Labour Forum and now the Citizens' Forum show exactly the opposite....And when the one discussion before the microphone is continued and multiplied in hundreds of listening and discussing groups all over the country, the result is an authentic instrument of the democratic process.

The Education for Reconstruction conference was a "triumph" for the CAAE Special Committee. In just under one year they had succeeded in welding together over a hundred organizations into a coherent force for organizing thousands of people for discussion and action on subjects of reconstruction. The educational visionaries proffered a conception of a democracy rooted in a dialogical process whereby policy would be formulated at the grass-roots community level, with the government responding to people's demands from below. The Citizens' Forum, then, was "radical" in pedagogical form if not in substance. Watson Thomson would have to create his own educational vehicle, the Prairie School for Social Advance (PSSA), in the summer of 1944 to achieve a synthesis radical in both content and form.

Delegates at the conference were struck by the prevailing spirit
of co-operation. "This spirit," Fletcher Peacock, Director of Educational Services of New Brunswick's Department of Education and one of the CAAE's most ardent supporters, "prevailed to the very end. In fact, it increased in evidence as time passed....The idea of individual participation by citizens which seems to be the genius of the project is doubtless the right technique." Like Peacock, Dr. C.W. Crutchfield, a leading figure in the CCEC, was impressed with the unusual spirit of the gathering....

There seemed to be something in the air around that Conference that gripped me, something extremely new in the field of education. There was a group of one hundred and fifty people from the various walks of life representing thousands of others in these walks, so deeply interested in the problems of educating our citizens in the Democratic Way of Life that they concentrated their thought exclusively on the best means of reaching their objective, over a whole weekend.

For Eugene Forsey, the implacable foe of MacKenzie King who would run unsuccessfully for the CCF in the 1945 federal election, the Macdonald College conference had outlined a program which

should be of great value to organized Labour, and in which Labour should take as active a part as possible. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that the project offers Labour an opportunity which may never occur again. Shortage of staff and facilities, and inevitable preoccupation with the grim struggle for self-preservation, will make it hard for the unions to play as large a part as they would like. But it is of the utmost importance that they should do everything they can.51

The left-wing, increasingly Marxian-oriented FCSO, which had endorsed the Education for Reconstruction project at a national conference in July, saw in the integrated study-listening-action program of the Citizens' Forum a focal point for the organization of people in neighbourhoods for the discussion of vital issues and for
democratic action. The FCSO suggested forming groups among friends and neighbours, people in church congregations, people with special interest in reconstruction (in Toronto, the FCSO had hoped to have a group relating each topic to Blacks) and among people in the community generally. And the FCSO would publish monthly bulletins related to the major questions involved in the topics to be covered.

We will put out in advance the central factors to be noted in the discussion of the topic, what the churches have said on the matter, and what social action can be taken....Since we will undoubtedly probe closer to the roots of the problems than the general broadcasts and study material, these bulletins will be valuable aids to the members of groups, particularly in churches.53

Thomson's final year as director of the Adult Education Office was, relatively speaking, a year of "unprecedented success." Unfortunately, from the historian's perspective, we know more about the administrative apparatus of the Citizens' Forum in Manitoba than we do about its actual impact on individuals and communities. But it is clear that, in the fall and winter of 1943-44, more people were interested in discussing their country's future than ever before. The aggregate number of study-groups increased markedly---both in the variety of subjects selected for study and in the number of communities having more than one study-group. Much of this increase was due to the widespread interest in the national Citizens' Forum program. The aggregate number of groups for 1943-44 was 175, compared with sixty in the previous year (132 of the 175 groups formed around the Citizens' Forum). As part of the organizational plan determined at Macdonald College, the Adult Education Office at the University of Manitoba assumed responsibility for the promotion and organization of the
Citizens' Forum throughout the province. And for the first time, Thomson's Department ventured into the field of urban education. In Winnipeg, where forty-seven groups registered, the Citizens' Forum was under the direction of Tannis Murray who was appointed Assistant to the Director as Urban Listening-group organizer for an experimental period of seven months.

As there were no Canadian precedents to follow in the field of urban organization of adult discussion groups in a national program, everything done was experimental. Thomson and Murray enlisted the Central Volunteer Bureau, which provided stenographic assistance and up-to-date mailing lists of all Winnipeg organizations, who sent out 1,000 copies of advance publicity. It was evident, Thomson concluded, that this activity had several results: the undertaking of community surveys with regard to post-war needs; setting up of committees to help with the rehabilitation of returned men and women and the setting up of local adult education councils.\(^{53}\)

In late April the Adult Education Office entertained George Grant, national secretary of the Citizens' Forum. At the luncheon meeting on April 28, attended by twenty-five, President Smith moved that those present constitute themselves an advisory committee. Such a committee, he said, would facilitate the promotion and organization of Citizens' Forum in its second season. On April 29 in the CKRC theatre, a conference of Citizens' Forum delegates heard Grant speak on the progress of the program throughout Canada. The luncheon group learned, among other things, that the Forum had not been able to penetrate beneath the middle class in urban areas. In the four western provinces, with the exception of Alberta, the Forums had been well-organized. In Ontario, because of lack of staff and money, only 440 Forums had
been organized. The CAAE had started something. But how could that interest be consolidated and extended?\footnote{4} It appeared that the Citizens' Forum would not secure the needed breadth to influence social policy to any serious extent.

To gain even further involvement in the national dialogue, a further innovation—the Winnipeg Public Library Film Forum—became an integral feature of the Citizens' Forum in Winnipeg. A joint project of the Adult Education Office, the NFB and the Public Library, the program (co-ordinating books, films, panel discussions and audience participation) was related to the subject of the previous evening's broadcast. Most frequently the program took the form of a panel discussion following the screening of a film, with the audience joining in the discussion later. For Thomson, the Winnipeg-based film forum provided a common meeting ground for all the city forums, thus permitting each of them an opportunity for further exchange of views outside its immediate circle.

The Citizens' Forum did give significant impetus to the Adult Education Office's study-group program. Old groups added new members; new groups formed. While not of earth-shaking significance, the intellectual and social level of communities was raised.\footnote{5} In those communities where there was an absence of community spirit or rampant defeatism, Thomson again encouraged carefully selected groups to be the nucleus of local initiative. Some communities presented insurmountable problems. In Stoney Mountain, a community of 400 oppressively conditioned by the presence of the Federal Penitentiary, most men were completely exhausted and apathetic after a day's work. Evening study was hardly very appealing. Other towns
such as Reston and Tilston remained "discouraging places from the standpoint of citizenship and general social awareness." And Neepawa, Thomson observed, was "still vigorously reactionary." It must have been evident to Thomson that, despite increased numbers, his "study-group as spearhead" strategy was only modestly successful.

In the 1943-44 season the Community Schools were extended in scope and given greater direction of form and purpose. One school was held during each of the first four months of 1944 at Carman, Gilbert Plains, Souris and Gladstone. The theme of each was "Post-War Plans for Your Town and District": Thomson hoped to channel towards local action the abstract discussions of study programs such as the Citizens' Forum. He wanted to bring together study-groups and groups such as Municipal Councils and Boards of Trade and to stimulate public interest in local problems of reconstruction by bringing together expert and citizen. To effect these ends, a three-way co-operation was established between the MFA (and Manitoba Pool Elevators), the Provincial Government Post-War Planning Committee and the University. In each case the MFA encouraged the farmers of the neighbourhood to attend and gave the services of one or more of their leaders to the staff team (F.W. Ransom and J. Watson). Was it effective? Only partially—all we can say is that now there was more co-operation between the farm, townspeople and the University than in the first days of the University of Manitoba's adult education program.

Thomson thought that the film program available to the rural circuits had improved in technical quality and now included more subjects of direct relevance to adult education. In addition to direct war information films, films on youth and the war, conservation
of food and materials, health in rural schools, ideological basis of the war, changing agricultural policies, nutrition and world food policies, credit unions, mutual aid of the United Nations and community rehabilitation of veterans were shown. From the birth of the film circuits, Thomson and Rands had hoped to encourage local action projects in as many communities as possible. Now, with more films dealing with community problems and other concrete issues, rural audiences discussed more enthusiastically matters on which they could take action. Films on credit unions, agricultural policies, world food planning, co-operative hospital units and hot school lunches were most successful in provoking discussion and action. "It is significant," Thomson wrote in his Annual Report,

that community action resulted in a large number of cases in the formation of credit unions and of hospital units, the organization of study-groups to prepare for credit unions and hospital units, and setting up of committees to arrange hot lunch facilities for rural schools. One village made plans for a post-war community rink, and immediately raised $3,000 toward it; another, as a result of a venereal disease film accompanied by a medical speaker, instituted Wasserman tests as routine in the district hospital.59

Some fruit was finally being reaped from all the sowing of educational seed.

The circuits, Thomson thought, had played a part in the "increasingly important movement toward community enterprise and local post-war planning." Over 200 towns and rural communities were now served in Manitoba and North-Western Ontario with an average monthly attendance of approximately 34,000. The potentiality of the film circuits in quantitative terms alone was indicated by the fact that, in Manitoba alone, the rural audiences for the last twelve
months totalled more than one-third of a million.

The Citizens' Forum was, considering the lack of available resources, a very bold plan designed to build up in a very short period to a nation-wide organization to promote and carry out a study-action program. But the number of Citizens' Forum participants fell short of Watson Thomson's envisaged 75,000 (roughly eight per cent Canada's population). Moreover, the organization of the Citizens' Forum was decidedly uneven. Some provinces were stronger than others; the four western provinces, excepting Alberta, had excellent organizations. It is hard to imagine what else Manitoba could have done! In Ontario and Quebec the development of the Forum was marred by the absence of any permanent organization to carry out an effective program. In the Maritimes, Citizens' Forum programs were in the hands of very busy Department of Education officials. One serious consequence of ineffective organization in Ontario was the Citizens' Forum's failure to penetrate Canada's industrial heartland. Labour is partly to blame here as well. In February 1944 the CCL created a Political Action Committee which siphoned off energy. George Grant wondered if the CAAE had, in fact, erred in granting so much autonomy to regional organizations. But then they had little choice, given the CAAE's perennial lack of finances and staff.60

The educational visionaries who prepared the Special Report at Macdonald College in late 1942 could at least be satisfied that they had helped create, in Vlastos' phrase, an "authentic instrument of the democratic process." The basic idea of the Citizens' Forum was, indeed, a challenge to the existing capitalist political system which, as C.B. Macpherson has so cogently argued in his lifelong
analysis of liberal democracy, depended on mass apathy and rule by political elites in the interest of Capital. Any mobilization of the people in liberal democracies is potentially threatening to the elite managers of the system. But dialogue must be about something; it must, after critique, specify policy. The educational radicals who presided at London and at Macdonald College in the spring and fall of 1943 wanted a society based on production for people and not profit. They wanted to examine thoroughly the meaning of democracy and advocated "co-operative movement, community planning, and collective action from below." They eschewed, in Freire's phrase, the "banking concept of education" (knowledge as gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing) in favour of an advocacy stance against the status quo. The "passionate educators," heirs of the enlightenment, believed that the acquisition of social knowledge would in turn set Canadians free. They were determined to treat politics as a means of conducting genuine debates about the public interest, not merely competitions between rival interest groups. Reason, they believed, could overcome evil.

A reading of the Citizens' Forum study-bulletins for 1943-1944 reveals that, while they raised many pertinent questions about Canada's economic and political system, they failed to analyze boldly the problems in terms of class and power. Nor did the authors of the Citizens' Forum bulletins choose to specify what new institutional arrangements would be necessary in order to achieve a participatory democratic society. These facts lend some support to William Young's contention that the progressives in adult education "aimed at building up a middle-of-the-road consensus." Perhaps the
educational radicals did the best they could in the febrile war years, given the levels of consciousness in Canadian society, the political and psychological realities of wartime, pressure from more conservative elements in the CAAE and the ruling Liberal party's uncanny ability to checkmate social unrest. Thomson, for one, well knew the limitations of a Citizens' Forum. He knew how easy it was for the CAAE to tone its message down. Nevertheless, the Citizens' Forum did provide opportunity for people of different ideological conviction to discuss fundamental issues at a turning point in Canada's history. It is, after all, possible for any listening-group to reject the viewpoint of any speaker and, through collective discussion and action, arrive at an alternative conception of social change and action. Studies of the impact of film and forums, beyond the scope of this thesis, may well enable us to understand more fully the relationships between the "attainment of enlightenment" and the kind of society that emerged in the post-war years.
CHAPTER SEVEN

FOOTNOTES


2 WTP 2-5, pp. 184ff; See also Isabel Wilson, Citizens' Forum: "Canada's National Platform" (Toronto: CAAE, 1980), pp. 1-8. R.B. Inch told me that Watson Thomson was "one of the principle promoters of the idea of the CBC doing something about the coming peace" (Interview with R.B. Inch, July 20, 1981).


5 Special Report, pp. 15, 17.

6 Special Report, p. 21.

7 Irving Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), ch. 5, "The CCL, the CCF and the Communist Party, 1940-46," p. 75.


10 For background leading up to this meeting, see Ron Paris, The Passionate Educators (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1975), pp. 101ff.


The April 25th, 1944 broadcast, "Who Shapes the Future," noted: "For a great many people the central question on the agenda of the future is not: should there be planning? but rather: in whose interest, and by whom, will the planning be done--by a minority group or by the people as a whole? Will the Canadian people achieve mastery over their own destiny, and shape the future in a pattern which will contribute to the well-being of all?" (CAAE Papers, Archives of Ontario [hereafter CAAEP], B-1, box 6, Citizens' Forum Administration, 1943-1966).


Alex Sim to R.B. Inch, February 13, 1943, IP, vol. 8, file 370 (1).


Eugene Forsey to R.B. Inch, February 24, 1943, IP, vol. 8, file 370 (1).


The questionnaire went to members of the Advisory Committee, consultants and participants. Among the latter who replied were Armstrong, Hope, Howse, Lander, McEachern, Sandwell, Thomson, and Perry and Mrs. Durand, Mrs. Dorise Nielsen and Miss Charlotte Whitton.


Watson Thomson to Mary Thomson, May 23, 1943, RRP.


33. Watson Thomson to Mary Thomson, May 23, 1943, RRP.

34. Watson Thomson to Mary Thomson, June 3, 1943, RRP.

35. WTP 2-5, p. 185.

36. Watson Thomson to Mary Thomson, June 3, 1943, RRP.

37. E.A. Corbett to Harry Avison, June 1, 1943, CAAEP, A-I, box 1, Director's files, 1935-43.


44. Avison to Thomson, September 1, 1943, CAAEP, A-I, box 1, Director's files, 1935-1943.

45. Avison to Thomson, September 1, 1943, CAAEP, A-I, box 1, Director's files, 1935-1943.


47. Widespread interest in the "Education for Reconstruction" conference is indicated by the following list of organizations represented at the Macdonald College conference: The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, University Extension Departments (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, McMaster and Macdonald College), Departments of Education of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, the educational services of the army, navy and airforce, and of the
Canadian Legion, from the WIB, the Department of Pensions and National Health, the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, the CBC, the Dominion Department of Agriculture, National Service and the NFB. Teachers' organizations represented included the: Canadian Teachers' Federation, N.B. Teachers' Association, Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers (Que.). Among parent-teachers groups were the Canadian Home and School Federation, NS Federation of Home and School, BC Parent-Teacher Federation, Provincial Council of Home and School Associations (Que.), Sask. Federation of Home and School and L'Ecole des Parents du Quebec. There were representatives from the: Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women, Student Christian Movement, Ontario Library Association, Civics League, National Council for Canadian Soviet Friendship, Canadian Youth Commission, League for Women's Rights, Canadian Association of Social Workers, National YMCA, League of Nations Society, International Community School, Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship, Canadian Library Council, Canadian Congress of Labour, Canadian National Committee on Refugees, Montreal YMHA, Ecole des Sciences Sociales de Laval, Labour Youth Federation, United Farmers, Sask., Homemakers' Clubs, Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and Other Transport Workers, World Federation of Educational Associations, National YMCA, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, National CCF Council, Metal Trades Council, National Council of Women, Henry George School of Social Science. The churches, apparently, sent few representatives. ("Education for Reconstruction," Christian Social Action, September-October 1943), p. 2.


If asked to label the content of the 1943-44 series, I would offer "social democratic."

Peacock, Crutchfield and Forsey quotations from "In My Opinion," Food for Thought, October 1943, p. 19.


University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1943-44. See also, Watson Thomson, "The University Adult Education Programme," University of Manitoba Alumni Bulletin, October 21, 1943.
"Report to the Executive of the CAAE on the Progress of Citizens' Forum," CAAEP, B-I, box 3.


Stan Rands to Thomson, January 22, 1944, SSP 50-2.

Watson Thomson to Sidney Smith, February 23, 1944, SSP 50-2.

Critical Report on Gilbert Plains, February 18-19, 1944, SSP 50-2. Thomson wrote: "Although recovery to a better mutual understanding was achieved the following day (after the farm—or MFA—point of view had been emphatically stated by Mr. Watson in the Saturday evening discussion), this is obviously a situation which can easily develop owing to the rather exclusive type of loyalty prevailing within the farm organizations. Care and objectivity are needed in the fullest degree to guard against this danger."

University of Manitoba, Department of Adult Education, Annual Report, 1943-44.

"Report to the Executive of the CAAE on the Progress of Citizens' Forum, 1943-44," CAAEP, B-I, box 3, Citizens' Forum Records. George Grant's reflections on the speakers' committee did not get into the report. He wrote to Harry Avison on January 18, 1944. "I find it hard to write anything relevant—for have just been at a speakers' committee of Malcolm Wallace, Dr. Corbett, Neil Morrison, Bushwell, B.K. Sandwell, Capt. Cavell and all they did was pick the middle of the way—the mediocre. Neither extreme right or left—internally—neither internationalists nor imperialists in the world war. 'Gentlemen let's sit on the fence—and put on our opinions—everybody else is either too young or too old—everybody else might be too reactionary or might be too progressive. Let's toe the middle of the line carefully and quietly—for when all is said and done a careful, pragmatic and self-centred view of the world—is after all the truth'—neither badness or goodness is any good—just plain dullness" (CAAEP, B-I, box 2, Citizens' Forum Administration, 1943-1966).


See study bulletins, CAAEP, B-I, box 6, Citizens' Forum Administration, 1943-1966.


CHAPTER EIGHT

"TO BE AND BUILD THE GLORIOUS WORLD":

139 ROSLYN ROAD

In January 1941 Watson Thomson had started an adult education department from scratch with very little interference and a great deal of support from President Sidney Smith and the University of Manitoba. He had created an educational infrastructure, which if it had been allowed to evolve, might have developed permanent participatory forms of community life. Much of his educational activity in Manitoba and work with the CAAE and other national organizations was motivated by his desire to awaken individuals and communities to a participatory civic consciousness and to create communal forms of organization. Individuals had to be awakened to communal responsibility and communities had to break through internal divisions to find the "truly human" ground of commonality. The small-group was the "indispensable context"\(^1\) for learning to "be and build the glorious world."\(^2\)

Thomson hoped that once individuals had experienced the satisfactions of direct democracy in small affinity groups and community-oriented action projects, they would challenge the existing centralized political structures in favour of regionally devolved political, economic and cultural formations.

Thomson's practice as an adult educator was consistent with his social philosophy. Yet, in his public practice, sensitive as it had to be to ideological and institutional constraints, he was not free to be completely himself or articulate all of the radical implications of his philosophy. For philosophical as well as deeply personal
reasons, Thomson placed great significance in his experiments in co-personal living. Simply narrating Thomson's work as an adult educator, rich and fascinating as that is, does not permit us to understand fully his educational practice. The secret to Thomson's social vision lies in telling the story of 139 Roslyn Road in Winnipeg.

Thomson had left the Edmonton group in December 1940 to assume his responsibilities in Manitoba. Throughout 1941 he maintained close contact through correspondence with the Edmonton group. Correspondence reveals that Thomson felt isolated and often despondent in the early months of his tenure. He wondered if there would ever be a time when he would see a likelihood of a certain permanence and continuity, as to whom and how we shall live. All this may develop this way, and yet I still fear this 'settling down' business deeply—and I also have a sneaking feeling that it isn't going to be that kind of world very much for a long time.  

Although by the early spring of 1941 the response of people in several small Manitoban towns was providing him with much needed encouragement, he was still feeling a kind of sullen anger—anger at the things that are happening in the world, anger also at myself. I suppose the real trouble is that I haven't nearly enough emotional outlet in this life I am leading just now. I'm angry at myself for not being clear enough (or ambitious enough) to get that release to some creative work of writing or something.  

Thomson desperately needed the group. "My need of the group," he wrote to Mary Jackson, arises primarily from that fact. In the close relationship of the group, I always get that stimulus sooner or later, and generally sooner: but in this impersonal world I can go for days never more than half alive, and losing all sense of purposive direction.
During these perplexing days Thomson was meditating (and trying to complete a manuscript begun in 1940) on the need to find a new basis for world-wide social cohesion and co-operative order. He was convinced that the intensive co-personal group could create the seed out of which the only non-regressive New Order could emerge. It was possible, he thought, for individuals to give up egocentric defences and ambitions in favour of a common devotion to the cause of our collective salvation and the wholeness of vision with which to formulate the common goal. He was reading Herman Rauschning's *The Revolution of Nihilism* and Lewis Mumford's *The Story of Utopias*; the latter he thought of special importance for the Edmonton group. But he was particularly struck by a passage from Karl Mannheim's *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, published in 1940.

If the groups engaged in politics still refuse to look beyond their own immediate interests, society will be doomed. We need a new kind of foresight, a new technique for managing conflicts, together with a psychology, morality and plan of action in many ways completely different from those of the past. It is only by remaking man himself that the reconstruction of society is possible. The reinterpretation of human capacities, the reconstruction of our moral code are not subjects for edifying sermons or visionary utopias. They are vital to us all, and the condition of our survival.

Watson commented:

Isn't that a pretty good description of what we've been trying to do—reinterpret human aims, transform human capacities, reconstruct our moral code? When one of the recognized greatest living sociologists (some would say the greatest living sociologist) endorses our experiment to that extent, perhaps it is time we stopped being ashamed of ourselves.

By May 1941 Thomson was gaining zest and strength in his adult
education work. Speaking engagements at the Phoenix Club and the
Winnipeg branch of the LSR had also encouraged him; a co-personal
group seemed possible in Winnipeg. The core group at Edmonton
(Edward and Grete LeBeau, Stan Rands, Eldon Wilcox, Leone Roach
Wilcox and Mary Jackson) had resolved to come to Winnipeg. And
through a speech to the LSR Thomson met Rev. Elliot Bolton, Kay
Richardson Bolton, Muriel James, Jack Wilson, and Ruth Caldwell—all
of whom had collaborated, under pioneering CCF organizer E.J. Garland's
direction, in the preparation of the booklet Pioneers in Poverty, a
lucid study of Manitoba's pressing economic and social problems. Kay
Bolton recalled the excitement of that first meeting with Watson
Thomson.

Here was Watson Thomson telling the group that
one didn't simply go home when the meeting ended. One battled through until a solution was arrived at. No more just talking and talking and going home. Most of us felt that action was bound up in all this exploration process and if it didn't lead into some kind of action, you were just playing around, you were just a dilettante. We were very attracted to the idea of hammering out until you got somewhere with it. So we were interested in meeting the rest of the Edmonton group.

Who were these individuals who linked up with Watson Thomson and the Edmonton people?

The LSR group were all prairie children of the depression, sharing the restlessness and searching of those times. Elliot Bolton's family, for instance, had suffered severely during the depression. After doing odd jobs to support his stricken family, Elliot had chosen to enter the United Church ministry, training at United College in Winnipeg. During his student days, Elliot had been active in the SCM.
As part of the emergent left-wing within the church, he shared two concerns that were being woven together in the 1930s—personal development (in the Canadian theological context, based on Sharman's pioneering studies on the life of Jesus) and the necessity of social action in the world (articulated by Christian socialist intellectuals like J. King Gordon and Gregory Vlastos). Progressive elements in the United Church were also beginning to recognize that, socially speaking, people who felt personally diminished or inferior were not of much use in social change.

Kay Bolton had grown up in a moderately progressive and secure Winnipeg home. At age thirteen or fourteen she recalls having been inspired by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*. She was also active in her undergraduate years at the University of Manitoba in the SCM and Youth Congress, serving as SCM secretary for one year. After attaining her B.A. in psychology and literature, Kay Bolton went to the University of California at Los Angeles, then at the forefront of child-centred curriculum, to study Early Childhood Education. Returning to Winnipeg, she established one of the few kindergartens in the city and became involved with the LSR, a natural progression for left-wing SCMers.9

Muriel James graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1932 where she received her B.Sc. degree. To that point, her education had been geared to entering medical school. But the depression soon dashed these hopes. She decided to enter Normal School and received her education diploma in 1933. By 1936, after teaching music appreciation and choral work in rural schools, Muriel James began moving to the left. She joined a group of young people led by J.S. Woodsworth, and in 1937 or 1938 joined the LSR.
I was imbued with a great missionary zeal. I was a bit of a hero-worshipper all the way through. Always needing a leader. We were a very dedicated group, so we set about the task of writing a pamphlet called Pioneers in Poverty. It was quite an attractive little pamphlet concerning the dreadful conditions in both rural and urban Manitoba during the depression...I really believed we could change the world.\textsuperscript{10}

Muriel James joined the community at 139 Roslyn Road, embarking on what she considered the "most important part of my life because it gave me confidence to go out and teach and develop new concepts so far as education was concerned.\textsuperscript{11}

Unlike the Boltons and Muriel James, Jack Wilson had emotional and familial roots in the labour movement. His father was a railway conductor "union man," who had participated in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. But he was an alcoholic, dying when Jack Wilson was in his early teens and forcing him to drop out of high school. After a series of odd jobs to help support the family and a night school business course to gain some credentials, Wilson joined the Department of Technical Education in the early 1930s where he worked with R.J. Johns first as clerk-typist, later on in curriculum development. Wilson had attended Phoenix Club lectures as early as 1935, where many radical ideas were discussed, and moved in CCF circles. He joined the LSR in 1937 where he met Ruth Caldwell, whom he married in September 1943. Unlike her husband, Ruth Casselman Caldwell was born into a middle-class family. She graduated from the University of Manitoba in Home Economics in 1933. When she met Watson Thomson and the Edmonton group, she was working as Supervisor of Girl's Clubs in the Department of Agriculture. She worked there until the fall of 1944 when she became pregnant. Jack Wilson and Ruth Caldwell joined the Roslyn group in
On September 1, 1941, largely through the initiative of Will and Alice Conyers, the group rented a large house on 139 Roslyn Road for $75 a month from the London and Scottish Assurance Corporation. At first the city was reluctant to lease the house because of zoning regulations and the unusual nature of the house's occupants. To calm fears and dampen suspicions, Watson Thomson wrote to Miles Selby on August 18:

The group of people who propose to occupy this house have come together on the basis of common interest in problems of human relations and certain common convictions about the present crisis in its more personal and psychological aspect. We wish to manage our domestic arrangements on a co-operative basis as part of an experiment—which we hope may be serviceable to the community in many ways—in mutual understanding and mutual responsibility. Our aim is to deepen our own understanding of the implications of Christian and democratic living by testing co-operative principles in matters of household economy and discussing our experience.

Mr. Conyers and I have a common interest in adult education and especially in study-groups which converges on Mr. (Rev. G. Elliot) and Mrs. Bolton's interest in group-living as an important part of Christian experience. The others concerned all share these interests and are included for that reason. The project will therefore be in no sense commercial or profit-making for any of those concerned. Four of the group are University graduates, and all have reputable records of personal integrity and responsible citizenship.

139 Roslyn Road was a magnificent old house. Its wide entrance hall had a fireplace large enough to roast an ox, an oak stairway to the second and third floors; a huge kitchen and a dining-room large enough to hold the whole group around one table. Its beautifully panelled library held another fireplace, record-player and many records,
while a cranky furnace inhabited the appallingly dark basement.  
During the first year of co-operative operation, George, Grete, Mary,  
Eldon, Leone and Watson from the Edmonton group joined Elliot and Kay  
Bolton, Alice and Will Conyers with their children, Cliff (twelve) and  
Jimmy (seven), Muriel James and several young children, Marilyn LeBeau,  
Leone's child Christopher and the Bolton's daughter Frances. Stan  
Rands did not join the house until the spring of 1942; his wife Doris,  
a school teacher, joining him later after they were married in 1943.  
Fifteen adults comprised the core of 139 Roslyn Road.  

Others joined the group for shorter periods of time. Clive  
Cardinal, a half-German, half-English refugee, came and went. Fred  
Stenger, an anti-Nazi, pro-communist German refugee stayed at Roslyn  
Road for a year or so before joining the Canadian army. George Hynd,  
a seventy year old Saskatchewan farmer, wrote Roslyn Road several times  
and joined the group for a brief spell. A young idealist from  
Saskatchewan, John Marshall, joined the group in September 1944. He  
would become a key figure in the Prairie School for Social Advance  
(PSSA). Nahama Singer, a talented Jewish girl from Montreal, stayed  
at Roslyn Road as part of her training for the collective living of  
the Palestinian kibbutz. Cleo and Betty Mowers, and their child, were  
taken in when Cleo seemed about to be jailed for his pacifist refusal  
to join the army. The Mowers would leave the group in bitterness in  
April 1944 over the nature of their pacifism. Jack Laurence,  
stationed at an RCAF base one hundred miles from Winnipeg, joined the  
group every second weekend for about a year. Bobby Maxwell Moore, an  
eccentric curmudgeon of a character, lived in a small room in Roslyn  
Road's basement, driving some to distraction with his improbable
schemes. And Berry Richards, a CCF MLA from Le Pas, stayed at the house during legislative sittings, occasionally joined by his wife Mabel. Berry Richards would be caught up in a vitriolic dispute with the Manitoba CCF in the spring of 1945, tarring Roslyn Road in Stanley Knowles' eyes as anti-CCF troublemakers. But this hardly gives an adequate idea of the stir of people surrounding the group. Visitors poured in all the time—from all across Canada as from Winnipeg itself—of varying degrees of sympathy for the experiment. The group was in close touch with youth and labour groups, the NFB, CAAE, SCM, CCF and CP.

The group, as part of Thomson's plan, contained a wide range of ages, ethnic background and political beliefs. In ages, the span for adults was nineteen to seventy; for children from unborn to age twelve. In educational background the range was from elementary school to several kinds of university graduate (Rands was a Rhodes scholar). In place of origin, from the rural prairies to the urban Canadian milieu. There were those who had little political background and those with considerable experience in left-wing politics. Active conscientious objectors mixed with active members of the armed forces; Gentiles and Jews; refugees from Germany and a Jewish girl. In religious orientation, Roslyn Roaders ran the gamut from orthodox to liberal to agnostic. One even considered himself to be, philosophically, a Brahmin. There were, too, outpost disciples such as Glen Allen of Killarney and Norman Smith of Calgary.

Those who joined the urban co-operative house, with Watson Thomson undeniably the leader, shared with many of their generation the search for an altogether new social pattern of life. Unlike other Canadian
radicals, they opted for an intensive, time-consuming involvement in learning to be and build the glorious world in a small-scale community. Although one could never uncover all the reasons why individuals would opt for such an experiment, no doubt the group was a "haven in a heartless world" for more than a few, a spiritual home for those who had experienced the collapse of old certitudes in the depression and in the brutalities of global war. Watson Thomson believed, at least until he moved to Regina to work with Tommy Douglas in late 1944, that a New Order was imminent and that it would come by a process of creative revolution. The prior fundamental task facing the group was to work out in the interest of common humanity new patterns of relationship. Although well aware of human suffering and frailty, Thomson believed that all human beings had the potential for mutual understanding, harmony and love; this potential, however, lay buried beneath layers of defence mechanisms. The challenge before himself as leader and the group as a whole was how to transform the subjective, egocentric ambitions of individuals into objectively valid efforts in the direction of true self-fulfillment.

The human psyche needed to be re-educated. Like Alfred Adler, whose ideas he had internalized during the New Britain days, Thomson believed that the emergence of a New Order depended on the transformation of the egocentric, neurotic personality: "Social feeling" had to be restored to the emotionally isolated human being. The wholeness the group had to aim at was the microcosmic wholeness of one's own self. This self-wholeness, Thomson insisted, could only be verified by the intimacy of one's relationship to a miscellaneous few of one's fellow creatures. Only through a process similar to
"encounter group" therapy would individuals break the "vicious, dis-integrating circle of isolation—intellectualism—neurosis—evasion—impotency—egocentricity—social anarchy—political decadence." The goal of the co-personal group was the development of a "fully expressive and fully controlled, emotional life, a refreshed and clarified intellect, a dynamised will." Thomson's method of achieving his goals was based on the principle of radical acceptance of the other. "To accept and be accepted," he wrote in 1940, "to closely and warmly 'belong' is the beginning, the only and necessary beginning of any integrating, healing, socialising process." Individuals were asked to abandon completely all moralizing attitudes. They were to learn to assist each other in acquiring self-knowledge, as painful as that might be. The only personal growth of a sure kind was that which was built on the rock of realistic, unified self-knowledge. As inner clarification evolved, Thomson believed the individual would feel himself more cherished and supported than ever before and more aware of his ability to endure severities even when they were directed towards the self. Following Adler and Mitrinovic, Thomson believed that as the individual broke through his/her inferiority-complex, and rejected the need to compensate through dominance of the other, he/she would gain a new understanding of power as functional service to the community.

Roslyn Road was able to build a "community of trust." They practiced the age-old communitarian principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Each family pooled ninety percent of their income after deducting the necessary funds to meet obligations outside, such as supporting parents. The central fund
covered board, mortgage payments (Roslyn Road was purchased on August 25, 1942), house maintenance and nursery expenses. This was the fundamental material law. The other law of the group, to "become members one of another", they tried to achieve by encouraging "genuine openness in communication whether it was prompted by sensitivity to another's feelings or by conflict and challenge. If we grew in grace...it is because we really shared the joys and sorrows and conflicts that emerged among us, as they must with any group." Individuals in conflict were encouraged to work through problems. Kay Bolton wondered, having experienced this process in marital conflict, how anyone could enter into marriage without the support and insight of others. The group held "barley and cactus" sessions--times of praise and times of criticism. Some found these sessions--integrating heart and head--painful, exhilarating, difficult. All claim to have emerged stronger from the process, establishing bonds that were often deeper than to their own families. But unlike the encounter group therapies of the 1960s and 1970s, which were often short-term and disconnected from social goals, Roslyn Road contended in their newsletter In the Human Cause that:

We should secure our base--the severe and affectionate mutuality of our comrades. We need it as a place of personal endorsement and verification. (Who are you, or who am I, to be confident we are right in our social convictions merely out of private judgement?)... We need it [the base] as a place for the criticism of all things Old and the clarification of all things New. We need it as a base from which to go out to attack.

The group experiment was infused with utopian meaning. The group, although in daily contact with the world outside in various
organizations, reinforced each other in their visions and faith. In endless discussions, gathered close in a circle of genuine friendship, even love, listening to Watson Thomson's persuasive talk, anything seemed possible. Yet one could not live on dreams alone. Building an intentional community implied hard work and practical organization. Children had to be cared for, people had to be fed, dishes had to be washed, furnaces repaired, rugs cleaned.

Within the larger vision of building a new society, the group struggled with the practicalities of raising children co-operatively while respecting the role of women in a new society. During the war years women gained new self-awareness and became dissatisfied with traditional roles. For Roslyn Road the practical issue was which of the younger women should work in the collective house, and which should seek employment outside.

It took courage we found, for a young woman to say that she preferred the latter to the former. In an atmosphere of freedom of choice, it was easier to state such a preference and, as in all personal decisions, there was no dictatorship of the group but one could expect challenge of one's motives, both conscious and unconscious.

There was a fine line between group challenge of one's motives and group coercion. But those who did elect to stay at home drew up their schedule of duties--one cooking, one house-cleaning, one doing laundry, one supervising the nursery. Grete LeBeau, though she did work as an assistant film librarian beginning in March 1943, was in charge of the over-all direction of the household. Alice Conyers served as group hostess and Kay Bolton was in charge of the nursery. The men had their own schedule of activities covering maintenance
jobs, furnace tending and helping with the dishes after evening meals. When they could, the men assisted with child-care. There appear to have been few serious troubles on this level. Nonetheless, managing the dailiness of children, feeding twenty or so people every day, combined with after dinner discussions and going out to participate in cultural and political events around Winnipeg left little time for reading and sleeping.

Roslyn Road was itself an educational centre. Not until Eric Gutkind's arrival in 1943 would the group actually formalize critical study of philosophy, psychology and politics. But, informally, discussion was "perennial, generally intense, universal in scope." The group read everything they could on the nature of co-operative living—resulting in two publications, one on the Co-operative Land Settlement, the other on Co-operative Housing. They examined the question of leadership in egalitarian communities, the question of the love triangle, unmarried parenthood, divorce, anti-Semitism, pacifism in wartime, the "German question" and the "astonishingly bitter and hard to resolve" conflict between social democrats and communists.

Several issues were particularly contentious and potentially divisive. Pacifism was the issue which created the "most violent, bitter and turbulent feelings." As Thomson recalls, the pacifists were university graduates with a kind of piety which seemed anemic to the more robust sons of rural life on the dried out prairies. Several group members criticized the pacifist position as serving two extremely useful purposes simultaneously: it provided grounds for feeling morally superior to others and it saved one's skin. This
attack led to the Mowers' departure. Another and deeper issue was the source of long-term tension in Roslyn Road; this was the tension between the contemplative and active life.

By the summer of 1943 Watson Thomson's publicity—the success of his CBC broadcasts, his work with the CAAE and the Jewish Refugee campaign—had given Roslyn Road some reason to hope that they might influence the shape of things to come in Canada. But everyone was quite uncertain how to take the step from a small coterie, with a sort of intangible verbal influence across the land, to becoming a palpable social force, something of a political movement. "Post-war reconstruction" was in the air and Roslyn Road felt they had something to say which would "offer Canada the kind of new world everybody dreams of during a major war. So we actually thought, in our collective naïveté and my personal conceit." The summer of 1943 brought the great days of the anti-Hitler alliance. Soviet Russia was now Canada's "noble ally" and pro-Sovietism was almost respectable. Although Roslyn Road leftism combined with ardent wartime pro-Sovietism, the group shunned any rigid position. An open, questioning, eclectic approach (reminiscent of the New Britain movement) was part and parcel of their way of life. However, a number of the group of more activist leaning (the LeBeaus and the Wilsons) argued that either the group must create its own vehicle of political action, if that were conceivable, or it had to commit itself to action through the medium of an existing political party. But this latter option presented serious problems to the communitarian socialists of Roslyn Road. All were pretty disillusioned with social democracy. What other medium was there other than the Communist Party? The clash
between the "Marxist realists" and the rest coincided with the visit of Eric and Lucie Gutkind to 139 Roslyn Road.

Watson Thomson had first met Eric Gutkind in London immediately after his flight from Germany to London in 1933. Born in 1877 in Berlin into a highly cultivated family (Eric's mother was descended from Heinrich Heine), Gutkind had studied philosophy, anthropology, art history, religion and psychology at the University of Berlin. A man of brilliant and visionary intellect, Gutkind had published *Sidereal Birth* in 1910. In this rhapsodic work Gutkind prophesied that, in a spiritually exhausted world, humankind must break out to something wholly new, beyond the old "realities" of the egoistic person, the nation, race and class. The publication of *Sidereal Birth* widened Gutkind's circle of friends. With the eminent Dutch writer Frederick van Eeden, he formed a group which met in Berlin and at Gutkind's summer home in Potsdam in 1914. This group, which met to reflect on the crisis of western civilization, included Florens Rang, the theologian and historian; Henri Borel, the Orientalist; Gustav Landauer, the communitarian socialist so admired by Martin Buber; and Martin Buber, the Jewish theologian. These were joined at various times by Walter Benjamin, who was associated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, and by the American Upton Sinclair, a close friend of Gutkind's. Van Eeden was also corresponding with Gandhi and Tagore. One of Buber's biographers, Maurice Friedman, locates the birth of the I-Thou philosophy in the experiences of this unusual group of men.35

Dimitrije Mitrinovic had been introduced to Eric Gutkind by Wassily Kandinsky before World War I. Sharing Gutkind's vision of
the new age, Mitrinovic made Sidereal Birth the platform of his New Europe Group and of the magazine New Albion, which he edited with A.R. Orage in 1934. During the 1920s, influenced by the great Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem, Gutkind moved to a radical reinterpretation of traditional Judaism, more "radical and daring," H. Le Roy Finch thinks, than either Martin Buber or Franz Rosenzweig. In 1933, Gutkind openly opposed the Nazis in lectures and public addresses; he and his wife were forced to flee to London. There he completed the English translation of his second book, The Absolute Collective, subtitled "A Philosophical Attempt to Overcome our Broken State," published in 1937.36

In the fall of 1933 Gutkind came to the United States and settled in New York City, where he remained until his death in 1965. During this period he gave hundreds of lectures, first for many years at the New School for Social Research, and then at Yeshiva University, the Institute of Arts and Science at Columbia University, and in the adult education division of the City College. Gutkind also lectured in the early 1940s at the Rand School and the South Orange-Maplewood Adult School.38 These lectures ranged from "New Frontiers in Psychology," "Restating the American Dream," "The Dilemmas of Science and Technology," to the "Wisdom of the Kabbalah," "The Jewish Ritual," and "Zen versus Cybernetics." Gutkind was a most unusual adult educator. He provided a study program to acquaint men and women with the latest discoveries of modern science so that they could prepare for post-war reconstruction. Gutkind was especially preoccupied with the problem of Germany and the dangers of the new mass psychology. Thomson had reestablished contact with Gutkind while
doing business on the Northern Plains study in New York in 1942.

From the first moment, Thomson remembers feeling "accepted and recognized, with a rare and irresistible depth of understanding." The relationship of these two men would, however, be stormy throughout 1944 and 1945.

The prophet arrived among the ordinary people in that summer of 1943. During the summer Gutkind gave two public lectures a week at the Phoenix Club (arranged by Conyers and Thomson), and one private lecture a week at Roslyn Road to about fifty people packed into their "Red Room" on the third floor. All this proved to be immensely stimulating, but it brought to the surface a latent conflict between Marxism and Thomson's kind of radicalism, which he still held in a kind of Mitrinovician version, and Gutkind's more philosophically complete Judaist version. In his diary Will Conyers captured something of the philosophical dimensions of the conflict between Gutkind and Thomson.

The fundamental issues of importance came up between Dr. Gutkind and Watson. Seemingly in direct opposition to Watson's philosophy, Dr. Gutkind repudiated the need of man to depend on his instinctive drives. He thought that man's so-called animal nature could be transcended almost completely. Watson's philosophy is that man's instinctive drive cannot be obliterated, but must be accepted and used constructively. Dr. Gutkind appeared to deny our need of them, that they were indeed a positive danger to man and should be eradicated completely. Watson appeared to consider a new point of view of this matter which is so fundamental to D.M.'s teaching which he has accepted so completely as his philosophy of life....I'm quite certain that the matter will be fought out at a later time.

Watson also spoke of the need to replace totalitarianism with the concept 'total personality.' Here again, Dr. Gutkind corrected Watson in
stating the falseness of totality or absoluteness in anything. He pointed out that since Einstein's theory of Relativity, physics, mathematics, etc. had to abandon the concept of totality, wholeness, or absoluteness.

Conyers thought that Watson had met his match in Dr. Gutkind, a quality he needed to bring out the best in him and to keep him up to his best. Dr. Gutkind, I feel, has the greater originality of thought and the deeper philosophical and psychological insight but Watson has that quality of action which Dr. Gutkind lacks. They would make a marvellous team and should hold their own against any combination. I do hope Dr. Gutkind stays with the group for here in Canada he would have the freedom on a smaller manageable scale with Watson's help to bring about the 'Revolution for Man's Freedom.'

Nevertheless, in spite of some differences over how individuals become self-activated for revolutionary action, Gutkind and Thomson agreed that the "new revolution must and shall come out of individual initiative, through personal alliance to the new and totally human order." As an outsider to the group, Gutkind not only illuminated the intellectual currents of the day. He also observed that 139 Roslyn Road was beginning to be "in-grown," too preoccupied with the fine points of inter-personal relations, which he thought would tend to disappear or become insignificant in a more active and dynamic situation. Advised Gutkind, "Grow outwards--go out to the people."

After Gutkind returned to New York to resume his adult educational work, Roslyn Road took up his challenge. In the fall of 1943, Roslyn Road began to explore how they could grow outwards. Preparing a list of 423 names, gathered from the group's extensive contacts among progressive-minded people, the group went public, publishing a
mimeographed newsletter, "In the Human Cause." The group conflict was temporarily resolved. Roslyn Road identified themselves as a group of 20-30 people in Winnipeg. The number is not fixed, nor is the number the important thing. The important thing is that we have carried friendship—in its best sense—to a logical conclusion. Most of us live, by choice, under the same roof because we're tired of the shut-in, private family unit. There's another, even bigger reason for our coming together. Alone, a human being is helpless, lost, isolated. In any kind of crisis, he can accomplish very little. When joined together in genuine understanding and trust, however, human beings become all-powerful. We believe that being together offers us the basis for any action we might choose to make. Instead of separated individuals, we become a force. When confronted with a 'situation,' we can do something about it! Also living together keeps us sane in a mad world.44

Roslyn Road declared that they were "putting themselves on paper" for several reasons. They felt that few publications in Canada were attempting to deal candidly with "rock-bottom issues of the world crisis" and because they believed that it was time for "personal responsibility, decision, and action...." Appealing to their personal friends and others who had indicated that they were not trying to start a political party or organization of any kind, they declared:

We want a kind of personal alliance, such as we have between ourselves, extended to as many people as possible across Canada...The kind of thing we believe in is, as we said, an alliance of persons, which means we've got to get to know you and you've got to do something about it—namely, sit down and write us from time to time.45

The first newsletter promised to issue, once a month, a statement of their convictions on some essential topic concerning the present crisis in human affairs. At the outset, Roslyn Road articulated some of the principles which seemed basic.
That the big issue today is humanity and what happens to it, human beings and what happens to them—not nations, races, or even geopolitics.

That a full and abundant life, economically and culturally, is a human right and within the reach of all.

That the emphasis in social life must change from 'dollar' values to a concern with the dignity and fulfillment of persons; that to this end the ideas and institutions foisted on us from the past must be drastically changed.

That religion, for example, must finally become a way of living, and not a mere worship of God without faith in the spirit and solidarity of Man.

That our political and economic institutions must be divorced from vested interests and become the instruments of the conscious, non-competitive purposes of an awakened people.

That all these changes—even changes in 'human nature' are possible by the creative effort of even a small minority if this minority is earnest and self-dedicated.

That we are not aiming at millenia or utopias. Our business is not to arrive, but to begin.46

"Remember," the first newsletter concluded, "TWO people make a conversation...THREE make a conference...but FOUR, committed to action, can make history turn somersaults."

Roslyn Road admitted that a newsletter was a "ludicrously inadequate medium" in which to try to make a realistic analysis of world affairs and to find some pattern of meaning in a chaotic world. The great democracies appeared to be preparing again the same betrayal of the dead and the dying. But Roslyn Road insisted that the "decencies, the skills, the ripeness for responsibility were all there in such people as those of this Continent." Only one thing was lacking: the "right focus, the necessary rallying-point for all these positive
forces in us and in our people which, frustrated, turn us into the
ambiguous, unzealous creatures we are." The group had sent out 423
letters, received fifty-nine responses, adding 143 names to their
original list. Many of these responses asked the "eternal, insistent"
question of how "total change" was going to be brought about. Some
respondents wondered why Roslyn Road was not allying itself with a
particular political party or embarking on their own political
crusade.47

In a letter to Harry Avison, Kay Bolton explained why Roslyn Road
was opposed to a premature entry into public life.

We are not against political action but neither
are we for a premature burst into public life—
which a political party, for example, most
certainly would be. At this stage of the game,
it would involve taking sides by what could
hardly help but be a most superficial means in
the present bitter conflicts—conflicts between
social strata, sectional or racial interests.
And our base of action is by no means firm and
extensive enough. As one of the first steps,
some few people have to come to the stage where
in the fullest kind of purpose and personal
integrity they can hold together their beliefs
about race, religion, economics, politics,
education, science—hold them in some kind of
totality where no single element is ignored.

It must be coming clearer to any of us who have
always had these or similar purposes, that there
must be a pretty well integrated body of people
who share these all-inclusive intentions, before
anything more than a few brave flashes in the
pan could emerge.

And so it is easy to see that our aim at this
moment must be beyond party and essentially beyond
politics, except in so far as it becomes one aspect
of functioning in the promotion of 'the human
cause.'48

Roslyn Road knew that there was no "blueprint for the perfect
order." In fact, they admitted that on the surface global and
national events looked rather bleak. "We know," they wrote in the newsletter of December 1943,

that this bloody and excruciating war is being fought for no pure principles, no clear and valid aims; that the great men of this world are still the profiteers and the hard egoists, and they are moving in, more obviously in North America than elsewhere, from their seats in the directorates of corporations to the seats of government in the Political State; that the majority of the citizens are still gullible and still irresponsible.49

They thought it probable, if the situation remained, that a "Social Security New Deal could be put over as the brave new world of the present power-holders in their hastily-donned 'progressive' dress." This would amount to little more than temporary comfort and specious security, but no change, no release of man's spirit and immense creative power.

Roslyn Road believed that, in the absence of clearly articulated principles on the left and in the general society, they had the responsibility to articulate a life-embracing vision.

Without the greater, more inclusive vision on the part of at least some leavening minority, society becomes (as it is today) a jumble of rival factions, and government is not by the people but by pressure groups. The farmer, seeing himself only as a farmer and not as a Canadian or American world citizen, gets his way today and insists that it be at the expense of labor or the consumer. Tomorrow labor is on top. Then the industrialist. And so on. Someone must have the broader vision, the only standard by which the lesser goals can be kept relative, indeed the only point from which they can be realized.50

In July of 1943 Gutkind and Thomson closeted themselves in a summer cottage outside Winnipeg to clarify the herculean task Roslyn Road had set itself. The result was an unfinished manuscript--
"First Call for the New Revolution: A Brief Guide to Personal Action and Total Change." Both men thought, no doubt reflecting their own transforming experiences in small-groups, that all the great movements in history began with personal devotion, conspiratorial intimacy, total commitment of head, heart and will. They thought the new revolution would begin with a more-than-organizational alliance between persons of any race or class; in H.G. Wells' term, it would essentially be an "open conspiracy." Gutkind and Thomson did not think that blueprints or plans could stir men to the needed depth. Their imagination had to be awakened with a clear vision, common to millions. When the new revolution is born, "it sets in motion a continuous process, reevaluating all things, changing all things, making change a permanent element in the social process. The new revolution is not to 'end revolutions' but to begin the perpetual revolution." The first cry of the new revolution, then, was: "Break down the old meaningless barriers--of race, class, party or sect--that separate person from person. Break down the barriers between man." Like others in the communitarian socialist tradition--one thinks of Landauer, Buber, Proudhon, Kropotkin--Gutkind and Thomson rejected the idea that "things must get worse before they get better." The moment was always ripe: "the new revolution could begin now in the personal commitment to the "new and totally human order." Gutkind and Thomson believed that men and women were now living in a "wilderness of dead and outworn forms and institutions." Man's outer life was dominated by institutions he could no longer believe in. His personal life was dissipated among many organizations--
church, party, lodge, club and so on—none of which could completely satisfy because with none could he be fully identified. Nowhere did he fully, genuinely belong. Nowhere, therefore, was there a sure and genuine collectivity. But humankind had reached a new stage of maturity. Only fear (of "coloured races," of the masses, of social anarchy) prevented growth into a wider freedom and a deeper responsibility which drives men to uphold the status quo—in economics, politics, moral standards, religion and so on. Tied to this fear man cannot see that the only possible solution is more responsibility for the workers, more education for the masses, higher standards of living for the coloured races, more freedom for all.53

Only the personalist revolution was feasible. The old reformist, evolutionary pattern of imperceptible change represented no fundamental break with the old order. And the Communist Party had lost its revolutionary momentum.

It now offered friendly collaboration to the old, capitalist parties. Its membership carry on in stubborn loyalty, but like the members of other radical groups have no revolutionary momentum either in the old sense or the new. Every circumstance, and the very spirit of the times and of the place, is against them. That old road is a dead end.54

For the task was no longer merely to liberate economic classes. The political task itself was more total, and the total task infinitely more than politics. The crisis was also psychological and religious. It challenged and infected the very soul of man.

The old style revolution rooted in mass resentment leading to violent seizure of the state was not only obsolete, it was foreign to the social climate of North America. Only the "new revolution" with
its source in personal decision and individual initiative, was feasible and fitting. This may have been a valid critique. But who would be the agents of this new revolution? And what would the new institutional framework look like?

Roslyn Road dreamed that small groups of personally-allied new revolutionaries could be spearheads of social change. Think of the Biblical patriarchs—the first Christians—the Platonic Academy—Pythagoreans—Quakers—America's founding fathers—even the Bolsheviks and Fascists... Could spearhead groups, as Will Conyers fantasized, be established in every stratum of society or on a nation-wide scale in such a way that there would be no central headquarters or central group of leaders to be seized and eliminated to the total destruction of the whole movement? Could these groups be self-moving, self-creative, self-determining and self-responsible units, all moving in the same direction toward the total revolution? In the company of Gutkind and Thomson, dreamers of the new age gathered in the close circle of intimate fellowship, anything seemed possible.

By Easter of 1944 Roslyn Road had thrashed through to a conclusion. They faced two alternatives: cut themselves off from society or devote themselves to playing an active part in the world outside. So, Roslyn Road decided to establish the Prairie School for Social Advance (PSSA), acting more "continuously and more drastically than ever before." The purpose of PSSA was to mobilize and coordinate the progressive forces of the west (farmers, industrial workers and intellectuals) through the co-operative study of the fundamental issues of the day. PSSA committed itself to "issues" and not "subjects" and adopted pedagogical forms that maximized free and
informal discussion in small groups.

At the outset, PSSA stated that after an initial week-long conference to be held in the Barry Hotel in Saskatoon from July 16 to 23, plans would be made during the session for: 1) the formation of permanent study and discussion groups in farm and labour organizations, 2) the formation of a centre for the periodic discussion of accurate, up-to-date information on current events, including recent advances in science and technology and 3) the founding of a permanent, year-round PSSA for the training of leaders in labour unions, farm organizations and progressive organizations. Gutkind and Thomson feared that technological developments in industrial societies were rapidly increasing the number of problems requiring technical solutions. Unless the man on the street, on the farm and in the factory became scientifically and technologically literate, society would be ruled by the specialists.

Roslyn Road created an Advisory Board consisting of old friends of Thomson and the co-operative experiment—Alex Calhoun, head of the Public Library in Calgary; E.F. Scharf, secretary of the Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan; Fawcett Ransom, secretary of Manitoba Pool Elevators; Sid Simpson, secretary of the national executive of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees; Dr. Carlyle King, assistant professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan and CCF activist; Robert McCreath, acting secretary-treasurer of the Trades and Labour Council in Edmonton; Norman Priestly, secretary of the UFA Co-operative Wholesale, Calgary; Ben Lewis, secretary of the MFA; Norman Smith, editor of The Western Farm Leader and John White of the Phoenix Club. Sid Simpson, Grete LeBeau and F. Ransom comprised the
school's arrangements committee and organized the first conference, assisted by the inmates of Roslyn Road. Eric Gutkiná, R.J.P., Mortished of the International Labour Office in Montreal and Watson Thomson served as staff. These men were chosen for their "high academic standing," identification with "the people" and belief that "radical social change is desirable and is coming."56

The PSSA was one of the most unusual ventures in progressive adult education ever undertaken in Western Canada. Two basic concerns confronted the PSSA in the summer of 1944: first, to analyze in global context the common issues facing prairie workers and farmers and second, to consider how the people could be mobilized for fundamental change. PSSA chose as its pedagogical format that one of the three lecturers speak in the morning, the afternoon and in the evening. After appropriate films, there was to be dialogue around the day's themes.

The conference opened on Sunday, July 16 with Gutkind and Thomson telling of their vision and of this new experiment in adult education. Having dispelled doubts on leadership of the conference, Thomson declared that the "main purpose of the P.S. was to achieve that clarity of mind about essential issues through free and co-operative discussion, and the guidance of the best available thought." This required, he thought, the establishment of the School on an above-party basis with an emphasis on personal, rather than on organizational relationships. It also required earnestness and decisiveness which began, so far as the staff was concerned, with their definitely taking the stand that they were on the side of the people, and of total social and economic change.57
Thomson believed that the people were already on the move. In the West, where the community spirit of the pioneers was still alive, it was surely possible to bring together the different elements of the progressive movement—farmers, industrial workers and intellectual workers—so as to avoid tragic divisions such as those in Fascist Europe's progressive ranks. Thomson hoped that the Prairie School would itself be an example of three-way co-operation and a model of human comradeship.

Eric Gutkind believed that what mattered today was to "have vision and not be concerned only with immediate practical goals and aims." It seemed to Gutkind that people were flocking to places where they could find "new visions, new hopes." To build up the new era and the new humanity, Gutkind thought that the people had to be mobilized around a decisively announced vision. Gutkind believed that the close co-operation of farmer, industrial worker and intellectual could work miracles. But the intellectual had to come out of his ivory tower; and the worker, frustrated because of the lack of intellectual weapons and equipment, had to accept the intellectual's guidance. With a clear brain and a new vision, the people would do wonders.58

PSSA leaders agreed with Gutkind that capitalism was the "strongest system that had ever been created." But it was running vicious circles, as— -we are striving toward abundance, yet in the midst of abundance we live in scarcity and war. The purpose of Technology is to make Man free, yet at present it enslaves him and creates only destruction....Our basic society is based on the property and acquisitive urges rather than on the more social motivations—love and the will to co-operate.59

The challenge before PSSA participants was to understand something of capitalism's "vicious circles," critically assess the existing forces
for change and determine how Western Canadians could be catalyzed for radical change.

R.J. Mortished opened the discussion on the trade unions and co-operatives as potential agents of social change. Mortished argued that labour unions were limited in their effectiveness as instruments of radical change. Concerned primarily with wages, hours of work and the right to work in a particular trade as well as exercising some influence in the matters of safety, health and comfort in the workplace, unions had no control over the organization of work. The employers decided on the purchase of materials, provision of finance, organization of production, marketing and the depreciation and renewal of plant facilities. Nor did unions exercise any control over prices. But unions, Mortished stated, were by no means useless.

Their defensive functions are necessary, even if negative. They may be able to develop increasingly positive functions and acquire at least a share in positive control. Not the least useful of their functions is the development of the sense of solidarity and the practice of reconciling individual and collective interests.

In the discussion that followed Mortished's lecture after an evening panel discussion ("Will the trade unions lead us to fundamental change?") and the film "Partners in Production" (the story of labour-management committees), PSSA participants considered the question whether trade unions could be anything more than protective agencies. Could the functions of management be decentralized to permit the participation of the many? Was increased production through labour-management committees merely an effort of war-time pressure? The consensus of PSSA participants appeared to be that trade unions were organized to squeeze the most out of the present system for their members. As they became a threat to the established order of things,
the state moved to crush the movement. Therefore, Labour must act in some more comprehensive fashion for social change if its real objectives were to be achieved. Labour-management committees simply pointed to the "potential"; they were not the end of action. Jack Wilson, who chaired the evening's panel, concluded:

It is not in the power of the trade union to bring about this change. This body can only improve conditions. A fundamental change can be effected only by changing the system which the trade unionist is trying to protect himself against.61

Mortished began by raising a question much debated in social democratic, co-operative and Marxist circles.62 Could co-operatives bring fundamental change? For Mortished, co-operatives were more radical institutions than trade unions. A co-operative society was both an economic organization and an association of persons. As an economic undertaking, its purpose was service to the membership and not profit for anyone. As an association of persons, the purpose of the co-operative was the liberation of the human personality of its members by means of mutual aid from dependence on, and subordination to, others. Co-operatives thus differed radically from labour unions, since within their particular spheres they did determine what economic goods should be produced and distributed; they fixed prices, they raised their own capital. Their function was not negative and defensive but positive and constructive. But was there a limit to the extension of these functions?

Mortished thought that co-operatives would have difficulty in producing heavy machinery and similar economic activity. The co-operative market for, say, steel might be too small to support a
co-operative steel mill. Co-operatives might never compete with deeply established private enterprise. Moreover, in the transportation sector, the more appropriate alternative to private capitalism would be municipal or state enterprise. Mortished thought that this sector could also apply part of the co-operative principle by organizing on a non-profit basis.

But for Mortished, there was no limit to co-operation as an educative experience of self-reliance and social solidarity. Co-operatives were invaluable "schools of citizenship." In this respect they resembled labour unions. But they could go much further because they could provide knowledge and training in the technical problems of the financing and management of production and distribution as well as moral education in self-respect, foresight, prudence, the reconciliation of the individual and general interests, respect for the rights of others. All matters in which training and experience were necessary if democracy was to be effective and genuine. 63

Participants were sympathetic to Mortished's account of co-operatives. A number believed that co-operatives had not been started with enough basic education. Many co-operators failed to see the necessity for co-operation beyond economic needs. Businessmen were hired to run co-operatives; they were not given the education to broaden their understanding of co-operatives as a force for social change. One co-operative activist stated that

we as co-operators have to regard our movement as a tool for revolutionary change. The main purpose of co-operatives is education. Experience in co-operatives makes people ask the question: Why can't people get control?

For some participants people could only gain control if they returned
to the land. Too many urban people, they contended, had forgotten their dependence on the land and food production. This resulted in an arid intellectualism which severed contact with nature. Eric Gutkind, not given to any compromise, adamantly opposed any notion of a mystical return to the soil. The time for "back to the land" movements had gone forever. The change in agriculture in the Soviet Union was significant. Relentlessly the tractor had forced itself between the peasant and the soil, destroying the old romantic allegiance to the soil. Religious attitudes to the soil and old social structures were dissolving. Dependence on nature made men weak. The Russian revolution had destroyed pre-scientific attitudes and was perhaps in its deepest sense a "scientific revolution." 64

PSSA participants, if uncertain about the "back-to-the-land" ideology, did agree with Thomson who argued that

efficiency in production as well as ethics and sanity demand a reconsideration of the basic pattern of social and economic relations, internationally, nationally and locally, if the people of the Plains are to find the free, socialized and scientific and abundant life which is now possible. 65

PSSA participants were a little uncertain whether the primary issue was social ownership of land or its co-operative control. But they firmly believed that the primary question was not "ownership but release from fear and want in order to realize ourselves as individuals and as social beings." 66

PSSA participants understood that labour unions and co-operatives had their limitations as instruments of radical change. They also agreed that genuine democracy meant active, conscious participation in community affairs by every member of the community. And that repre-
sentative democracy, which allowed individuals to vote once a year in their co-operatives, unions or political communities, was totally inadequate. How could a participatory society—decentralized in function, planned in general social direction—be achieved? What pedagogical methods were appropriate to progressive movements who wanted to influence the public mind?

Eric Gutkind opened the discussion on these issues, lecturing on "Vaccination against Mass Psychology." Drawing on the works of Gustav LeBon and L. Hogben on crowd psychology and Ortega y Gasset's critique of mass society, Gutkind declared that in a "mass everyone is lonely, although this may not seem so. Nobody is integrated. And the second law: The mass will reach always the lowest level possible." For Gutkind it was impossible to educate a mass, only small groups and individuals could be educated. The Soviet Union, Gutkind believed, had solved the problem of "mass education." Everywhere where small groups were set up, in fact, in villages, in theatres, in schools, the mass had been divided up into small units—the soviets. These small units got together, forming even greater soviets so that the mass was not any more a mob, subject to mass psychology (without ethics, thought, credulity). Mass psychology could never be used for constructive purposes. If one wanted to preserve respect for the individual person, the people had to get together in functional units and neighbourhood groups.

Dr. Weil, a member of the panel reflecting on methods to influence the public mind, which followed Gutkind's lecture, set out the options facing the PSSA: persuasion, emotional appeal, a combination of the first two, and mass psychology. Against Gutkind, Dr. Weil said that
the school had to seek a "fusion of emotional and rational values... this kind of education can enable them to act as a focus or crystallization point in a crisis." Watson Thomson thought it worth remembering that many socialists were lured into the fascist camp in Italy, Germany and elsewhere through non-rational suasion. But it was most important to guarantee that the right goals were never lost sight of. This required something more than emotion, a view shared by Mr. Rhodes, one of the other panelists.

We are safe from the dangers of emotionalism only when the progressive movement becomes a coherent system with clear and explicit goals and principles, which act as a constant guide and corrective for both leaders and rank-and-file. These principles should be the living rules of the new society realized here and now among the comrades of the transition.68

How could a Canadian people's movement avoid the tragic mistakes of Europe? "To see things as they seemed then," Mortished observed, demanded "clear thinking, adequate knowledge, spiritual determination, solidarity in spite of difficulties, and a really passionate urge for social change."69 All agreed that, to avoid the tragic mistakes of Europe, the farmers' and workers' movements had to "raise their sights."

PSSA was committed to nothing less than a unified progressive movement. For Watson Thomson this did not mean reviving the old "popular front" ideology of the 1930s. Thomson thought that the old fanatical partisanship was dead. More and more people realized, he contended, that it was an "infantile disorder" and that "maturity" demanded a more detached and critical attitude to any such grouping—party, sect, lodge, nation. For Canada, the obstructive conflict in the progressive movement had been between the Communist Party and the CCF.
The Communist Party has traditionally been a small, tightly-knit, highly disciplined group, trained in intrigue, ruthless in logic, controlled by the party elite, and making effectiveness in action their primary standard. Social-Democratic parties on the other hand, have been marked by reasonableness and belief in persuasiveness, by a moral decency, (with Christian and petty bourgeois colouring) which is prepared to believe well of all, even their enemies. They have been patient and concerned chiefly to hold the social advances already won, moving forward step by step as opportunity presents itself. The Communist Party has nearly always been intransigent, yet it has been influential in many unrealized ways by virtue of clarity of mind and will. The Social-Democratic parties have allied themselves with Co-operatives and Labour Unions, frequently being dominated by the conservative forces in these bodies.70

Both, Thomson argued, had betrayed their generation through spending their energies fighting each other instead of the common enemy. The communists sacrificed ethics ("any means to our ends") and the sacred rights of personal freedom of mind and spirit and the social-democrats, deep earnestness of purpose. PSSA had to ask itself whether reconciliation between these parties was possible, whether parties were as important as they seemed, and whether action could be started outside of these parties which could make for unity and movement among the people. Thomson suggested that the following could be taken as axioms or principles:

1. Parties as such cannot be unified. Organizations exist to maintain themselves and their particular fragment of truth and vision.

2. A vital, inclusive and indigenous political movement can come out of nothing but personal integrity, personal directness of mind, interpersonal honesty of communication (only as persons, not as officials, representatives of an organization, etc. is our exchange of opinion real and creative.)
3. An alliance of free, mature and earnestly-minded persons cannot displace parties and action on that level, but could constitute a focus above and beyond them towards which they could move and by whose vision and clarity of mind they could be dynamized. The new motivations (as towards the new age of abundance, technology) and the great eternal goals of Equality, Comradeship and Freedom would be stimulated by these personal pioneers.71

Immediately, several PSSA delegates reacted critically and telling-ly to Thomson's insistence that there was nothing more important in this world than "real fellowship between mature beings." Why cultivate personal friendship with a few mature persons when political action was needed in order to reach the many as yet immature in mental and cultural outlook? Could this "higher attitude" really exist without some tangible organization? Was it not a luxury we could not just afford to associate ourselves with a few in maturity? These latter questions exposed a flaw in Thomson's three axioms. Personalism's power lay in its critique of bureaucratic structure. Its weakness lay in the mistaken belief that a few dreamers could provide a holistic vision for the progressive movement.

The discussion failed to resolve the knotty question of whether a new synthesis between social democracy and communism was possible. But Wilson, Jack King, Gutkind and Thomson insisted that the paramount issue facing the PSSA was gaining the co-operation of farm, labour and the intellectual. Referring to the historic betrayal of the people by intellectuals (Thomson mentioned Julien Benda's The Treason of the Clerks), Thomson observed that

intellectuals must come primarily as human beings and secondarily as teachers. We want to meet you on something more than the basis of common needs, such as food and clothing. We want to meet you
PSSA had succeeded in finding a way for farm, labour and intellectual to converse. Where did PSSA go from here?

The PSSA concluded on the weekend of July 22 and 23. Despite open and often intense debate, the school found itself at its close with one focus. Participants had learned to watch films critically. They had learned how to bring out "essential things" in discussion and that people, initially approaching problems from different perspectives, could arrive at a common place. Thomson concluded that the PSSA would work "to unite and to release the creative energy of the progressive people of the West. It sets its face resolutely towards the new society which shall be worthier of Man's Dignity. It is 'the People's own,' to adopt and use."73

PSSA students resolved to establish the school on a permanent basis. By training leaders for the People's movement and creating centres of clear understanding of the essential issues, they hoped to mobilize the people in effective resistance to the "well-organized forces of reaction." The organization of the school would be entrusted to the Winnipeg committee who initiated the project together with those individuals throughout the prairies who were prepared to help realize the school's objectives. The conference also made the following recommendations to the continuation committee. First, schools of leadership, of one month duration, should be held at a resort central to the prairies. Second, short courses, covering periods of one week or weekends, should be held at convenient centres throughout the
prairies. Through the shorter schools, PSSA thought, a larger number of people could be reached and local groups and individuals kept in close relationship with each other and the movement as a whole. And those who attended leadership courses would be encouraged to form local study-groups wherever possible.

PSSA recommended that a full-time Director be appointed by the Central Committee, and that the Central Committee, based in Winnipeg, should have the responsibility for co-ordinating and extending the work of the School in co-operation with committees in other centres. Though the nucleus of the PSSA staff would be formed of people fully identified with the movement, conference participants thought that they could make use of other "experts" for the discussion of specialized factual information. Co-operatives and trade unions would probably be willing to lend their leaders for this purpose. PSSA affirmed that all their educational activities should centre on the "interpretation of the crisis."

PSSA, while affirming the above principles and organizational direction, decided to take a "definite and concrete step towards establishing the New World Order." Such a concrete but small step, the School felt, should have two aspects: 1) community land settlement where ownership and control would be in the hands of people actively engaged in it and 2) industrial co-operatives. Accordingly, the PSSA passed this resolution: "That the Central Committee be asked to prepare a Brief on Collective Land Settlement for presentation to the Minister of Rehabilitation, Government of Saskatchewan, and other appropriate officials and bodies in the three Prairie Provinces."

Finally, individuals were urged to further the purposes of the School
through contacting progressively-minded individuals and groups in order to provide "certainty of purpose and convergent action."

At Roslyn Road, Watson Thomson attempted to replicate the New Britain experiment of London. Thomson believed that this co-personal experiment would provide individuals with a revolutionary "enabling structure." Personalities would be transformed and equipped to become leavening agents of the new revolution. Thomson, and his Roslyn Road followers, wanted to forge a third way (a politics of personal authenticity) in a fragmented political culture. Even if they were not certain how to move from prophetic envisioning of a totally new society to its actual achievement, the general direction of their critique was clear. Society lacked clear ethical principles. Humans were losing control over their institutions. Politics, work and cultural practice were ceasing to be creative activity. Roslyn Road envisaged that economic and social life would be rebuilt around units small enough so that face-to-face relationships were never crushed. Nothing less than a "cultural revolution"--the development of a new value orientation and a new sensibility in human relationships--would satisfy the Roslyn Road communitarian socialists.
CHAPTER EIGHT

FOOTNOTES


2 The phrase is Jack Wilson's.

3 Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, Sunday 26th (no month or year, probably January 1941), RRP.

4 Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, March 8, 1941, RRP.

5 Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, March 2, 1941, RRP.

6 Unpublished manuscript on "Group," 1940, RRP.

7 Watson Thomson to Mary Jackson, March 30, 1941, RRP.

8 Interview with Kay Bolton, Montreal, February 15, 1982.

9 Interview with Kay Bolton.


12 Interview with Ruth Wilson, December 1981.

13 A letter written by George Hynd to Alice and Will Conyers, December 18, 1944 provides some idea of the kind of person Hynd was. He wrote: "I have distinctly let them know that I am in this thing for a cause, for a revolution, and not as a party man, a revolution in people is my goal, and Political expediency, even for the CCF," RRP.

14 Stanley Knowles to T.C. Douglas, April 2, 1945, W.S. Lloyd Papers, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina (hereafter WSLP), E27 (hereafter Adult Education), 1945 (January-June).

15 WTP 2-2, pp. 100-101.

16 Watson Thomson to Eric Gutkind, February 25, 1945, RRP.

18. 1940 manuscript, p. 20, RRP.

19. 1940 manuscript, p. 29, RRP.

20. 1940 manuscript, p. 44, RRP.

21. 1940 manuscript, p. 47, RRP.

22. WTP 2-2, p. 102.

23. This view ascertained from interviews with Will Conyers, Stan and Doris Rands, Kay Bolton, Ruth Wilson, the LeBeaus, Mary Thomson and Muriel Nielsen.

24. In the Human Cause, vol. I, 3 (no year), RRP.


26. See Doris Neilsen New Worlds for Women (Toronto: Progress Books, 1944), copy in William Bennett Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia, box 4, file 1. She observes: "The war has broken down a good many (though by no means all) ideas about the so-called incapacities of women—both mental and physical" (p. 9).

27. WTP 2-2, p. 103.

28. WTP 2-5, p. 175; Kay Bolton interview.

29. Philip Coombs would label Roslyn Road education as "non-formal education," i.e. "any organized, systematic educational activity outside the framework of the formal [school] system [designed] to provide selective types of learning to particular sub-groups." Cited in Rolland Paulston and Gregory LeRoy, "Strategies for Nonformal Education," Teachers College Record 76 (May 1975), p. 569.


31. WTP 2-2, pp. 103, 104.

32. WTP 2-2, p. 106.

33. WTP 2-2, p. 106.

34. WTP 2-2, p. 107.

circle, to which a number of very well known men belonged, was for each person there a turning point in his life. And even when this circle had disintegrated, the high harmony of this being-together has continued to resound, and has never entirely left any of us" (cited by Friedman, pp. 394-395).

36. In the introduction, "Is Man's Destiny a Blind Alley," Gutkind wrote: "Man stands at the cross-roads, naked and unarmed before the ultimate realities. Before him lie only two alternatives—a return to his primal significance, or extinction. Compromise, harmonious adjustment—these are no longer possible" (p. 9).

37. Gutkind gave a course entitled "Great Conceptions of Society: A Comparative Study of the Philosophy of Life in World Literature" at Columbia University's Extension Division's Institute of Arts and Sciences. Topics included "The Book of Job"; Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy"; "Dostoyevsky vs. Tolstoy"; "Heinrich Heine's Writings"; and Emile Zola's "Labour."

38. In 1906 the Rand School of Social Science was formed in New York City by the Socialist Party. The objective of this school was to provide workers with the type of broad education required to create a new social order based on socialism. See Richard Dwyer, "Workers' Education, Labor Education, Labor Studies: An Historical Delineation," Review of Educational Research 47 (Winter 1977), pp. 179-207.

39. WTP 2-2, p.108.
40. WTP 2-5, pp. 182-183.
41. Will Conyers Diary, July 6, 1943, WCP (Phoenix Club Papers included in Conyers' papers in my possession).
43. WTP 2-2, p. 108.
44. In the Human Cause, vol. 1, 1 (c. September 1943), RRP.
45. In the Human Cause, c. September 1943. See ch. 2: "The Central Experience: Dimitrije Mitrinovic and the New Britain Movement" for origin of notion of "personal alliance."
46. In the Human Cause, vol. 1, 1 (c. September 1943), RRP.
47. In the Human Cause, vol. 1, 2 (no date), RRP.
In the Human Cause, vol. 1, 3 (December 1943), RRP.

50. In the Human Cause, vol. 1, 4 (no date), RRP.


52. "First Call for the New Revolution," pp. 7, 8, 9. Eugene Lunn, Prophet of Community (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), observes: "Landauer insisted that social and historical reconstruction had to be preceded by the rebirth of the individual in the unregenerated world of the present. The mystic experience of the existence of community and humanity within which would provide men with the will for real change; without this spiritual renewal all attempts at socialist construction would be in vain," (pp. 212-213). The parallels between this view and Gutkind and Thomson's in "First Call for the New Revolution" are remarkable!


54. "First Call," ch. 4, p. 1. Cf. Watson Thomson, Pioneer in Community: Henri Lasserre's Contribution to the Fully Co-operative Society (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1949): "It is in the nature of our age of crisis, that the answer to totalitarianism has to be something especially total, whole, integral. But of persons, not of States, or masses or mechanisms; for human welfare, not for power; concerned with quality, not with magnitude" (p. 4).

55. Will Conyers, "Spawning the Group Revolution," no date, WCP.

56. Announcement of PSSA for July 16-23, 1944, PSSAP.

57. PSSA, Proceedings of the First Session and Conference, July 16-23, 1944, p. 1, PSSAP.

58. PSSA, Proceedings, pp. 2-3. See also, Eric Gutkind, "A Letter to the Mine Workers on What to do Next," published as a PSSA leaflet, PSSAP.


60. PSSA, Proceedings, lecture 1, R.J. Mortished, "Is Collective Bargaining Enough?" p. 5, PSSAP.

61. PSSA, Proceedings, evening panel 1, "Will the Trade Unions lead to Fundamental Social Change?" p. 11, PSSAP.

62. See MacPherson, Each for All, pp. 186-190.
PSSA, Proceedings, lecture 4, R.J. Mortished, "Can Co-operatives Bring Fundamental Change?" pp. 12-13, PSSAP. Cf. MacPherson, Each for All, p. 213: "The defensive ethos of the institutions should not obscure 'the crusading' spirit of the [co-operative] movement. Faith in the common man, a commitment to education for social change, an aversion to the competitive ethic, a distrust of traditional political activities, and a faith in the potential power of economic action remained powerful even in many large co-operatives in 1945. Utopian co-operators, in their many hues, were primarily responsible for keeping alive the dreams of a better, more co-operative world."

PSSA, Proceedings, evening panel 2, "Is the Idea of a 'Return to Nature' essentially fascist?" pp. 20-22, PSSAP.

PSSA, Proceedings, lecture 6, Watson Thomson, "Shifting the Boundaries," pp. 18-19, PSSAP.

PSSA, Proceedings, evening panel 2, summary, Jack Wilson, PSSAP.

PSSA, Proceedings, lecture 9, Eric Gutkind, "Vaccination against Mass Psychology," pp. 29-30, PSSAP.

PSSA, Proceedings, evening panel 3, "What Methods to Influence the Public Mind are Proper for Progressive Movements?" pp. 33-36, PSSAP.

PSSA, Proceedings, lecture 12, R.J. Mortished, "Why have the Worker and the Farmer not come to power?" pp. 41-43, PSSAP.


PSSA, Proceedings, evening panel 5, "The Paramount Issue: Co-operation between the Farmer, Labour Worker and Intellectual Worker," p. 62, PSSAP.

PSSA, Proceedings, Watson Thomson's closing remarks, p. 68, PSSAP.

Again, it is worth mentioning how Roslyn Road's concerns foreshadowed those of the "New Left" in the 1960s. See Barry Katz, Marcuse and the Art of Liberation (London: Verso Editions, 1982), ch. 5, "Years of Cheerful Pessimism."
CHAPTER NINE

FAILED DREAM

The first PSSA had ended euphorically. When the first session had begun on July 16, only twenty-five students were assembled. A week later at the final session the student body had increased to fifty. And these fifty were a unanimous and purposeful group of men and women. Saskatchewan had been quite hospitable to the Prairie School. The press wrote the School's proceedings up daily, and the local radio described its activities regularly. Local clubs invited PSSA lecturers to address their meetings. Moreover, cabinet ministers from the newly elected CCF government of Tommy Douglas, and other prominent citizens, dropped in, with more and more local people showing up for the evening discussions. This euphoria would not last for long.

Indeed, by the end of 1945 the PSSA would seriously doubt their ability to meet the demands of the human crisis. Attempts to expand their sphere of influence in the labour movement had largely failed. Widespread support in the farm movement did not materialize. As global and national events engulfed the PSSA in 1945, their dream of a unified people's movement would be revealed as an immature, almost "infantile", fantasy. Recognizing in early 1945 that they had overestimated the possibility of fomenting the new revolution, the PSSA tried, desperately, to particularize their vision for the prairie region.

But no social movement emerged to transform their vision into reality, their hopes in fulfilment. All utopians, as Frank Manuel has observed, fixate on one "face of reality."¹ In this fixation, the utopian
often understands more deeply than others the drift of society. Roslyn Road understood the depth of the human crisis. They were simply powerless to do much about it. That was distasteful medicine for Roslyn Roaders who had begun their little experiment with such great expectations. This chapter, then, explores two themes: the failure of the PSSA to extend its influence in the farm and labour movement and the gradual dissolution of the PSSA dream of a new revolution.

At the School Thomson had talked informally to Tommy Douglas, Premier of Saskatchewan. Douglas queried Thomson, "Why should you work for an old Tory like Sidney Smith! Why not come and do adult education work under a socialist government? We're going to launch the biggest adult education program in the country." Thomson was confronted with a most difficult decision; he was obviously the central figure in the PSSA and his Manitoban adult education program appeared to be gaining momentum. But, despite Thomson's misgivings about social democracy, his own social philosophy was more convergent with Douglas than that of Sidney Smith. What had been implicit in his educational practice in Manitoba could now be made much more explicit. And Saskatchewanites were more receptive to new progressive ideas and experiments—one had only to compare the greater success of the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan than in Manitoba.

By the end of the summer of 1944 it seemed to Thomson that...
Indeed, several Roslyn Roaders were quite critical of Thomson's leadership role in Roslyn Road. Will Conyers, who appreciated Watson's ability to shake men and women out of inertia and callous indifference and stir them to creative action, thought that Thomson found it difficult to work with equals unless they were in complete accord with him. When he came up against resistance and practical difficulties, or his plans were subjected to critical analysis, he "blew up emotionally." Conyers thought that Thomson had an "autocratic, egotistical streak" and that his "impatience and intensity of purpose" ultimately defeated him.

Instead of relaxing with a quiet pool of alertness, watching to make the best of the situation, he disturbs, ruffles up the surface of the pool, modifies it and clouds the issue. All his projects ultimately came to naught because as he sooner or later encounters opposition or difficulty, he becomes subjective and blows up emotionally.\(^5\)

Thomson was, in fact, experiencing severe inner stress in the summer of 1944 which he thought "must be derived from my relations with the group." Once again, Thomson was questioning his motivations. He was aware of a "growing reservoir of guilt for having so drastically interfered with so many people's lives for (as it sometimes seemed) such dubious reasons."\(^6\) In a burst of petulance (or was it fatigue?) Thomson had thrown up the Week-end Review job without prior notice to the CBC. He had also, in a "violently irrational sort of way,"\(^7\) disputed Corbett's plans for the Citizens' Forum. Thus Thomson's decision to go to Saskatchewan to begin building a people's adult educational movement resolved his own inner conflict to some extent as well as his conflict with Roslyn Road. Though Roslyn Road could understand how important Thomson's new work with Douglas was and the excellent opportunities
presented to build up the PSSA, some felt that he was abandoning the group for greener fields. Even George LeBeau, Watson's closest friend, wondered if Thomson went to greener and bigger fields in Saskatchewan because he was losing his "god-like position" at 139. And Ruth Wilson asked Leone Wilcox if she had considered how it would have been had Jesus walked out on the disciples to go elsewhere, and then turned around to discover that they were, all undis­mayed, going ahead to build up the thing without his active help? That's the way it seems to be with Watson.8

Thomson had rationalized his emotively driven actions. He was fleeing from Roslyn Road.

The community of trust established at Roslyn Road was near the breaking point in the summer and fall of 1944. Watson, Mary and their young son Colin arrived in Regina in late October with assurance from Douglas that his government would support the PSSA. Stan Rands assumed the responsibility for directing the University of Manitoba's adult education program. Roslyn Road was left with the main responsibility for organizing the PSSA. The instability and confusion at Roslyn Road did not portend well for the PSSA's future.

The first specific task of the Winnipeg Central Committee following the summer school was to prepare a brief supporting a proposal for collective land settlement. They presented it to the Hon. J.H. Sturdy, Minister of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation for Saskatchewan, in August 1944. The brief, distributed widely throughout the prairies, argued that even one successful experiment in co-operative farming would be of "incalculable great value" as an instrument of radical social change.9
PSSA believed that the "actual creation of a New Community" was made-to-order for returning servicemen and women. Perhaps, at this point in Roslyn Road's history, their utopian ardour was conditioned by the success of their co-personal experiment. And like other "activist utopians," they wanted to extend their own experience outwards. At any rate, they thought that through deep and tragic circumstances, men and women in the armed forces had learned the value of individual courage and initiative directed towards strongly held common goals. They knew something of the effectiveness of group action and of decision-making. The PSSA brief contended that "the collective settlement would provide the life of common tasks and the comradeship they desired." Pointing to the success of international experiments in the Soviet Union and Palestine, Canadian experiments in collective farming (Milden Valley Co-op Farm in Rosetown-Biggar, WestEnd Community Farmers' Association in Wanham, Alberta, Two Rivers Co-op Farming Association near Ft. St. John, B.C.) and their own experience, the PSSA was convinced that collective land settlement in Western Canada was not only "feasible but can be a triumphant success."

In a visionary section of the brief—"Community Life and Internal Structure of the Settlement"—the Winnipeg PSSA Central Committee imagined how this new community could be organized. The town would be planned with a centrally located common hall, recreation facilities, stores, school and communal kitchens and dining facilities. Many of the domestic homemaking functions, traditionally women's sphere, could be socialized. Women would be free to choose, if they so wished, the kind of work often incompatible with conscientious homemaking. Moreover, the brief contended that schooling should be fully integrated with community
enterprise and activity. History, geography and the arts ought to be integrally related to life experience in the model community. The 'tool' subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, they thought, would be quickly mastered as the children operated their own store, planned and grew their own garden, developed their own projects of building and social activities. And adolescents "should be given as soon as possible the opportunity of functional participation in the carrying out of projects thus decided upon." This model differed from Deweyian theory of the "school and society." Dewey and his progressive followers thought of the school as a "little community" in an impersonal industrial order. They did not conceive of new modes of schooling and experience in small-scale intentional communities. Adults, too, would continue their own education indefinitely. They would discuss the theory (politics, sociology, psychology) of their own social experiments. They would receive further training in technics, and study world affairs. They would develop skills in the arts and science according to personal preference.

Internal government and administration in the model community was to be characterized by a high degree of direct democracy. All the members of the settlement would participate directly in the making of all major decisions involving their own collective welfare. Discussion of community policy would be first carried out in small groups. After, all groups would meet in an "assembly of the whole" to report conclusions and an approximate unanimity. Further, discipline in any self-contained society could not be maintained by compulsion. Every individual had to be ready to place "collective welfare above individual wishes." The PSSA brief on Collective Land Settlement insisted that only
large-scale "collectivized farms" (not the inefficient, individually-owned quarter-section) could provide for maximum production and human satisfaction. The PSSA wanted to encourage rural industrialization. The dangerous gulf of social and political misunderstanding between farmer and industrial worker could be broken down in the new community which integrated small-scale, co-operative manufacturing enterprises into its way of life. 15

Presenting a bold vision of new communities is one thing. But once the ebullience of the summer wore off, the Winnipeg Central Committee realized it faced enormous difficulties in actually mobilizing the people of the prairies in effective resistance to the "well-organized forces of reaction." One of the PSSA's immediate tasks was to expand their sphere of influence in the farm and labour movements. Roslyn Road also embarked on its own internal Thursday evening study group of Marxism (a group of about twenty or so gathered from the hundred people who attended Gutkind's Phoenix Club lectures). It was an exciting, busy and controversial period for Roslyn Road and Watson Thomson, who was almost overwhelmed with the demands of his new job in Saskatchewan.

The PSSA began in earnest in the summer to organize the first of a proposed series of Weekend Labour Forums in Winnipeg. On October 1, PSSA in co-operation with the Needle Trades Council, which had given its full support and co-operation to the PSSA, presented its first Labour Forum on "Labour's Decisive Hour." Three hundred needle trade workers attended this event held in the North Winnipeg Auditorium of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Hall. The meeting was chaired by Sam Herbst, president of the
Winnipeg Needles Trades Council, who was acting as a special advisor to PSSA for this session. The Ukrainian Choir and Orchestra, under Harry Stefaniuk's direction, and Morris Cohen provided music and Fred Lamatksy danced. Cultural activity associated with Jewish labour and political events was typical of Winnipeg's North End. After the music and screening of NFB film, "The Labour Front," which vividly portrayed the mobilization of labour for war purposes, Sam Herbst introduced the rest of the program by drawing attention to the need amongst Labour for a thorough-going education.  

Thomson, introduced by Elliot Bolton, and Gutkind, introduced by John Marshall, reiterated several themes discussed at the summer school. Watson Thomson told the Needle trade workers that the Prairie School was formed out of the realization that the present crisis needed a new kind of education about the issues of central importance in the solving of our economic and political problems. The purpose of Prairie School was to help the Needle Trade Workers solve their own problems and then march together. Eric Gutkind told the workers that Labour was not fully mobilized yet. No universal popular movement, looking into the future and seeking "real change," had emerged. But such a movement could be created. Labour had to decide on this basic issue—would it work inside the old system or move beyond? 

Let us not any longer stand aloof before the gigantic revolutions of our time. Let us not say: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Make a definite end to fence-sitting. Make a definite end to all 'neutrality.' Let us not stand callous next to these horrors that are going on. Let us not be indifferent to the future for which you are responsible. The Future is in your hands. The fate of mankind must not remain any longer in the hands of all those old-fashioned status-quo forces. Let the entire Globe hear our re-
sounding demands for the liquidation of poverty—
for the liquidation of the era of scarcity. It is
up to you to usher in the New Era of Plenty. 17

The meeting was brought to conclusion with greetings from Sid Simpson,
secretary of the national executive of the CRBE and member of the PSSA
Advisory Board. Simpson described the first fruits of the first summer's
PSSA. For perhaps the first time, Simpson said, intellectuals and
representatives of farms and labour organizations discovered that they had
a common object in life. Expressing his hope that the Needle Trades
Council would elect their own Continuations Committee to work with the
PSSA, Simpson stated:

We want you to join us in meeting and overcoming the
forces of reaction which can only be met and overcome
by a stronger constructive force, unless we want to
repeat the calamity of 1918-20 when we won the war
but lost the peace. Prairie School is designed to
help you organize—organize your brains. 18

In his closing remarks, Sam Herbst said that a Continuations committee
of the Needle Trades Council had already been set up. The committee
would meet on the following Wednesday.

The Needle Trades Continuation committee met with the staff of the
PSSA on October 4 to plan their winter program. The PSSA tried to
ascertain the requirements of the unions, and determine the form educa-
tional assistance might take. The Continuations committee decided to
send representatives of the Needle Trades Union to the Weekend Labour
forum schedules for October 8 and 9. They also decided to call a meeting
of the Needle Trades Council during the week following the forum to meet
with the existing educational committee of the Council, constituting it
as a branch of the PSSA. 19

The PSSA organized a Labour Weekend for representations of trade
unions and PSSA staff in Winnipeg on October 8 and 9. The proceedings were opened by the chairman, George LeBeau who, as a founding member of PSSA, gave a brief outline of the hurried organization of the School, its purposes and objectives for the future. LeBeau spoke of the hope that the School would be made into a permanent feature of the life of the Western Prairie Region. Then LeBeau introduced Watson Thomson who was to lecture on "Labour's Past Weaknesses and New Change." A brief examination of Thomson's text will provide insight into the PSSA's analysis of Labour's failure to become a revolutionary force.

Thomson presented a penetrating analysis of the history of the labour movement in Europe and North America and its present predicament. World War I, Thomson argued, had very deep social and economic consequences for Labour. The most notable event was the gradual development of antagonism between Communism, now associated with the rather alien civilization of Russia, and the Social Democracy of the West. Noting that the post-war strength of the world labour movement was short-lived, Thomson enumerated the defeats it suffered in the early 1920s and 1930s. Fascism had crushed the trade union movement in Italy, Germany and Austria, the English General Strike of 1926 had failed, and France's Popular Front government failed to implement anti-fascist and anti-war policies. In America, the depression found the labour movement without any real voice, leaving Roosevelt to answer its difficulties. Labour had been given a new status. Since then, growth had been remarkable, culminating in the Political Action Committee of the CIO.

Thomson then listed the five main factors contributing to Labour's failure to become a revolutionary force. First, "Doctrinaire sectarianism" had split the labour movement into factions. Second, social democratic
"petit bourgeois" attitudes tended to dominate. Far too many labour movement people wondered whether labour existed only to raise their own living standards. This "petit bourgeois" attitude, concerned with private property, left the movement compromised and confused. Was the capitalist system basically antagonistic to the interests of humankind? Third, Labour was uncertain about revolutionary possibilities and technique. Thomson outlined a new definition of "revolution" to restore that lost certainty. Revolution must not consist in destroying the capitalist structure, but in taking it over and transforming it. Four, the development of pressure-group mentality had gravely weakened Labour's responsibility to the whole community. The French Popular Front's short-sighted policy and consequent fate showed the result. Finally, the labour movement lacked strong determination; it appeared to have faith only in numbers and organization, as was the case in Nazi Germany.

What was Labour's new chance? Labour's advantages (more organization and numbers; some favourable legislation; increase of sense of responsibility to community), gained during the war years, were essentially concessions related to the needs of a war economy. Collective bargaining was not enough. If the labour movement was concerned only with defending its own interests it could possibly sabotage, as being immediately detrimental to its members, new inventions as well as obstruct technological advance. The labour movement had to concern itself with preserving Labour's interests in the context of general plan for the good of all.

Labour's "new chance" was to keep its war time gains, recognize that capitalism was complicit in the World War, yet maintain its responsible and constructive attitude. Its goals were radical social and economic change. Labour was now more than an aggregate of the trade unions and
labour parties. It included all victims of capitalist absurdities and injustice. Re-defining Labour and revolution meant getting busy with the job of education—not just for the masses but for small groups—the spearheads which took initiative and were constantly mobilized. The new revolution was not destructive. It was a revolution of clear minds, personal initiative, decision, knowledge, education and constant action. Thomson did not specify the content of a political action program for Labour.

Restrained pessimism pervaded the discussion following Thomson's address. Most of the trade union delegates agreed that unions were not the "ideological institutions" they should be. People, one speaker said, joined labour unions only to gain a greater price for their labour power. Another speaker thought that well-paid officials of the labour organizations inevitably tended to become reactionary. In reply, Thomson enlarged upon the danger of large mass organizations led by high-salaried officials. One had to go directly to the rank-and-file. Their vision ought to be broadened, Thomson thought, to enable them to understand the impact of international events on local labour conditions. Thomson considered it defeatism to think, as did Mr. Fagan of the Needle Trades Union, that unions had to concern themselves primarily with protecting their interests. There was no real protection for the worker short of bringing about a socialist society (popular control of the whole economic machine).

The final day's program provided a significant insight into the contemporary development of capitalism. The old productive forces based on direct labour and measured labour time were less important for productivity than the new productive forces of knowledge, science and
technology. All past economic systems had been schemes to divide a fixed quantity—scarcity. Now capitalism's basic contradiction was overproduction/underconsumption. Thus, if abundance were possible, trade unions would need to find radical new ways of thinking about the implications of the "new productive forces" for the re-organization of society. One participant saw something of the liberating potential of a society no longer needing great amounts of labour power. Men's minds, he said, needed to be opened to appreciate the new world of abundance. If so, they would come to see that having more time would free them to be lazy, to develop their country's culture, to pursue human relationships. Although Jack Wilson did not (or could not) grapple with the emerging Keynesian solutions to the problem of overproduction/underconsumption (assuring that a substantial portion of the society's wealth is used wastefully or unproductively and developing new mechanisms for distributing income shares and claims on the total product, so that demand will expand), his attempt captures the essence of PSSA's commitment. Labour had to move beyond internal organizational matters to an understanding of cultural, scientific and technological developments.  

In the symposium "Beyond the Labour Code", panelists Bob Russell, Eric Gutkind, George LeBeau and Watson Thomson agreed that if Labour continued in its present direction, what stood beyond the Labour Code was a "servile state." Russell thought that if Labour would not take advantage of schools such as the PSSA, then the Labour Code would be used as an instrument to hold Labour back. LeBeau wondered how one raised Labour's sights from something concrete and easy to see, to something more comprehensive? You have to make the large goals very understandable, and the immediate steps clear. Educa-
tion is certainly one of the methods....What about wall newspapers, travelling libraries, pamphlets and leaflets written by the workers?

Responding to one speaker from the floor who asked why the PSSA hadn't become a political party, Thomson declared that:

The most creative instrument in bringing about social change is truth. Truth means science, critical analysis, clear understanding of the social and psychological forces in the world today. These things are not the business of a political party at all. Political parties have another task on their hands; immediate tactics on the current scene. There is a sense in which all political parties must be opportunistic. Someone must say the truth uncompromisingly, whether good for political tactics or not. Rather than choosing one party, in which case a large group of workers would be eliminated from the movement... altogether, is not our goal unity? And there is no resolution possible of the conflict between social democrat and communist except through the common understanding of some people who have real integrity and independence. We should keep our objective just as it is—total, radical change; and we can do it best by not tying ourselves as a group to a political party. As individuals, yes, but not as a group.23

Thomson's rejection of any formal alliance with either the CCF or the LLP committed the PSSA to a revolutionary educational role. He rejected the Fabian LSR option of being the CCF's brain and the Trotskyite strategy of burrowing within reformist parties. Thus, Thomson and his associates could only hope that existing labour, farm and political organizations would be captivated by the inclusive vision of a new society. It seemed a rather forlorn hope. To provide a unifying "mythology of hope" for the progressive forces, the PSSA activists tried to gain a hearing from the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) at the annual meeting held in Quebec in October. Winnipeg labour organizations submitted three resolutions; two from the Winnipeg Labour Council, and a third from Division 142 of the CRBE. After outlining briefly the purpose of the PSSA, Harry Chappel
of the CRBE presented a resolution that the CCL endorse the School. The
convention adopted the resolution which urged the CCL to foster the
School among its locals. Chappel was also in touch with Chester King,
president of the Winnipeg TLC, who was going to the TLC convention in
Toronto. He promised to do a like job there. Although nothing would
come of the CCL endorsement, by the end of October enthusiasm among the
Winnipeg Central Committee of the PSSA was running high.

Throughout the fall the PSSA Central Committee, assisted by other
Roslyn Roaders, continued meeting with Needle Trades people. They extended
their contacts in the labour movement through encouraging individuals from
plants such as Macdonald's Aircraft to return to their locals and discuss
basic issues. And they laid plans for a December weekend conference on
"After the Peace, What? Is Collective Bargaining Enough?" Roslyn Road
also got down to some serious study on Marxism, with various members
leading discussions—encouraged by Gutkind who urged the group to "fight
the popular misunderstanding of Marx's teachings as if he meant to say
that Man is only 'homo economism.'" Elliot Wilcox, who had joined the
services and was stationed near Winnipeg, had organized about thirty
study-groups on his base, making use of NFB films and materials from the
PSSA. LeBeau, Wilson and Rands promoted the School during their visits
to rural communities. In Saskatchewan, Watson Thomson was integrating
CCL locals into his adult education program. Also, he was talking about
the PSSA with Tommy Douglas, who had encouraged Thomson to take "time out
to attend to Prairie School negotiations."

The object of the meetings with the labour unions was to interest
individuals in the local unions to form a nucleus group in each union
(a "soviet") who would be responsible for promoting Prairie School—
raising money, distributing and using the materials prepared during the winter. Roslyn Road considered this to be a sound Marxian approach. However, with the exception of a few leading trade unionists, most Winnipeg workers were not very receptive to the idea of forming "educational soviets".

Despite encouraging meetings with individuals from the CRBE, Macdonald's Aircraft, the Building and Maintenance Union and Packing House workers, some discouragement was seeping into Roslyn Road. Needle Trade Council commitment was flagging, the number of those interested from the Labour movement small. "We have some feeling," Roslyn Road wrote to Thomson and Gutkind, "that if there is not more interest shown both from the Needle Trades and trade unions generally, then we should re-think our whole position and approach." Gutkind's response was immediate: "We ever more realize what great a thing we all of the Group have created with this Prairie School and what enormous chances it has to become a real creative centre...Don't let us lose the great momentum the School has."

Was the PSSA losing momentum? On November 27 Roslyn Road wrote to Thomson that "our nucleus is growing and a few bright lights have gathered around who should help us greatly in our work." The week-end conference on December 9 and 10 with Watson Thomson was shaping up. The PSSA Central Committee saw this as an excellent opportunity to create a vision of Prairie School in the larger scheme of things. Thomson spoke to the Forum on post-war prospects for Labour and participated in a Sunday symposium with the labour leaders Johnson and Chunn. The attendance was not large. But the PSSA contacted one or two "interesting people," who were evidently enthusiastic to "get going."

By the end of 1944, history did not seem to be turning any somersaults.
Roslyn Road was only modestly encouraged with their work with the unions, contacts on the prairies and progress of PSSA groups in Saskatchewan. Financial difficulties, the problem of orchestrating a "people's movement" without any full-time director and the equivocation of Saskatchewan government support threw into question the bold dreams of Roslyn Road.

It was evident, too, that the PSSA's call for unity among progressive forces was easily misconstrued among a left polarized between the LPP and the CCF. Thomson had received a letter from Eugene Forsey in which Forsey took exception to the last paragraph of Thomson's article "Not Bread Alone". Thomson had argued that, if fascism was to be prevented from squeezing between the Communists and the Social Democrats, there "must be a unity of persons who see the urgency of the moment...and who know the danger of standing together against the foe." Roslyn Road commented rather sarcastically on Forsey's letter:

We shall have to take care to say nothing (in print) in the future that might suggest that we were advocating anything so dastardly as a union of progressive forces against the powers of reaction. Since an appeal to people is apparently interpreted as an appeal to party members, and since talk of unity of Communists and Social Democratic movements is taken to mean union of LPP and the CCF then for the time being we shall just have to shut up on the score. We are not in any position as yet to antagonize these groups....All we can do is to carry on convincing people by personal contact that there is such a thing as an 'above and beyond position.'

Roslyn Road had more doubts than ever about the CCF's commitment to socialism. John Marshall, appointed as researcher for the Manitoba CCF in November 1944, had just returned from the national CCF convention unimpressed with the convention as a socialist conference. Marshall thought that the CCF was "hell-bent for election," and that most people in the CCF (either blindly or optimistically) underestimated the degree
of planned organization, collective discipline and public education needed for the establishment of democratic socialism. Nothing less than a "fully educated public, accurately informed both on the essentials of socialism,...wide awake to their responsibilities as democratic citizens, and ready to defend their democratic rights"\textsuperscript{34} would suffice.

The lack of basic education among CCF members was manifesting itself in a confusion on all sorts of issues, and a growing tendency to leave policy to the leaders. In the last few years, Marshall felt, the original emphasis on education had been largely superseded by a growing emphasis on organization \textit{per se}. Pointing to the results of the Alberta election, Marshall argued that the decisive defeat of the CCF was evidence of inadequacy, not so much politically as educationally. However, Marshall did think there was a strong minority of not-yet articulate people who were aware of the confusion and resented the concentration on elections and votes. These, he thought, were the crucially important ones for the future of the PSSA. At the convention Marshall had talked with Frank Underhill "who definitely takes John's side in his criticism of the CCF today."\textsuperscript{35} PSSA activists no doubt wondered if they could create a people's movement by welding together the disenchanted left-wing of the CCF (and possibly the LPP?) and radical elements in the labour and farm movements.

During this critical period Thomson's thinking was undergoing a major shift. While still convinced that the existence of "139" validated the Group's outward action, Thomson wrote candidly to Roslyn Road and the Gutkinds that the past year had convinced him that that form of the consumation of the Group which was part of the original vision I'd had of it is not
for us, not for our time....[P]artly because of that my own philosophic basis has been severely shaken and I don't think it is quite steady yet. I believe we can work through that and...the result will be more solid foundation than we had before. Nevertheless, ...a glory has faded even though maybe it was a false glory.36

Thomson doubted that a New Order could be created out of "intelligence and love" and all the explosive energies of humankind's creativity—released by the co-personal group. Thomson now thought that the effectiveness of their efforts would depend on the "realism, and humility with which we accept the new condition which history has shaped for us on the anvil of war."37 The time for apocalyptic utopianism was no more. On January 17, Thomson wrote to Gutkind that he was still a committed, even pragmatic activist, with the compromises pragmatism necessarily implied.

Prairie School was also weighing heavily on Thomson's mind and conscience. He asked himself if he was neglecting PSSA for his provincial program. But he could not see how he might have acted differently. He saw his job as "a marvellous opportunity of self-expression" and service towards "the People."

I have persuaded this government to give me more money than any adult education office or University Extension Department in Canada has at their disposal—twice as much as the CAAE! I feel I have simply no right to scatter my energies, especially in these critical, formative stages of the development of the new thing.38

Gutkind responded bitterly to Watson's letter of January 17. Convinced that "all the Adult Education in the three Prairie Provinces cannot be compared with our Utopia," Gutkind received Thomson's letter as a "farewell to our dreams, these dreams which are so exceedingly more reality-creating than so many a 'practical' plan. And it is farewell to a
friendship...." Gutkind queried Thomson:

What is the idea, Watson? Do you really mean to let down P.S.? This fine noble creature that carries so much honest thinking and striving and struggling with it, so much love of all of us invested therein, radiating a little bit of that genuine light that people, as we have seen so impressively, are looking for, and yearning for with all their hearts. Do you intend to push PSSA somewhere into a corner, replace it by the current activities of Adult Education, and make it superfluous, finally?

As a result of declining interest in the PSSA, Roslyn Road revised its earlier plan to have four or five schools over a six-week period in various centres throughout western Canada. After his NFB tour through Saskatchewan and Alberta, LeBeau tended to agree with the Calgary PSSA group that a concentrated effort in one province in 1945 would establish the Prairie School on a permanent basis. On February 17 Roslyn Road wrote to Eric Gutkind:

We, here at 139, are determined to go ahead with P.S. and we are trusting that both of you and Watson will be participating in the School this summer....We are anxiously awaiting your program to put into our publicity and feel that our publicity should start by the end of this month. We think that we shall probably have two one-week schools in the same place and we hope at Watrous this year. We are aiming for an attendance of two hundred people and I don't doubt that we shall get them.

Roslyn Road reassured Gutkind that their discussions had been enthusiastic.

But this enthusiasm was, in part, a brave front, masking a deep-seated uneasiness with Gutkind's uncompromisingly utopian expectations of the School. Grete LeBeau was convinced that Gutkind's "purist position about action and no compromise" was now making him ineffective and unacceptable to Jefferson School, Rands School and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. She wondered if the PSSA could afford to
continue this line of action. "Now, what about PSSA itself. Where are we going with it? What are the next steps?" she asked Thomson. Grete LeBeau felt that so much depended on co-ordinating the action in Winnipeg, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The next question was financial backing which she felt was closely related to getting a full-time field organizer. Jack Wilson had been approached to accept this position. But he was happy in his work with the NFB and did not want to gamble on something as fragile as the PSSA. Grete LeBeau did not think it was possible to "swing schools outside of Winnipeg without someone in the field to do a full-time job of money raising, forming groups and creating an interest in PSSA."

But Grete LeBeau thought that PSSA's greatest stumbling block was perhaps none of these things—perhaps it is still the fact we haven't made up our minds about the importance of such a movement as PSSA and are not willing to make the necessary sacrifices. It may well be too that we have not yet found this whole project in relation to the actual political facts that exist in Canada today. However, we still are convinced, more than ever, about the necessity of education for the workers. But, we do have to reconsider the form and line we take. Has it got to be more related to their problems? and not so much dealing with ultimate issues in order for us to get them coming our way?

Most of Roslyn Road thought the School had to be more "practical."

Through all this controversy Roslyn Road pressed ahead with its promotional and educational activities. The Monday evening discussion group continued successfully. Although PSSA was getting nowhere with the Needle Trades, who were preoccupied with internal organizational conflicts, Sid Simpson and Elliot Bolton were still being well received by the Canada Packers workers and the Winnipeg Labour Council. PSSA was also getting some publicity through the publication of Simpson's article in the New York *New Leader*. Elsewhere in western Canada, as George
LeBeau had discovered in his five-week tour of Saskatchewan and Alberta for the NFB, there was a positive, if not overwhelming, response to PSSA. A small group, led by Mr. Liebe, had been carrying on some discussion in Lethbridge; they were anxious to have a Prairie School in Alberta. In Calgary LeBeau met with fifteen or twenty people, led by a young worker from the Bakery Union, who were very interested in the School. In contrast, the Edmonton PSSA group, comprised of co-op people, had disintegrated. In Saskatchewan, three lively groups had operated since the previous summer; one under the leadership of Sophia Dixon, a prominent CCF and farm movement activist. LeBeau had met with one of the three groups and was deeply impressed by the tone and "human" atmosphere of the session. In Regina and Moose Jaw, LeBeau was convinced, Labour would give excellent support to the School. On the national scene, PSSA had explored the possibility of establishing a relationship with the newly formed Political Action Committee (PAC) of the CCL, headed by Eamon Park. This contact, however, did not look too promising. LeBeau, who had known Park quite well when they were both on the national executive of the CCYM, thought that his main emphasis would be "to swing the Labour vote for the CCF and away from the Labour Progressives. The antagonism between the so-called left-wing groups will become even greater with a PAC under the leadership of Eamon Park."45

On March 10 Roslyn Road wrote to Gutkind to share their perceptions of the Thomson-Gutkind conflict and PSSA's predicament. They assured Gutkind that he had helped to solve "inner conflicts of the group," and that he had contributed invaluably to helping them "see and understand the great visions and goals you had already established for yourselves and wanted us to share and be a part of." Moreover, Roslyn Road now
insisted that Watson's move to Saskatchewan had been correct. They pointed out that, due to the immensity of Thomson's assignment, it was impossible for him to do Prairie School organizational work for the three prairie provinces. But he had done his part in keeping the Prairie School very much in the minds of people in the west.

In mid-March Thomson travelled to New York on Saskatchewan Adult Education business. There he met with Gutkind to thrash through their differences. Thomson felt that Gutkind had been "almost unbelievably unfair" in his accusations. Didn't he understand that the Saskatchewan program "would serve as a base and a feeding ground for Prairie School and should in order to serve that purpose have something of the same outlook and principles?" Thomson took exception to Gutkind's suggestion that his adult education program was "CCF education." He contended that this claim completely ignored the extent to which his own position was far from identical with that of the CCF. Gutkind, it seemed to Thomson, downplayed the risks he was taking to make adult education in Saskatchewan something other than CCFism or social democracy. Thomson also pointed out that the decision for the 1945 summer program (which Gutkind thought was a lilliputian affair) had been made by the Winnipeg group and not himself. After this meeting, Thomson and Gutkind parted in peace and friendship. Both agreed that the Saskatchewan Adult Education program must not swallow up PSSA. It seems, though, that Gutkind was more hopeful than Thomson was that the PSSA could develop into a more global Political Action Committee. The troubles with Gutkind were not over, however.

Even with the conflict between Gutkind and Thomson temporarily "resolved," Roslyn Road wondered if Gutkind's concept of the Prairie School and the mobilization of the people was not different from theirs.
Did Gutkind really understand the hugeness of the task of organizing the Prairie School in the western part of Canada? Did Gutkind realize that PSSA had started with $200, and still had a deficit of $800, that they had worked long hours, all volunteer work, trying to interest labour people in Winnipeg in the Prairie School both to build the idea and raise money, and had little, as yet, success in raising funds? In the light of these facts, two one-week schools seemed to be a realistic proposal for the summer of 1945. The prophet was disheartened with the ordinary people.

Throughout the late winter months and early spring Gutkind had been working on a series of lecture proposals for the PSSA. Finding it difficult to shift his focus from the original plan (four or five schools over a six-week period) to two one-week schools in Saskatoon and Winnipeg, Gutkind sent, instead, a "Manifesto" for the Prairie School. The preamble captures the essence of the document:

In the name of suffering humanity and of the sovereign spirit of Man. To save men and women and most of all children and the innocent unborn LET US PROCLAIM OURSELVES NOW with unflinching honesty, that the fog of half-truths may be penetrated and men know to what future we, citizens of our respective democracies, dedicate ourselves, if need be unto death....As between the old order of callous, money-worshipping individualism and the 'new order' of the mass-collectivism of regimentation and terror, we hesitate....And still our leaders have not said convincingly that it is for neither of these that we fight, that thousands have already suffered and died. They have not yet declared that a third way is necessary and possible. Therefore must we affirm it, having no authority except the authority of our own head and mind and conscience, conforming each other as persons, as human persons and not as members of any party, organization, race, church or class; and declaring it to the common people of the democracies, the oppressed and humiliated of the occupied countries and the innumerable prisoners of Hitlerism in Germany.
The document continued in this vein, setting out four fundamental principles and announcing in sweeping language a program in economics, politics and culture.

Roslyn Road was clearly dismayed with Gutkind's manifesto. They thought that the program spoke in a "masterly way to us the message of PSSA, but in a way which makes it impossible for us to publish it for general consumption." They did not think that the people of the west were ready for so "profound and forthright a statement." It would be "political suicide" to distribute it widely. On May 27 Roslyn Road conveyed their thoughts on the manifesto to Gutkind. The manifesto had courageously challenged the whole decadent and confused status quo. But they believed the manifesto was in no sense particular to the Canadian prairies. It was equally relevant for an audience in China or New Zealand.

Roslyn Road was uncertain if Gutkind could live with particularization. How could the "people" be "activized" unless PSSA was willing to envisage the specific forms and direction of activity for the specific kinds of people inhabiting the prairies? Like Gutkind and Thomson, Roslyn Road was still committed, in the final analysis, to developing a Prairie People's Movement as a "spearhead of a continental and global 'awakening of the People.'" They thought, however, that perhaps the PSSA would have to be, for one more summer session, something of a "voice crying in the wilderness." There did not seem to be "those palpable strivings from below (in spite of Study-Action in Saskatchewan)" to connect with. PSSA could do its part in creating these strivings. But they thought that history must do something too.

For his part, Watson Thomson wondered how he could use the manifesto. As it stood, in its "naked and native splendour," the manifesto could
strike "terror into the hearts of some of the prospective staff (not all) and some (but certainly not all) of the prospective students (maybe that's how it should be)." But Thomson really doubted that this "challenge-to-the-whole-status-quo" approach sufficiently reckoned with the new world framework, i.e. "socialist-capitalist co-operation (imposed from above)." He also doubted that the classical class-struggle was leading to the inevitable breakdown of capitalism, now that the Soviet Union and capitalist-democracy had been forced into a common orbit. Both Thomson and Norman Smith, who had received a copy of the manifesto, thought it was not politically strategic to send it out.50

And for his part, Gutkind was convinced that PSSA had gone to the "other extreme of soft pedalling, of watering down, of hush and hush and jitter, which make our plans just as 'suicidal:'"51 Gutkind still maintained, intransigently so, that people were "despairingly looking for vision, to be shown a way," and they were "nauseated with appeasement." He could not understand why PSSA was confining itself to "narrow provincial affairs and picayune technicalities," which "interested only a handful of people?" From Gutkind's stratospheric vantage point, never had there been such momentum as now. PSSA had a moral duty to spread clarity and encouragement by taking a strong stand on the fundamental issues.52

George LeBeau was disgusted with Gutkind's idea of action. His idea of revolution, LeBeau wrote to Thomson, was "speaking your mind at all costs; walking out of political parties and unions; it is not important to do anything in the Canada-Soviet Friendship Council—all these organizations are obsolete!"53

When Lucie and Eric Gutkind arrived in Winnipeg from New York in the first week of July 1945, Roslyn Road was astir with activity and
tension. Conrad Komarowsky, one time editor of the New Masses and former organizer for the CIO now with the Lincoln School in Chicago, Charles Lightbody, originally from Saskatchewan, recently of the Jefferson School in New York, and Ed Russenholt, an expert from Winnipeg on regional planning and land and resource conservation, had agreed to join Watson Thomson and Eric Gutkind for the two schools. Thomson and Gutkind were also scheduled to participate in the Vancouver YMCA's Public Affairs Institute in August. Bruce Yorke, who had first met Thomson at the 1943 Institute, had written to Roslyn Road telling them that a group of us out here are planning to capitalize on their visit to break away from the 'Y' and form a B.C. branch of the Prairie School. The plan for the camp is for the members of the executive to personally secure five to ten active campers who they feel will wish to pursue some concentrated and intelligent social action.

And Gutkind immediately began a lecture series on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 139. By June 23, twenty-five had registered for the second PSSA in Winnipeg. Gutkind became ill, however, and did not participate in either of the two summer schools or the Public Affairs Institute in Vancouver. Charles Lightbody took his place in Vancouver.

In spite of Roslyn Road's brave efforts and Gutkind's wild belief that people were ripe for prophetic vision and radical change, history did not seem to be endorsing the PSSA. On June 11 Mackenzie King's Liberals swept the CCF into political oblivion, a defeat from which they never recovered. To make matters even worse and increase the PSSA's isolation, in CCF establishment circles Roslyn Road was becoming increasingly suspect as a "communist nest." Berry Richards, a CCF MLA from LePas who stayed at Roslyn Road during legislative sittings, was expelled from the party in May. And John Marshall had been fired from his CCF
research position in February. An utterly exasperated Stanley Knowles believed that 139 Roslyn Road had played a leading role in stirring up trouble within the CCF. Although Thomson had convinced Woodrow Lloyd and Tommy Douglas that he was not at the bottom of the Richards affair, the suspicion lingered.

On the local adult education scene events took a grim turn. Abruptly and without consultation with Stan Rands, the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba suspended the university's adult education program on April 30. The Board argued, essentially, that adult education cost too much. The experimental stage had been passed, they said, and until a new president was appointed, they should not embark on any new program. Rands was incensed.

There is a high degree of irresponsibility in the decision to suspend on such short notice services upon which scores of organizations and thousands of people have come to depend. The Film Library alone, which is the source of educational films for all organizations and adult groups in Manitoba, serves audiences now totalling 300,000 annually. Yet the abrupt closing of the office makes no provision for the continuance of these services. In view of the wide scope and future possibilities of the adult education program, the public has a right to ask a better reason for the closing of the office than the financial one given by the board.

The real reason, hidden from the public, was that the adult education program under Watson Thomson and Stan Rands' direction was deemed too "political and propagandistic" by certain board members. The only encouraging note in the summer of 1945, excepting the enthusiasm of individuals scattered here and there, was that the adult education program in Saskatchewan was gaining momentum under the banderole of "No Study without Action, No Action without Study." It was small consolation to the PSSA to know that they had the task of keeping the flame of a critical adult education burning in Manitoba.
Perhaps Gutkind was right, in some ultimate sense, in suggesting that in 1945 humankind was facing an either-or predicament. But when the second PSSA got underway in late July, world events were moving rapidly, twisting and turning from Yalta (February 4-11) through the United Nations conference in San Francisco (April 25- June 26) to the foreboding Potsdam conference (July 17-August 1). One needed almost magician's insights to understand the Big Power machinations. The Prairie School leadership understood, to some extent, that the disintegration of pre-war social systems and the growth of revolutionary movements signalled potential upheaval everywhere in the world—China, Italy, Greece, France and East Europe. They also knew that the "problem" of the Soviet Union appeared to be very much connected with the issue of the left. And they believed that powerful reactionary forces in Canada and the United States were trying to break the fragile wartime coalition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The idiot winds of the Cold War were stirring throughout 1945. Eight months after the PSSA ended, with Churchill's tragic "iron curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri on March 5, 1946, they would be raging.

The PSSA was confronted with a bewildering host of immediate issues to untangle. The Prairie School attempted to place these immediate issues in the global context of the war against fascism and the emergence of "people's movements" throughout the world. PSSA leaders were convinced that though Germany had been defeated militarily in May 1945, this did not necessarily mean that fascism as a way of life had been rooted out. As a "conspiracy against the common man" (Thomson's phrase), fascism had to be stopped from appearing in post-war "gentleman guise." Thomson believed that people were stirring everywhere in the world—only fascism
could stop the momentum of the liberation movements. PSSA leaders believed that a democratic revolution was going on in Europe--feudalism was in process of being liquidated. The global situation demanded, PSSA leaders insisted, unity of the greatest number of common people for positive, decisive action. This aspiration for a "democratic" Europe, now viewed as naive, was authentic.58

In the context of the emergence of people's resistance movements and the symbolic presence of a "new way of life" in the Soviet Union, Conrad Komarowsky examined Labour's role in people's movements and Dr. Charles Lightbody discussed the meaning, for the common man, of the San Francisco Charter, the World Food Plan and the Bretton Woods proposals.59 Komarowsky saw great hope in the organization of the World Trade Union Congress, representing sixty million workers, in February 1945. A new world was in the making; the masses were, he thought, on the move! But Komarowsky also believed that Labour's gains during World War II were seriously threatened. U.S. Labour, too, was seriously divided. Strikes were no longer adequate political instruments. Only political education would cement Labour and its allies into a common people's movement for socialism.

Lightbody thought that the World Food Plan, devised at the Hot Springs Conference, was important to the Prairie region. If put into effect, changes would be required in the internal framework of recipient countries. Food was a potent political weapon--the people must ensure distribution without any strings attached. Lightbody believed that the Bretton Woods proposals of July 1944 were a forward step. They outlawed many devices of trade restriction. They provided for world currency stabilization and prevented inflation. He also thought that they ruled
out an imperialist financial struggle and were, therefore, a step in the direction of world economic planning. Lightbody believed, however, that Canada could only influence policy if it developed a people's movement. And it was especially important to develop pro-Soviet feeling in Canada. If not, reactionary powers would triumph. 60

PSSA tried to link the global struggle against fascism to the development of a people's movement in the Prairie Region. Roslyn Road well knew that the West had historically been a centre of political ferment. But western protest had expressed itself mainly as negative revolt against "vertical interests," the industrial east and the Grain Exchange. Rarely, the PSSA thought, had western protest articulated a "positive program" for the development of the inherent resources of the region. Consequently, the summer school planners decided to make the theme of Prairie Development central. Rejecting the criticism that regionalism was merely sectionalism, Ed Russenholt and Watson Thomson considered the region in relation to the nation as a whole, to the continent and to the great world issues of the day.

The prairies were seen to be at the cross-roads of the new air age and at the centre of the Big Three "triangle of power." Ed Russenholt, one of the pioneering Canadian ecological thinkers, set out his vision of ecologically-attuned regional development. 61 The Prairie Region, Russenholt argued, had to be developed on the "basis of conservation" (using the resources of land, water and people for the greatest good of the greatest number of humankind for the longest time). Russenholt maintained that the "land and water and people resources of any area can be only efficiently developed by developing an entire region."

But how, specifically, should the Prairie Region be developed?
Thomson, Russenholt and Lightbody stated that the "immense, largely untapped power resources of the region" could be the basis for new industry which would facilitate new types of agricultural production and increase the population. The PSSA believed that the Hudson Bay Route (HBR) was essential for the integral development of the Prairie Region. In fact, George LeBeau had resigned from his job with the NFB on June 30 to take up a position with the Hudson Bay Route Association to work for cheaper shipping rates.

Pointing to the fact that other countries such as the USSR had plans for their prairie region, Lightbody stated that the HBR was a "necessary part of regional development but not sufficient in itself." Watson Thomson observed that their own "prairie plan" and the original development of the region were "two entirely different things." Thomson suggested that hydro-electric power could be developed and small industries such as packing plants could be established. These developments could be the beginning of small industrial centres, revitalizing towns that were presently in decay. This new plan Thomson, believed, could well bridge the gap between farmer and labourer. The PSSA visionaries saw Prairie Regional development as the core of a dynamic people's movement (the "people" versus the "forces of reaction"). Consequently, PSSA perceived their educational task as ensuring that Labour and Agriculture developed a common regional conception.

But this was an almost impossible task. PSSA had a few human resources and they knew that Labour was not especially open to their ideas. All the leadership could do was encourage PSSA students (trade unionists, farmers, white collar and professional workers, carpenters, housewives and teachers) to publicize the School's conception of a planned
prairie region, engage in anti-fascist work in organizations such as the Canada-Soviet Friendship Society and act as leaven in trade unions, farm organizations and churches. And the two schools had, tentatively, decided to adopt a number of projects for research and investigation. In the harsh glare of reality, this hardly seemed like the new revolution.

In August 1945 the US dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan succumbed, and the world entered a new era in which great-power diplomacy would be conducted near the abyss of nuclear war. These events were thrust suddenly and painfully upon the PSSA. "These are the events and processes," PSSA wrote in September 1945 to students and associates of the School, "whose significance as world issues we can hardly begin to grasp before we are forced to grapple with them as immediate issues." What did atomic power mean? Would humankind use this new power to build life more abundant or would she misuse it to its own utter destruction? PSSA felt that "only by focussing a steady light on the basic human issues can we see our way clearly through the bewildering host of immediate issues which confront people today." The crushing events of August 1945 had forced PSSA to do some hard critical self-reflection. With or without vision, the world seemed to be perishing.

Looking back now, after the event, we can see many places where, in our summer sessions, the light wavered and our vision blurred....But if this is to be the 'century of the common man,' as we believe it must, then we must find within ourselves the strength to overcome our limitations. This strength will come only through a tightened solidarity, through free communication, through frank self-criticism. In this way we shall prove ourselves adequate to the demands of the human crisis, and to the original conception of P.S., as an unfailing source of vision which would throw a clear and steady light on the goals of human effort—in order to clarify the means.
By early October 1945 it was not surprising that Roslyn Road doubted their ability to meet the demands of the human crisis and spearhead a prairie people's movement. On October 2 Kay Bolton wrote to the Thomsons, Gutkinds and friends, expressing the collective thinking of the group. Bolton thought that PSSA had been "unrealistic at all times about its size and scope, in terms of our own man-power, other people's support, organizational possibilities and financial resources." She did not believe that the group had the talents required to organize a region-wide, social-educational movement, or to raise the many hundreds of dollars required to run a large-scale Prairie School. Our talents are more close-up talents; they have to do with influencing people, clarifying issues, determining policies.

Failure to proceed with sufficient realism, she maintained, had had two results: 1) the organizational job has for the most part been inadequately done—with obvious results in terms of vital statistics and finances; 2) the job of influencing people, clarifying issues, and determining policy was insufficiently thought out. To some extent, they had lost sight of the Prairie School's unique function—to present to the public the broadly social and human issues.

Bolton thought that the organizational machinery of the PSSA would have to be drastically reduced. They would maintain only a minimum set-up. Individuals would be encouraged to select the most progressive, or potentially progressive organizations in the west, then work through them, influencing people, policy and direction. This option of working through existing organizations had always existed. Roslyn Road had chosen to extend themselves outward because it came closest to expressing their total vision of what they thought was needed. Now, Bolton thought that
perhaps their most effective work had been in established organizations such as the CCF, "Manitoba Adult Education, Film Board, Saskatchewan Adult Education, Elliot's personnel work, more recently George's Hudson Bay Route Association; and Grete's Saskatchewan job, our jobs in the outside world generally." That was not music to Thomson's ears.

Watson Thomson replied to Kay Bolton's lengthy letter on October 16. Thomson was still trying to get the promised $500 from Woodrow Lloyd. He was very unhappy that he was now responsible for persuading the Saskatchewan government to give $500 to "bury a corpse when they thought they were giving it to nourish a lusty infant." Thomson disagreed with Roslyn Road's analysis of the situation. He did not think that PSSA suffered from "delusions of grandeur." The fault, he felt, was the reverse. Roslyn Road had not thought grandly enough. But Thomson did concede that the "glow of zeal and vision" faded when "something snapped in their relationship". Unwilling to give up completely his utopian hopes for Roslyn Road, Thomson maintained that the PSSA had not "bit off more than we could chew." If the sustaining force of the group had not given out, the PSSA might not have died. Thomson insisted that 139 Roslyn Road meant more to "hundreds of people in this country..., than any work any of us have done in Adult Education or Film Board."  

Predictably, Eric Gutkind thought the summer of 1945 catastrophic. On November 12 he conveyed his dismay and sadness to Roslyn Road.

As it looks to us, PSSA is a dead issue, PSSA is ruined. But we still firmly believe (this we wrote to Watson too) that PSSA was a genuine spark that would have kindled a genuine fire. And it was in the process of doing it the summer before. At that time we had the enthusiastic appreciation of the finest people. At that time we had a vision—and a decision. How happy, how elated would we be if we would have now something to offer in this moment of
universal despair. But when PSSA was replaced by a picayune affair, what else could remain but bitter disappointment and the end, which we had predicted.67

Fortunately, Gutkind's views were so psychiatric in tone that 139's and PSSA's turning away had few unpleasant consequences to the essentially political people in both groups.68 Several months later, on January 4, 1946, Gutkind wrote an exceedingly bitter letter to Roslyn Road criticizing their current activities. "These microscopic affairs," he stated, "are not only without significance, but they have--and this is the real issue--they have nothing to do whatsoever with PSSA." He accused PSSA of dishonestly silencing profound inner conflicts.

The PSSA finally dissolved on August 20, 1946. Sadly, Sid Simpson concluded that the PSSA had not realized, when they began, that the various people's groups saw little need to handle the "fundamental issues." Then, too, the PSSA had erred in attempting to launch a mass education movement rather than concentrating on leadership training. The PSSA activist utopians had learned a bitter truth: the School could only live and grow when there was some militancy among the people's organizations. However, Simpson believed that individuals and groups still needed to be stirred to constructive action and consolidated effort. He assured his supporters that those who had initiated the PSSA would continue to contribute to the "continuous struggle toward sanity and human decency."69

Roslyn Road's longed-for cultural revolution had not occurred. To be sure, individual participants had benefitted, in various ways, from the experiment. But they had been unable to extend co-personality beyond their own intentional community. Their attempt to do so is, in itself, of interest to historians. Roslyn Road's failure to proceed with suffi-
cient realism suggests that the utopian mindset places blinkers on political perception. The PSSA visionaries misperceived the Canadian political and intellectual culture of the mid-1940s. Trade unions were preoccupied with "bread-and-butter" issues and badly divided by political strife. The co-operative movement had lost much of its utopian impulse of the 1930s. Political parties were engaged in rancorous conflict for control of parliament. In 1945 the PSSA dream of an unified progressive movement disintegrated as the world shuddered into the atomic age. Canada in the mid-1940s, as it turned out, was only mildly revolutionary.
FOOTNOTES


2 *WTP* 2-5, pp. 184-185.

3 See S.M. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), chs. 3 and 4, and Ian MacPherson, *Each for All*. "Manitoba," says MacPherson, "was different from Saskatchewan and more like Alberta in that utopian co-operators had little impact (p. 162).

4 *WTP* 2-5, p. 184.

5 Will Conyers' diary, c. 1944, WCP.

6 *WTP* 2-5, p. 186.

7 *WTP* 2-5, p. 185.

8 Ruth Wilson to Leone Wilcox, c. November 1945, RRP.

9 Brief Supporting the Proposal for Collective Land Settlement by the Central (Winnipeg) Committee of the Prairie School for Social Advance, August 1944, PSSAP.

10 The phrase "activist utopian" is from Frank and Fritzie Manuel, *Utopian Thought*, p. 9, Activist utopians, the Manuels say, "launched revolutions for the sake of seeing the glory of utopia with their own eyes:"

11 Collective Land Settlement Brief, p. 7, PSSAP.

12 Collective Land Settlement Brief, p. 9, PSSAP.


14 Collective Land Settlement Brief, pp. 19-21, PSSAP.
On pages 16 and 17 of the brief, authors discuss "Plant and Machinery" and "Industrialization," They comment: "The whole concept of 'farming' has to change to something different in which industry and agriculture are closely related (Collective Land Settlement Brief, p. 17).

16 PSSA, Labour Forum, Report, October 1, 1944, PSSAP.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 PSSA, Needle Trades Council Continuation Committee, Report, October 4, 1944, PSSAP.


22 In February 1944 the cabinet approved Order-in-Council, P.C. 1003. Now, for the first time, there was not only legislative backing for the principle of orderly collective bargaining but also rules, procedures, and supervising agencies to ensure that workers could choose a bargaining agent and enter into negotiations. See Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People (Ottawa: Deneau and Greenberg, 1980), p. 184.

23 PSSA, Labour Forum, Report, October 8 and 9, PSSAP. Emphases in original:


25 Roslyn Road newsletter No. 1, October 22, 1944, RRP.

26 Eric Gutkind to Roslyn Road, November 17, 1944, RRP.

27 Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, November 13, 1944, RPP.

28 Roslyn Road newsletter No. 5, November 21, 1944, RRP.

29 Roslyn Road newsletter No. 4, November 12, 1944, RRP.

30 Eric Gutkind to Roslyn Road, November 17, 1944, RRP.
31 Roslyn Road newsletter, November 20, 1944, RRP.

32 Watson Thomson, "Not Bread Alone", issued as a tract by the PSSA: reprinted from the Canadian Mineworker, April 1944.

33 Roslyn Road newsletter, December 14, 1944, RRP.


35 Roslyn Road newsletter, December 14, 1944, RRP.

36 Watson Thomson to the Gutkinds, January 1, 1945, RRP.

37 Watson Thomson to the Gutkinds, January 17, 1945, RRP.

38 Ibid.

39 Eric Gutkind to Watson Thomson, February 3, 1945, RRP.

40 Roslyn Road to Eric Gutkind, February 17, 1945, RRP.

41 Grete LeBeau to Watson Thomson, February 8, 1945, RRP.

42 Jack Wilson to Watson Thomson, February 8, 1945, RRP.

43 Grete LeBeau to Watson Thomson, February 8, 1945, RRP.

44 Ibid.

45 Reference to Eamon Park in Roslyn Road newsletter, January 11, 1945, RRP. Other material in Roslyn Road to Eric Gutkind, February 17, 1945, RRP.

46 Watson Thomson to Eric Gutkind, March 6, 1945; Eric Gutkind to Watson Thomson, March 17, 1945, RRP.

47 Eric Gutkind's "Manifesto," written for PSSA summer schools 1945, RRP.

48 Roslyn Road to the Gutkinds, May 23, 1945, RRP.

49 Roslyn Road to Eric Gutkind, May 23 and 27, 1945, RRP.
50. Watson Thomson to Eric Gutkind, May 13, 1945, RRP.

51. Eric Gutkind to Roslyn Road, May 27, 1945, RRP.

52. Eric Gutkind to Roslyn Road, May 19 and 27, 1945, RRP.

53. George LeBeau to Watson Thomson, July 7, 1945, RRP.

54. Bruce Yorke to Watson Thomson, Eric Gutkind and Roslyn Road, May 24, 1945.

55. Stanley Knowles to David Lewis, February 18, 1945, CCF Papers, PAC, vol. 98, file S. Knowles 1940-45. "We definitely suspect Richards, Marshall and 139 Roslyn Road of having a hand in this. Who got our mailing list? In any event, for financial reasons—which were there before Marshall went haywire—we have fired Marshall as at the end of the month."


60. PSSA, Proceedings of the Second Session and Conference, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, July 1945, PSSAP.

61. See Edgar Russenholt, The Heart of the Continent (Winnipeg: MacFarlane Communication Series, 1968) for an example of Russenholt's approach to the prairies.

63 Prairie School in Action-1945, RSSAP.

64 Prairie School in Action-1945, PSSAP.

65 Kay Bolton to Thomsons and Gutkinds, October 2, 1945, RRP.

66 Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, October 16, 1945, RRP.

67 Eric Gutkind to Roslyn Road, November 12, 1945, RRP.

68 Eric Gutkind to Roslyn Road, January 4, 1946, RRP.

69 Prairie School for Social Advance Circular, Roslyn Road, August 20, 1946, PSSAP.
"June 15, 1944," David Lewis observed in his autobiography, "was an intoxicating day for the CCF across Canada."\textsuperscript{1} It was no less so for Watson Thomson who was invited in the late summer of 1944 to come to Saskatchewan to launch a grass-roots adult education movement for participatory democracy. His work in Manitoba, successful within the constraints imposed by the university bureaucracy and the conservative political climate of Manitoba, had suffered through disconnection from government policy formation. This chapter focuses on the way Thomson carried into practice his pedagogical strategies and community theory in a milieu supportive of radical ideas. For the first time in his life, Thomson had the opportunity to link his transformative-communitarian theory to the social policy of the government. Thomson could actually think of involving 500,000 Saskatchewanites in a process of personal and social transformation. Also for the first time in his life, Thomson was extensively involved with government bureaucracy. This was indeed a new and unprecedented experience for the anti-establishment Scotsman.

Consequently, Thomson faced several new problematics. For one thing, he had to think more concretely about the kind of government that would embody his vision of a decentralized and participatory society. Secondly, he had to devise a strategy for moving people, many of whom were not CCFers, from participation in local community life (an "activated" citizen) to a more politically conscious participatory democrat (a "socialist" citizen). The more apocalyptic elements of the
Mitirnovic days were cast aside as he opted for success in the imperfect but promising world of CCF Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan CCF had swept W.J. Patterson's Liberal machine out of office, winning forty-seven of fifty-two seats. Despite the bitterness of business-supported anti-socialist campaign, the CCF had won a decisive victory. The national CCF leadership thought they saw signs of things to come. Even the fanatically anti-socialist Financial Post predicted that the CCF could win between seventy and one hundred federal seats. Of course the victory in Saskatchewan had not happened overnight. The first three decades of the twentieth century in Saskatchewan had witnessed the creation of a powerful, self-conscious agrarian movement. As the dusty and dirty thirties ended, the CCF at last acquired more supporters in the socially and depressed rural population than the old-line parties.²

With the war came rising expectations of increased prosperity. But satisfaction of those expectations came too slowly for activists in the farmers' movement, with their traditions of co-operative endeavour and populist rebellion, and they soon abandoned the Liberal Party.³ Tommy Douglas, who had only assumed the Saskatchewan CCF leadership in 1941, had succeeded quickly in drawing diverse elements of the populace into a crusade for "definite reforms," although without explicit reference to some essentials of socialism—such as state ownership.⁴ His reluctance to emphasize "state ownership" was partly tactical. He was unwilling to offend suspicious, anti-statist farmers. Also, Douglas preferred to emphasize "social ownership," including co-operatives. "When we talked about a co-operative commonwealth, "Douglas told Lewis Thomas, "we had in mind a mixed economy including public ownership, co-operative enterprise
and private ownership.\^5

The 1944 election program appealed to a broad spectrum. Saskatchewan was promised security of land tenure, expanded social services, including socialized health services, educational reform and a planned economy. Although the CCF won a convincing victory, Douglas faced formidable problems in establishing a "beachhead of socialism on a continent of capitalism."\^6 He had inherited one of the worst machine bureaucracies in the country. Most, if not all, civil servants were wary of CCF goals. He had come to power without the support of any of the major Saskatchewan, or national, newspapers. To be sure, fifty-three percent of the electorate had voted CCF. But large numbers of big Saskatchewan farmers had not. Nor had significant numbers of the urban middle classes. Despite the work of an influential Roman Catholic supporter, the Rev. Eugene Cullihane, most Roman Catholics remained suspicious of the CCF as did many ethnic sub-groups—French Canadians, Ukrainians, Mennonites. One group of Old Colony Mennonites even prepared to leave Saskatchewan, believing that a totalitarian dictatorship was about to descend upon the province. Could all of these groups be drawn into the reform projects of the new government? What form would the opposition of old line parties take? How would this opposition be confronted?

The possibility that education would draw these enemies' teeth must have come to mind in the earliest days of the CCF mandate. Indeed, the education of men's hearts and minds had fascinated the CCF faithful from 1933. Through education, the crooked civil servants could be made straight. Through education, isolated and individualistic farmers would see co-operative communities and farms as more viable ways of organizing.
life. Through education, the doubts of CCF opponents could be dispelled. Through education, the whole people, corpus civilis, might be brought around.

If Douglas faced a politically nervous public, he was by no means presiding over a unified party with a consistent base of support. The CCF's most vigorous support came from the province's left-wing—what Richards and Pratt call the "culture of left populism." The left, while agreeing with the party's limited electoral goals of a secure land tenure and of public welfare, wanted soon to create a socialist society with a fundamentally new value orientation. They sought qualitative changes in all social relationships. They proposed co-operative farming and housing, inclusion of co-operative values in public school curricula, and believed social services should be built and governed from the community upwards. They mooted direct, "grass-roots" democracy.

"The CCF government," Richards and Pratt contend, "was a marriage between the leaders of a left populist movement and representatives of professional civil servants..." Was it a marriage of convenience? How much support would Douglas and the cabinet provide to the left populist forces? Would they foster this culture's central preoccupations? One could not answer these questions unequivocally in the summer of 1944. But it would be evident soon enough that the Fabian bureaucrats, committed as they were to rule by cabinet, would win out and, after a period of initial radical enthusiasm, settle in to running a moderate, increasingly bureaucratic, social democratic party. Nonetheless, the need for a sufficiently reliable and practical, yet sufficiently radical educated civil service was obvious, and acknowledged, early in the life of the Douglas government. The way was increasingly clear for the Thomson
appointment soon to come.

Tommy Douglas was, after all, sympathetic, even identified with, the left-wing of the party in the early days of the Saskatchewan regime. Douglas wanted not only to introduce legislation on health, collective bargaining and education as he had promised. He wanted also to use a campaign of grass-roots radical adult education—a massive campaign of study-action throughout the province—to begin the building of a new society.

In August 1944 Thomson had lunch in Saskatoon with Douglas. Thomson wanted to enlist Douglas' support for the PSSA. Instead, as the conversation evolved, Douglas extended an invitation to Thomson to come and work as director of a new government division of adult education. The invitation came as a complete surprise to Thomson. But for a variety of reasons—among them the uncertainty of the future of adult education in Manitoba and his feeling that the group at Roslyn Road had come to an end of a phase—he was disposed to accept. Thomson thought the conversation with Douglas very constructive. Neither had anticipated landing up where they had. Thomson saw "exciting vistas ahead." What did Douglas want Thomson to accomplish? What was Woodrow Lloyd's understanding?

Woodrow S. Lloyd was only thirty-one when he assumed the post of Minister of Education. Born on a Saskatchewan homestead in the small town of Webb in 1913, Lloyd had been educated in a one-room schoolhouse. In 1929 at age sixteen he graduated from high school and enrolled in the College of Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan. Unable to continue his studies, he set out in 1931 for the Moose Jaw Normal School. Between 1931 and 1940 he continued university studies by correspondence
while teaching. He received his B.A. in 1940. An active unionist, Lloyd helped to build and finally to run the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation as president. Like Watson Thomson, Lloyd became intimately conversant with the problems of teachers and prairie farmers, and aware of the appalling conditions of rural schooling. Lloyd also knew the writings of Carlyle King, president of the Saskatchewan CCF party, who provided a critique of capitalist education and advocated the restructuring of the curriculum along socialist lines.  

W.S. Lloyd wrote to Douglas on August 28 conveying something of his thoughts on adult education. He could not have known Thomson's work in any but a vague way, yet pointed in directions both men would have wished to take. Although adult education under the University of Saskatchewan Extension Department had done good work with Homemakers, Co-operative organizations, Boys and Girls' Clubs and the Farm and Citizens' Forums, Lloyd did not think it enough to satisfy community needs. Lloyd thought that the aims of a new Division of Adult Education should be: 1) to clarify the thinking of our citizens to the end that desirable social and economic conceptions may prevail and 2) to provide adult education with immediate and tangible aims (co-operative farming, credit unions, health improvement facilities, development of community centres and leisure-time activities). Underscoring the problem of citizen inertia, Lloyd insisted the new Division immediately needed a director and some good fieldmen.

Two days after meeting with Lloyd on the afternoon of September 1 in Saskatoon, Thomson wrote to Lloyd that he was resigning from the University of Manitoba and would be relinquishing his duties on October 5 on the basis of Douglas' promise of employment. He would start as
director of adult education on October 15. Thomson summarized the organizational and intellectual conclusions of his talk with Lloyd mentioning especially their commitment to stimulate broad social consciousness in all groups and communities of the province, to activize the people through adult education in projects of local reconstruction, to promote study and discussion of current affairs, both local and global, in groups and community forums, and to "liquidate" illiteracy, especially in "New Canadian" communities.14

Thomson insisted, moreover, that the PSSA would be an "above-party" independent institution, integrally related to the general adult education program of the province—a training school for field workers from which the "right kind" of personal study materials would emanate. Thomson also told Lloyd of the suspicions of J. Rayner and K.W. Gordon, the University of Saskatchewan's Extension Department's key men, and of University of Saskatchewan President J.S. Thomson's reservations. Thomson sought a "most co-operative" understanding with the University, but did not imagine he could manage easily. On the other hand, to ensure the fullest understanding between himself and the CCF government, Thomson included a copy of his article "Education and Propaganda," published in the [Canadian Forum]. He hoped that it would serve as a "useful basis for a discussion of policy which we may have at a later date."15 If the University would remain suspicious, surely so well-informed a government would not.

The context into which Watson Thomson now stepped seemed perfectly suited to his aims, his methods, his hopes. Saskatchewan was "gripped" by vague hopes of social and community change; the old chains of money-based dominance—one group over another—seemed to have loosened. Into
this vaguely hopeful scene stepped Watson Thomson, whose scattered schemes for mass change appeared suited (as none other could be) to the needs of the CCF administration. Yet that context was in fact, deep-down, flawed and unready for Thomson-style adult education.

Watson, Mary and Colin Thomson arrived by train in Regina in October to find the housing situation desperate. They managed to find a small house on Athol Street, but immediately began thinking of ways to establish a co-operative housing project in Regina. With characteristic élan, Thomson began organizing his Department. He talked with Lloyd and J.S. Sturdy, the Minister of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. He interviewed applicants for jobs and arranged for office furniture. He interviewed a deputation from the Provincial Library Association and spoke at a Melfort Agricultural banquet. He met with President J.S. Thomson and J. Rayner at Saskatoon.

Thomson was exuberant. He wrote to Roslyn Road on October 22.

I get the feeling from all the cabinet people I have spoken with that they expect our program to be really big and significant. Several times I have felt that even though I have been thinking in pretty large terms, maybe they are not large enough yet to fill this tremendous wide open opportunity which they are prepared to offer. Of course it is early yet to be sure of that but certainly the feeling is of having all the room for growth and action that one could possibly desire or use.16

He was also "extremely happy" with Art and Ellen Wirick. Wirick, whose wife Thomson playfully dubbed a "good Marxist," became on November 1 the first District Field Supervisor. A university graduate, Wirick had taught history for several years at the University of British Columbia and worked in that university's Extension Department. There he became good friends with Watson's fellow adult educator, Robert
MacKenzie. Wirick came to the Division of Adult Education after a year's work in the Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan. "We have already talked with him about purposes and politics," Thomson informed Roslyn Road, "religion and 'group' and all the thousand and one aspects of the job ahead of us." Two weeks later M. Florence Gaynor became Thomson's assistant and supervisor of the Basic Citizenship program. She had taught for nine years in elementary, high school and commercial colleges, had supervised secretarial workers, knew music, the arts and crafts and possessed Basic English teaching techniques. Thomson began to feel at home.

In the week of October 22-29 Thomson moved into the new offices of the Division of Adult Education, two blocks to the rear of the Legislature. He was glad to be far away from that "pompous edifice which still smells...of Liberal party machine bureaucracy." And for the first time Thomson encountered some opposition. After meeting with Fred Hansen and Fred C. Williams of the Saskatchewan Commonwealth, a CCF party newspaper, Thomson was shocked. "Fred Williams," Thomson told his Roslyn Road friends, came out with such a narrow right-wing CCF line that I found myself arguing back rather forcefully. In spite of myself I seemed to be forced into the position of defending the Communist Party though I kept trying to raise the thing to a broader and more objective level. However I hear the upshot is that Fred Williams has written me off as a hardened fellow traveller. These bitter tight-lipped socialists are a terrific liability."

Later, after he had left the Division, Thomson would identify his candour in the early days as a tactical error.

And, unknown to Thomson, only two weeks earlier Tommy Douglas had received his first of many letters from outside the province casting doubts on Thomson's political acceptability. H.M. Caiserman, General
Secretary of the Canadian Jewish Congress, wrote confidentially to Douglas on October 12. He had been encouraged to do so by Dr. J. Stanley Allen, a leading CCF partisan in Quebec.

Travelling through Western Canada last year I heard a few addresses by Professor Watson Thomson, to various groups. The impression he gave me was that he is communistically inclined, although otherwise a very fine gentleman and splendid educationist. I learned from Dr. Allen that Watson Thomson is now the head of Adult Education in the Saskatchewan University. This fact gave me a restless feeling.

I take it for granted that your Government will not place a man with such tendencies, to head the adult education of the Province. I am therefore writing to ascertain whether this phase of Professor Thomson's personality is correct, or if my impression is absolutely erroneous.

Five days later Douglas replied, displaying the wit for which he is famous.

I have known Professor Thomson and his work for a long time and I feel certain he is not a member of the Communist Party. It is true that he holds very advanced views along certain lines, but the Government feels that he is capable of doing a very constructive piece of work here and I would think his book, 'I Accuse,' which has done so much to arouse feeling here in the West on behalf of Jewish refugees, ought to make him acceptable to all lovers of liberty.18

Easily the most significant, and as it would turn out, controversial development took place at the end of October. Watson Thomson prepared a confidential brief on "Adult Education Theory and Policy" for the cabinet. He hoped this document would be used as a "basis for some personal and confidential discussion directly with the cabinet or perhaps even with the whole party caucus."19 This brief outlined what Thomson felt was the only possible attitude to adult education for a socialist government to adopt. He thought it of the "utmost import" that members of the Saskatchewan government should clearly understand
the educational theory and principles of the new Adult Education division, both in itself and in relation to their own social philosophy. This was particularly so, Thomson contended, because the field of education was regarded by the opponents of the present government as "exceptionally vulnerable." Accusations of "propaganda" and "totalitarianism" would be levelled on the slightest provocation. Even the progressively minded were liable to be placed on the defensive—a weakness the progressive cause could ill afford. This weakness, he thought, was rooted in an insufficient understanding of the fallacies of the education theory on which such accusations were based.20

Thomson rejected the "liberal" theory of education. Under this theory, he wrote, education was impartial, objective and neutral on all social questions. It had "nothing to do with action, with decisions we make in our capacity as citizens, these being private matters." Along with other spheres of life (politics, art, religion), liberal education had been aloof from, with no relation to, the community. For Thomson this whole theory had been exposed as inadequate both by philosophic and social analysis from Marx onwards. As capitalism began to break down noticeably in the period of world crisis from 1929, the liberal "neutrality in the face of fascist diabolism" betrayed a "common humanity." The challenge of our times, Thomson reiterated once again, was "total...demanding that we apply principles consistently throughout the whole society."21

For a government committed to a "planned economy," education had to be linked to the social process as a whole. The school dare not be detached from the community without loss to both. The university professor's neutrality was not a sign of objectivity, but a by-product of his
secure position in society. In short, Thomson found the liberal theory of education wanting both in theory and in practice. In theory, its individualistic conception of society comprised of atomized individuals and unrelated social parts was inadequate in an increasingly socialized world. In practice, it favoured the status quo and was an important factor in the resistance to necessary social change.²²

Thomson offered the counterpoint of a "social" theory of education to the liberal. The new theory had three axioms. First, social education neither was nor could be detached from the social process. Second, education was always, consciously or unconsciously, related to the dominant goals of that society. Although not always acknowledged, education (as well as other aspects of social living) were related to and coloured by the goals of the society. Education was never as "unbiased and neutral" as was sometimes pretended. Third, education was in a "healthy and creative" condition only when the society was moving ahead actively towards satisfying goals. A frustrated society, as Western Canada was in the years of drought and depression, had a "degenerate art" and an "escapist adult education." But when people broke through and beyond this frustration, and clarified their objectives, adult education clarified itself. Then, Thomson declared, adult education could become "primarily a matter of serving the people by supplying them with the tools of knowledge and information necessary for their forward activity towards attainment of these goals."²³

In Saskatchewan, an adult education conforming with the principles of the social theory had two primary tasks: 1) to support the people with relevant knowledge in their movement towards the new objectives for which the way has been opened up, whether it be co-operative farms, larger
school units or new public health projects; 2) to awaken the people to a sense of the "central issues of the world crisis," still unresolved, so that there would be a clear way ahead for modern society. In short, education had...continually to be related to the most significant aspects of the social process both locally and universally.24

Anticipating the attacks that would be launched against his adult education program in Saskatchewan, Thomson reinforced the case against the cry of "totalitarian" education and "propaganda." Far from imposing anything on people from above or from the outside, the social theory of education attended the wants of the "Common Man." Skirting the problem of just who would define the "wants" of the Common Man, Thomson contended that "socially minded" educators could simply trust the people. They would tell the educator what they wanted and the educator would serve them with "every best modern tool of real knowledge and accurate information.25

Thomson informed the cabinet that the primary concern for a socially-minded education was to find where the growing points were, where a sense of social purpose was breaking through towards social change, either in the community, the nation or the world. Then, one needed to foster that "activization in every possible way, feeding it the material for its creative job of re-shaping the environment." To be sure, some people would be still inert, unawakened, unconscious of their opportunity. In that case, the primary purpose of adult education was surely to present the fundamental and critical issues of the times so that people were aroused to be decisive.

Any adult education concerned with mobilizing the people, Thomson wrote, must necessarily concentrate on the central, "universal" issues
of the social crisis. The amount of energy aroused and the degree of devotion stimulated around, say, a purely local project such as a credit union, would be infinitely greater seen in the context of the "fundamental struggle of our times, namely that of fascism versus the building of a real people's society." Placing himself in sympathy with the "culture of left populism," Thomson argued that a socially conscious adult education must offer the Common Man room "for his own initiative and responsibility, helping him to see his significant place in the crisis of our times." 26

Thomson's central conviction, then, was that adult education had no business recommending specific political programs or party doctrines. But the necessary business of a socially intelligent adult education was to desire and promote the full activization of the people. A common understanding of theory and policy along these lines would not solve in advance every political difficulty which might arise. Much would necessarily depend on the wise application of these principles in the concrete activities of the Division's adult education program. But a clear understanding of the social theory of education provided a base for suitable action towards the people and the repudiation of the people's enemies. 27

Watson Thomson's brief on "Adult Education Theory and Policy" was in an "advocacy" tradition that educational historians now usually associate with George Counts. In the early 1930s Counts defied the prevailing liberal wisdom by boldly declaring that education could not escape value-inculcation. Thomson agreed with Counts. But, unlike Counts, Thomson attempted to integrate the experimentalist (Dewey, Kilpatrick) emphasis on developing critical, reflective intelligence
into his educational theory and practice. He was concerned that the process, the "how", of educational practice be democratic. He wanted to help the Common Man rebuild society according to his desires. But Thomson did, in fact, have some fairly clear ideas about the kind of society the People ought to be building. Was it a contradiction to argue that one rejected the imposition of beliefs while at the same time one wanted the People to build a communitarian socialist society? Was it a contradiction to be committed to the People in their movement towards new objectives while awakening them to the central issues of the world crisis?^{28}

It was not. The attempt to convince adults of the validity of the need for fundamental personal and social change through dialogue around particular problems and issues was and remains a legitimate educational endeavour. The radical educator, acting as educator and not as ideologue, knows that the People may not decide they want to move in the direction the educator prefers. But in the fall of 1944 Thomson believed that a significant number of Saskatchewanites had chosen to move towards a new society, rendering the liberal policy of education obsolete. The requirement to "both sides of the story" was plainly irrelevant in a society that had opted for some form of socialism. Thomson saw his job, in such a society, as facilitating a pedagogic process to help people clarify their goals and achieve their ends; his effectiveness ended when the People chose not be awakened or receded into passive or reactionary stances.

Thomson's brief was presented to the cabinet on October 30.^{29} Tommy Douglas professed to be "delighted" that Thomson had prepared the brief. He said that he would read it on his way to Ottawa and would join with
Thomson in an "informal" cabinet discussion of the whole thing as soon as he returned. The discussion never took place. There was, in fact, no explicit reaction to the brief whatever, except a vague agreement from the Minister of Education.\(^30\) The evidence, then, runs counter to Diane Lloyd's accusation that Watson Thomson thought he had a carte blanche to do what he pleased,\(^31\) and Ormand McKague's erroneous assertion that the cabinet never received the brief.\(^32\) A November 15 "Memo on Policy," written by Thomson, indicates that eleven copies of the brief had been sent to the cabinet. Perhaps, as William Harding suggests, the brief may not have been presented in the bureaucratically appropriate manner.\(^33\) That, however, seems unlikely.

Why didn't the cabinet respond officially to this crucially important policy brief? It may simply have been forgotten in the hectic first months of establishing the new government. Cabinet ministers were incredibly busy, almost overwhelmed with work. Yet one cannot escape the suspicion the cabinet may have wished not to face the implications of openly declaring their real goals. At any rate, since the cabinet did not provide any feedback, Thomson considered that they found it acceptable. The whole affair did not bode well for the future.

Despite the absence of formal approbation from the cabinet for his policy statement, Thomson pressed ahead during November and December building the infrastructure for his new Division. Besides trying to establish general policy guidelines, he attempted to clarify the relation of his office with other government departments. This was no easy task—Thomson understood that his Division was not simply one more organization to replace others. Rather, its role was as co-ordinator of other Departments' programs, a re-vitalizer of every existing organization and
the whole of community as well. Thomson had soon to confront bald political reality: some Departments or Divisions within Departments would, no doubt, see Adult Education's commitment to "the whole community" as a threat to their control of individual sectors. The Division of Physical Fitness and Recreation, for instance, felt particularly threatened. In the process, Thomson spent a lot of time ploughing through a mass of red tape. "There's a lot of it around," he confided to his comrades at Roslyn Road,

and it can be maddening. Whether the CCF government will get around to a revision of the bureaucratic system, which is as bad as I ever saw it, I don't know....In fact, it's really difficult in this job to avoid becoming a part of a machinery so large that one could never hope to keep it all really dynamized and rightly orientated. Nonetheless Douglas encouraged Thomson to continue "cutting through or ignoring red tape."

Thomson continued "talking up" adult education in the Saskatchewan community. He did finally manage to speak to a CCF caucus meeting on adult education policy. This was the closest the cabinet came to grappling with his brief. He believed that some of the cabinet—Toby Nollet, Joe Phelps, John Brockelbank and several other MLAs—really meant business. "They were keenly interested," Thomson observed, "and I think I had them coming my way very nicely....Anyway, I think it was quite an important success." Thomson talked with two Ukrainian MLAs. From them he learned something of the depth of their national feeling and the "iniquitous power of a reactionary priesthood in the Greek Catholic Church." Meanwhile, in order to keep in touch with what he considered one of the finest groups in the province, Thomson addressed several meetings of Wheat Pool delegates and dropped in when he could to a local Wheat Pool Farm Radio Forum. Thomson sensed that the "more alert" people
of the province were "extremely curious," about adult education. Although the Saskatchewan milieu did not, in his opinion, generate "intellectual acumen," it did generate a kind of "moral earnestness and human warmth."

During November and December Thomson shared his hopes for adult education with the Saskatchewan people. This was the old publicist at his best. In early November he published several articles in the Regina Leader-Post, Moose Jaw Herald, Prince Albert Daily Herald and the Saskatoon Phoenix-Star. He gave a series of four radio broadcasts on the theme of "Power to the People" in December. The Division of Adult Education, he told his audience, wanted to convey the kind of knowledge which would help the plain people of every race and creed to take hold of this old world, confidently knowing that they could and must reshape it. The knowledge the Adult Education Division wanted to convey was not knowledge for its own sake, but for the sake of change nearer to the heart's desire of ordinary, decent people everywhere. Not solitary education for private ends: but public education for social ends; for building, co-operatively, a new and more truly human society. The average man, Thomson believed, did not want to study the history of medicine in the abstract. But when he began to ask why he could not have a decent hospital in his own district and to get together with his neighbours to figure out some way of getting one, he was ready to learn some history of medicine, as well as some social and economic history, of Western Canada. "Education for the People—all the People. Education for action—co-operative, responsible action. Education for change—inevitable and desirable change. Power to the People." Thus Thomson ended his first broadcast.
In subsequent broadcasts people heard Thomson challenge them to be "scientific and to be co-operative." In these two achievements, he said, lay the hope of building the kind of world which can remove some of the bitterness from the present agonies of war and justify its awful sacrifices. Aware that the trend in agriculture was towards increasingly mechanized, capital-intensive, large-scale units, Thomson challenged farmers to bring their isolated farms together into single co-operative communities. He was convinced that the people could take the "raw material" of a prairie village and create a rich community full of life and interest. But one could not do that without co-operation, without study and co-operative action. "No study without consequent action. No action without previous study": this was the banner of the Department's Study-Action program.

Thomson urged Saskatchewanites to see action in their local communities as just one expression of the "whole new social pattern." Voluntary co-operation, voluntary socialization of life in all its aspects—create a new pattern not forced down from above but worked out by ordinary people from below. "A new world, built from below by the Common Man with the guidance of science and his own trusted leaders—that was the only answer to war and fascism..." Thomson's goal, then, was nothing less than the creation of the "activated citizen": generally cognizant of the scientific and technological developments of the day, aware of the main issues of the world crisis, committed to playing an intelligent role in the constructive life of the community. 37

By mid-December Thomson and his staff had prepared a detailed "Provincial Study-Action Program" and submitted it to the cabinet for discussion. Adult education did not rank very high on the list of cabinet
priorities. Since July 1944, the cabinet had been busy preparing a "tremendous amount" of new legislation (collective bargaining; labour legislation; socialized health services; free hospitalization and care for the mentally incompetent; free medical care for old age pensioners; co-operative farms for veterans; larger school units; increased minimum salaries for teachers; crop failure legislation; rural electrification; legislation preventing farm eviction and a bill to allow the government to enter the insurance business). The government also created three new departments: Social Welfare, Labour and Co-operatives. The important Farm Security and Trade Union acts of 1944 were passed in the House. The cabinet had little energy to reflect critically on the ambitious plans of the fledging Division of Adult Education.38

In principle and structure, the Study-Action program was to be decentralized. Resident field workers, called District Supervisors, were to be placed in district centres such as Yorkton. They would correlate their work with that of other government Departments and agencies such as the Wheat Pool, University Extension Department and the NFB. The Division of Adult Education eventually hoped to have a full-time Study-Action leader for every Large Unit of Administration in the province. The District Supervisor was to establish a nuclear community centre program, to start discussion and study-groups on basic economic and political issues, encourage all forms of citizen activization (credit unions, community centres, co-operative farms, study clubs, community forums), promote study and discussion of projects in Public Health, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Social Welfare and Co-operatives, organize periodic three day adult schools, act as district librarian and take charge of film-distribution, replacing the existing NFB circuit
organization. In the urban areas, labour education classes for unionists would begin in Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw.

Study-Action was underway in Saskatchewan! Nevertheless, immediately after returning from Winnipeg on December 12 or 13, where he had been addressing a PSSA Week-end forum, Thomson had the nagging fear that there was "resistance of several kinds" to the program. He was beginning to see "how every characteristic vice and weakness of social democracy is represented right here in this government." One week later some of this gloom lifted. The cabinet had approved the "Provincial Study-Action Program" plan and granted $100,000 for its budget.

Obviously elated at receiving this stamp of approval, Thomson wrote to Douglas on January 1, 1945 one week after Eugene Forsey advised Douglas to watch Thomson closely. Thomson told Douglas just how good it felt for a fellow like him—who after experiencing the vicissitudes of teaching in the colonial world, instructing unemployed youth in the London slums, editing a radical weekly in London until health gave out and working as an adult educator in Alberta and Manitoba—to be working in Saskatchewan. "It's the best yet," Thomson told Douglas,

chiefly I think because, for the first time, I can feel identified with the basic goals of the people in authority and can have full confidence in their moral integrity. Now when I learn they are going to back our adult education (except that we're banning that phrase, as far as we can, in favour of 'study-action') heartily and to the tune of $100,000 next financial year—well, I just feel I'm one of the luckiest people on the continent.

Thomson raised several strategic considerations with Douglas. What should the study-action program emphasize? What should be the content of the central drive? How safe and disarming should the Department play? And how challenging? "You see," Thomson pointed out,
I'm interested in the whole gamut from the microscopic 'Kingdom of God on Earth' in the establishment of genuine fellowship and 'being members one of another' as between a handful of people; to the total radical change into a society at all points socialized and 'of the People.' Co-operatives are relevant, community-centres are relevant, even just getting a group of neighbours to sit down regularly together as a study-group is relevant. But so also is the challenge to monopolies and vested interests and racialism and irrationalism (either in politics or in religion). Only there's more dynamite in some of these things than in others. The question is: How is the battle going to develop? And what is the wisest and most effective thing to do in the light of our understanding as to the stage of development of the battle we're at right now?\(^{40}\)

Thomson insisted that the Division's activities had to be "clearly and explicitly" co-ordinated with the general political policies and strategies of the government. All government publicity, public information and much of adult education should, Thomson thought, be an integrated system directed by someone who had continuous access to the government. Why did Thomson raise this question with Douglas? Perhaps he knew that the bolder his Division became, the louder the political opposition would scream that Adult Education was nothing but a conduit for CCF propaganda. Could the Division count on full government support?

With a substantial budget approved, Thomson could hire the staff needed to launch Study-Action throughout the province. William M. Harding was appointed on January 16 as Director of Study-Action and Administrative Supervisor. A man of keen intellect and exceptional organizing skills, Harding's task was pivotal: he would organize efficient record-keeping and community centres and the projected Citizens' Conferences. Harding moved quickly, fleshing out the details of the proposed Study-Action plan. In mid-February he was joined by Eddie Parker, seconded from the Department of Physical Fitness and Recreation to work
as promotional Director. A young man of scintillating imagination highly regarded by David Lewis, Parker joined Thomson, Harding and Hugh Harvey of the Department of Co-operatives, to form the visionary centre of the Division. Those men really believed that Saskatchewan could be turned "upside down."

Lloyd Williams joined the staff on January 15 as Production Editor. An experienced writer who had worked on several prairie newspapers, Williams' task was the preparation of the Study-Action outlines. The Division projected a new vision of publication. Materials would be tailored specifically to community needs identified by field workers. Two new District Supervisors were added to the staff. On January 29 David Fast, a methodical if unexceptional man, assumed responsibility for promoting adult education in the Mennonite areas of the province. In the spring he was joined by C. Hugh Logie, an experienced educator. His main task was to assist Grete LeBeau in developing a co-operative housing and living experiment with veterans and their families in Saskatoon. On May 30 Al Johnson was appointed as Supervisor of the Lighted School program and enthusiastically joined the Thomson team. Irene Hutton, an experienced rural educator, was hired to assist in developing the Lighted School program.

In early November Thomson had sent out the first questionnaire to a number of community organizations. Through these "amateur" sociological surveys, Thomson hoped to gain ammunition for future social action projects and keep the CCF on the side of the people. By December 18, the Division had received two hundred replies. With the able Harding overseeing the Study-Action program and District Supervisors ready to go into action, the Department began to proceed systematically to establish
more starting and growing points, study-action groups and community councils. A "starting point," as Harding conceived it, consisted of one individual; a "growing point" of four individuals interested in a common "problem" or "issue." When ten "units" cohered around a common theme, a study-group was created.

The visionaries in the Division of Adult Education envisaged nothing less than a "comprehensive adult education campaign for social progress through which five hundred thousand men and women of the province are being encouraged to become active citizens and fully-rounded personalities." By May 1 the central Study-Action office hoped to circularize all existing contacts. By October 1, when the Study-Action outlines would be ready, the Division of Adult Education wanted to have a thousand starting-points and three hundred growing points. Looking into the future, Harding and Thomson imagined that by "1960, fifteen years after the start of this campaign and ten years after its full-speed capacity is realized, Saskatchewan should be able to boast it is truly possessed by its people..." "Half-a-million active builders of a new and better Saskatchewan. Half-a-million intelligent citizens of the world. Nothing less," Thomson exuded in a press release at the end of January, "is the goal of the Saskatchewan Study-Action program..." Three central issues were clear to Thomson and Harding. First, they understood that the Saskatchewan government had to demonstrate to the farmers, workers and plain people that a "provincial socialist government" could effect tangible material improvements. Secondly, they knew that the mass of people must be mobilized and activized as rapidly as possible. Only by participating in the processes of social change would people realize that "socialism is democracy extended" and the bogey of
"socialism as mere bureaucracy and regimentation" ludicrous. Thirdly, Thomson and Harding believed that the "political consciousness" of the mass of people must be so deepened that the foundations of prairie radicalism became unshakable.

The first task was one of legislation and administration, the second and third matters ones in which adult education could play an important role. Study-Action had been designed to meet the second need—mobilizing and activizing the people at the grassroots. It was essential, the Study-Action strategists contended, to begin with a broad approach to "communities as communities," serving them in some appreciable way regarding their "felt needs." Study-Action, Citizens' Conferences and the Lighted School all aimed at serving communities in an "above-party spirit." Yet, these latter activities were not quite "above-party": Harding and Thomson really wanted to create an organizational vehicle for a more directly "political" or "socialist" type of education. This goal was not announced publicly for obvious reasons.

It was educationally sound, they thought, to attempt to lead study-action groups from local and immediate concerns to the affairs of the province, nation and eventually the world. As one did so, the issues discussed would inevitably take on a more "political" character and groups would look to the Division of Adult Education for guidance. And that guidance could be then given on the basis of confidence earned through non-partisan services in the community-centred interests. Developing this political consciousness, though the most crucial task as far as the progressive movement was concerned, was the most difficult. If too abrupt and outspoken an approach were taken to current political and economic issues, one would be "reduced to the futile role of preaching to
the converted."³⁴⁴

During the month of February Thomson's main preoccupation had been with the training course for the field workers and staff. "It has been a pretty stiff course," he wrote to Roslyn Road, "for all concerned yet extremely worthwhile. As far as I know it is the first time there has been any attempt at professional training for adult educationists in Canada."³⁴⁵ Morning sessions were taken up with educational theory and the practical problems facing field workers (problems of New Canadians and returned veterans, for example). In the afternoons representatives from various government ministries addressed the students. In the evenings field workers and staff saw demonstrations of film-forums, watched films critically, participated in panel discussions and heard more talks from government officials and community organizations. It was an exhaustingly thorough and exciting three weeks. And the excitement of the training school was, no doubt, intensified several days after the sessions ended. The staff opened the Financial Post of February 24 and saw this headline—"Saskatchewan CCF Adult Adult Education Program May Emerge as Straight Socialist Propaganda."

Under this provocative headline, Gordon L. Smith malevolently linked Saskatchewan Study-Action with undemocratic education. "Nothing like it has ever been broached in Canada," he exclaimed. "One can only point to Germany or Russia or pre-war Italy for such a deliberately planned scheme of a mass education, perhaps more correctly described as mass propaganda." The anonymous author of the regular news column, "The Nation's Business," informed Canadians that if they wanted to know what would happen on the national level if the CCF came to power, they should look at Saskatchewan. "The evidence strongly indicates that they are in for a mass propaganda
drive of the Goebbels' variety, in which they are to be given that special set of facts and that special interpretation of those facts which suits the government in power." The author was quick to add that Watson Thomson was an exponent of "socialist and communist blueprints for utopia" who readily admitted that he felt "no obligation in educational work to present more than one side of the question."46

This sort of "socialist-bashing" was, of course, nothing too new to CCF and farm movement activists. Accusations that CCF was synonymous with totalitarianism and regimentation had been hurled at Douglas throughout the bitter 1944 campaign. When farmers were establishing co-operatives in the 1920s, they were often labelled "communist." What was new was the intensity of the anti-socialist propaganda engineered by people like B.A. Trestrail and supported by many business organizations. Through the spring of 1945 until the June federal election the CCF would experience its most vicious onslaught in its twelve-year history. After the debacle of June 1945, it did not much matter. David Lewis and Gerald Caplan think that, despite the chicanery of the anti-socialist propaganda, the Trestrails and Smiths succeeded in undermining CCF support. Particularly in Ontario, less so in Saskatchewan where populist and co-operative traditions inoculated a good segment of the population against the diatribes of the bourgeois press. For his part, Watson Thomson thought the Financial Post comments were "pretty damning." But he still trusted that "all publicity was good publicity."47

Thomson well knew that the Saskatchewan Adult Education Study-Action program would be particularly vulnerable through the months of March, April and May as the District Supervisors established contacts, growing points and study-action groups in various communities. Sensing just how
vulnerable his new Division was, Thomson decided to prepare a monthly newsletter. His purpose was to "try and bring the field and the head office and the world in general into some common perspective." At the stage they were at, Thomson told his staff, it was important that everybody had a clear picture of their particular obligations. Everything was foundational—the rest of 1945 would be in many ways the most creative because everything they did would be a novelty. Ed Parker's five-year plan, Lloyd Williams' study outlines, Bill Harding's week-end conferences and record system, Florence Gaynor's labour class techniques and the effects of the field workers.

Because they had made their intentions public but would not for some time have any considerable body of support, Thomson pointed out that the Division was "inevitably vulnerable."

Nothing would worry me more than to feel that you would allow yourselves to be disturbed by manifestations of this kind, or, worse still, were becoming embroiled in direct attack on such opposition. The motto is: 'Hold tight. Go ahead with your work quietly. Shrug off verbal opposition with a smile.'

Although they were living in a "disturbed and nervous" period, Thomson counselled his staff, there was nothing surer than this—"new life, strong and confident and creative, is in the People." Their job was merely to "create the opportunity" for the people to take over.

"April 1945," Thomson wrote in his second newsletter, "is a great and terrible month to have lived through. To try to evaluate such mighty events is to risk exposing one's own inadequacy." President Roosevelt had died. How many newspapers, Thomson asked, gave adequate treatment to Roosevelt's death or to the union of the American and Red armies, or to the Battle of Berlin, or to the story of the prison camps..."
of Germany? Ed Parker had been stimulating Thomson's thinking—each of these events deserved front page treatment "unlike any front page ever before." Could the Division find a way to dramatize world events for the people of Saskatchewan? Roosevelt's death troubled Thomson deeply. He wondered how far, without the "practiced restraining hand" of Roosevelt, the anti-social, centrifugal forces in American society could be prevented from going off in a great post-war rampage of "throwing off wartime controls and indulging in all kinds of 'American Century' irresponsibilities."

With Roosevelt gone, responsibility for human progress in the critical tests of the next few years rested more decisively than ever with the People. The lesson for Study-Action in Saskatchewan was transparent. Thomson observed: in a world deprived of Roosevelt, the need for the "mobilization of the people" was more "obvious and important" than ever. Thomson advised his workers to never forget their duty to build a "decent and reasonable understanding of the Soviet Union" in the minds of the Saskatchewan people. The most subversive notion current in the world today, Thomson maintained, was that war between the Soviet Union and the capitalist democracies was inevitable. Madness lay in that direction. Adult education in Saskatchewan had to play a catalytic role in creating a "socialist" general will. Once the general will was transformed, new institutions would inevitably follow. "We began our program with community-centred Study-Action because," Thomson reminded his workers, "we can't believe in any kind of social responsibility which isn't manifest in the affairs right under our nose. Democracy begins at home, but only begins." 49

April saw the beginnings of positive responses in the field. The
work of Art Wirick and David Fast confirmed the Division's opinion that although apathy was still to be found, people were stirring to new interest. Ed Parker had visited the Landis-Biggar area and discovered that their central interest was co-operative farming. In this case, Thomson observed, the Department's job began with the "happiest of all stages", namely with helping a "grand bunch of people" to get what they wanted by giving them something "we've got which they know they want."

A week-end conference was in the offing. This Citizens' Conference on co-operative farming would be part of the preparation for a whole winter's study and research and discussion of the entire community. Thomson told his staff that other Citizens' Conferences were also being considered. Through the co-operation of Major McKay, head of the Rehabilitation Division of the Department of Reconstruction, Adult Education was already committed to a short week-end, or two-day conference on "How a Community should prepare to receive its veterans" at Melfort and Prince Albert, with others to follow.50

If Thomson thought he lived in a "dangerous, fascinating, grandly terrible" world that was "suddenly darker and more uncertain" than the pre-Roosevelt era, events on the national and provincial scene were equally ominous for him personally. In early March the original budget of $100,000 had been reduced to $60,000, possibly in part due to the squabble over the seed grain issue. Without any warning, in early April, that there had been any change in understanding between Thomson and the Premier, Lloyd told Thomson that no provincial grant would be made to the PSSA. "Lloyd," Thomson wrote to Roslyn Road, "said that the Premier himself had made the decision on the grounds that it was too politically dangerous." Thomson was incensed: this seemed to be a unilateral repudia-
tion of the original agreement which brought him to the province. "But this," Thomson continued, "is not the only instance I know of in which Douglas has acted on impulse and then backed away from the consequences of his action. He is capable of being impulsive and inconsistent to the point of irresponsibility." Thomson told Lloyd how serious the consequences of such a decision were. Evidently impressed, Lloyd told Thomson he would re-open the question with the Premier.\textsuperscript{52} It is at this point that the ground begins to slide out from under Thomson.

Lloyd informed Thomson that the decision not to support financially the PSSA had been made around the end of March. That could mean, Thomson thought at the time, that the decision was related to the Richards-Johnson rebellion in the Manitoba CCF and Watson Thomson's alleged association with that. Thomson had, however, been "officially exonerated."\textsuperscript{53} What had been happening behind Thomson's back? In early March S.J. Farmer, the leader of the Manitoba CCF, informed Douglas that he had talked with Stanley Knowles about Thomson. At Knowles' suggestion, Farmer sent a magazine, \textit{The Record} (March 1945), which had reprinted Thomson's article "Not Bread Alone." Farmer had underlined, as had Forsey, the lines--"And labour must unite. The gap between the communists and social democrats must be sealed to keep fascism from squeezing up between them (as it did in Europe)." Thomson had gone on to reject any "United Front" form of unity. But that did not seem to matter. On March 8 Douglas sent the booklet to Woodrow Lloyd.\textsuperscript{54} On March 19 the national executive of the CCF and caucus (F.R. Scott, M.J. Coldwell, Angus MacInnis, F.R. Laroche, D. Lewis, A.M. Nicholson, S. Knowles, P.E. Wright, C. Gillis, G. Grube, O. Chartrand, J. Noseworthy, G. Castleden and W. Bryce) had met in Ottawa. At that meeting Stanley
Knowles gave a "full report of the background of the trouble with Richards and Johnson, analyzing the situation as it developed from day to day."\(^{55}\) Knowles probably raised the question of Thomson's role in the Manitoba imbroglio.

In fact, only a week after the national executive and caucus meeting national CCF leader M.J. Coldwell informed Douglas, his protegé, that on March 12, while in Montreal addressing a public meeting, he saw a bulletin board announcing that Thomson was to speak under the auspices of an organization for inter-racial co-operation. "We ran into a man," Coldwell told Douglas,

whom I did not know, who was busy preparing for the meeting, and I was told that he was one of the very active communists, and that while the committee was undoubtedly set up by Jewish people, the communists are boring from within. I hope that Watson Thompson [sic] is not playing ball with these people. He left pretty strong communist followers in Manitoba, and while I have always had high regard for the broadcasting work that he did, I think this should be carefully watched because, while he may not be a communist—or even a fellow traveller—the Communist Party is out to wreck the CCF, and anyone who lends themselves to their efforts in any particular, ought not to be in a position of trust anywhere in our movement."\(^{56}\)

The day after receiving Coldwell's letter P.N.R. Morrison, president of the Calgary CCF constituency, told Douglas that he had it on very good authority that this Barry [sic] Richards incident was either engineered by or the result of contact with Watson Thompson [sic]. These people and Thomson lived together in the same barracks in Winnipeg during the winter of 1944. My information comes from another inmate."\(^{57}\)

That other "inmate" unnamed by Morrison, was Cleo Mowers, now editing a Calgary newspaper, who had left Roslyn Road after a dispute over his pacifist convictions. And, Morrison added, "we had Thompson [sic] here for a meeting and his line of talk was certainly very comforting to the
Five days later, on April 2, Knowles wrote to Douglas to ensure that, if Stanley Rands applied for a job in Saskatchewan, that he should not be hired. "I cannot make my warning too strong. It is very clear that we have a real struggle on our hands with these so-and-sos." 58

Knowles' letter was followed just three days later by one from Dr. J. Stanley Allen, president of the Quebec CCF party, to Woodrow Lloyd. Allen pointed out that R.E. Gordon, editor of Today magazine, had been associated with Thomson on the same speaking platform. "I must admit," he said, "that at a meeting like this one can be very easily fooled unless he knows the individuals concerned, but for what it is worth I could call this to your attention." 59

How did Tommy Douglas respond to all of this? The only piece of direct evidence is found in a letter he wrote to M.J. Coldwell on March 31. Douglas told Coldwell that he had had "considerable warnings from various parts of the country, outlining the fears of some of our people. Both Woodrow Lloyd and myself are keeping that branch under careful supervision." 60 The suspicion that Thomson was not politically trustworthy, rejected out-of-hand by Douglas in the fall of 1944, seemed to be growing. The CCF was under assault from anti-socialist propagandists, the LPP was indeed seeking to disrupt the CCF in the labour movement and in political constituencies. 61 The tide, once flowing in the CCF's direction, was receding. Saskatchewan had to be protected. The CCF national leadership, threatened from outside and from within, was closing its ranks, drawing boundaries between who was in and who was out.

Watson Thomson did not seem to "fit" in the CCF camp. His call for
unity among progressive people was misinterpreted, his severe criticism of the Communists and commitment to building a grass-roots people's movement, themes evident in his PSSA lectures, went unheeded. The letters to Douglas and Lloyd, sadly but understandably, utilize the "character assassination" techniques we have come to associate with McCarthyism. No sound empirical evidence was provided to support any of the accusations. His writings were not read closely, he was "guilty by association" (with Gordon, Richards). Nor did the CCF national leadership, particularly Knowles and Coldwell, understand the Roslyn Road experiment. What "communist" followers did he leave behind? Nonetheless, Thomson's CCF critics, all of whom were on the "right-wing" of the party and Fabian in orientation, were correct on one issue: Watson Thomson was not a good and loyal CCF man.

Everything that the Division of Adult Education and Watson Thomson would do in the ensuing months would be clouded with political suspicion. During May and June Thomson, who was unaware of the letters, had his first "serious feelings that something was amiss." Only later, though, would he be able to see that the criticism that he was a communist because he talked of left-wing unity was the handwriting on the wall. The failure to gain full discussion of his policy paper on adult education was now looming large, becoming increasingly politically significant. Had the cabinet some doubts about the Study-Action program? The budget had been drastically reduced and PSSA support withdrawn. Were they a little uneasy that Thomson, through the Study-Action program, might actually succeed in mobilizing the people and gain support amongst the left-wing of the party? If he did, could the party control this grass-roots momentum?
On June 1 Thomson assessed the global and provincial situation. The world had celebrated V-E day on May 8, 1945. Once again, as in the tortured days of the outbreak of World War II, Thomson agonized over world events. Poland, Argentina, Trieste and Now Syria had all flared up as either diplomatic or military danger spots. The tragedy, from Thomson's perspective, was that all of these danger areas involved the Big Four who could not take any direct action. Thomson was more convinced than ever that Saskatchewan "desperately needed a vehicle through which they could act to "give some guidance to the thinking of people in regard to some of these desperately urgent matters of global import." Thomson told his staff that Saskatchewan needed a thousand groups, confident in the Division, who were active in their own communities and open to the broader global issues. Then they could begin to show effectively that Soviet totalitarianism was not the same as fascist totalitarianism. They could also demonstrate that freedom was an immoral luxury when men and women lacked the basic necessities. In the summer Parker and Thomson would gain government consent to conduct an experiment, called the "Living Newspaper," to demonstrate something of the emancipatory power of the media.

On the home front, Thomson was pleased that two Citizens' Conferences on "Community meets Veteran, one at Wynyard (June 5-6), the other at Melfort (June 26-27), were scheduled. "We are getting pretty marvelous co-operation from the other departments concerned in these plans and from the communities themselves. Both in Wynyard and in Melfort, there are some keen veterans all ready to take an active part in these conferences..." Lloyd Williams' first study-outline, "Community meets Veteran," was in galley-proof, and Irene Leman and Ed Parker were working
on preparing a "new kind of visual aid", two film-strips, one on Rehabilitation of Veterans, the other on Co-operative Farming. Moreover, the Division had received four hundred replies from individuals in Saskatchewan, large numbers of letters from people all over the continent, including one from the High Commissioner of New Zealand and E.A. Corbett, who heartily approved of Study-Action in Saskatchewan. In the Landis area events were progressing towards the first Citizens' Conference on co-operative farming. "Let's remind ourselves," Thomson said, "that these foundations should and must be laid with most devoted care, not because we have personal careers to further, or because a new government division has to justify its existence, but because Study-Action is the very spine and marrow of the only kind of democracy which can lead humanity into the abundant future..."

Would most of Saskatchewan recognize the present "tide in the affairs of men"—and take this new post-war opportunity to reconstruct themselves by the common co-operative effort of all classes and nationalities?

The June federal election left Saskatchewan as the only "progressive" spot in the country. From Thomson's perspective, conveyed in his fourth newsletter, Canada had now entered the first difficult phase of post-war reconstruction. Abroad, the Allied Control Commission had met in Berlin, under a thick blanket of censorship, and the San Francisco Conference had laboriously laid a "rather tenuous and uncertain" foundation for peace. Thomson thought the general election had provided a "rough and ready" measure of how far Study-Action had yet to go in activizing the Common Man. Any objective student of society would agree, Thomson argued, that a victory for the Canadian Liberal Party was a "victory for laissez-faire modified by paternalistic social legisla-

tion." It was not a victory for "active, participating citizenship, for
government of the people, by the people." The results of the general election also demonstrated for Thomson that Saskatchewan was "away ahead of the rest of the Canada." In contrast to other regions of the country, Saskatchewan was open to the idea of radical social change. "The eyes of the whole continent," he wrote, "and more are upon us—'progressive' people watching us with envy and guardians of the status quo with a sharpened hostility. Clearly, we are a vanguard..." Saskatchewan may well have been a vanguard, relatively speaking, but the shattering defeat of the national CCF was pressuring the Saskatchewan CCF in the direction of becoming a moderate, safe, social democratic party committed to cautious rule by cabinet. Woodrow Lloyd's response to Watson Thomson's fourth newsletter provides some indication of this rightward shift. "It would seem to me," Lloyd told Thomson, "that there are some statements...which would be better not made. I refer, of course, to those statements which particularly refer to the recent general election, direct references to the CCF as a political movement, and also the second last paragraph on page two." Advising "considerable discretion," Lloyd felt that Thomson's commentary on the Landis conference, where Thomson had spoken critically but favourably of the Soviet experiment in collective farming and had observed that the co-operative farm was Saskatchewan's chance to create their "social revolution voluntarily and without violence", was politically unacceptable rhetoric.

Lloyd was becoming increasingly edgy about identifying the CCF as a militant movement for social change. He seemed to be retreating from his earlier commitment to counteract citizen "torpidity." But it is difficult to know, in the summer of 1945, whether Lloyd agreed with the
social theory of education set out in Thomson’s brief. He probably had reservations. In fact, Woodrow had discarded one of the central concerns of CCF educational policy makers, to restructure the curriculum along socialist lines, in favour of a safe policy of establishing Larger Units of Administration and providing better working conditions for teachers. Carlyle King’s radical policy statement, received with a good deal of enthusiasm at a conference of CCF MLAs in late 1941 and distributed in Saskatchewan in 1942–1944, simply disappeared after the 1944 election. Apparently Lloyd arrived one day at the Provincial Office and removed all the copies. “This was a symbolic act,” claims King, “for Mr. Lloyd, who was no socialist, was determined that no radical change in the school program should take place under his administration.”67 It is true, as Richards and Pratt suggest, that by 1948 the CCF would have fully surrendered to a "seige mentality," but the seeds of this mentality were present in the first months of the Saskatchewan regime.68

Thomson certainly did not think that now was the time for the Saskatchewan CCF to play it safe or retreat from the opposition; the latter tendency, Seymour Lipset has observed, was quite characteristic of social democracy.69 Shortly after the federal election of June 11, a worried Thomson presented his concerns confidentially to the government in the form of a three-page document, "Adult Education in Saskatchewan: The Next Three Years." Reminding the government of the Division’s commitment to activize the people in an "above-party spirit," Thomson then turned to the future. Given the present tempo of provincial, national and global events, the government ran the risk of saying in three years’ time—"too little and too late." The extension and consolidation of the widespread goodwill and citizen confidence in the
Division's usefulness and integrity, now being built through Study-Action, Citizens' Conferences and, soon, the Lighted School, were "immediate and urgent" necessities. The plan was there, techniques known, a small but devoted staff at work as individuals and as a team. But opportunities far surpassed achievement because the Department needed more staff, research, writing and fieldwork.

The time was ripe. The people, as the Division was finding them, were "disposed toward change and ready to take a more dynamic role in affairs." Returned veterans, with their "restless demands," could be directed toward social change. To transform the interest generated around the Citizens' Conference on co-operative farming into an "active determination" required time and money. And, Thomson observed, this example also illustrated the way in which adult education could "stimulate not merely more social and progressive attitudes of mind but also the processes of actually creating a socialist environment." The Landis study-action groups on co-operative farming and the Regina-Saskatoon study-action groups on Co-operative housing, the latter directed by Hugh Harvey, Grete LeBeau and Hugh Logie, were cases in point. Summing up, Thomson said that a $60,000 budget would not give adequate attention to the thousand starting-points. The difference between a $60,000 budget and a $200,000 budget was a difference between laying the foundations of a sound but inconspicuous program of adult education, more or less innocuous as an instrument of radical social change and, in the other case, starting a dynamic popular movement, with challenging social and political implications and consequences, making a palpable impact on the mind and life of this province.70

Indeed, Watson Thomson confronted the Saskatchewan government with its options—innocuous or dynamic adult education. By the end of June
1945 the question was: did the Douglas government want to support a dynamic popular movement? And, if they did, did they really want Watson Thomson to direct it?
FOOTNOTES


4. Wright, Saskatchewan, p. 254.


8. Richards and Pratt, Prairie Capitalism, p. 139.


10. Watson Thomson Resignation Letter, December 31, 1945, RRP.


12. See C.H. Higginbotham, Off the Record: The CCF in Saskatchewan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), pp. 69ff, for a brief biographical sketch of Woodrow S. Lloyd. Diane Lloyd has written a full length biography of her father, Woodrow: A Biography of W.S. Lloyd (No place: Woodrow Lloyd Memorial Fund, 1979). For a sample of Carlyle King's educational thought, see "Saskatchewan CCF Policy on Education" (Confidential Memorandum Prepared for Delegates to National Conference on
Provincial Policy, to be held at Regina on December 30 and 31, 1943 and January 1 and 2, 1944), and "Education for a People's Peace," both in CCF Papers, PAC, vol. 152, file Education 1942-45. King also published an important article, based on his policy brief, entitled "Education for Dynamic Democracy," FCSO Papers, United Church Archives, Emmanuel College, box 1.


15. Watson Thomson to W.S. Lloyd, September 3, 1944, Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Adult Education Papers, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Saskatoon (hereafter AED), file 4, departmental correspondence: (a) Minister; W.S. Lloyd to Watson Thomson, September 9, 1944, WSLP, Adult Education, 1944 box.

16. Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, October 22, 1944, RRP.

17. Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, October 29, 1944, RRP.

18. H. Caiserman to T.C. Douglas, October 12, 1944; T.C. Douglas to H. Caiserman, October 17, 1944, TCDP.

19. Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, October 29, 1944, RRP; Watson Thomson to W.S. Lloyd, October 30, 1944, WSLP, Adult Education, 1944 box.


22. AETP, p. 2.

23. AETP, p. 2.

24. AETP, p. 3.

25. AETP, p. 3.
26 AETP, p. 4.

27 AETP, p. 4.


29 Watson Thomson to W.S. Lloyd, October 30, 1944, WSLP, Adult Education, 1944 box.

30 Watson Thomson Resignation Letter, December 31, 1945, RRP.

31 Lloyd, Woodrow, pp. 76-77.


33 W.M. Harding to M. Welton, July 1981.

34 Dr. J.B. Kirkpatrick, Director of Physical Fitness, Division of Physical Fitness and Recreation, wrote to Ed Parker on March 26, 1945, informing him that the "Division of Adult Education should concentrate on placing accurate and available information in the hands of existing organizations or groups, at the request of the said groups." On April 6 Thomson told Lloyd that Dr. Kirkpatrick's "constructive suggestion" proposes a return to a conception of adult education which I repudiated years ago and which every modern artist, librarian, or adult educationist knows to be socially irresponsible as well as defeatist" (WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (January-June) box.

35 Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, November 13, 1944, RRP.

36 Thomson to Roslyn Road, November 13, 1944, RRP.

37 Texts of "Power to the People"--I to IV, WMHP, basic literature, book 1.

Thomson to Roslyn Road, December 17, 1944, RRP.

Watson Thomson to T.C. Douglas, January 1, 1945, TCDP.

"Outline of the Proposed Study-Action Plan": confidential, not for general release, WMHP, basic literature, book 1.

"Outline of the Proposed Study-Action Plan."


Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, February 27, 1945, RRP.


Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, February 27, 1945, RRP. For a discussion of the anti-socialist propaganda campaign, see Gerald Caplan, The Dilemma of Canadian Socialism (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), chs. 8-12, and David Lewis, The Good Fight, ch. 14, "CCF Bashing."


Monthly Newsletter 2 (May 2, 1945), WMHP, basic literature, book 1.

Monthly Newsletter 2, WMHP, basic literature, book 1.

Monthly Newsletter 2, WMHP, basic literature, book 1.

Watson Thomson to Roslyn Road, April 16, 1945, RRP.

Thomson to Roslyn Road, April 16, 1945, RRP.

S.J. Farmer to T.C. Douglas, March 4, 1945; Douglas to Farmer, March 7, 1945; Douglas to Lloyd, March 8, 1945, TCDP.

CCF Papers, PAC, National Executive and Caucus minutes, vol. 2.

57 P. Morrison to T.C. Douglas, March 27, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (January-June) box.

58 S. Knowles to T.C. Douglas, April 2, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (January-June) box.

59 J.S. Allen to W.S. Lloyd, April 5, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (January-June) box.


62 Watson Thomson Resignation Letter, December 31, 1945, RRP.

63 Monthly Newsletter 3 (June 1, 1945), WMHP, basic literature, book 1. E.A. Corbett wrote Thomson on January 16, 1945: "I have looked over your material quite carefully and I am certain you have the right approach. Your emphasis upon the need for community responsibility and action is most important (AED, file 16, CAAE correspondence).

64 Monthly Newsletter 4 (July 1, 1945), WMHP, basic literature, book 1.

65 Monthly Newsletter 4.

66 W.S. Lloyd memo to Watson Thomson, July 14, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (July-December) box.


68 Richards and Pratt, Prairie Capitalism, p. 144.

69 See Lipset, Agrarian Socialism, ch. 11, "Politics and Social Change," for a discussion of the CCF's retreat from "socialism."

70 Watson Thomson, "Adult Education in Saskatchewan: The Next Three Years," WMHP, folder on adult education.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

STIRRINGS AT THE GRASSROOTS

The main achievements of June 1945, from the Division of Adult Education's perspective, were the conducting of the Citizens' Conferences at Melfort and Wynyard on Rehabilitation (June 5-6; June 26-27) and at Landis on Co-operative farming (June 29-30). Through the summer and fall the Department would hold other conferences on Family Services (Moose Jaw), Health Services (Kamsack, Saltcoats, Canora, Sturgis), Rehabilitation (Swift Current), Community Centres (Kindersley, Torquay) and a second on co-operative farming at Outlook. To succeed, the Citizens' Conferences needed a clearly defined objective, spontaneously chosen by the people and within their powers to achieve. But it was the Landis conference that really captured Thomson's romantic imagination. He thought that helping communities to establish co-operative farms was the most important action that could be taken at the local community level. The whole quality of the social environment could be altered and a new type of community created. In contrast to unplanned communities, the co-operative farm community would be deliberately created. It would have every chance of being "adequate and contemporaneous (technically, culturally, socially) as no other communities in Western Canada were adequate."

How familiar this scheme was! In London in the 1930s the New Britain movement had attempted to transform qualitatively human relationships through a co-personal experiment and network of clubs throughout Great Britain. In Alberta and Manitoba, Thomson believed that his transformative-communitarian experiments and spearhead philosophy would
lead to the altering of the social environment. And in each case, Watson Thomson was wrong. The social experiments of 1945 in Saskatchewan were of enormous significance. But not, as it turned out, in Thomson's way.

Consider, for instance, the Citizens' Conference. In pedagogical structure, the Citizens' Conferences rejected a top-down, technocratic approach. The idea of the Citizens' Conference, Thomson told conference after conference, was that ordinary citizens could come together with "experts" who could provide some analytical guidance and government officers who could provide some information regarding "official" policy. This may sound naive to political realists. But Thomson explicitly rejected the notion that specialists were there to deliver their words, leaving the people to criticize or go home and pick the words to pieces. That was not the way to build a "true democracy." Those who were not specialists had a right to have their say. Each conference utilized the familiar methods—speakers, films bearing on the conference theme, group discussion, panels, and strategy and action sessions. The heart of the Citizens' Conference, from Thomson's viewpoint, lay not with the large assembly but in the small discussion groups. As issues emerged in the plenary sessions, clear and significant questions were then placed before these "policy-making" groups.

These small groups formulated their responses which were presented to the whole conference for reflection and proposals for action. Following the panel discussion, Thomson's role, a crucial one, was to intuit the audience's mood and direction and address himself to the question—"Where do we go from here?" Action, as Thomson repeatedly pointed out, was of two orders: study and practical projects. Where he found evidence of discouragement, as was the case at the Melfort Conference, he
challenged the people to decide what was "feasible and practical."²

The organization of all the Citizens' Conferences followed a similar pattern. Through either circularization from a government Department or through the work of a field man, a newly formed group or already functioning committee would express interest in having a conference around a particular theme. In the case of the Citizens' Conferences on Rehabilitation, the Department of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation had circularized local Rehabilitation committees throughout the province. Once a local committee expressed an interest in a Citizens' Conference, arrangements were then turned over for completion to the Division of Adult Education. This was, perhaps, the most significant aspect of the process. The Division of Adult Education could control the direction of the conference and determine the role government officials would play. To succeed, government officials had to accept the role of participant with the people rather than as agent of social control. A representative of Study-Action would visit the local committee to discuss the details of the conference: sponsorship, location, publicity and participants. Once arrangements were underway and details of the program determined, the Division of Adult Education would prepare the publicity and the local committee would be left with the task of distributing the posters and contacting the local press. Just prior to the opening of the conference, the Study-Action leader would meet with the local committee to ensure that all aspects of the program, including projectionists, were in order, appoint a steering committee and establish personnel for the panel discussions. The process, then, moved from the community-generated theme, identified in pre-conference discussions, to the presentation of the problem by local people and experts. Then to the consideration of the problems through
informal but systematic group discussion and the analysis of the problems in the citizens' panel to the commitment to specific forms of actions. Put schematically, the Citizens' Conferences were organized around four central concepts: problematization, contextualization, reflection and resolution.  

At the Rehabilitation conferences in Wynyard and Melfort the problems were obvious enough. Overseas, servicemen and women had developed qualities of co-operation and teamwork. As part of the Allied war effort, their lives, as veteran Walter Thornfinnson stated, "all had a sense of significance even if our particular war jobs didn't seem vital." The veterans were restless and impatient. Women did not want to return to the old role of "housewife." Men wanted challenging jobs. The veterans did not want to return to static and unimaginative communities that offered them few interesting jobs and minimal community resources. What emerged decisively from Wynyard and Melfort was the integral relationship between community economic and social development and the solution to the veterans' problems. In his consolidation report, written several days after the conference ended, Hugh Logie assessed Wynyard's impact. Issues had been clarified, morale had risen and the community had a renewed sense of responsibility. Four study-action groups had formed to examine the possibility of establishing a waterworks and sewage disposal plant, recreation facilities, co-operative farms and electrified homes. The building of a waterworks and sewage disposal plant was identified as axial to the growth and development of Wynyard. But Wynyard deliberations also revealed the need for a hospital, creamery and pasteurizing plant. At Melfort, conferees considered how they might establish canning factories, an abattoir and meat packing plant and a new
collegiate high school. As conference participants moved from problematization to resolution, as Thomson had anticipated, they confronted some political realities. They learned that under the Veterans' Land Act of 1942 veterans could not pool their grants to start co-operative farms. Some veterans wanted that regulation changed; others wanted the grant to married veterans increased. To help finance local projects, most conferees thought that the dominion and provincial governments should grant them long-term loans at low interest rates.

Thomson tried to measure the success of the rehabilitation conferences at Wynyard and Melfort. At Wynyard, 200 people had attended the evening sessions; four groups had committed themselves to difficult forms of study-action. At Melfort, seventy people had attended the evening sessions; some study-action might get started. What was the difference? Wynyard had a large group of Icelandic origin who were remarkably socially-minded. In contrast, Melfort, a town of 2000 set in the heart of the richest mixed farming country in the province, had a "vigorous individualism of a town still on the pioneer fringe. Its good people were more prone to acts of personal generosity than to consistent socially-mindedness." While not unhappy with the outcome of these Citizens' Conferences, Thomson thought that rehabilitation was a less satisfying topic than others. The average citizen tended to be unconvinced that a full solution to the problem was within the local community's capacity. It took more than two days to convince him, particularly if the local committee had had discouraging experiences or was led by unimaginative or half-committed individuals.

Landis was a leading centre of the culture of left populism in Saskatchewan. From the early 1920s, Landis farmers had been in the
vanguard of co-operative enterprise and the agitation to organize farmers so that they could fix their prices above the costs of production.

Landis activists like Warren Hart and Louis Brouillette had been prominent in the organization of the militant Farmers' Union of Canada in 1921. They also played an active role in the United Farmers of Canada (UFC), Saskatchewan section, formed in 1926 after the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association and the Farmers Union of Canada were challenged to form a united front. They were instrumental in establishing a co-operative wheat pool marketing agency, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers, incorporated in 1927. In 1929, the Landis Co-operative Association was founded. After 1929, the Landis Co-operative Association extended its activities into the grocery business, hardware and other lines. As Jim Wright, author of Slava Boku (1940) who lived in the Landis area in 1944 and 1945, described the people of Landis, "They worked openly, without compensation of power, luxury or glamour, while carrying on their individual farming operations....Their general philosophy and practice excluded exploitation of their human brothers." Although the Landis co-operators may not have been exceptional, they were certainly in the forefront of the co-operative movement.

In the first months of the CCF regime there was much enthusiasm, some of it no doubt politically naive, for co-operative farming. Eddie Parker had visited Landis in April, the same month which saw the formation of the first complete type of co-operative farm at Sturgis. Parker was struck by how "sound, open-minded, sympathetic, and forward-looking" the Biggar-Landis area was. Shortly after, Parker wrote to Jim Wright and Fred Hart regarding the possibility of having a weekend Citizens' Conference on co-operative farming. On April 28 Thomson wrote to Fred
Hart, UFC director of District 12 and president of the Needwood Lodge.

"Both Ed Parker and myself feel very strongly that our working with such a group of people as you have around you is bound to produce the kind of important social consequences which mean a great deal to us down here."\(^{10}\)

By the middle of May the Harts, Jim Wright and others had decided to have a conference on co-operative farming. They wanted to hold a "generally advertised" conference to bring out as many people as possible and crystallize their interests in co-operative farming. But they had decided, unlike the other Citizens' Conferences, to leave Sunday afternoon for the "more interested and enthusiastic" individuals who were likely to be the key people in the study-action groups. The latter would begin study-groups in earnest after harvest and continue throughout the winter.\(^{11}\)

The organizing committee chose Landis as the appropriate site for the district. Landis had adequate facilities to host the conference. Landis was, moreover, becoming more and more a co-operative centre. Those interested in co-operative farming were already involved in several co-operative agencies. Thus, Landis would look after the publicity and Fred Hart would call a meeting of his UFC lodge as soon as seeding ended. And Wright informed Thomson that the Landis group preferred the term "co-operative" rather than "collective." Using the word "collective," Wright thought, might give "obstructionist opportunity" to some to say it was "Bolshevik." It was all right for John Fox and the Zimmers, who were Catholics, to use "collective," better for "CCFers and Protestants" to use "co-operative." But, he added, for the Harts, Zimmers and others who wanted to look into the possibilities of an economic and social way of farm operation and living, what was important was to find a "new way"
of organizing their lives. They personally did not care whether it was called "co-operative," "collective" or anything else. "There is going to be difficulty enough," Wright noted, "without making unnecessary difficulty through the use of terms that can be used as a verbal implement of obstruction."  

Why were Landis and other towns and settlements—Rosetown, Matador, N. Battleford, Sturgis, Kindersley, Wynyard and Swift Current interested in co-operative farming? The Saskatchewan co-operative farms were not intended as were the U.S. government-initiated projects in the 1930s as "temporary relief measures for migratory or destitute farm families." They were not intended to be sectarian communities such as those of the Mormons, Mennonites and Hutterites. They were distinct from the collective farms of the USSR, where the voluntary principle was largely ignored, and the Palestinian kibbutzim, which consisted of members largely from a single national group. Nor were they of the utopian separatist variety, such as the Harmony Industrial Association experiment in late nineteenth century Saskatchewan. The co-operative farming initiative in Saskatchewan was primarily a creative response to agricultural conditions in the province. One cannot discount, either, the co-operative heritage of many of the Scandinavian farmers who populated the above settlements.

With the introduction of large-scale machinery, it became increasingly difficult to farm small units economically. The number of farmers pushed out of agriculture by the pressure of larger, more efficient operation was growing rapidly. For some farmers, then, the co-operative farm may well have been seen in pragmatic terms as the answer to the economic problem. Pooling machinery, for instance, would be a limited step in this direction. But solving the economic problem was only part
of the reason for the interest. The Landis farmers, as did Thomson, saw co-operative farming as the next "logical step forward in the whole progressive struggle in Western Canada. It was a step of profound significance," Thomson wrote UFC past president George Bickerton, "as laying the foundation for a really new people's society."

Watson Thomson certainly wanted to bolster the left populist culture of the province. Landis provided a crucial opportunity for Thomson and associates like Hugh Harvey, Ed Parker and Bill Harding to discuss in a receptive milieu their vision of the new people's society. They disagreed with Henry Cooperstock who doubted that co-operative farms could thrive in a milieu dominated by individualistic farmers. And they agreed with Henrick Infield who wrote in 1947 that co-operative farms were "developing in a social and political environment which is sympathetic." Ever the dreamer, Thomson placed tremendous hope on the outcome of Landis. If successful, Landis could serve as communitarian socialist model of the new society. As Thomson wrote to Fred Hart on June 19,

I'm afraid of the Landis people getting the feeling of being railroaded a bit. But there is no way of stopping it. The subject itself has become of such deep interest to all sorts of people, many of whom would have called us crazy if we had mentioned it a year or two ago.

The Landis conference more than fulfilled the Division of Adult Education's expectations. Sessions began with James Gray, well known district farm leader and co-operator, in the chair. During the first day, June 29, some one hundred and seventy people heard Rabbi Gotteman outline co-operative farming practices in Palestine and Watson Thomson discuss the "collective" farm in the Soviet Union. They watched films such as "Dagania," which depicted the daily routines on a Palestinian
kibbutz. Local farmers, their wives, sons and daughters were then asked, in the light of their co-operative backgrounds, to state what co-operative farming would mean to them. The women of Landis discussed, often in remarkably visionary terms, how a new form of social organization could ease their endless chain of work. They wanted proper dairies, socialized laundry services, a quick freezing plant, a co-operative day-care, and homes with labour-saving devices. They even dreamed of establishing a "Church of All Nations" to replace the existing denominational structures. Mrs. E. "Shorty" Zimmer spoke for the women:

If we build here in Saskatchewan a community without racial, national or religious prejudice, a community wherein increased economic welfare results from—"each for all, and all for each"—this might be a basic pattern, a working example, for people everywhere...

Zimmer was a woman after Thomson's own heart! And the conferees heard Hugh Harvey tell how a community could integrate itself around the many and varied services the people desired.

On the following day, with James Gray again in the chair, Sam Sookocheff, a member of the newly formed Sturgis co-operative farm, told the assembly that the most important factor in co-operative farming was not economic, but social and cultural. At Sturgis they were trying to combat the isolation of the present farm home. Alex Turner, acting Deputy Minister of the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development, said that he was most encouraged by Landis. There were now twenty-five farm groups interested in pooling their resources or labour in some way; five were now incorporated, the latest at Orlee. In the late afternoon, the assembly, divided into men's, women's and youth groups, got down to serious reflection on the problems associated with co-operative farming. Seven men's groups considered such questions as:
a co-operative farm, set up on a voluntary basis, would there be the problem of the man or woman who wouldn't pull his weight? Was it possible to include industrial or processing features in the economy of the co-operative farm? Should the workers of the co-operative farm be selected on the basis of their ability to do some specific job required in the total enterprise? Five women's groups reflected on questions such as: Do you believe in bringing your homes into a community along with adopting other co-operative means and what were the most essential community services?

On the final day forty-five people decided to form a continuing organization, the "Landis Co-operative Farming Committee." Jim Wright was elected secretary, Fred Hart president with an executive of nine appointed. This group resolved

to study the means of pooling land and machinery to start co-operative farming in this basis in the spring of 1946, and that simultaneously we study methods of building a co-operative farming community at a central location as soon as possible; and that such study be organized after harvest and continue through the winter of 1945-46.

The Landis people, Thomson wrote in his July 1 newsletter, were "ready to move again. They have seen the Jerusalem they mean to build in the 'green and pleasurable land.' It's called 'co-operative farm community' or 'co-operative community farm.'" On July 6 Thomson wrote to James Gray. "For the sake of the whole progressive movement in this country, you must go ahead with this and you must not fail."

At the end of June 1945 Thomson was more convinced than ever that the opportunities to mobilize the people for fundamental social change was immense. Wherever there was a genuine stirring towards social change, among the veterans, farmers or city workers, he wanted his Division to
"get in there fast" to make it a "strong, concerted movement of the people on a dozen fronts." Divisional activity continued through the summer months. Lloyd Williams, Roy Henderson and, now, Gordon Caulfield were turning out study-outlines on Health, Co-operative farming, Rural Electrification, Community organization and Women's Rights. There were, too, new developments in the Study-action field. The community living experiment with sixty-five veterans and their families was well underway. And Adult Education fieldworkers were busy developing a new voluntary project with the Moose Jaw Family Service Association. Every school and neighbourhood was being mobilized around a project focusing on the urgent social problems of youth.

By the end of the summer, the Division of Adult Education was ready to begin winter programs in Basic Citizenship, the Lighted School, preparations for the health conferences, Study-Action and the Living Newspaper. Basic Citizenship had started to meet demands uncovered by David Fast in his work with Mennonite communities. The Division hoped that these classes would be the thin edge of the wedge to introduce discussions of other aspects of citizenship. The Lighted School, supervised by Al Johnson, was a program of regular weekly instructional classes in various subjects. This project took considerable, and tactful, organization and negotiation with school boards, teachers and various groups of citizens. Thomson hoped that the Lighted Schools would come to see themselves as embryonic community centres. He wanted them to be different from the "old formalistic and escapist kind of adult education evening classes."

In mid-August Thomson returned, refreshed and stimulated, from lecturing at the YMCA Public Affairs Institute on the west coast. He had
investigated workers' education, the Labour Arts Guild, co-operative nurseries and children's libraries and saw some of the new designs for living of the Vancouver "Art and Living" group. "All these things make me realize," he told his staff,

how ripe our people are for a great leap forward to a richer, more functional and more 'social' way of life. The positive forces are there, welling up, and ready to break through. Yet the other, tragic, side of the picture is that progressive people are themselves divided and a prey to conflicts which are sometimes of an incredible bitterness.25

Thomson was also disturbed that, since the high point of August, the world was rapidly slipping into "lassitude and disillusionment."26 On all sides—the breakdown of the Big Five Ministers' Council, the strike situation in Detroit and Windsor, the control of atomic energy, the terrible food situation in many parts of Europe, the Palestinian situation—there was either indifference or sinister silence. "Our people, as I find them, are slipping into a new isolationism born of pessimism about international relations or into the more bitter cynicism of some of our veterans."27 Was this unjustified pessimism?

The Division of Adult Education, in the light of global trends, had to resist cynicism. The urgency of the times required that the Division establish relations with another set of people than the present Study-Action contacts, the more "politically conscious contacts."28 It was utterly important, he thought, that Saskatchewanites be brought into the "storm centres of the people's action."29 The form decided upon was the Living Newspaper: it would consist of two components, a "Radio College" broadcast and weekly newspaper, The Front Page. The first fifteen minutes of the radio broadcast took the form of a discussion among members of the staff who attempted to demonstrate that all news selection
was biased. Why not present news biased towards the common people? In the second half of the program, Watson Thomson provided people with historiographic principles to make sense of trends in world affairs. Then, two days after the broadcast, a printed four page newsheet went out to four thousand registered listeners, Study-Action contacts, MLAs and, outside Saskatchewan, to individuals in a variety of organizations. The paper had an actual front page of news, the texts of Thomson's "Inside Story" and the editorial discussion.

The Living Newspaper was a bold and unconventional experiment in adult education technique. There simply had never been anything like it before. The Living Newspaper tried to accomplish two aims simultaneously: to dramatize the whole question of what kind of world the people were inheriting, and to educate the people in critical news reception, encouraging them to dig further into the meaning of current affairs. In the light of the anti-socialist propaganda of the Canadian press and radio, the Living Newspaper experiment seemed confluent with the goals of the CCF government. Little did Thomson and Parker realize the extent to which it would itself become a "storm centre."

On October 13 the first issue of The Front Page, its two inch headline announcing "Palestine Now Big Three Test," went out to several thousand readers. Very soon after the first few broadcasts it became evident that the Living Newspaper was a "success" in Saskatchewan, across the nation and to a few readers in the U.S. Support poured in from prominent figures on the national scene. Queen's University professor Gregory Vlastos told Thomson that the "only way to meet the Trestrail propaganda: [was] to take the initiative and put over our world-view into the imaginative currency of average people."

R.E.G. Davis, Director of
the Canadian Welfare Council, wrote that "of course the articles were 'slanted' but it was the slant of the Common Man which is neglected by nearly everyone else in the business." Neil Morrison of the CBC found the paper "stimulating, vigorous and hard-hitting. It should arouse thought and discussion." Socialist intellectuals F. Underhill and J. King Gordon, extension worker F. Peers, Dr. Charles Huestis, Alberta social gospeller, and old PSSA friend Charles Lightbody sent in letters of commendation. 31 And Max Lerner, editor of the PM, wrote Parker that

The Front Page was a

scorching good job. Speaking as an editor and a radio commentator, I want to tell you how professional a job your editors have done, and how accurately they have singled out for comment the often-neglected items of genuine importance. 32

Within Saskatchewan, the Living Newspaper resonated with the left populist culture's deep-felt need for a global perspective. Typical of the approximately one-thousand five hundred letters received were the comments of P.E. Klein, who was residing in the Saskatoon Community Apartments. The Living Newspaper is "stirring the public to think seriously about the vital issues of the day and to make us all realize that action is necessary to prevent world disaster." Lac Vert resident A. Driver, a socialist of long standing, told the Division of Adult Education that he listened to all forum programs, "but yours excels them all, your integrity, fearlessness and intellectual vision." G. Huff of Herschel spoke for many progressive-minded Saskatchewanites:

I am not a Communist or a revolutionist, but I do know that racial prejudice, imperialistic self-righteousness and economic exploitation...are issues which ought to be brought to public attention....I think the 'Inside Story' of Watson Thomson is particularly good because it is simple, honest, yet penetrating and thought provoking. 33
The Front Page was taken up by numerous listening groups, some newly formed, some already in existence, and used as a study guide. The Department also received letters of commendation from principals and school superintendents, several MLAs, R. Stutt of the Wheat Pool, and a few cabinet members, Sturdy, Brockelbank and Nollett.

The Front Page provoked limited but strong criticism within and without Saskatchewan. New York philosopher Sidney Hook, who would have applauded this experiment in social education in the 1930s, wrote Al Johnson on December 7 that he had never encountered, in all his years as an adult educator, anything so "blatantly and unscrupulously propagandistic in its organization and direction."34 This view was shared by Jim Struthers, editor of the Manitoba Commonwealth, who bitterly attacked Thomson and the Department as propagandists.35 If social democratic critics like Hook and Struthers thought the Living Newspaper was veiled communist propaganda, other citizens like the Rev. John L. Clark of Paddockwood informed the Division that people believed that "Watson Thomson was hired to sell the CCF party to the public. That being so, people wink at the veiled language about 'lecture on the general progress of mankind.'" Erhart Regier, a Mennonite from Hepburn, took exception to the Living Newspaper from a slightly different perspective. Perceiving the Living Newspaper as uncritically pro-Soviet, Regier counselled the Department to "contact the millions of refugees from that country, notably the Ukrainians, Mennonites and Lutherans for new information--Russia, like Nazi Germany, has state socialism under the iron heel of 'party' officials." The Rev. Eugene Cullihane, a man the CCF was depending upon to win over Roman Catholic support, thought The Front Page and Thomson's broadcasts were "doing untold harm, making his job tougher, and costing
them thousands of votes." Still others, like the Division's persistent critic, Arkley O'Farrell, simply thought the whole business was poor educational practice. Why could not the people be left to think for themselves?36

These few criticisms, by themselves, might not have unsettled Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd or other cabinet members. If views expressed on the Soviet Union were seen as being politically sensitive, Douglas could easily have discussed this with Thomson. But Douglas and Lloyd were, in fact, sympathetic to the position articulated by Hook and Struthers. After the publication of the third issue of The Front Page, Thomson received his first official reaction. After reading the October 20 issue, with its headline—"Race Hatred Sweeps Dominion," Lloyd wrote to Parker that the headline of this issue smacked of

spectacularism with which so much of modern journalism is loaded that I find it very difficult to take. If we have a worthwhile presentation of news which is in itself worthwhile, this type of appeal is as unnecessary as it is undesirable. The set up of the page together with the presentation, is so much of the propaganda type leading to directed thinking that I can see no place for it in legitimate adult education.37

As Ed Parker admitted thirty-seven years after the event, he had erred in "pushing the news", generalizing from six isolated cases. The headline was sophomoric and intemperate.38 But there was enough ambiguity in Lloyd's reply to upset Thomson severely. Was Lloyd questioning one particular headline? Did he approve of the Living Newspaper in principle? Parker wrote to Lloyd on November 9 explaining the purposes of the Living Newspaper. Since the publisher of The Front Page was a leftist government, Parker argued, the publication had authoritatively placed itself in counter-balance to the reactionary slant of the rightist press. Display techniques of equal daring were deliberately employed to provoke response
and interest. The real question was: whose interests should a paper serve—the common people or those few who would oppress them? Parker insisted that the Living Newspaper was a journalistic exercise serving the people's interests with regard to news trends. Concluding his letter, Parker asked if Thomson had Lloyd's confidence. 39

These new developments shook Thomson. While in Vancouver during August he had heard from a good friend that a leading executive of the B.C. CCF had received a letter from Douglas advising that Thomson be watched because he "was probably up to something with the LPP." 40 Now, with Lloyd's criticism voiced, the situation looked bleak. By October 22 Thomson had accumulated a list of thirteen grievances against the government. 41 Although he never presented these to the government, he did threaten to resign on several occasions during November. 42 But Hugh Harvey and Ed Parker convinced Thomson not to resign. After all, apart from the Living Newspaper there had actually been little interference with the Division's work, except for a directive in October that no additional appointments be made to the staff. Indeed, Thomson thought that the lack of interference with the Division's work had been excessive. Neither the Minister or the Deputy Minister had ever stepped inside the offices of the Division. And the one-thousand five hundred favourable responses to the Living Newspaper meant the Department was doing something right.

Like Woodrow Lloyd, Tommy Douglas was unhappy with The Front Page. He believed that the news was "definitely slanted and I certainly don't mean 'slanted' toward the political philosophy of the government." Writing to Lloyd on October 22, Douglas said that he thought that the final editing of the newspaper "ought not to be left to those at too low
a level since the government as a whole will have to accept responsibility for...this program....I think this matter would bear looking into before it gets out of hand." Three weeks later, on November 15, Douglas was even more incensed. "Did you listen to the Adult Education broadcast of Wednesday, November 14," he queried Lloyd,

the commentary by Watson Thomson was excellent but the ingenious attempt to justify one-party government as promulgated by the Communists in Russia and Yugoslavia was as fallacious a piece of argument as I have ever listened to. I think the time has come when this matter can no longer be allowed to drift and some action to either discontinue these radio broadcasts or to have them taken in hand by a group of persons with some sense of responsibility.

The paper, from all Douglas could gather, was "following increasingly the 'fellow-traveller' line." One year after inviting Watson Thomson to come to Saskatchewan and defending him to H. Caiserman of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Tommy Douglas was ready to cut his "man" adrift.

The political wolves in the national CCF moved in on their prey. David Orlikow, secretary for the tempestuous riding of Winnipeg North which sent Stanley Knowles to Ottawa and elected communists municipally, wrote to Fred Williams rather than to Thomson or Lloyd. He felt that the kind of criticisms he wanted to make "ought to be made and acted upon privately and quietly if at all possible." Although he admitted that he liked the format of the Living Newspaper, Orlikow wondered if the CCF would not be better off without such a newspaper. Quoting Thomson out of context, Orlikow suggested to Williams that he could see the headlines now--"The CCF would outlaw opposition and set up a one party 'democracy' such as they have in Russia." "What Mr. Thompson [sic] is preaching," Orlikow told Williams,
is straight 100% communist propaganda. I am not one of those who believes that every man we hire ought to have a party membership but certainly when we hire a man, who has as much responsibility and authority as Thompson [sic] has, he ought to be a man we can trust implicitly rather than a man who owes his allegiance to a party which is doing everything it can do to destroy us.45

Orlikow hoped that Williams would take the matter to Douglas and Clarence Fines, the Minister of Finance. And, he added, he would appreciate knowing "just what their reaction to the matters I have raised is as I feel that it is of the utmost important [sic] to the movement across Canada that the matter be cleared up satisfactorily at an early date."

A week later the militantly anti-communist Charles Millard, national director of the United Steelworkers and CCF partisan who had tried but failed to swing Labour to the CCF in the 1945 elections, accused Thomson of making statements that were "unsound historically" and opposed to the "principles and theories of democratic socialism endorsed by the CCF."

"For instance," he told Douglas,

the statement that democracy as far as we know it is a device of capitalism and something quite different from democracy in a socialist society, could, it seems to me, be used by our enemies as evidence that the CCF does in fact intend to take away rights which we now enjoy and which we generally knew as 'democratic.'46

In fact, Thomson had argued that democracy, in the sense of a full life for the common man, would not be like capitalist democracy. Pointing to the anti-democratic nature of capitalist economic organization, Thomson called for the creation of "new types of economic organization, new and more socialized directions and controls in industry."47 On December 5 Douglas replied to Millard. "We have enough grief ourselves, without starting to build up carefully camouflaged communist doctrines among our people."48
On December 3 national CCF leader M.J. Coldwell wrote to Lloyd telling him, in so many words, to fire Watson Thomson. Coldwell thought the Living Newspaper had not paid enough attention to Canadian issues. But, most serious, he thought that "wherever possible, inferences were thrown in with a 'Communist slant.'" Like Douglas, he thought that the dialogue regarding Yugoslavia was "pretty brazen" in its communist tinge. Coldwell wondered how a paper issued by a CCF government could follow a party line.

If this was indicative of the type of adult education being done in Saskatchewan, I feel some misgivings as to what the results in Saskatchewan in the future will be, not only to our Movement but to democracy in Saskatchewan. I am sorry to have to be so critical but I have been rather shocked by the obvious Communist turn given to discussions and items appearing in 'The Front Page.'

On December 3 a beleaguered and bewildered Lloyd informed M.J. Coldwell that his predicament was a "rather difficult one." He stated that, at the present time, the situation regarding Adult Education was "rather one of proper time of 'liquidation.'" Lloyd concluded his brief letter to Coldwell on a peculiar note.

On the whole I can say with considerable degree of certainty that a considerable amount of good work has been done through our Adult Education Division. This particular project of the Wednesday night broadcast and the 'Front Page' was a ten weeks' experiment and next week is the concluding programme.

If the Division was doing good work and the Living Newspaper was just an experiment, why was that adequate grounds for firing Watson Thomson? It was not. But those presiding over the CCF's national interests (Coldwell, Knowles, Millard) actually thought that Thomson was in the communist camp. One cannot answer unequivocally for Douglas. His letters to Lloyd and Millard seem to indicate that he had changed his mind about Thomson.
But, after Thomson was fired, he would write several left-wingers admitting that Thomson, though an enigma, was not a communist.\textsuperscript{51} Be that as it may, Thomson had made a serious strategic error in publishing *The Front Page*.

The youthful and inexperienced Woodrow Lloyd, no radical, was caught in the middle, squeezed by the national CCF leadership and his own Saskatchewan superiors. This is not to say, however, that Lloyd agreed with Thomson's social theory of education. He did not. Watson Thomson simply made the Saskatchewan CCF leadership uncomfortable. To be sure, Thomson would have nothing of the Russophobia present in CCF leadership circles. But neither would many left-wing CCFers in Saskatchewan. Douglas chose to listen to the powerful anti-communists in his party. To fall prey to anti-Sovietism was, for Thomson, to contribute to the fracturing of the world into irreversibly hostile camps. Certainly some CCFers were uneasy with Thomson's pro-Sovietism, but without understanding its philosophic roots. But the "communist" label pasted on Thomson masked deeper fears. The people were stirring at the grassroots. They were interested in being directly involved in policy-making. The Citizens' Conferences implicitly challenged traditional modes of capitalist democracy and CCF notions of how people participated in decision-making. Rather than passing a resolution at a local constituency meeting and then hoping, sometime, that a cabinet minister might implement it, government departments would have a different role. Their task would be to facilitate programs demanded, through a democratic pedagogical process, by communities, providing them with the resources to solve their own problems. Rather than interpreting legislation or restraining this process through bureaucratic procedures, government departments
would help the people build more co-operative institutions.

Evidence suggests that the Saskatchewan leadership, with few notable cabinet exceptions, really did not want to encourage co-operative farming, small-scale community-run enterprises or worker participation in management. Perhaps M.J. Coldwell even thought that if co-operative farming really caught fire in Saskatchewan, that he would never be able to convince conservative Ontario farmers to vote CCF. Two different perceptions of the significance of Saskatchewan: for Thomson, a grand opportunity to mobilize the people towards laying the foundation for a "really new people's society"; for Coldwell, a grand opportunity to show the Canadian electorate that the Saskatchewan CCF was a moderate reform party, ruled by humanistic bureaucrats.

On December 12 Watson Thomson sent his resignation to Woodrow Lloyd. "In view of recent evidence of basic disagreements between us in matters of adult education policy, I wish, by this letter, to resign my appointment as Director of Adult Education." With that resignation, an era of adult education ended. Within days of Thomson's resignation, word leaked out through the grapevine that Thomson had been fired. At the end of December the news of the "firing" (officially a resignation) was made public and another storm crashed in upon Douglas and Lloyd. In left-wing circles throughout Canada and in Saskatchewan the firing was received as incredibly disheartening news. Thomson's old friends Glen Allen and Norman Smith, long-time CCF activists and personal friends of Douglas, immediately rallied around Thomson and wrote Douglas asking him to reconsider his decision. Letters of support for Thomson and censure of the government poured in from hundreds of ordinary people in Saskatchewan. The Landis activists, led by Fred Hart and Jim Wright, supported by a
number of cabinet ministers, were ready, if Thomson so wished, to wage a fight with the CCF. Needless to say, the Saskatchewan press and political opposition had a field day flaying the CCF once again.\textsuperscript{54}

On November 25, aware of the accusations being levelled at Thomson, Norman Smith wrote to his old friend that he had talked with Douglas. Smith had pointed out to Douglas that Thomson had never "allowed himself to be used as a 'tool' of the Communist Party." Thomson, Smith argued, was sincerely committed to assuring the "harmonious development of the socialist forces." In reply, Douglas spoke of the impossibility of "co-operating with those who believed in dictatorship." Reflecting a position he shared with Thomson, Smith spoke briefly and tentatively on the "conceivability of building up sympathetic understanding between rank and file in different groups." Smith concluded by saying that Tommy Douglas was a "sincere man who has been so preoccupied with certain aspects of politics that he had to neglect others."\textsuperscript{55} Three days later Thomson told Smith that while he agreed with his assessment of Douglas, he was quite skeptical about getting Douglas to talk with him.\textsuperscript{56} Two weeks later, on December 13, Thomson advised Smith that Douglas had, in fact, not called him in for any kind of talk. Instead, Woodrow Lloyd had called him in and suggested that he look for employment elsewhere. He was to be out of the Division of Adult Education by January 31.\textsuperscript{57}

Norman Smith was distressed by this "astonishingly bad news." He decided to intercede with Douglas on Thomson's behalf. But, he noted, in view of "Douglas' failure to keep his promise, grounds for the hope did not seem very promising." Smith advised Thomson to ask himself "whether he could long remain content to sacrifice all right of private judgment in an organization with whose general policies you might agree."\textsuperscript{58}
"I know a considerable number of men who have been brought into contact with Watson Thomson," Smith said to Douglas.

All I know have recognized the completely disinterested devotion to social ideals which has led him to sacrifice prospects which would be highly attractive by ordinary standards. Those who know him well (so far as my experience goes) are agreed upon that, whether they do or do not accept his views.59

Glen Allen, the Killarney, Manitoba community leader and CCF activist whom Thomson had worked with in the Manitoba days, was also astonished at the news from Saskatchewan. Although Allen thought that Thomson would have trouble with Douglas' "understrappers," he thought that Douglas would understand Thomson and give him the rope he needed. "The only explanation I can think of," Allen confessed to Thomson, "for his failure to do so, is that he didn't have the time to take a closer look at you, and get a better understanding of you. You and he have so much in common,..." Allen wondered if the struggle had exhausted Douglas such that, like Coldwell, he was becoming less scrupulous than in earlier days of the movement. Allen playfully chided Thomson for not being politically disingenuous enough to deal with his opponents.

If the adults of Saskatchewan are educated it won't be because that is a good idea. It will be merely because the people who don't want 'em [sic] educated have been rendered powerless to prevent it. Next place you go, please try to resign yourself to being a despicable little shyster on occasion.60

In late January Allen informed Douglas that Watson Thomson was "NOT a communist. To tell you the truth I have never been able to make up my mind how to define him, but finally I have boiled it down to 'A Gandhi in a tweed suit.' He loves everybody, including millionaires, socialists, communists, presbyterians and pimps."61
Others were equally disturbed when they learned that Thomson would be leaving the province. Gregory Vlastos, who believed that Thomson was doing a particularly successful job of adult education, was concerned that a person of his stature "should continue to make a contribution to Canadian life." Vlastos believed that The Front Page would have given "David Lewis and others of the same persuasion...fits." He was surprised, though, that the "Saskatchewan outfit was...ridden with Russophobia. It is a heart-breaking business." Heartbreaking indeed. Lewis Lloyd, Woodrow's older brother, was shattered. So much so, that he did not talk to his brother for several years. "I saw it coming [sic]," he told Thomson. "Woodrow wrote me some time back and told me that he was in a jam and reading between the lines I could see the Cabinet was putting pressure on him,..." Lewis Lloyd thought that his brother had taken a turn to the right. Les Bright, Tom Bentley, Barney Johnsrude, Les King, Henry Lewis and Pete Jansen, though, were all on Thomson's side. For Lewis Lloyd the firing of Watson Thomson was sure evidence that the "people's movement" had swung to the right. "O Christ," he lamented, "what a mess and where in hell do we go from here?" The firing was no less a shock to Thomson's staff. Art Wirick spoke for them all in expressing his "sense of dismay and personal loss" to Thomson. "We know how strongly you believed in the program we had shaped and from which you have now been cut off." He did not think that the program, as they had conceived it, would continue. "God knows," he concluded, "what milk and water they propose to dispense."

The announcement of Thomson's dismissal, discussed freely in progressive circles throughout Saskatchewan, was bitter news to left-wing supporters of the CCF who believed that they had elected a "socialist"
government. Individuals like Mrs. E. Munn, an active PSSA supporter, informed the government that if Thomson was "too much to the left, then why not dismiss some Deputy Ministers who are too far to the right and sabotage what the CCF are trying to do [sic]." Left-wing supporters believed that the Living Newspaper experiment had been well received because there was demand for information that the capitalist press either entirely suppressed or partially censored. Activist pastor G.A.A. Wilson of Cutknife spoke for many correspondents. After years of bombardment from "a hostile, reactionary, vicious capitalist press and radio," Wilson took "great pride and joy and new courage from our little world newspaper 'The Front Page,' which gave a magnificently enlightening slant on the affairs of the world." Left-wing supporters also believed that the government was capitulating to Liberal leader W.J. Patterson's critique of the Radio College broadcasts as high pressuring "the people of Saskatchewan into the ideas of Socialism and Communism under the cloak of adult education." It is evident, as Thomson had hoped, that the Living Newspaper had succeeded in getting in touch with the politically conscious elements in Saskatchewan. These were Thomson's activated citizens: aware of the seriousness of the global crisis, committed to playing intelligent roles in building more fully co-operative communities and larger society. In their minds, the expropriation of the Box factory in Prince Albert, the fight against the federal government over the seed grain issue, the promotion of co-operative farming and small-scale, government-managed industries as well as the hiring of Watson Thomson were linked. With Thomson's dismissal, the left populist culture felt betrayed. The government, the Rev. Harry Penny observed, had committed an "unforgive-
able blunder in losing one of Canada's outstanding devotees to the cause of freedom and democracy." But just how widespread was Thomson's support?

Some Thomson supporters like John Colbert thought there would be a "tremendous upsurge against a government who dismisses a man so able and so popular as Dr. Thomson. The point is this," he told Lloyd, "that the number of letters sent in...represent a fraction of those interested in the work." On December 13 Jim Wright informed Thomson that he had probably heard of the unanimous support for the Living Newspaper at the joint meeting of three adjacent provincial constituencies—Wilkie, Cutknife and Battlefords. The Juniata constituency had also censured the government as had the Nary Valley UFC lodge. Wright also told Thomson that he had been talking to Toby Nollett—a "fighter for the zeal, sincerity and world vision of yourself and Adult Education"—at Lloydminster. "My idea in phoning Toby," he said, "was to discuss with him putting up a fight, but if you don't want it there is any [sic] use in rousing things up." Two weeks later Wright said that Patterson's charges did not hurt their movement. "What is serious is lack of understanding and fear in the cabinet ministers." Fred Hart also tried to encourage Thomson. "I think Watson you have been doing a valuable job. And all the great workers run in opposition. We have learned a great deal from you....I feel perhaps a few letters from people such as myself we [sic] give you encouragement to carry on." But Thomson did not think that the "good people of the left-wing in Saskatchewan" were "ready to fight on this or any other issue yet." The important fight, Thomson pointed out to Wright, had to be necessarily within the CCF about the basic questions of trends and principles."That
fight," he observed,

is of the first importance historically and Saskatchewan
is undoubtedly one of the main fronts on which it will
have to be fought. But responsibility for making it an
effective thing must necessarily lie with left-wingers
within the party. 74

The tragic fact, as Thomson saw it, was that there was "no consolidated
left-wing within the CCF to follow through and make the fight signifi­
cant." 75

In the last week of December Thomson sat down to reflect on the
events that had led to his dismissal. So many friends and supporters had
written to him that a lengthy reply was in order. From Thomson's
perspective, the CCF government had condemned itself in serious ways.
When Thomson accepted Douglas' invitation to come to Saskatchewan, he
believed that the government was "more socially conscious" than they were,
that the government had a "genuinely socialist purpose." Now, however,
he had seen social democracy in action and he did not like it. He did
not think the government had any strategic plan or clear social goals or
methods. They had never provided him with the opportunity for rational
discussion of questions of adult education policy. And dismissal
procedures, Thomson contended, were disturbingly arbitrary. From Dr.'
Carlyle King Thomson had learned that the CCF provincial executive had
been sounded out four days before the axe fell. They, apparently, did
not support such a step. Nor had he, by December 31, been given any
real "reasons" for his dismissal. 76 In this light, Tommy Douglas' letter
to Glen Allen, written on February 7, is illuminating. "I agree with
you," Douglas stated, "that he is not a Communist but that he is an
enigma...You can be sure that we are treating Watson well and that we are
parting without any hard feelings." 77 Douglas had neither treated
Thomson well nor honestly and they were parting with hard feelings. But Watson Thomson had expected too much of the Saskatchewan CCF and people.

After the publication of the Living Newspaper it was perspicaciously evident to Thomson that there were basic disagreements of policy. In a unpublished "Letter to the Editor" meant to answer his press critics, Thomson insisted that the government had not taken an explicit stand against the liberal theory of education. Thomson had not anticipated that the Saskatchewan government, which he assumed was committed to a "policy of involvement in the people's struggle, not of aloofness from it, of challenge to the status quo, not appeasement," would withdraw its support. Indeed, Woodrow Lloyd's reply to Fred Hart, which represented Lloyd's official interpretation of the crisis, clearly indicates that Thomson's analysis that the "government did not really want the fight which doing a straightforward kind of socialist education would inevitably arouse" was accurate. Lloyd did not think it was a "sound policy to present, entirely, one side of the picture....We must have sufficient confidence in the people that they will come to the right decision if they have adequate information placed before them."

Thomson also accused the Saskatchewan CCF of "venomous anti-communism." This anti-communism, and its more veiled anti-Sovietism, Thomson believed, was a social menace. Rather than providing leadership to the genuinely socially conscious people, of whom the one thousand five hundred supporters of the Radio College and Front Page were a good cross-section, the CCF leadership had exploited the "phobias of ignorance." Once the "anti-Red phobia" was touched off, Thomson believed that "ordinary, decent interchange" was impossible. Once Thomson had received the scarlet brand of "communist," everything he said or wrote or did was
interpreted within this frame of reference. I do not think that most of us would agree," Lloyd told Fred Hart, "that Democracy and Capitalism are the same thing, and that any satisfactory future organization would have to be something outside a democratic set-up." Thomson had argued no such line. Lloyd linked Thomson's alleged totalitarian bent to the Radio College's justification of Marshall Tito's plan. After this, Lloyd informed Hart that when Watson Thomson spoke in B.C., Alberta, Quebec and published an article in a Manitoba magazine, the Department had received letters of complaint. "These letters came not from our political opponents, but from leaders in our movement in these provinces. I think," Lloyd added, "that we must accept the fact that these people, selected as leaders by those of our political conviction, wrote only because of their genuine concern." Lloyd concluded by saying that Thomson did not have the flexibility to "accept and represent the Government's point of view." But the government had never told Thomson what their point of view was. The whole business had a shabby tone.

By the end of 1945, with the Gouzenko spy trial about to push Canada irrevocably into the Cold War era, Watson Thomson was convinced that the social democratic idea had to be challenged. To an appalling extent, he thought, Saskatchewan was conforming to the same pattern of "tragic inadequacy exposed elsewhere—in Germany, Austria, France, Britain..." Blaming social democracy at first, in later years Thomson would shift some of the blame for his firing to Ed Parker who had pushed him on to more "dangerous ground" than he would have "penetrated on my own." But Thomson had allowed himself to be pushed in that direction. Thomson was heart-broken and humiliated. Never before had he ever been fired from any job. And as he recalled nostalgically in his autobiographical
memoirs, I loved my work in Saskatchewan; I loved the young men and women who were my team of co-workers; and we had great plans and ambitions for the future. It was heartbreaking to see it all brought to naught for no sufficient reason that I or my fellow workers could at that time see.

With the dismissal of Watson Thomson, the momentum of Saskatchewan Study-Action gradually dissipated. Approximately one hundred community-based projects had been started throughout Saskatchewan and numerous study-action groups were ready to begin their winter's work. But without Divisional leadership and government support, these groups gradually disbanded or turned to other activities. The Landis dream of the "co-operative farming community" was never fulfilled. Within a year, Harding, Wirick, Parker and Harvey were no longer associated with the Department of Adult Education. Thomson's career as an adult educationist was finished. He thought that if he was too far left for "socialist" Saskatchewan, his services were not likely to be in demand elsewhere in Canada. While still in Regina during the last agonizing months, Thomson received an offer to broadcast in Montreal and an invitation to stay in the empty house of Einar Neilson, a friend he had met at the Public Affairs Institute in the summer of 1945, on Bowen Island.

The Thomsons opted for the simple and healing life of Bowen Island on the West Coast. During these days of anguished reflection on the forces that had reverberated so disastrously in his life, Thomson began, slowly, to recover his energy and integrity. Returning to Vancouver in the spring of 1946 to set up communal living with the Wilsons and Bruce and Mary Yorke in Kitsilano, Thomson was hired as an educational officer to assist with the I.W.A. strike. But the I.W.A. wanted a communist "party-man"
and Thomson could not accept L.P.P. direction. With the world no longer receptive to outspokenly radical ideas, Thomson spent the late 1940s experimenting with a left-wing journal, Contact, which he edited with Ed Parker. After nine issues, Contact folded in July 1947. He did some broadcasting for CKWX from 1946 to 1948. And he continued to write, preoccupied with the meaning of the communist/social democrat split and his experiments in co-operative living.

In 1949 Ryerson Press published Thomson's study of Henri Lasserre, the Swiss-born Canadian Christian socialist philosopher, practitioner and friend of "integral co-operative" experiments. Thomson felt a deep kinship of mind and purpose with Lasserre. In fact, Thomson, Hugh Harvey and Henry Lewis, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources in the Saskatchewan government, joined Lasserre's Canadian Fellowship of Co-operative Community in 1944. Writing Pioneer in Community afforded Thomson the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of his own Canadian experiments. Like Lasserre, Thomson had tried to see whether, after all, it might not be that men and women could live in intimate co-operation and like it. Moreover, like Lasserre, Thomson had known rewarding and unregretted failure.

Thomson shared Lasserre's belief that co-operation, as a way of life, was more than a particular form of economic association. To Lasserre, integral co-operation meant the combination of consumers' co-operation with producers' co-operation, and farmers' co-operatives with industrial co-operatives. All of these were aspects of the integrated life of a fully co-operative community. Then, too, the fully co-operative community had to create new educational modes, new forms of spirituality and new ways of healing the disabled. This, of course, was Thomson's goal for the co-operative farming experiments in Saskatchewan, an interest Henri
Lasserre shared.

None of Lasserre's experiments—his own or those he supported—were "successful." Did this mean, Thomson asked, that there was something intrinsically wrong with "industrial co-operatives," "intentional communities," or "integral co-operation"? For Thomson, the failures pointed significantly to the challenges human civilization had to meet if it was not to collapse in violence and misery. To be sure, Thomson doubted that the generality of men and women could easily transcend the old patterns of behaviour. But this simply meant that ways must be found to dislodge the old ways from the human heart. Successful intentional communities, and lessons learned from the failed ones, at least suggested that this was possible. In 1949, Thomson's utopian vision seemed undimmed.

Researching Henri Lasserre's life rekindled Thomson's interest in co-operative community experiments. William Ackerman, a prominent Jewish liberal friend from the "I Accuse" days, visited Thomson in Vancouver in the summer of 1949 and offered his financial resources to help Thomson find something fitted to his capacities. The LeBeaus and Thomson had talked about establishing a land-based intentional community as a buffer against counter-revolution. George LeBeau had lost his job as secretary of the UFC (Saskatchewan section) and was open to a new experiment. So were the Wilsons. They were joined by Ivar Gustavson, a Saskatchewan farmer who decided to sell his farm and throw in his lot with the LeBeaus and Wilsons. With money from Ackerman, Lasserre's Robert Owen Foundation and Harry Penny, the group moved to an one hundred and twenty-five acre farm at Colebrook, located ten miles south of New Westminster. They immediately began building tar-paper shack living quarters and preparing the land for cultivation. It turned out to be depressingly backbreaking
work.

The experiment was disastrous. The land was too expensive and the debt load too heavy, there were serious internal problems among the members and the arable land was not productive. By the winter of 1951 Thomson was experiencing tremendous stress. His wife Mary was pregnant with their third child, Eric. Thomson decided to leave Colebrook—a bitter disappointment which shook his "faith to its foundation" and for a time created a rift between the Thomsons and the LeBeaus.

Throughout the Colebrook period Thomson had been lecturing to engineering students, teaching them English 150. In the summer of 1947, through Dr. Norman Black's assistance, Watson Thomson had been appointed as a "reader" of engineering student essays. He did this to earn some money, but this task evolved into a lectureship in the English department of the University of British Columbia.

Although incredibly weary of spirit through the early 1950s—a time when he was acutely conscious of his political impotence—Thomson gradually assumed the role of university professor. This role, however, did not quite provide the radical educator with respectability. President Dr. Norman Mackenzie knew that the Board of Governors would never officially appoint him as a university teacher, so Mackenzie simply kept renewing his term appointment. This left Thomson without tenure, status or pension. When questioned about Thomson's politics, Mackenzie informed his questioner that Thomson was a "Christian socialist." Not until 1959 would Thomson be officially appointed as an associate professor.

Teaching English to engineers was not exactly the most coveted position in the Department of English. In fact, English 150 attracted a few maverick professors like Joe Lawrence and Vic Hopwood who taught the
engineers the art of manipulating language. From 1955 to 1960 Thomson taught a new course, "Aspects of Modern Thought," a program of humanistic studies for applied science students. Immensely successful, this course explored the foundational works of Marx, Darwin and Freud and the modern philosophies of existentialism and logical positivism. During the late 1950s Thomson turned his energies to the problem of the "two cultures." In the modern world, knowledge was increasingly fragmented into specialized versus general education. Modern scientific knowledge was unrelated to any common human centre. Was it possible to find a way of "speaking across the barriers" dividing the humanities and the sciences?\(^{88}\) What did the notion of a "community of scholars" mean? To find out, Thomson toured institutes of technology in the U.S. in 1957 and Britain in 1959, conversing with leading scientists and humanists.

Despite the success of his university life, which this postscript barely sketches, the 1950s was a taxing period for Thomson as it was for the left in general. But as the experimental decade of the 1960s unfolded, Thomson began to regain some of his lost hope. Group experimentation would not quite stay dead; in 1959 several Vancouver couples, led by Harry Penny, banded together to create a place where they could be open with one another, giving voice especially to their radical anti-status quo thoughts and sentiments. Unlike the Roslyn Road experiment, the Vancouver group did not live together and they lacked an outward-looking political focus. Instead, they met every two weeks and explored questions of inter-personal relations, particularly marital and sexual tensions. The Thomsons also joined the Vancouver Unitarian community. In the early 1960s, working closely with the Rev. Phillip Hewett, Thomson initiated some encounter group style experiments in the Unitarian church.
But it was the students' anti-war protest and the emergence of a communitarian socialist trend in the youth culture that gave a new and urgent relevance to the central passions of his life. His own son, Colin, became involved with the Company of Young Canadians. Thomson acted as advisor to the younger radicals and tried to encourage the CYC activists to see their organizations as a personalistic "community of conspirators" and not simply as an organization.

But Thomson would not be able to participate actively in the events of the 1960s. In November 1960 he suffered a near fatal cerebral thrombosis which left his speech impaired. No longer able to teach at U.B.C. or participate actively in the peace movement, Thomson assumed the mantle of philosopher, scribbling out essays on a wide variety of subjects. He wrote to Roy Daniells in February of 1966 that he was now preoccupied with the great conflicts of our time—"between the machine element in modern life—industrial, bureaucratic, military—and the free human spirit which is breaking through in new ways in our time."

Thomson's essays, however, lacked the specificity which had characterized his journalism and broadcasting during the adult education days. "The real trouble," he confessed to Paul Goodman, with whom he had a brief correspondence, "stems from my unwonted and unwanted distance from the scene of action. It takes a proximity which I do not and cannot have to get one's writing as specific and concrete and topical as writings for a monthly periodical should be." Thomson had sent a number of articles to the American magazine, Liberation; Editor Dave Dellinger found them valuable but too synoptic.

Through the early 1960s Thomson shaped his autobiographical notes, begun in the 1950s, and unpublished essays into Turning into Tomorrow.
Published by the Philosophical Library in New York in 1966, *Turning into Tomorrow* was written in a musing style. With a brief autobiographical sketch as backdrop for his reflections, Thomson set out his vision of how an alienated humanity, divided into warring nation-states, split into ideological camps, divided into East and West and on the individual level, into male and female principles, could evolve into a world made whole. Anticipating the "small is beautiful" movement of the 1970s and 1980s, Thomson argued that only a radical restructuring of society, a breaking down of monolithic institutions into decentralized and federated units, would suffice if humankind was to avoid extermination. Thomson lightly sketched his communitarian socialist vision—communities would be created out of federated families and co-personal groups, regions from federated communities and nations would be federations of self-managing regions.

For Thomson, the co-personal group remained the crucible for resolving the great dichotomies. "The goal toward which this kind of group strives," he wrote,

> is the reconciliation and conscious unification of the whole family; the time and place of starting is here and now. All the great opposites of mankind must finally be contained--male and female, Oriental and Occidental, black man and white, individual and collective--within a climate of knowledgeable concern from each to each, and so a sense of belonging.\(^9\)

The co-personal group was, then, an analogue of the whole society. Now, with the threat of nuclear extermination even greater than it was in the mid-1960s, our knowledge of how unliveable and unmanageable our big institutions have become and a deepening awareness of how profoundly our technologies have destroyed the ecological balance of nature, Thomson's
message is more relevant than ever.

On November 25, 1969 the "fighter against his times" died in Vancouver at the age of seventy. Watson Thomson had deeply touched many lives, rare accomplishment for anyone. Letters of celebration and consolation came to Mary Thomson from old friends of Nigeria days, Mitrinovic's circle, former youthful SCMers, intimate associates from the Roslyn Road experiment, and many new friends in and around Vancouver. The tributes were testimonies to a man who had lived adventurously and risked much to create networks of compassion and light in the troubled and dangerous twentieth century. Longtime English friend David Shillan captured the spirit of many letters.

Tears of sorrow at Watson's death,...tears at having to face a world with a still bigger, blacker borderline around it--and without the knowledge that I am sharing my little space on this planet with someone important possessing a kindred sense of tragedy and tragicomedy...

But also tears of gratitude for the gift of having known Watson at all and having shared with him--and you--that fleeting yet permanent sense of solidarity which lends a little light and a little meaning to the darkness and the banality.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

FOOTNOTES

1 "Monthly Newsletter 4.


5 "Monthly Newsletter 4.


8 James Wright, Prairie Progress: Consumer Co-operation in Saskatchewan (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1956), p. 188.

9 Ed Parker to Mrs. "Shorty" Zimmer, April 20, 1945, AED, box 10, conferences file.

10 Watson Thomson to Fred Hart, April 28, 1945, AED, box 10, conferences file.

11 Jim Wright to Watson Thomson, May 14, 1945, AED, box 10, conferences file.

12 Wright to Thomson, May 14, AED, box 10, conferences file.

13 James Wright, Prairie Progress, p. 164.

15. Watson Thomson to George Bickerton, June 11, 1945, AED, box 10, conferences file.


20. Hugh Harvey, an innovative civil servant in the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development, worked as an extension specialist. He spoke to the Landis Conference on "Community Services on a Co-operative Farm."


27. Ibid.


30. Gregory Vlastos to Watson Thomson, October 20, 1945, AED, inter-departmental correspondence file.
A Summary of Comments on "Radio College" and "Living Newspaper" from Saskatchewan Citizens to January 20, 1946, WMHP, plans and procedures, book II.

Max Lerner to Ed Parker, December 24, 1945, WTP 1-4.

A Summary of Comments on "Radio College".

Sidney Hook to Al Johnson, December 7, 1945, AED, box 8, political correspondence, 1944-1946 file.

The Struthers-Thomson correspondence was very bitter. See James Struthers to Watson Thomson, November 13, 1945; Thomson to Struthers, November 28, 1945; Struthers to Thomson, December 3, 1945, all in WTP 1-4; and Struthers to Thomson, December 3, 1945, AED, box 8, political correspondence, 1944-1946 file.

See A. O'Farrell to Al Johnson, January 17, 1946, and Rev. Eugene Cullihane to Fred Williams, November 30, 1945, both in AED, box 8, political correspondence file. Fred Williams sent Cullihane's letter to Douglas on December 6.

W.S. Lloyd to Ed Parker, November 5, 1945, WTP 1-4.

Interview with Ed Parker, February 15, 1982.

Ed Parker to W.S. Lloyd, November 9, 1945, WTP 1-4.

Thomson Resignation Letter, December 31, 1945, RRP.

Thomson's grievances, October 22, 1945 (WTP 1-4):
1. Original Brief to Cabinet on Policy ignored.
2. Premier's invitation to informal discussion with Cabinet never implemented.
3. Hedging re PSSA (in light of original understanding at time of appointment).
4. Refusal to reconsider salary.
5. Obstruction of appts. and promotions (Sept.-Oct. '45).
6. Sending ABR as representative to CAAE Council.
7. Never acknowledging reports of work accomplished (demanded peremptorily).
8. Complete absence of encouragement of any kind at any time.
10. Never visiting the Division.
11. Suggesting that neither Soviet Union nor CCF should be mentioned in our Confidential Newsletter.
12. Insistence that DM/E (sic) keep control.
13. Failure to recommend payment of expenses of trip to S'toon prior to appt. and of moving from W'pg (sic).
Ruth Wilson Roslyn Road, c. November 1945, RRP.

Tommy Douglas to W.S. Lloyd, October 22, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (July-December), box.

T.C. Douglas sent two memos to Lloyd on November 15, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (July-December) box. In the November 17, 1945, issue of The Front Page in the column, "What the Editors said in Radio Caucus," Parker stated: "The Yugoslav election perhaps was not conducted according to our concept of free elections but since it did result in an irrefutable people's support for a communist society, it is hard to dispute the majority will which makes a government popular."

David Orlikow to Fred Williams, November 19, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (July-December) box. On November 10, 1945, in The Front Page Thomson stated: "Democracy as we understand it, is part and parcel of capitalism. Now we can begin to see where the tension comes from. It comes from the fact that there is another aspect of capitalism, as much part of it as the democratic ideals themselves, which is nevertheless in radical opposition to these democratic ideals...The point to be realized here is the inevitably undemocratic, indeed, in the long run anti-democratic, nature of these economic organizations."

C.H. Millard to Tommy Douglas, December 5, 1945.


Tommy Douglas to C. Millard, December 5, 1945, TCDP.


W.S. Lloyd to M.J. Coldwell, December 3, 1945, WSLP, Adult Education, 1945 (July-December) box.

Tommy Douglas to Glen Allen, February 7, 1946, TCDP.

Richards and Pratt suggest as much in Prairie Capitalism. Of the cabinet they say: "Although they variously described themselves as 'progressive,' 'socialist,' and a few even as 'Marxist,' most were in effect Fabians. To the extent they shared a philosophy of social change it was the Fabian faith in the philosopher-bureaucrat who designs and implements change from the centre....Their [Cadbury and his associations] primary commitment was to cabinet government, not to the culture of left populism. They were also hostile to what they identified as syndicalism currents within the crown corporations" (pp. 139-140, 141). Phelps,
Nollett and Brocklebank were on the left in the first Saskatchewan CCF government. Conversations with William Harding, Ed Parker and John Richards also support my observation.

53 Thomson to W.S. lloyd, December 12, 1945, WTP 1-4.

54 Examples of reaction to Thomson and the Adult Education Division: "It now appears that Saskatchewan's government takes a different and most unethical view of the matter. It does not hesitate to use public funds in a campaign to secure converts to a very distinct political belief. One could imagine the uproar that would have followed if Liberal or Conservative governments in Saskatchewan in the past had used taxpayer's money for a similar purpose" (Estevan Mercury, December 13, 1945). After The Front Page folded, a Calgary Albertan editorialist of January 2, 1946, opined: "Fortunately for the proletariat, not many people read 'The Front Page.' Its effort was both juvenile and feeble, and no doubt backfired on most of those who saw it." The moderate Saskatoon Star-Phoenix of January 8, 1946, noted: "The whole course of this incident should convince the Government that the subject of adult education contains more political dynamite than most Governments can safely play around with."

55 Norman Smith to Thomson, November 25, 1945, NSP, Watson Thomson correspondence.

56 Thomson to Smith, November 28, 1945, NSP, W. Thomson correspondence.

57 Thomson to Smith, December 13, 1945, NSP, W. Thomson correspondence.

58 Smith to Thomson, December 16, 1945, WTP 1-4.

59 Smith to T.C. Douglas, December 16, 1945, NSP.

60 Glen Allen to Thomson, Sun. 27th [no month or year] WTP 1-5.

61 Allen to Douglas, January 27, 1946, TCDP.

62 Gregory Vlastos to Watson Thomson, January 16, 1945, WTP 1-5.

63 Vlastos to Thomson, January 31, 1946, WTP 1-5.

64 L.L. Lloyd to Thomson, December 17, 1945, WTP 1-4.

65 Art Wirick to Thomson, December 18, 1945, WTP 1-4.


68 Prince Albert Herald, December 22, 1945.


71 Jim Wright to Watson Thomson, December 13, 1945, WTP 1-4.

72 Wright to Thomson, December 28, 1945, WTP 1-4.

73 Fred Hart to Watson Thomson, December 30, 1945, WTP 1-4.

74 Watson Thomson to Jim Wright, WTP 1-4.

75 Thomson to Roslyn Road, January 8, 1946, RRP.

76 Thomson Resignation Letter, December 31, 1945, RRP.

77 T.C. Douglas to Glen Allen, February 7, 1946, TCDP.

78 Thomson, "Letter to the Editor", undated, WTP 1-5.

79 Thomson to Jim Wright, January 5, 1946, WTP 1-4.

80 W.S. Lloyd to Fred Hart, January 22, 1946, WTP 1-5.

81 Watson Thomson Resignation Letter, RRP.

82 W.S. Lloyd to Fred Hart, January 22, 1946, WTP 1-5.

83 Watson Thomson Resignation Letter, RRP.

84 WTP 2-5, p. 196.

85 WTP 2-2, p. 111.


89. Watson Thomson to Roy Daniells, February 13, 1966, in my possession.


92. David Shillan to Mary Thomson, December 8, 1969, in my possession.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to build a composite picture of Watson Thomson, the Scottish-Canadian proponent of transformative-communitarian adult education. Thomson's priorities, aims, strategies, values, achievements and failures as an adult educator all throw light on a moment of highest importance in the social history of Canada. In this sense, Thomson's career "explains" something of the social-intellectual context of his times. At the same time, "To Be and Build" shows how the context accounts for Thomson. Together, the thesis sheds light on the mildly revolutionary atmosphere which gripped Canada in the mid-1940s, and which resulted in the appearance after 1945 of the so-called welfare state.

The opening chapters examined the educative influences which shaped Thomson's motivational structure and world-view. Thomson was "radicalized" in the First World War. He believed by 1918 that bourgeois civilization was at a dead-end, lacking spiritual depth. True individuality had withered. The person was no longer an end in himself. At the same time, deep community was no longer possible. Only transformation could solve the problem of cultural fragmentation. The whole capitalist social and economic order had to be radically restructured. How was this to be accomplished?

Living and struggling with Dimitrije Mitrinovic, prophet of the co-personal revolution, suggested to Thomson the means of renewal. Here the constituent elements of his transformative-communitarian vision were put in place. Thomson believed, anticipating the mass society critics of the 1950s, that industrial civilization had eroded truly communal forms of
association. Man's life was no longer whole and the revolutionary goal was to recover this lost dimension. Men and women were now egocentric and acquisitive. Still, they had creative potential. Through a psychotherapeutic process in small, intentional communities, the social shell could be penetrated, individual potential and, ultimately, creative social energy, released. One returned to community through mystic conversion.

Once liberated from egoism and crippling defence mechanisms, individuals had to work to extend the personalist revolution outward. This peculiar radicalism eschewed the Marxian notion of the revolutionary proletariat. Thomson was critical of the "scientist" mentality of Marxism—its narrow rationalism and commitment to inhumane, centralized industry. Instead, the "person" was the end toward which revolutionary action progressed. If this were not so, human beings could be debased under pretext of their liberation. For communitarian socialists, adult education was essential. Men and women could be awakened and educated to be and build the new world. Throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, Thomson articulated the fundamental ethical principles he thought ought to guide post war reconstruction. He was much less concerned with "nuts-and-bolts" socio-economic issues. His was a politics of visionary imagination.

Thomson took this vision and attempted to put it into practice in the Canadian context—Alberta from 1937-1940, Manitoba from 1941-1944 and Saskatchewan from 1944-1946. A critical examination of Thomson's educational thought and practice shows a consistent modus operandi. Thomson's commitment to the microscopic "Kingdom of God on earth" (genuine fellowship between a handful of people) and macroscopic total change (challenging the vested interests) allowed him considerable
pedagogic room to maneuver. He could support the small study-group as training cell for participatory democracy and caring human relations. He could encourage all co-operative ventures. He could try to bring farm and labour, town and country together to consider global development strategies. He could attempt to catalyze farm leaders and adult educators to consider the Northern Plains as a cultural unit. He could wholeheartedly initiate study-action programs to mobilize 500,000 Saskatchewanites for fundamental social change. He could engage in civic education projects such as the Jewish refugee question. And he could support the national Citizens' Forum. Thomson wanted nothing less than a more generous and just social order.

Study-groups were to be spearheads of social change. He hoped that these groups, beginning as small centres of light and reflection, would multiply, eventually illuminating the whole landscape. Guided by the vision of a new, fully-co-operative social order, these groups would initiate the new revolution. Thomson's spearhead theory was most successful in Saskatchewan where he found support in a left populist culture. More research on this point will be needed. The present study suggests the persistence of a rather weak movement towards cultural revitalization in Western Canada in the 1930s and 1940s. It is not possible yet to analyze definitively the relationship between nonformal education, social movements and policy outcomes (i.e. measurable changes in values or institutional structures). anywhere. Research on the impact of the folk high school in Scandinavian countries links adult education to the emergence of a humane, welfare state. In contrast, this thesis only hints at the link between the emergent welfare state and nonformal education. Studies of the impact of nonformal education on community life
are needed. The best way to accomplish this would be detailed community and regional studies.

Thomson's ideas resonated with small but significant cultural currents in labour, farm, religious and community organizations. These ideas came not just from the social gospel movement, or from eccentric prairie agrarian populists. We have discovered a hitherto underestimated and unsuspected network of ideas and hopes that spanned North American and European continents. We have uncovered the presence of a "third force" on the Canadian left—a personalist left. This loose grouping had three essential characteristics. First, they were communitarian socialists who linked personal transformation to the building "from below" of a voluntarily socialized society. They were committed to co-operation as a total way of life. They were interested in communitarian socialist experiments as embryonic, anticipatory institutions of the future new order. Second, they were sharply critical of representative democracy. They wanted to build regionally and community-based forms of participatory governance and to develop an indigenous culture, reflecting the prairie ethos. Third, they were internationalist in outlook. They believed in the unity of people's movements everywhere. This unity, they thought, was deeper than political partisanship. The PSSA, in spite of its failure, symbolizes this utopian longing for a new world order of federated nation-states. Their hopes were dashed in the Cold War era.

The final task, to assess Thomson's accomplishments and limitations as an adult educator, is the most difficult. If we use Thomson's ultimate goal--total change--as criterion of judgment, then Thomson failed. But that would be a harsh and simplistic judgment. First, Thomson had a huge impact on individual lives. Thomson's own passionate
commitment to justice and openness to others served as a model for others. After encountering Thomson, some were galvanized to take risks, others to conduct experiments and to act imaginatively in the world. Roslyn Road was testimony to this impact. For many rural Western Canadians in the late 1930s and 1940s, dangerous and disturbing years, Thomson opened a window on the larger world of global politics. Individuals were helped to make sense of world events, to see life as an indivisible whole. That was Thomson's message to his fellow activists—one could not compartmentalize life. The impact of this kind of global view is difficult to assess empirically. It operates outside the usually evidencible intellectual, cultural, social and economic events. Historians tend to see outcomes and not actors' motivations and spiritual reasons for acting.

Second, Thomson energetically participated in a remarkable range of adult education ventures and experiments. Without unduly celebrating Thomson's work, we simply point to his role in founding WEA Chapters in Calgary and Edmonton, his axial role in the Alberta School of Community Life and the support he generated in the UFA in the late 1930s. He played a small part in revitalizing rural Manitoban communities in often dreadful conditions. The Northern Plains project, while it never got off the ground, was a bold attempt to challenge the centralization of Canadian politics and culture. Thomson provided philosophical perspective for the CAAE at a key moment in its history. And the Roslyn Road and PSSA experiments point to the presence of avant-garde themes in the Canadian intellectual culture of the 1940s. His most disappointing experience was, of course, in T.C. Douglas' Saskatchewan. Nevertheless, Thomson provided Saskatchewan with the language and administrative devices for taking the government to the people, thereby influencing the course of
Saskatchewan history. The extent of this influence awaits further research.

In our own troubled period, when adult education has become professionalized, becalmed and technicized, Thomson's advocacy perspective provides a needed counterpoint. His social theory of education remains as pertinent as it did in the mid-1940s.
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