Hegemony Secured: Social Credit and the Crippling of the Alberta Left, 1935-1971

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Introduction

Even after the election of a New Democratic Party (NDP) government in 2015, both scholarly and non-scholarly narratives about Alberta's political culture often exclusively emphasize an intransigent and long-standing tradition of conservatism. Alberta is spoken of as a place with a "distinctly conservative political character" where successful political campaigns speak to favoured conservative themes of *laissez-faire* economics, individualism, and provincial autonomy.[1] These types of assessments, which focus on the second half of the twentieth century, often obscure the reality that there once did exist a flourishing reformist, and even radical, political culture in the province. Indeed, during the 1920s and 30s Alberta was the site of a number of remarkable movements and moments in Canadian left history. Most notable among these were the election and governance of the United Farmers of Alberta from 1921 to 1935, the founding of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in Calgary in 1932, and the election of Canada's first Communist town council in Blairmore in 1933. That these sorts of seminal moments in the history of Canadian leftism occurred in the province of Alberta suggests that historian Alvin Finkel may even be understating matters when he claims that, "Alberta's political culture before 1935 did not crowd out left-wing forces."[2] Leftist organizations of various types had a real and sizeable appeal for large numbers of Albertans of this era.[3] However, in the period from 1935 to 1971, the political culture in Alberta changed drastically. The Social Credit government that swept to power in the election of 1935, and dominated

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[1] Jared J. Wesley, *Code Politics: Campaigns and Cultures on the Canadian Prairies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 55-113. Quotation from page 55.
[2] Alvin Finkel. *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), xi.
[3] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 13-40.

provincial politics for more than 35 years afterwards, engaged in a successful conservative ideological project which decimated Alberta's leftist movement. That decimation is the topic of this work.

The process by which Social Credit worked against the provincial left can be described as an exercise of hegemony. Hegemony, as Marxist political theorist Antonio Gramsci conceived of it, is the process whereby a ruling group in a society seeks to impose a certain worldview upon that society such that the people within it are not likely to think about the world in terms which might threaten the interests of the ruling group. In Canada, for example, hegemony has been defined by the imposition of a "liberal order" in which the tenets and structures of liberalism – capitalist markets, parliamentary democracy – "seem to be just like natural phenomena, to which no sensible person can object."[4] The maintenance of this hegemonic apparatus, then, "is characterized by a combination of force and consent which balance each other so that force does not overwhelm consent but rather appears to be backed by the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion."[5] But, of course, there are people in any society who find themselves outside the hegemonic group, willing to question the "common-sense" of the prevailing framework. In the context of Social Credit Alberta specifically, these counter-hegemonic actors were known, just as they were known in a great many other places, as socialists, communists, and social-democrats. In other words, they were leftists.

Hegemony, as Gramsci emphasizes, involves "an alternation of insurrections and repressions" which take unique and varied forms in any place based on the existing historical conditions which happen to prevail there.[6] The existence of this alternation is what makes

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[4] Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005): 62.
[5] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 156.
[6] Gramsci, 155.

hegemony a process rather than just a thing, a process which involves daily efforts on *multiple*

fronts to secure and maintain support for a political project. So, while hegemony is primarily

about the maintenance of a particular political worldview, or ideology, it is a process which takes

place in multiple realms beyond the simply ideal. Jonathan Joseph summarizes this point:

> A materialist theory of hegemony depends upon the fact that it refers, not just to the articulation of ideological factors, but also to the material forms which generate these ideologies and to the social agents who may be attracted to them. Hegemony acts as an extrinsic articulator, not just of ideas, but of many practices – ideological, cultural, political and economic, and the specific institutions of the state, civil society, and the economy. A hegemonic project uses ideas to make its case, but to make advances, it needs to organise people and relate to social and economic developments.[7]

It is this sort of materialist conception of hegemony which animates this analysis of the Social

Credit era in Alberta.

The goal of this work, then, is to understand the "social and economic developments"

related to Social Credit's conservative hegemonic project, a task which necessitates the adoption

of a broad analytical scope allowing for the consideration of developments taking place far

beyond the provincial borders of Alberta. Indeed, Social Credit's successful creation of a

securely conservative hegemonic order in Alberta, and the attendant crippling of the counter-

hegemonic movements on the left, can *only* be properly explained via reference to provincial,

national, and international trends, and the ways in which these trends related the creation of such

an order. Now, to be sure, each of the three leftist movements against Social Credit varied in the

degree to which their fates were tied up with goings on within and without Alberta. The

Communist movement, by virtue of its strong ties to the Soviet Union, was affected largely by

international events. The socialist CCF, distinctly Western Canadian in its origins and character,

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[7] Jonathan Joseph, *Hegemony: A Realist Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2002): 219.

was most affected by provincial factors. And the movement for social-democracy in Alberta was thwarted primarily by Social Credit's reference to national trends in explanation of the superiority of conservatism. But by taking Communism, socialism, and social-democracy to all be a part of a more general counter-hegemonic leftist movement, it becomes possible to understand Social Credit's exercise of conservative hegemony in a fuller way. It becomes apparent that over the course of the Social Credit era in Alberta, it was a combination of provincial, national, and international conditions that enabled the crippling of the provincial leftist movement.

The definition of "leftist" that animates this argument is borrowed from Ian McKay: "Anybody who shares four key insights – that is, into capitalism's injustice, the possibility of equitable democratic alternatives, the need for social transformation, and the real-world development of the preconditions of this social transformation in the actual world around us – can be called a leftist."[8] In the context of Alberta during the Social Credit regime, as has been indicated already, this definition maps onto three main groups: communists, socialists, and social-democrats. As such, in chapter one I will discuss the Communist Party of Canada's Alberta activities, chapter two will assess the socialist challenge to conservatism embodied primarily in the CCF, and the final chapter will deal with the creation of the NDP and its social-democratic opposition to the Social Credit regime.

Communists, socialists, and social-democrats in Alberta each fit this broad definition of "leftist," but there were important ideological disparities between these groups which must be stipulated. Communists were the most radical of the three, as Communist Party members

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[8] McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals,* 32-33.

believed in working towards revolutionary change that would ultimately bring about an economic order in which production and distribution were animated by the famous principle, "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!"[9] That said, Communists in Alberta during the period in which they are considered herein were aware that such change was not particularly imminent. As such, Communist Party members in the province concerned themselves primarily with bringing about the preconditions from which their vision of society could be established. Socialists in the CCF, less radical in their vision, advocated for a planned economic system, which they described as the Co-operative Commonwealth, where production and distribution would be organized by the state with an aim at providing for human needs in the most equitable possible fashion. The primary method through which they believed this could be accomplished was via public ownership of various industries, and because this was a vision for which the social preconditions were more firmly established, socialists in Alberta during the Social Credit era occupied themselves with openly advocating social transformation along socialist lines. Finally, social-democrats in the NDP, who became active in Alberta during the 1960s when conservative hegemony had already been solidly entrenched by Social Credit, were focused on creating the preconditions from which socialism could return to the provincial political consciousness. They focused on individual political and economic issues, refraining from advocating for wholesale societal transformation for which there was little provincial appetite.

The historical study of these leftist groups and their relationship to the hegemonic Social Credit government that so successfully resisted them involves linking a series of distinct

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[9] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2010): 347. Originally published 1875.

historiographies. Scholars, traditionally, have not been inclined to treat the left as a general movement, preferring instead to embrace a sectarian view of counter-hegemonic movements which emphasizes the differences between these groups rather than acknowledging the fundamental similarities.[10] This trend has prevailed in scholarship on the left in Alberta as well, resulting in the current reality that while there are distinct bodies of literature on the individual leftist movements, they are not linked as strongly as they ought to be. Each of the constituent chapters herein contain exegetical sections on the particular historiographical trends related to the three leftist movements considered and, as such, those trends will not be dealt with here. At this stage, it only needs to be made clear that the approach taken in this analysis is one which rejects the sectarian trend in the existing literature. The result of such an approach, as mentioned already, is that it enables a fuller understanding of the historical developments –provincial, national, and international – that were related to Social Credit's hegemonic campaign against the provincial left.

Finally, then, it remains to establish some historical background to the analysis that unfolds in the body chapters of this work. The support for leftist thought and ideology that existed in Alberta prior to 1935 can perhaps be best understood via an account of the economic conditions that prevailed in Alberta during the early 1930s. The province, at the time, was still a primarily rural one, with approximately 70 percent of residents living in population centres with fewer than 1000 people. Agriculture was the dominant industry – 100,000 farms in a province of less than 800,000 people – and the majority of employment in non-agricultural industries like service and finance was indirectly created by production in the farm sector. Large-scale industrial manufacturing, the traditional site for left-wing organizing around the world during

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[10] McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 23-24.

this time-period, accounted for only 11.5 percent of provincial employment. Whatever the specifics of economic organization in Alberta were, though, the commonality shared across industries was the strife caused by the Great Depression. Farmers were regularly forced to abandon their land as the debt-load they carried often could not be managed as incomes fell. Workers in resource-based and urban industries suffered under lax labour standards and, as was characteristic of most Depression economies, there was widespread provincial unemployment. These were the material conditions that attracted large numbers of workers and farmers to political organizing efforts on the left.[11]

The group which most successfully channeled the fervour for politico-economic reform in the 1930s, oddly enough, was Social Credit. While the Social Credit government ultimately turned out to be a vehemently conservative one, it swept to power on a staunchly anti-business, pro-reform economic platform that picked up on the pre-existing traditions of reformism and radicalism in the province. Social Credit garnered support from a broad coalition of farmers and other workers and won the 1935 provincial election in a landslide, taking 54 of 63 available legislative seats.[12] At first, this moment ought to have appeared as a victory for the left in Alberta. The political wing of the UFA, in government since 1921, had become increasingly conservative during the Depression and Social Credit seemed in many ways to offer a legitimate left alternative to the status quo. Voters in 1935 could scarcely have foreseen that Social Credit

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[11] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 15-18. My separate mentioning of farmers and workers is considered and purposeful. My intention is not to suggest that farmers do not work. Rather, the separation indicates the essential difference between the two groups: farmers own land while workers own only their labour.

[12] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Thursday, August 22, 1935." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1935

would only govern in accordance with its reformist 1935 platform for a short time before becoming an entirely business-friendly organization of Cold Warriors and reactionaries.[13]

It is difficult to pinpoint a precise or singular moment when it became obvious that Social Credit would abandon the platform of monetary reform that was so popular during the election campaign of 1935. Regardless, from as early as the late 1930s until the end of the regime in 1971, Social Credit operated as an undoubtedly conservative party in both its social and economic policies. Premier Ernest Manning, who led the party from 1943 to 1968, vehemently opposed any collectivist or redistributive economic policies, engaged in crack-downs on civil rights, and suppressed the provincial labour movement in a successful project designed to impose a strictly conservative hegemonic order in Alberta. In this way, the period of the Social Credit "dynasty" from 1935 to 1971 had a distinctly dual character. The dynasty was at once borne from a definitively leftist political tradition and eventually sustained by the implementation of a decidedly right-wing socioeconomic programme.[14]

It ought to seem quite odd that a government that rose to power on a platform of economic reform, a platform which was popular insofar as it reflected the demands of a flourishing leftist movement, would turn entirely away from its initial electoral promises without a rebuke from voters at the polls. But, of course, this is precisely what happened with Social Credit in Alberta. Despite Social Credit's rightward shift, it was not seriously challenged in any election until it lost one to another conservative party in 1971. In fact, in most of the elections contested between 1935 and 1967, the party won an almost laughable number of legislative seats each time. In the most lopsided result, from the election contest of 1963, Social Credit MLAs

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[13] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 35-40.
[14] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 4-5.

were elected to serve in 60 of the 63 available seats.[15] Explaining how this was possible requires

accounting for how provincial leftist movements were suppressed and resisted in the decades of

Social Credit's governance. And such an account can only be accomplished via reference to

provincial, national, and international developments and the ways in which these developments

contributed to the counter-hegemonic failure of the Alberta left.

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[15] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Monday, June 17, 1963." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1963

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Internationally Assisted: Social Credit and the De-Legitimation of the Alberta Communist Movement

Despite always being a relatively small organization – probably never having more than a thousand members in Alberta – the Communist Party once held a significant degree of influence amongst both farmers and workers in the province.[16] Beginning in the years just prior to the election of Social Credit in 1935, and continuing for at least a decade afterwards, the Communist Party was a genuinely formidable political entity provincially.[17] Yet before the 1940s had come to a close, Communism had all but fallen off the political map in Alberta. After reaching its organizational peak in the late 1930s, the Communist Party began to decline quickly as Social Credit moved to the right and took every available measure to ensure that ordinary Albertans would cease to see the appeal of Communist thought. Such activity on the part of Social Credit was made possible largely because the Alberta Communist Party was so closely associated with the Soviet Union and the Communist International (Comintern). International Communist policies regarding the Second World War rendered bleak the prospects for the provincial movement and after the "hot" war ended, the onset of the Cold War provided an opportunity for Social Credit to further cement its conservative hegemonic order against the threat of Communism. The Communist movement in Alberta, then, was decimated by the end of the 1940s mainly because of international developments that delegitimized the provincial Communist Party.

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[16] The Alberta Communist Party was simply a provincial arm of the larger Communist Party of Canada.

[17] Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989): 26.

The current state of historical literature on the Communist Party in Alberta is defined by a remarkable paucity of scholarly attention. The most thorough scholarly treatment of the provincial Party is contained in Alvin Finkel's comprehensive history of the Social Credit era in Alberta, where, in the early chapters at least, he devotes serious attention to explanations of the Party's status during the 1930s and 1940s.[18] Aside from Finkel's work, what little scholarship there is on the Alberta movement appears mostly in brief sections of national histories like Norman Penner's *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* and Ivan Avakumovic's *The Communist Party in Canada: A History.*[19] A large part of gleaning a coherent history of the Party's activities in Alberta during the Social Credit era amounts to endeavoring a synthesis of these works. Fortunately, such a synthesis can be supplemented with primary source material, as there exists a relative abundance of autobiographical literature published by activists who were leaders of the Communist movement in Alberta. Between these primary accounts, the small amount of related scholarship, and a number of other sources which establish general historical context, this chapter presents a history of the Communist movement in Alberta which is historiographically unique mostly insofar as it attempts something which has not been done elsewhere. The actual argument advanced, that counter-hegemonic Communism failed because of unfavourable international conditions, cannot be pitched against any historiographical consensus because no such consensus exists.

Now, before assessing the decimation of the Communist movement in Alberta, it remains to establish that there was something to decimate in the first place. The Communist Party first became prominent in Alberta after gaining influence in unions of unemployed workers

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[18] See Finkel, *Social Credit*.

[19] Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988); Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975).

which, because people were unemployed in very large numbers during the Depression of the early 1930s, represented a not inconsiderable sphere of influence. Communists within these unions, as well as in more well-known unions of employed workers like the Mine Workers Union of Canada and the Worker's Unity League, successfully organized a variety of strikes and other campaigns in both rural and urban contexts. It was in this capacity, channeling the discontent of many Albertans into militant demonstrations in favour of particular demands, that Communists were most effective. As Alvin Finkel points out, "wholesale calls for restructuring the economy or organizing bloody revolution to achieve a classless society" were not ideas that Communists could effectively promote in Alberta, but maintaining a sense of rank-and-file political militancy amongst organized workers and farmers was something that Communists could and did do successfully.[20] In fact, during the lead-up to the election of 1935, which was won in landslide fashion by Social Credit, Communist-organized rallies routinely garnered crowds as large as those that were found at demonstrations in favour of Social Credit.[21]

The efficacy with which Communists were able to organize and mobilize Albertans during the Depression did not, for the most part, translate into electoral success. At least not on the provincial stage.[22] The only resounding electoral success to arise out of Communist organizing was the election of a Communist town council, or "red administration," in the small mining town of Blairmore in 1933.[23] This municipal election, the result of which arose at least partially out of the role played by the Communist-led Mine Workers Union in the Crowsnest

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[20] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 27.
[21] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 26-28.
[22] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 27-28.
[23] Kyle Franz, "Painting the Town Red: The 'Communist' Administration at Blairmore, Alberta, 1933-1936" (M.A. thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2007): 138. The local administration would retain members with Communist ties or sympathies, such as mayor Enoch Williams, into the 1940s.

Pass Strike of 1932, was a unique political event for the Communist Party in Alberta.[24] Despite the large rallies they organized during the months preceding the 1935 election, the nine candidates run by the Party that year only won 5771 votes, a total which amounted to a mere 1.91 percent of the total vote.[25] Still, the 1935 election did not serve to discourage the Alberta Communist Party, or dampen its enthusiastic organizational efforts in the province, to any large extent. Quite the contrary, the Party saw the election as an opportunity moving forward. For Alberta Communists, the election of Social Credit demonstrated a crack in the provincial hegemonic apparatus, to borrow a phrase from Gramsci. It showed the willingness of many Albertans to reject traditional politics and the Party sought to begin the process of parlaying this apparent willingness into an increased number of supporters of counter-hegemonic Communism.[26]

That Alberta Communists should have perceived this political moment as one of opportunity may have seemed a little odd at first pass, given that the Communist Party of Canada's (CPC) newspaper, *The Worker*, had repeatedly described Social Credit as a fascist organization before the election. But this pre-election rhetoric was a symptom of the global Communist Party line before 1935, a hyper-sectarian position which held that all but the most vehement Communists were enemies of the world revolution. After 1935 and the Seventh Party Congress of the Comintern, this sectarian policy gave way to what is typically referred to as the

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[24] The role of 1932 strike in the election of the Blairmore town council is somewhat ambiguous. In his thesis, a main argument advanced by Franz is that explaining the election simply via reference to the Communist role in the strike is inadequate. In *Social Credit*, page 27, Finkel does attribute the election result to the strike without discussing any additional factors, though he only mentions it in passing and has no argumentative stake in the claim.
[25] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Thursday, August 22, 1935." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1935
[26] Avakumovic, *Communist Party,* 108.

"Popular Front" strategy.[27] This strategy was outlined in a speech by Bulgarian Communist

Georgi Dimitrov in which he allowed for Communist cooperation with all sorts of theretofore

maligned groups, stressing the need for the "unity of the working class against fascism."[28] The

change in tone from Alberta Communists after the election result of 1935, then, was contiguous

with this broader shift and ought to be seen as an indication that "they realized the implications

of the new line of the Communist International, and the extent to which Social Credit represented

a reaction against the Canadian Establishment."[29] Also demonstrated by this shift was just how

attached the Alberta Communist movement was to international Communist policies – a

harbinger of coming developments.

Coincident with the onset of the Popular Front era, the first term of the Social Credit

government under the premiership of William Aberhart, from 1935-1940, was an enigmatic one.

While it was "not until the 1940s that Social Credit took a firm stance in favour of capitalists

over labour," the first term still did not bring about many of the anti-business monetary reforms

that had made the party attractive during the 1935 election.[30] Once in office, Aberhart had

realized that the money for a number of his proposed policies was not available and that there

were inescapable legal impediments to called-for reforms in banking.[31] The Communist Party

had anticipated this and hoped that the inability of Social Credit to follow through on campaign

promises would lead disillusioned Albertans into their ranks. As the first term of the Social

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[27] James R. Barrett, "Rethinking the Popular Front," *Rethinking Marxism* Vol. 21 No. 4 (September 2009): 531.
[28] Georgi Dimitorv, "Unity of the Working Class against Fascism:
Concluding speech before the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International." Accessed at
https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/unity.html
[29] Avakumovic, *Communist Party*, 108.
[30] Eric Strikwerda and Alvin Finkel, "War, Repression, and Depression, 1914-1939," in *Working People in Alberta: A History*, ed. Alvin Finkel (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2012): 103.
[31] Strikwerda and Finkel, 103.

Credit government unfolded, then, Communists actively sought cooperation with displeased Social Crediters in an attempt to make Popular Front strategy work in Alberta.[32]

The primary method of fostering this sort of cooperation with the Social Credit movement was through electoral alliances. These alliances were opposed from the top by Aberhart and his government, but they were acceptable amongst Social Credit members who were unimpressed by the government's performance. In a 1936 provincial by-election contest in Edmonton, for example, Margaret Crang ran on a joint Communist-Social Credit ticket after she was nominated at a "united front" meeting of groups from both parties. Crang did not get elected as the left vote wound up being split between her and another candidate run by the CCF, but this was only the first of a number of attempts at electoral cooperation between the Communists and Social Crediters. In municipal elections in the city of Calgary in 1938, an informal alliance between the parties resulted in the election of a Communist alderman, Patrick Lenihan.[33] Lenihan, who participated in the Sinn Féin movement to oppose British rule in Ireland before immigrating to Canada, had spent much of the 1930s travelling around Alberta organizing strikes and demonstrations on behalf of the Communist Party. Notably, he also spent time living in Blairmore. As a result of these activities, as well as regular appearances on Calgary radio, by 1938 Lenihan "was the best known Party person in the City of Calgary."[34] His known status, in addition to the ability to work with Social Credit, secured him a seat on the city council and the chance to "use the Council chambers as a tribune from where [he] could express the views and the needs and desires of the working people… of Calgary."[35]

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[32] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 49.
[33] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 50.
[34] Patrick Lenihan, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism*, ed. Gilbert Levine (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1998): 127.
[35] Lenihan, 128.

The sorts of alliances that got Lenihan elected were a particularly contentious matter for Aberhart, and he made very clear his displeasure with jointly developed municipal platforms. Writing to the secretary-treasurer of the Calgary provincial constituency association, which enrolled about a quarter of Social Credit's provincial members as of 1937, Aberhart suggested that the 1938 Calgary platform's unequivocal support for the development of trade unionism in the city was "a pure labour plank to which Social Credit could not wholly subscribe."[36] For Aberhart, cooperation with Communists and the necessarily attendant support for labour-friendly policies could not be entirely accommodated under his legislative agenda and he counseled against alliances accordingly. At least at this point in 1938, Social Credit members in Calgary did not listen. But this rift between Aberhart and the general membership of his party prefigured the direction in which the government was headed, with its rightward shift already becoming apparent.[37]

Despite success stories like the election of Lenihan in 1938, the advent of the Popular Front era, and the stark change of course that it represented for Communists in Alberta, was not always handled as effectively as it could have been. Tim Buck, the General Secretary of the CPC at the time, at one point criticized those cooperating with Social Credit, accusing them of "simply aligning the Communist Party in a position that can be interpreted as one of unqualified support of Aberhart."[38] This accusation was then contradicted later on in 1938, when Buck wrote in an edition of the *Daily Clarion* that a group calling itself the "People's League," created by Conservative and Liberal Party members in Alberta, had to be actively opposed in its effort to bring down the Aberhart government. For Buck, replacing the Social Credit government at this

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[36] Quoted in Finkel, *Social Credit*, 51.
[37] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 50-52.
[38] Tim Buck, *The Road Ahead* (Toronto: New Era, 1937), 51.

point would have been a "calamity for the people of Alberta."[39] So, the position of CPC officials

on cooperation in Alberta was far from consistent during this period. And while at one point

during the late 1930s there may have been reason for some Communists to believe that there was

a chance to form a coalition with leftist Social Crediters against the right-moving government,

some indecisive management from the top of the CPC partially forestalled such an opportunity.[40]

The sense of a lost opportunity in the failure to engage in truly large-scale cooperation

with malcontented Social Crediters is amplified with hindsight. As the 1930s drew to a close,

frustration amidst the general membership of Social Credit came to a boil because of the

inability, or unwillingness, of the government to keep election promises regarding

unemployment relief. In 1935, Aberhart had campaigned on a commitment to shut down

Depression-era relief camps and distribute a relief dividend of at least twenty-five dollars per

month to every adult, commitments which were not kept. The government made some futile and

transparently perfunctory attempts at relief reform, but constituents province-wide were largely

unsatisfied. In places like Lethbridge where the majority of Social Credit party members were

unemployed workers, there commenced something of an internal insurgency as Aberhart's

offices were inundated with letters that demanded a change in the government's relief policies.

Aberhart would often respond to these letters with barely-concealed hostility, suggesting in a

response to a complaint letter from Calgary, for example, that those asking for reform "had not

the best interests of Social Credit in mind."[41] Between 1937 and 1940, then, this developing

fissure between the Social Credit government and its general membership resulted in a

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[39] Quoted in Avakumovic, *Communist Party*, 109.
[40] Avakumovic, *Communist Party*, 109-110.
[41] Quoted in Finkel, *Social Credit*, 57.

significant exodus of those members that had lost faith in the government's willingness to enact reforms.[42]

Had there been an obvious place for these former Social Crediters to go, like into an organized coalition with Communists, then the result of the 1940 election may have been somewhat different.[43] But as it was, the exodus only served to cement the increasingly apparent conservatism at the top levels of Social Credit, with no significant intra-party resistance to the ongoing rightward shift.[44] And besides, by 1939 international developments had begun to weaken the provincial appeal of Communism, mitigating the significance of other factors. As Ben Swankey, one of the best-known Communists ever to be active in Alberta, notes in an oral history interview he gave to the Alberta Labour History Institute in 2003, "The Communist Party started losing strength in August 1939 after the Soviet German non-aggression pact."[45] Indeed, the signing of the pact, despite the eventual role that the Soviet Union would play in the defeat of Nazism, would serve to enormously and immediately diminish the prominence of the Communist Party in Alberta. The conditions of the pact meant that Communist Parties around the world would oppose the Second World War, a position which alienated the Party and ended the Popular Front era. Historian Norman Penner describes the phenomenon:

> The recasting of the Communist parties along the Seventh Congress blueprint brought about a complete change in the outlook of these parties, their tactics, and their alliances. Most of them, including the Canadian Party, benefitted greatly from these changes. In a

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[42] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 49-59.

[43] I am not claiming here anything like that there would have been a strong Communist caucus in the legislature, hence the qualifier "somewhat."

[44] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 52-59.

[45] The pact entailed an assurance of non-belligerence between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, as well as a clause that neither nation would support any enemies of the other. Ben Swankey, interview with Winston Gereluk, *Alberta Labour History Institute* (2003): 12. Accessed at http://albertalabourhistory.org/interview-transcripts/ben-swanky/. Note that ALHI has here spelled the surname "Swanky." Perhaps I am unaware of a reason for this, but every other place in my research where Swankey has appeared, including in his memoirs, the "Swankey" spelling has been used. I assume accordingly that ALHI's spelling is an unfortunate oversight and opt for the more common spelling.

few months, however, all of these benefits disappeared as the Communist parties, following the lead of the Soviet Union, opposed the war and were completely isolated as a result.[46]

Whereas international Communist policy had been enormously beneficial to the Alberta

Communist Party during the second half of the 1930s, it became equally detrimental as the

Second World War commenced.

The international Communist policy of opposition to the war was not entirely immediate.

For a very brief period, the war was supported and some Alberta Communists actually sought to

enlist in the effort, Patrick Lenihan among them.[47] However, in September of 1939, long before

any enlisted Communists could have seen battle and about a month after the signing of the non-

aggression pact, Stalin issued a directive via the Comintern which began, "The present war is an

imperialist and unjust war for which the bourgeoisie of all the belligerent States bear equal

responsibility. In no country can the Communist Parties or the working class support the war."[48]

The CPC quickly adopted the new anti-war stance, with Tim Buck vowing to work at turning the

war into a "just" and "anti-fascist" conflict before the conclusion of an "early democratic

peace."[49] The most immediate tangible consequence of this opposition to the war in Canada was

that in June of 1940 the CPC became illegal under the War Measures Act. Because of an

international policy of the Comintern, and no matter their personal attitudes towards the conflict,

Alberta Communists were made to hunker down in anticipation of prompt arrest.[50]

Arrests of Communists were made possible by the expansion of the powers vested in the

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) during wartime and justified by the position of the

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[46] Penner, 156.

[47] Lenihan, 132. Another prominent Alberta Communist to enlist was Jack Sereda.

[48] Stalin quoted in Penner, 161.

[49] Buck, in the *Daily Clarion* newspaper, quoted in Penner, 162.

[50] See Lenihan, 135, and Swankey interview, 12-13.

Canadian government that "communists were threatening the nation's industrial war-effort by

fomenting strikes, allegedly to improve the lot of workers but actually as a part of a strategy

devised by the Soviet Union to undermine the strength of the Allies."[51] Amongst those arrested

in Alberta were Swankey and Lenihan, both of whom were jailed within a few months of each

other in Calgary.[52] Neither spent long in jail, though, as along with approximately 100 other

well-known Communists in Canada both were interned as prisoners of war in 1940. Internees

like Lenihan and Swankey were transported by the RCMP to the Eau Claire Internment Camp at

Kananaskis in the Rocky Mountains where they spent a little over a year working and living in

conditions which, so far as internment camps go, were reasonably humane. In most instances, the

camp guards were friendly to Communist internees, and the fact of so many like-minded

individuals being interned together made for a relatively positive camp culture. After

Kananaskis, internees were transported to different camps in Petawawa and Hull, Ontario before

a campaign for their release was eventually successful in 1942.[53] But despite the rather short

period of internment, this episode was not one that the Communist Party in Alberta could easily

withstand. In the provincial election of 1940, which took place a few months after Communists

first started being arrested and few months before the Communist Party was officially declared

illegal, just one Communist candidate ran for office.[54] International policies of the Communist

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[51] Ian Radforth, "Political Prisoners: The Communist Internees," in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, ed. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000): 196.

[52] Interestingly, Swankey writes in his memoirs that he was personally in favour of the War, despite the official position of the CPC. Explaining his stance, he writes of the War that "it had an anti-fascist character right from the start." Lenihan, too, was for the War initially and actually attempted to enlist in 1939 before the CPC changed its position. See Ben Swankey, *What's New: Memoirs of a Socialist Idealist* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford, 2008): 87, and Lenihan, 127. For an interesting take on the flexibility of individual belief in the Communist Party of Canada, see Ian McKay, "Joe Salsberg, Depression-Era Communism, and the Limits of Moscow's Rule," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 21 (2013): 130-142.

[53] Radforth, 194-224.

[54] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Thursday, March 21, 1940." Accessed at web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1940.

Party, in a very short span of time, had undone years of organizational growth and progress for

the Party in Alberta.

One of the conditions for the release of Communist internees was that they each had to

sign two documents, one stating their full support for the Allied war effort and the other

promising not to belong to the Communist Party of Canada so long as it continued to be an

illegal organization under the War Measures Act.[55] Historian Ivan Avakumovic describes this as

an outright prohibition on any political activity, but it was a ban that was not stringently adhered

to by released internees. While the ban on political activity had made organizing under the

banner of Communism an impossible task, Communists across Canada had begun to re-organize

themselves as the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP) in 1942, and when internees like Lenihan and

Swankey returned to Alberta, they violated the ban on political activity and very quickly became

involved in politics again.[56] After arriving in Edmonton in late 1942, Swankey was recruited to

go on an organizing trip to various Alberta mining towns on behalf of the LPP and by 1943

Lenihan had been "put in charge of trade union activity in the City of Calgary."[57] The LPP had

become the organ through which Communist political expression was possible in Alberta, as in

the rest of Canada, though despite this newfound political vehicle Communism would never

again appeal to Albertans as it did in the era of the Popular Front between 1935 and 1940. The

counter-hegemonic opportunity that seemed to present itself during the 1930s had been missed.

Presumably, most of the would-have-been Communist candidates had either been arrested or were avoiding the public eye for fear that they would be.

[55] Penner, 186.

[56] It should be noted here that while the re-organization into the LPP began in 1942, it was not formalized until a founding convention took place in Toronto in August of 1943.

[57] Swankey, *What's New*, 108 and Lenihan, 152.

The period of Communist internment roughly corresponded to the period when Social Credit began to earnestly work towards the establishment of a distinctively conservative hegemonic order in Alberta. In the aforementioned election of 1940, the most considerable challenge to Social Credit had actually come from the right in the form of a coalition of business-class candidates who had organized under an Independent banner. Independents had no real uniting ideology, but ran simply on a platform of vague opposition to the (very timid) attempts at reform made by Social Credit in their first term. They turned this protest campaign into about 42 percent of the popular vote, nearly matching the 43 percent of votes that Social Credit received in what would be the closest provincial election contest until 1971. That a substantial right-wing challenge to Social Credit was even possible indicates how, before 1940, Social Credit was still seen to be an anti-business and reformist party despite its failure to implement most of its 1935 platform. Perhaps, given what had occurred in the election, Aberhart realized how electorally powerful a rightward shift could be, given that from 1940 until his death in 1943, he "exhibited an increasing unwillingness… to entertain left-wing views."[58] He became stridently opposed to talk of public ownership in industry, abandoned previous rhetoric about implementing maximum income legislation, and started to oppose non-contributory insurance models which had had considerable purchase among Communists and other leftist groups. If Social Credit's conservatism could be doubted or debated during the 1930s, it was quickly ceasing to be a questionable matter in the early 1940s.[59]

While during the early 1940s Aberhart had been in full retreat from previously espoused leftist policies, decisively shifting Social Credit to the right, his conservatism paled in

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[58] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 76.
[59] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 76-78.

comparison to that of his successor, Ernest Manning. Under Manning, who became premier after

Aberhart's death in 1943, Social Credit abandoned its early identity as an "umbrella reform

group" and became "engaged in a virulent anti-socialist campaign."[60] Manning immediately

began work to obliterate the previous ideological vagueness of the Social Credit government

which had made possible the sorts of alliances that were undertaken by Communists and Social

Crediters in the late 1930s. A central aspect of this process was the commencement of a

rhetorical project which posited the bizarre theory that leftists of all kinds in Alberta and

elsewhere were engaged in a conspiratorial alliance with financiers.[61] Consider, as an

emblematic example, Manning's response to a Calgary Social Credit group which had proposed

an alliance with the LPP and CCF in a 1943 by-election. Manning opposed such an alliance by

saying, in part:

> In the past the present financial dictatorship established itself through control financial institutions until it was able to dominate all phases of our economic life but people generally, at least in this province, have become wise to this form of dictatorship … finance today is seeking to strengthen its dictatorship by subtely [sic] advocating the doctrine of a supreme state. In other words it is determined to strengthen its now shaky position by augmenting its present control by the establishment of dictatorship in another field, namely that of Government. This is the ultimate end of all forms of socialism.[62]

Perhaps the most notable consequence of such rhetoric was that it altered the direction of Social

Credit's political ire. Whereas Social Credit had risen to power on the strength of a platform

which held that the finance industry was a primary impediment to the greater good of society,

this new line advanced the "view that the socialists were even a greater menace to liberty than

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[60] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 82.

[61] Sound anti-Semitic? For a comprehensive account of anti-Semitism in Social Credit see Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

[62] Quoted in Finkel, *Social Credit*, 86.

were the financiers and that the two were, in any case, united in their efforts to enslave the ordinary people of the world."[63]

The Manning government's rightward turn also coincided with a rapidly growing wartime economy in the province. While total provincial income had been as low as $146 million in 1933, by 1942 the gross value of agricultural production alone was $346 million. The resource economy was also growing quickly and the formerly anti-business Social Credit government was now courting significant support from moneyed corporate interests in the province. Additionally, the increased funds in provincial coffers were used to substantially increase government spending in the education and healthcare sectors. This rather sudden expansion of the provincial economy, especially insofar as it partially manifested in improvements in education and healthcare services, made many Albertans reticent to entertain the idea of changing governments.[64] So come the election of 1944, even though Alberta Communists were able to regain some of the status they lost during internment, not much would change. Still operating under the banner of the LPP, the Communists were able to run 30 candidates for provincial office, an impressive recovery from the previous election in 1940, but they did not win a single seat. Social Credit, meanwhile, increased its seat total from 36 to 51, thereby strengthening the legislative base from which it exercised hegemony.[65]

A year later, in 1945, the end of Second World War brought with it the onset of the global Cold War, the international development which would be most decisive in terms of the

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[63] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 82-86. Quote from page 86. It is also worth noting here, if only in a footnote, that the word "socialist" as used by Manning is functioning broadly. That is, by "socialist" he is referring to the left generally, including the Communist left.

[64] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 90-92.

[65] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Tuesday, August 8, 1944." Accessed at web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1944

harm it did to the Alberta Communist movement. Ben Swankey was the leader of the Alberta

LPP during the early Cold War era and he describes the period as the most difficult of his life.[66]

He can hardly be blamed for viewing the period so unfavourably. In 1946, the same year that

Swankey became leader of the LPP, Manning would commence an explicitly anti-Communist

crusade, beginning with the implementation of province-wide censorship measures. Especially

concerned with film, the government would increase the power of censors to ban any movies

which seemed to offer even the mildest social criticism in hopes that it could "eliminate

communist thought from Alberta-shown movies."[67] But such censorship measures were really

just the tip of the proverbial iceberg, as Social Credit's anti-Communism would manifest most

nefariously within the provincial labour movement, where purges of Communist organizers

became widespread and functioned to all but eliminate the Communist presence in Alberta trade

unions. The elimination of Communists from unions, enabled by Cold War political culture, left

the Communist Party without any base from which counter-hegemonic activity could be

conducted in Alberta.[68]

Beginning in the aftermath of the Alberta Farmers' Strike of 1946, the Social Credit

government began to put strong anti-Communist pressure on organized labour in the province,

particularly through the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) and the Alberta Federation of

Labour (AFL). And the failure of these labour organizations to respond effectively to this

pressure eventually paved the way for anti-labour legislation and the long-term suppression of

Communist ideals in the labour movement. Upon the conclusion of the 1946 strike, in which

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[66] Swankey, *What's New*, 123.

[67] Donald G. Wetherell, "Some Aspects of Technology and Leisure in Alberta, 1914-1950," *Prairie Forum* Vol. 11 No. 1 (January 1986): 55.

[68] James Muir, "Alberta Labour and Working-Class Life, 1940-1959," in *Working People in Alberta: A History*, ed. Alvin Finkel (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2012): 135-139.

striking farmers ceased grain delivery for a period of thirty days, Manning publicly denounced the strikers as being pawns for Communist agitators.[69] Then, in 1947 after provincial packinghouse workers went on strike, led by a CCL-affiliated union, Manning engaged in further public anti-Communist broadside against the labour movement when he suggested that, "Expanded and uninterrupted production of goods in this country is being deliberately sabotaged by industrial and distributing combines and by those who deliberately are fomenting industrial unrest in furtherance of those philosophies which make capital of distress."[70] In the context of the Cold War, there could be little doubt what he meant by this. But in response, the AFL and CCL were remarkably weak. The AFL, which was itself a rather conservative organization by this time, did nothing, and the CCL joined the government in its red-baiting by responding thusly to Manning:

> It is our opinion that you have endeavoured to convey to the public of the province the impression that all labour unions are wrapped up in one inseparable parcel and led by professional fomentors of industrial unrest, and by inference take their orders from foreign countries - even as far distant as Moscow. We feel that you, as the Honourable Premier of this province, should be better informed. Only last week, our organization, the CCL, and its Canadian CIO affiliated unions has by convention denounced Communism in all its forms.[71]

The Cold War left the Communist Party in Alberta without allies, even in the labour movement.[72]

With timid labour organizations turning their back on once popular communistic ideals and Communism being generally delegitimized in the public eye, Manning was freed up to turn

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[69] LPP members were indeed involved in supporting the strike through Party media organs and via the distribution of leaflets and other literature in affected communities. See Swankey, *What's New*, 140.

[70] Quoted in Alvin Finkel, "The Cold War, Alberta Labour, and the Social Credit Regime," *Labour / Le Travail* Vol. 21 (1988): 132.

[71] Quoted in Finkel *Social Credit*, 110.

[72] Warren Carragata, *Alberta Labour: A Heritage Untold* (Toronto: Lorimer and Company, 1979): 140-141.

his rhetoric into legislation which would cement conservative provincial hegemony by illegalizing radical unionism. In March 1948, Social Credit tabled a significantly re-written version of the Alberta Labour Act which made unions and union leaders responsible for the actions of rank-and-file members, steeply increased penalties for Act violations, voided collective agreements which were ruled to have been the result of illegal strikes, and most notably, prohibited union organizing on any employer's property without permission. Labour organizations opposed the legislation, but with militancy now off the table, such opposition was necessarily weak.[73] After futilely contesting the new Labour Act on the legislature floor, the CCL dealt with new legislation primarily by strengthening its official anti-Communism via the expulsion of the major Communist-led Mine-Mill union from its ranks. The AFL, for its part, essentially embraced the legislation when its president pronounced in 1950 that a new era of labour-government cooperation had commenced.[74]

The utter destruction of Communism in Alberta during the late 1940s was evidenced in the election of 1948. After rebounding from 1940 to run 30 candidates and win five percent of the popular vote in 1944, the LPP ran just two candidates in the 1948 contest, receiving a little more than 1300 total votes.[75] After 1948, the LPP continued to have some degree of influence in the mining communities of the Crowsnest Pass until the early 1950s, but the provincial damage to the movement was largely done by the end of the 1940s.[76] Alberta Communists were never able to realize the promise of the Popular Front era as the Social Credit government, at first

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[73] Finkel, "Cold War," 134-135.
[74] Carragata, 136-141.
[75] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Tuesday, August 17, 1948." Accessed at web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1948
[76] Tom Langford and Chris Frazer, "The Cold War and Working-Class Politics in the Coal Mining Communities of the Crowsnest Pass, 1945-1958," *Labour / Le Travail* Vol. 49 (2002): 56-67.

under Aberhart but especially during the early Manning years, was able to banish Communism from the political landscape via a hegemonic campaign which capitalized primarily on international developments. After the Communist Party was made illegal because of Comintern policy regarding the Second World War, Social Credit began a rhetorical campaign against Communism which set the foundations for the Cold War and the conversion of anti-Communist rhetoric into anti-Communist legislation. Once this conversion had taken place, any hope for a revival of the formidable Communist movement of the late 1930s became utterly remote. The stories of Communists who remained in Alberta throughout the remainder of the Cold War, people like Jack and Jan Tarasoff, Dave Werlin, and Peggy Askin, are stories of struggle and political negligibility which indicate just how firmly anti-Communist hegemony had been established in the province.[77]

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[77] See: Peggy Askin, interview with Winston Gereluk, *Alberta Labour History Institute* (2005). Accessed at http://albertalabourhistory.org/interview-transcripts/peggy-askin; Dave Werlin, interview with Winston Gereluk and Don Bouzek, *Alberta Labour History Institute* (2003 and 2004). Accessed at http://albertalabourhistory.org/interview-transcripts/dave-werlin; Jan and Jack Tarasoff, interview with Winston Gereluk, *Alberta Labour History Institute* (2005). Accessed at http://albertalabourhistory.org/interview-transcripts/jan-and-jack-tarasoff.

2

Subjugated Socialism: Social Credit and the CCF in Booming Alberta

In August of 1932, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation officially formed - in Calgary - as a political movement that united various streams of the labour and socialist movements in Western Canada behind a distinctively socialist message.[78] In addition to calls for equality "without distinction of sex, nationality, or religion," the provisional programme of the Federation called for a "planned system of social economy for the production, distribution, and exchange of all goods and services," as well as the socialization of financial institutions and natural resources.[79] This principle, though it was moderated at times, would be the pillar of CCF socialism throughout the Federation's existence. Among the organizations which played a role in the drafting of this programme were the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and the Alberta branch of the Canadian Labour Party (CLP), organizations which "were believed to represent between them most farmers and workers in Alberta." As such, at a superficial level at least, there ought to have seemed to be ample reason for hope that socialism would have a sunny political future in Alberta.[80] Such hope was ultimately optimistic, though, as over two subsequent decades there emerged a set of conditions in the province that were decidedly unconducive to organizing for socialism.

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[78] James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working Class Future* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016): 66.

[79] Ivan Avakumovic, *Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978): 57.

[80] Alvin Finkel, "Obscure Origins: The Confused Early History of the Alberta CCF," in *"Building the Co-operative Commonwealth": Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada*, ed. J. William Brennan (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985): 99

Much like the Communist Party, the CCF in Alberta experienced approximately a decade of provincial growth beginning in the early-to-mid-1930s before losing support throughout the late 1940s and into the 1950s. By the late 1950s, the Federation was mostly a political non-entity. However, the superficial similarities in the trajectories of the socialist and Communist movements conceal important disparities of detail. One difference was simply that the CCF was much larger than the Communist Party in numerical terms, but more importantly, because the CCF was founded as a Western Canadian organization, it was inured to some degree against the global political tides with which the provincial Communist Party rose and fell.[81] As such, the failure of the CCF in Alberta must be attributed largely to conditions closer to home. Mainly, the CCF failed in Alberta because rapid provincial economic growth in the mid-1940s decreased general interest in the Federation and enabled Social Credit to engage in an aggressive and successful ideological campaign against socialism.

Locating the failure of the Alberta CCF in the provincial economic context of the 1940s and 1950s involves, to a certain degree, writing against a trend that characterizes the existing literature on the Federation. For example, both Olenka Melnyk and Alvin Finkel have published essays which argue that the ultimate failure of the CCF in Alberta was determined early and was primarily a result of its involvement with the UFA and CLP during the 1930s.[82] Both of these essays stress that leaders in the UFA and CLP, despite being officially affiliated with the CCF, were unwilling to sacrifice the status of their organizations to the broader movement. The leaders' lack of interest in working to build the CCF, it is argued, allowed for Social Credit to fill

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[81] Avakumovic, *Socialism*, 55.

[82] Olenka Melnyk, "Dreaming a New Jerusalem in the Land of Social Credit: The Struggles of the CCF in Alberta," in *Socialism and Democracy in Alberta: Essays in Honour of Grant Notley*, ed. Larry Pratt (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986): 40-56; Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 99-122.

the political power vacuum that appeared in the election of 1935 and to maintain that power through subsequent elections. But to suggest that the fate of the Alberta CCF was decided during the earliest years of the Federation obscures the reality that the CCF was, for the most part, actually growing its support base throughout the first decade in which it was active in the province. Indeed, popular support for the CCF actually peaked around the provincial election of 1944.[83] So, while it is certainly appropriate to suggest that the CCF's early growth in Alberta was stunted, there was growth nonetheless. And given that this growth only began to reverse after 1944, it is more appropriate to attribute the failure of the Alberta CCF to developments of the 1940s. Still, despite arguing that the 1940s were the decisive decade in terms of the CCF's fate in Alberta, the 1930s remain important to this analysis. Accounting for precisely how Social Credit was able to wage such a successful ideological campaign against socialism requires establishing the degree to which the socialist movement had become a formidable counter-hegemonic threat to Social Credit in the first place.

The UFA and the CLP officially joined the CCF after the drafting of the 1933 "Regina Manifesto," which declared that, "No CCF government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full program of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Co-operative Commonwealth."[84] However, there was some question about the extent to which the leaders of the CLP, and especially the UFA, were actually sympathetic to the socialist cause. In the case of the UFA in particular, it was clear that there was significant dissonance between the attitudes of a number of radical members and more conservative leaders in the organization. And while the radical wing dominated the UFA caucus

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[83] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 113.

[84] Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, "Regina Manifesto: Programme of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation," 1933. Accessed at http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/CCF/ReginaManifesto.htm.

in the federal government as well as the provincial organizational hierarchy, it only had a small

number of representatives in the provincial government.[85] Radicals attempted to influence the

provincial leaders leftwards in various ways, sometimes via the proposal of radical measures like

state ownership of industry, and sometimes via more modest suggestions like issuing scrip to

pensioners over the age of 65. But these attempts never made much headway, and so despite the

official affiliation of the UFA to the CCF, it could scarcely be said that the UFA represented

socialism in any meaningful way.[86]

Because of the rather dubious socialist credentials of provincial leaders in the UFA, many

Alberta farmers who did have genuine socialist leanings were confused as to why the UFA had

been permitted to become an Alberta affiliate of the CCF at all. In the lead up to the 1935

election, one farmer who supported the CCF wrote a letter to a federal member of the UFA in

which he stated that, "If there is no place in our provincial politics for our CCF program of

reform, then to my mind it is not such a disaster for our provincial political organization to be

defeated which we are sure it is going to be." This farmer continued, claiming of UFA members

that, "They are refusing to pay their dues because they say it is just for a political party to fight

the things we want done."[87] This statement reflected a willingness among CCF-supporting

farmers to let the provincial UFA lose its status as the governing party in order that a new

government could form and effect some change in Alberta. And because the CCF was, as its

name suggests, simply a federation of various groups, not supporting the provincial UFA would

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[85] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 100-101.
[86] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 100-103.
[87] Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989): 22

amount to not supporting the CCF.[88] At this stage, farmers in Alberta did not seem to have in the CCF "a vehicle for the active involvement denied [them] by the old parties."[89]

The other Alberta CCF affiliate, the CLP, made more sense as a participant in the movement for socialism. The CLP, which represented urban workers in the province, had been calling for social ownership of the means of production since the 1920s. But the alliance of the CLP and CCF was made awkward by the fact that the CLP and UFA had operated theretofore on an understanding that neither organization would challenge the other politically. Neither would run candidates in the same electoral races, and the CLP caucus in the legislature largely refrained from challenging the governing UFA. CLP legislators would use their position in government as a sort of pulpit from which to espouse their socialist views rather than as a locus of opposition to the government. This situation became more and more untenable in the approach to the 1935 election, as the UFA government's increasingly frugal spending on services like urban relief put the CLP in an impossible position. It had to attempt to oppose the government for the good of its members, but doing so would mean criticizing its fellow affiliate in the CCF. As Alvin Finkel writes, "At a time when the UFA government had lost its credibility among farmers, never mind urban workers, the CLP felt compelled to adopt a moderate stance regarding the government's deficiencies so as to pursue an elusive alliance with the organization which bore the same name as the government but supported policies opposite to those followed by the government."[90] Social Credit, for its part, did not have this problem and could more easily present itself as an agent of political change.

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[88] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 103-104.
[89] Walter D. Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969): 75.
[90] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 105.

The prospects for the CCF in the provincial election of 1935 were ultimately ruined by the Federation's inability to present itself as a genuine alternative to the status quo as represented by the UFA. The provincial council of the CCF, made up of equal parts UFA and CLP members, resolved that candidates in the 1935 election would run as members of "separate entities" and it was thereby all but ensured that, if Albertans were to vote for change, it would not be a change to socialism. Indeed, the degree to which UFA and CLP leaders seemed to be caught up in ensuring the perpetuation of their existing organizations may have obscured the fact that there was a movement for socialism in the first place. Aberhart's Social Credit presented itself more effectively as a leftward reformist alternative to the UFA government and swept to legislative power in this election.[91]

So in short, by 1935 there was serious dissatisfaction with both the UFA and the CLP. By extension, this suggested dissatisfaction with the CCF. But nonetheless, there were indications that the CCF and its vision of a planned economy had a genuine audience in the province, and could be a serious factor in provincial politics if only that vision could cease to be overshadowed by other matters. The CCF, because of the decision of the UFA and CLP to continue operating separately, had not actually run any candidates in the 1935 election.[92] The name of the Federation did not appear on any ballots that year, and so it would be difficult to claim that the election was in any way calamitous for the young organization. In a few municipal elections of 1933 and 1934, where socialist candidates had been able to run on an actual CCF ticket, electoral victories had been won. And at rallies and meetings held by the CCF, large gatherings consistently turned out. So while the first foray of the CCF into a provincial election may have

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[91]Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 107-108.

[92] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Thursday, August 22, 1935." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1935

been mired in political growing pains, there was still reason to project good things for the future

of socialism in the province. Suggestions that the 1935 election result indicated a "stillborn"

socialist movement are, surely, a bit overstated.[93]

After the 1935 election and through the second half of the decade, as it became

increasingly clear that the reformist platform of Aberhart and Social Credit would not be

delivered as promised, the CCF had an extended opportunity to attract Albertans to socialism.

Sensing this, CCF leaders sought to take advantage of the opportunity in a few ways. One of the

first measures taken was to rename the *Alberta Labour News*, a paper owned and operated by

future CCF leader Elmer Roper, as the *People's Weekly*. As the *People's Weekly*, the paper was

used by Roper and his associate editor, former UFA parliamentarian and CCFer William Irvine,

to "strongly [support] the new political movement."[94] The first issue of the paper, for example,

published the first in a series of 16 open letters written by Irvine to premier Aberhart that

vehemently denounced the actions of the Social Credit government. Irvine lamented Social

Credit's failure to implement even the most basic reform tenets of the 1935 platform and accused

Aberhart personally of dictatorial tendencies. Aberhart had implemented a law which enabled

him to govern by Order-in-Council, a law that to Irvine, "robbed the people of a liberty for which

other generations fought and paid dearly in the past."[95] This sort of polemic, aimed at weakening

the government's appeal, was one goal of the new *People's Weekly*, but not the only one.[96]

Roper also saw the paper as an organ that could be used to recruit people to independent

CCF clubs around the province – "independent" meaning that they were not connected either to

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[93] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 25.
[94] Anthony Mardiros, *William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical* (Toronto: Lorimer and Company, 1979): 205.
[95] Quoted in Mardiros, 206.
[96] Mardiros 205-206

the UFA or the CLP. These clubs became a focal point of CCF organizing efforts in 1937 when the UFA decided to bow out of provincial politics altogether and the CCF began the process of becoming a provincial political force on its own. This reorganization of the provincial CCF was rather slow until 1939, though, as the UFA remained in federal politics until January of that year and thereby continued to complicate, or confuse, the status of the CCF vis-à-vis the UFA.[97] And because the UFA dragged its feet in terms of completely abandoning political activity, the CCF's reorganization was not far enough along to make the Federation a real threat to Social Credit in the 1940 election. Still, the election was the first in which candidates ran on CCF tickets, and with a total of 34 candidates running, the CCF was by a long stretch the most well-represented leftist organization. The CCF did not win a legislative seat, but it could boast of having earned 11 percent of the popular vote. [98] This can hardly be said to have been a disaster for the Federation, especially given that the result may not have said as much about the popularity of socialism in Alberta as it did about the salience of the fear that Social Credit could be defeated from the right by the Independents, who were discussed in the previous chapter.[99]

So, by 1940, the history of the CCF in Alberta was largely a history of growth and progress. No doubt the Federation had faced considerable obstacles, ones that it did not face in other provinces, but it was nevertheless on an upward trajectory.[100] Then, after a couple unremarkable years subsequent to the 1940 election, that trajectory would continue upwards from 1942 to 1944, the period of the most substantial growth in the Federation's provincial history. A special convention for the reorganization of the Alberta CCF was called in early 1942

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[97] Mardiros, 208-210
[98] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Thursday, March 21, 1940." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1940
[99] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 110.
[100] The relationship between the UFA and the CCF obscured the extent to which the CCF represented a political alternative. The CCF in other provinces faced no such obstacle.

where it was determined that the CLP, which had outlived the UFA, would officially amalgamate with the existing provincial CCF clubs. This marked the end of the CCF as a truly federated body, and allowed for its operation as a direct membership organization. This new organizational model finally enabled the CCF to espouse a socialist message, demanding that "the principle regulating production, distribution and exchange will be the supplying of human needs," without the mediation of other entities.[101] Its leaders embraced this new reality. Irvine, for example, immediately set about drafting a new provincial programme which heavily emphasized the question of public ownership, especially in the resource sector, a policy which proved quite popular. By 1943, CCF membership had tripled from 2000 the year before to a total of about 6000, and by 1944 it had doubled again to 12,000.[102] Additionally, it was around this time that CCF women's groups began to expand significantly and into new locations like Lethbridge, Flin Flon, and Red Deer, indicating the Federation's growing appeal to people who may have been especially concerned with "consumer and family issues."[103]

The CCF's growth from 1942 coincided with the death of Aberhart and the ascent of Ernest Manning, a development which, as was discussed in the previous chapter, was the decisive factor in determining Social Credit policy regarding leftist challenges to its governance. While Manning's attitudes and policies were deeply detrimental to the provincial Communist Party, there can be little doubt that the CCF bore even more of the brunt of the onslaught. And because the CCF was a more immediate threat to Social Credit than were the Communists, Manning would certainly have been glad that the CCF suffered as much or more than its fellow

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[101] Constitution of the CCF (Alberta Section), Alberta Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party fonds, Glenbow Archives M1722, file 126.
[102] Mardiros, 211-212
[103] Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989): 212.

leftist movement. When Manning launched his campaign to equate Alberta socialist movements with the National Socialism of Nazi Germany, his primary target was the growing provincial CCF. At one stage in the approach to the 1944 provincial election, after a CCFer had written him to propose electoral cooperation between Social Credit and the CCF, Manning responded saying, "It is an insult to suggest to the Canadian people who are sacrificing their sons to remove the curse which the socialism of Germany has brought in the world that their own social and economic security can be attained only by introducing some form of socialism in Canada."[104] And then there was the simultaneous effort to suggest an international conspiracy of socialists and financiers, which had people like Social Credit's legislative whip, A.V. Bourcier, suggesting that they could prove the CCF's connection with a group of mysterious, never-seen men of global finance. Social Credit, in total retreat from its former pretense as a reform movement, was clearly willing to go to almost any rhetorical length in order to defend capitalism and quell the CCF's growing counter-hegemonic movement.[105]

National CCF leader, David Lewis, described this period as a time of unprecedented "CCF bashing," wherein there was "produce[d] from every organ of influence and propaganda a sudden and simultaneous defence of the establishment against a serious threat of fundamental change."[106] Still, there is some question as to just how much Social Credit's virulent anti-socialism was resonant amongst voters in Alberta in 1944. Despite Manning's attacks, in the election of that year the CCF won about a quarter of the provincial popular vote, and the Communist LPP added another five percent to the vote total for the provincial left. This, in a sense, was an impressive electoral performance for the CCF. Its organizational and recruitment

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[104] Quoted in Finkel, *Social Credit*, 86.
[105] Finkel *Social Credit*, 86-87.
[106] David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981): 304.

efforts of the preceding years had more than doubled its vote total from the previous election –

hardly a development to lament. But less positively, the CCF's large share of the popular vote

only translated into two legislative seats, one less than the three seats won by the Independents,

who retained status as the official opposition in the legislature. Had there been absolutely zero

vote-splitting on the left, perhaps four or five leftist legislators could have been elected, but like

any historically counterfactual speculation, this is uncertain. An alliance of socialists and

Communists could also have backfired and given Social Credit even more fodder for anti-leftist

rhetoric.[107] And besides, there is little reason to think that a few additional legislators could have

substantially altered the fate of the CCF in coming years.

Beyond the actual failure to win many seats in 1944, the main reason for CCFers to be

discouraged moving forward was the changing context in which their economic programme was

pitted against Social Credit's. As the end of the Second World War approached, a large reason

for the growing popularity of the CCF was fear of a return to economic depression during the

transition away from the centrally-planned Canadian wartime economy. As such, the CCF's

belief that Alberta could, "make its best contribution… to post-war reconstruction by developing

the resources of the province by public ownership," was salient to a large number of

Albertans.[108] Making particular reference to the growing provincial oil industry, Irvine described

this mood: "There is public uneasiness lest private interests instead of the people through their

governments should gain and keep control of what may turn out to be one of the greatest sources

of oil and oil products in the world."[109] Social Credit under Manning, fully and unambiguously

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[107] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 112-113.
[108] Minutes of the Provincial Convention of the Alberta CCF, Calgary Nov. 27-28 ,1942, Alberta Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party fonds, Glenbow Archives M1722, file 128.
[109] Quoted in Mardiros, 212

committed to a capitalist Alberta, countered this by courting the support of corporate interests and by making "the menace of socialism" into "the staple of the official Alberta Social Credit propaganda."[110] This strategy proved immediately effective for Social Credit in the post-war years, as a period of rapid growth, especially in the resource industry, commenced.[111] Quick growth allayed fear of a return to economic depression, and represented a material development to which Social Credit's hegemonic propaganda campaign could be conveniently attached.

Just as fears of an economic downturn were subsiding, a coincident change of the general political milieu in the province began to occur as well. As was outlined in the previous chapter, the membership of Social Credit dropped significantly throughout the 1940s as the character of the government became more business-oriented, but Social Credit was not the only organization that struggled to sustain its membership. The CCF also began to lose rank-and-file members as Albertans who a few years earlier may have been inclined to devote their energies to political movements instead "joined economic organizations whose purpose was to win economic gains for their members rather than to effect structural economic changes."[112] Industrial trade unions and the main agricultural union, the Alberta Farmer's Union, began to experience especially quick membership growth. And while leaders of organized labour did, in many instances, support the political aims of the CCF, they were not inclined to adopt a policy of close cooperation between their organizations and a political party.[113]

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[110] C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013): 206.

[111] John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979): 80-81.

[112] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 114.

[113] Finkel, "Obscure Origins," 114.

As the CCF was declining at the grassroots, the provincial economy continued to boom, primarily on the strength of the discovery of oil in the central Alberta town of Leduc in 1947. The oil strike at Leduc was a moment of epochal economic significance in the province, as it decreased the importance of agricultural production, and it also had an enormous influence on provincial politics. Oil exploration after Leduc was undertaken primarily by private American firms that Manning had attracted to Alberta by promising a stable and friendly climate for private capital. This paradigm of private development made for extremely fast-paced exploitation of the oil reserves and, by extension, very quickly put substantial windfall revenues in the pockets of the government. These revenues would then become the basis for a Social Credit spending policy which was carefully designed to undercut the political appeal of the CCF without actually making any concession to their counter-hegemonic programme.[114]

With the increased revenues coming in from the developing oil industry, Social Credit chose to spend heavily in the areas of health, education, and public welfare. As an example of this, monthly supplements to Alberta pensioners became the highest in the country and further, beginning in 1947 old-age pensioners were provided with free treatment in hospitals and medical clinics across the province. These sorts of expenditures, insofar as they largely benefitted working-class segments of the provincial population, made life difficult for opposition movements, especially counter-hegemonic ones like that embodied by the CCF. As material living conditions for the majority of Albertans improved, socialist demands for structural economic changes ceased to appeal as widely as they had in times of lesser prosperity.[115] And

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[114] Richards and Pratt, 82-85.
[115] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 122-126.

this was no doubt Social Credit's intent. For economist Ed Shaffer, this was the entire ethos of Social Credit spending. He writes:

> The Social Credit Government could have used the funds to lessen income inequalities and to reduce poverty. But this was not done because such a redistribution would undermine the incentives of the market system – income inequality is essential for the survival and efficient operation of capitalism. Therefore, they decided to spend the funds on social services in such a way as to minimize the redistributional effects.[116]

In this way, Alberta became home to both an unfettered form of capitalist development and a relatively high standard of living for working-class people. This model, so long as there were funds to sustain it, could function to strengthen conservative hegemony and quell any impulse for reform in the province.[117] Reflecting on this state of affairs in his 1948 CCF President's Report, J.E. Cook lamented that, "In times of boom… only those who are prepared to remember the past, evaluate cause and effect, and plan for the future, are likely to be interested in fundamental change. At such times progress is slow."[118]

That Social Credit's revenue expenditures were working to suppress any impetus for structural reform was demonstrated around the provincial election of 1948, both in the result of the election and in the way the CCF ran it. The CCF attempted to continue its advocacy for public ownership of natural resources, now an issue which focused almost entirely on oil, but it did so in a more moderate way than it had done in the past. Aware that many Albertans were better off than they had been in the 1930s and early 1940s, and thereby reticent about possibly changing governments, the CCF began calling for a fifty percent share for the government in provincial fossil fuel resources instead of total public ownership. It also supported a somewhat

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[116] Ed Shaffer, "The Political Economy of Oil in Alberta," in *Essays on the Political Economy of Alberta*, ed. David Leadbeater (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1984): 182.

[117] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 122-125.

[118] J.E. Cook, "President's Report," in *1948 Provincial Convention Program of the Alberta CCF,* Alberta Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party fonds, Glenbow Archives M1722, file 129.

more popular nationalization plan for Calgary Power, which had monopolized provincial electrical distribution. This second issue was put to a referendum coincident with the 1948 election, and the vote in favour of nationalization was narrowly defeated by a margin of 151 votes, with a total of 279,831 votes cast. Overall, though, it was clear that the CCF was tempering its version of socialism. Where in 1944 it had been possible to agitate for an avowedly and explicitly socialist platform of wholesale nationalization, four years of economic growth and anti-socialist propaganda later the CCF was forced to pick its battles lest it be perceived as a threat to the material well-being of Albertans.[119] Circumstances like this, where counter-hegemonic movements are forced into a defensive and, for lack of a better word, conservative position, render projects of hegemonic maintenance rather simple, as the result of the 1948 election attests.

Even after moderating its policy proposals, the CCF mustered no significant electoral challenge to Social Credit in 1948. Prior to the election, the Federation had seen membership numbers dwindle from 12,000 in 1944 to below 4000, and it was therefore not particularly surprising that the Federation saw its share of the popular vote drop to below twenty percent, failing to increase its legislative seat total beyond two. CCF leaders now claimed openly that radical change was no longer desired by any large number of Albertans.[120] To Alberta CCF organizer Nellie Peterson, this was something of an existential crisis for the Federation as it seemed quite apparent that Social Credit propaganda, accompanied by ever-growing prosperity, was making it difficult or impossible to be an open socialist in Alberta.[121] By contrast, the Saskatchewan CCF won its second consecutive election in 1948, in a province where non-

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[119] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 125-126.
[120] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 126.
[121] Melnyk, 53

capitalist economic policies were already partially established and where advocates of free-market development had less immediately available evidence for the virtue of their ideas.[122] In Alberta, though, it was becoming clear indeed that, "The best counter-irritant to the CCF is to go as far as you possibly can with social security out of the dividends of private enterprise."[123]

While increasing revenues were being used to meet important needs of Albertans, and causing many to become less inclined to support a counter-hegemonic opposition movement as a result, there was another consequence of the new provincial economic structure which was perhaps even more detrimental to the CCF. Coincident with the oil industry becoming more central in the province, the previously dominant agricultural industry was fundamentally changed. Individual farm units were disappearing at a rate of at least 1000 per year as the percentage of the population which earned its living on the farm dropped to below 20 percent for the first time in provincial history. This seriously undermined the class basis of CCF support because, with fewer small farmers in the province, it became less advantageous for the CCF to advocate policies that would "underwrite the family farm's continued existence by public policy, where necessary intervening in and abrogating the dictates of the capitalist market."[124] Further, since the decrease in the number of family farms was accompanied by an increase in the number of much larger operations which consolidated formerly small farming units, the type of agricultural production that did persist was far more mechanized and capital-intensive.[125] John

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[122] Jean Larmour, "The Douglas Government's Changing Emphasis on Public, Private, and Co-operative Development in Saskatchewan, 1944-1961," in *"Building the Co-operative Commonwealth": Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada*, ed. J. William Brennan (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985): 176-177.

[123] Reg Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977): 147.

[124] Robin Hunter, "Social Democracy in Alberta: From the CCF to the NDP," in *Socialism and Democracy in Alberta: Essays in Honour of Grant Notley*, ed. Larry Pratt (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986): 58.

[125] Hunter, 58.

Richards and Larry Pratt suggest that the transition towards this type of agribusiness manifested politically in the increasing viability of conservative capitalist ideology, and the decreasing popularity of its antithesis: socialism.[126]

By this stage, Social Credit's conservative hegemonic order was well-established, based strongly in a flourishing economy which showed no serious signs of distress, and the government's coercive tactics of the past ceased to be necessary. Mitigating the popularity of socialist ideas no longer required the vitriolic rhetorical campaigns that had defined the mid-1940s. Instead, Social Credit could exercise hegemony largely by consent as Albertans generally were not inclined to support the CCF, and even the CCF itself was stuck in a defeatist stasis. Those who remained Federation members into the 1950s were no longer enthusiastic in their belief that socialism could happen in Alberta in the foreseeable future. David Lewis lamented this period, describing a portion of the lasting Alberta membership as "old timers who had got used to CCF electoral failures and felt more at home in the role of victims of capitalist greed than they would be as victors in any electoral battle."[127] This mood saw the CCF be replaced by the Alberta Liberal Party as the main electoral threat to Social Credit, and in the elections of 1952, 1955, and 1959, the CCF ran fewer and fewer candidates, receiving fewer total votes each time.[128] In no other province was the CCF's decline so rapid, and in bordering Saskatchewan, for

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[126] Richards and Pratt, 107-108.

[127] Lewis, 489.

[128] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Tuesday, August 5, 1952." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1952; Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Wednesday, June 29, 1955." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1955; Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Thursday, June 18, 1959." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1959; Hunter 58-59.

contrast, the CCF government was continuing to win elections by significant margins throughout the same period.[129]

By the end of the 1950s, the process of abandoning the CCF and creating the New Democratic Party had begun. The languishing of the Alberta CCF was not the immediate impetus for the creation of a new party, which came from "humiliation of the Canadian people" represented by the national ascent of the Diefenbaker Conservatives in 1958.[130] But still, calls for abandoning the CCF in favour of a new political vehicle were generally well-received in the province, at least initially. At the Federation's National Council of 1958, for example, Elmer Roper described the movement for a new party as "a significant political event which… if it works out would give Canadian socialists a mass movement and the framework to do more than they can by paddling around in a little pool of their own philosophical abstractions."[131] Later on, though, as the actual process by which a new party would be created became more apparent, the idea of abandoning the CCF would meet with some resistance from leaders in Alberta. Primarily, these leaders were worried that the merger of the CCF with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) could pose a serious threat of ideological dilution. These fears were certainly reasonable, the creation of the NDP by this merger did represent a shift away from the genuinely socialist foundations of the CCF, but this was a matter of historical necessity. It was clear that the counter-hegemonic socialist movement, which ascended amidst the turmoil of the 1930s and 1940s, needed to change in order to remain relevant in the historical conditions that characterized

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[129] Elections Saskatchewan, "Results of Twelfth Provincial General Election - June 11, 1952." Accessed at http://www.elections.sk.ca/election-results/1952/; Elections Saskatchewan, "Results of the Thirteenth Provincial General Election – June 20, 1956." Accessed at http://www.elections.sk.ca/election-results/1956/; Elections Saskatchewan, "Results of the Fourteenth Provincial General Election – June 8, 1960." Accessed at http://www.elections.sk.ca/election-results/1960/.

[130] William Irvine, "President's Address to the 1958 provincial convention," Alberta Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party fonds, Glenbow Archives M1722, file 137.

[131] Quoted in Hunter, 65.

the 1950s and 1960s.[132] The story of that change, and how it ultimately affected the leftist movement in Alberta, is the story of the following chapter.

To conclude, then, the socialist movement in Alberta, which for a time had been a genuine counter-hegemonic threat to the Social Credit government, was ultimately stunted by disadvantageous social and economic conditions in the province. After the CCF grew consistently through the 1930s and early 1940s, peaking in 1944, it began to run up against a government propaganda machine that would go to any length in order to suggest the evils of socialist ideology. This propaganda machine was buttressed by shifting material realities in the province, emergent from a rapidly growing oil industry, which enabled the government to implement an expenditure paradigm that simultaneously improved the lives of working-class Albertans while never threatening the structure of provincial capitalism. And while the economy continued to strengthen into the 1950s, conservative hegemony could be maintained increasingly by consent, as socialism slid further and further away from the provincial mindset and committed socialists who did remain in Alberta confined their efforts to areas beyond the political stage. Such was the process by which socialism was subjugated in Alberta.

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[132] Hunter, 64-70.

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"Compare Alberta with the Rest of Canada then Vote Social Credit": Struggles of the NDP in 1960s Alberta[133]

Just as the origins of the Communist Party and the CCF indicated which historical developments their provincial counter-hegemonic movements would ultimately be most affected by, the national origin story of the NDP was a harbinger of the party's fate in Alberta during the 1960s. The federal government's embrace of Keynesian economics in the postwar period ushered in a decade of relative prosperity across Canada during most of the 1950s, but by the late 50s and certainly by the early 1960s, the country at large had begun to experience a return to economic turmoil. National unemployment reached its highest point since the Second World War, the value of the dollar was dropping steadily, growth was slow, and the economic backdrop to the "rebellious" sixties was being formed.[134] However, despite socialist predictions that the "sobering sixties" would entail a "rude awakening" in the province, Alberta defied this national trend in economics just as it defied the trend towards rebellious politics.[135] The provincial economy, still buoyed by revenues from the oil industry, remained healthy, and the material conditions of most Albertans continued to improve.[136]

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[133] Quotation from Ernest Manning in Jared J. Wesley, *Code Politics: Campaigns and Cultures on the Canadian Prairies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011): 83.

[134] Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 35-41.

[135] William Irvine, "President's Address to the 1960 provincial convention of the Alberta CCF," Alberta Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party fonds, Glenbow Archives M1722, file 139. A striking indication of the extent to which Alberta defied these trends I describe can be gleaned from a recent book on young leftists in Canada during the 1960s. In the book, Alberta is mentioned just once in a passing comment about the relative conservatism of the campus at the University of Alberta. See Ian Milligan, *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014). The reference in question appears on page 76.

[136] Brian Brennan, *The Good Steward: The Ernest C. Manning Story* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2008): 135.

By the 1960s, then, Alberta had become a wealthy province in Canada and Albertans were thereby not much inclined to rebellion against the existing order. The Social Credit government, still under the premiership of Manning until 1968, used the fact of Alberta's wealth relative to other provinces as its primary hegemonic weapon during the decade.[137] This exercise of hegemony was firstly oriented around a robust, five-year expenditure program implemented by Social Credit in the early 1960s which rendered stark the relative affluence of Alberta compared to other provinces. Then, through the middle of the decade, the national debate surrounding universal healthcare became the fodder for Social Credit to maintain the favourable comparison of Alberta with the rest of Canada. By continually suggesting that NDP policies would place Alberta on a path similar to the one that the rest of the country was on, Social Credit was able to mitigate the appeal of social-democratic ideas and prevent the provincial NDP from making significant counter-hegemonic progress. The social-democratic movement of the 1960s failed, then, because Alberta's becoming a uniquely rich province in Canada enabled Social Credit to successfully posit limited-government conservatism as the direct cause of provincial prosperity.

As was mentioned in passing in the previous chapter, the process of retiring the CCF in favour of a new political party found its most immediate impetus in federal politics, particularly the election of the Diefenbaker Conservatives in 1958. After that election, which saw the CCF win just eight parliamentary seats, the CCF and the CLC formed the joint National Committee for the New Party (NCNP) and embarked upon what turned out to be a three year "period of gestation" leading to the creation of the NDP in 1961.[138] The *raison d'être* for the new party was

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[137] Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989): 141-160.
[138] Desmond Morton, *The New Democrats, 1961-1968: The Politics of Change* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986): 21.

an increasing awareness, at least among national leaders, that in order to maintain relevance in Canadian politics it would be necessary to move away from the socialist platform that had underpinned the CCF's existence since the 1930s. As such, the draft programme adopted at the national founding convention of 1961 bore little resemblance to the "Regina Manifesto." Gone were enthusiastic calls for the extermination of capitalism in Canada, abandoned in favour of far more moderate rhetoric in advocacy of increased employment, national health insurance, sick benefits, free education, and a steeply progressive taxation system to accommodate egalitarian redistribution of wealth. It was on the grounds of individual issues like these that the NDP would operate.[139]

In short, the NDP was established as a social-democratic party which, while recognizing the evils of capitalism, would seek to remedy those evils without immediately abolishing its fundamental structure. As such, there may be some question about whether a social-democratic movement like this can be said to have been counter-hegemonic in its nature. This analysis does treat social-democracy as a counter-hegemonic movement, of course, and it does so on the grounds that social-democracy can be thought of as a mode of maintaining pressure on hegemonic apparatuses in times when conditions are not conducive to movements which advocate the immediate abolition of hegemonic structures. The NDP was formed as a matter of historical necessity at a time when the radicalism of decades past was not politically feasible, and Alberta social-democrats of the 1960s opposed conservative hegemony to the greatest extent that they could given historical conditions. It could be said, referencing Marx's great aphorism, that social-democrats of the time were socialists making their own history, just not as they pleased.[140]

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[139] Morton, 19-24.
[140] The aphorism I reference here is the from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* where Marx famously stated that, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under

The existing body of literature on the Alberta NDP is dominated by writing on one person, Grant Notley. Notley, who tragically died in a plane crash in 1984, became associated with the NDP first as a provincial organizer, then as provincial secretary, and finally as the provincial party leader and MLA for the constituency of Peace River. His role in shaping the direction of the party in Alberta is certainly undeniable, but his centrality in the literature, even if it emerged from an impetus to pay tribute to him after his untimely death, is unfortunate. There are two major texts in the historiography, one is a biography of Notley by Howard Leeson, entitled *Grant Notley: The Social Conscience of Alberta*, and the other is a collection of essays edited by Larry Pratt, entitled *Socialism and Democracy in Alberta: Essays in Honour of Grant Notley*. Leeson, who worked for a time as Notley's executive assistant before becoming a professor of political science, treats Notley in an extremely friendly fashion in his biography.[141] Indeed, the text reads like more of a celebration than a study, as Notley is referred to as "Grant" throughout and the book's tone is endlessly sentimental. Pratt's edited *Essays,* despite what the title may seem to indicate, are a more substantial contribution to the academic study of the NDP (and the CCF) in Alberta, but they are still hindered by a focus on one person as a representative of a movement. Notley appears in some of the included essays in ways that can feel contrived and which serve to downplay other factors.[142]

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circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." See Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," excerpted in Lawrence Simon, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994): 188.

[141] Biographical information on Leeson is taken from the book's back cover. Bibliographic details are in the following footnote.

[142] Howard Leeson, *Grant Notley: The Social Conscience of Alberta*, 2nd ed. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2015); Larry Pratt, ed., *Socialism and Democracy in Alberta: Essays in Honour of Grant Notley* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986).

One of the most troubling aspects of this historiography is that it treats the 1960s simply as the lead up to Notley's leadership, which began in 1968, and his election to the legislature, occurring in 1971. The early history of the provincial NDP becomes the story of Notley's apotheosis and important opportunities for analysis are lost in the process. As such, this chapter seeks to overcome the deficiencies in the literature in an attempt to place the 1960s Alberta NDP in somewhat fuller historical context. The economic and political history of both Canada and Alberta are emphasized above the personal history of Notley in order that the failure of the NDP to challenge Social Credit's conservative hegemony can be more adequately understood.

The founding convention of the Alberta NDP was held in Edmonton in January of 1962, a few months after the national convention. A total of 379 delegates were registered: 85 came from the CCF; 93 were from so-called New Party clubs; 135 were from the labour movement; and 19 came from the New Democratic Youth.[143] This composition of convention delegates was mostly reflected in the elections for the party executive, which saw trade unionists elected to the positons of president and treasurer, and four former CCFers, in addition to a New Party club member, elected as vice-presidents. Of these groups represented in the early Alberta NDP, the most notable were trade unionists whose "membership in the new party exceeded substantially the level of trade union membership in the CCF."[144] The labour movement's presence in the NDP, which emerged largely from a process whereby union locals voted to affiliate with the party, was the most notable demographic difference between the NDP and the CCF. Whereas the CCF had its strongest base among small farmers in rural Alberta, the NDP's strength was in the

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[143] New Party clubs began to be formed in the late 1950s and were tasked with generating the broadest possible support for the idea of a new party.

[144] Robin Hunter, "Social Democracy in Alberta: From the CCF to the NDP," in *Socialism and Democracy in Alberta: Essays in Honour of Grant Notley*, ed. Larry Pratt (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986): 80.

(mostly urban) trade unions, a change that reflected both the shifting nature of the provincial economy and the change in counter-hegemonic direction that the NDP would undertake. The dominance of the trade union movement within the NDP meant that the trade unions' tendency to pragmatically prioritize immediate gains for workers was to be mirrored by the party's approach to politics.[145]

Pragmatism of this sort made good sense given that beginning in the early 1960s, Premier Manning had initiated a very popular five-year expenditure package which, in a televised address to the province, he described as "a gigantic five-year anti-recession development program that will be the boldest, most aggressive, and far-reaching program of its kind ever attempted by a provincial government in Canada."[146] This program was conceived as precisely the sort of measure that could cement Alberta's status as a prosperous section of an unstable Canadian economy and demonstrate the superiority of limited-government conservative governance. Amongst the expenditures in Manning's program were: 50 senior homes that would house 4,100 people; a number of community improvements like swimming pools, recreation centres, and camping facilities; the construction of what would become the Foothills Hospital in Calgary; the renovation of the (now very controversial) Mitchener Centre for "mental defectives" in Red Deer; and the construction of a provincial museum and archives in Edmonton.[147] Spending like this "no doubt explained the government's popularity in the post-war period," and was a major

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[145] Hunter, 80-83. For a first-hand oral historical account of trade union pragmatism, and the relationship between trade unions and the NDP, see Norm Leclaire, interview by Mack Penner, Lethbridge, Alberta, 2016. Soon to be available at the Galt Archives in Lethbridge.
[146] Address quoted in Brennan, 135
[147] Brennan, 135-137.

factor in the NDP's turn towards a politics which de-emphasized socialist ideology in favour of issues-based social-democracy.[148]

As Howard Leeson describes the leadership of the NDP during this time in the early 1960s, especially Notley and then party leader Neil Reimer, "Their interests were organizational, their approach competitive, and their focus provincial. There was little time for philosophical debate about policies and issues… Instead there was a deliberate concentration on short-term tactics, the advantage of position on immediate issues, and a new policy of direct attack on Manning and Social Credit."[149] An important aspect of this approach to counter-hegemonic activity was an enthusiastic search for some kind of character scandal that could threaten the Manning government. Outspoken socialists in the NDP, those who had come directly out of the CCF tradition, decried this as a form of gutter politics, but as party leader, Reimer thought the government to be so widely popular that simply presenting alternative policies to Albertans would not be a sufficient praxis.[150]

The pragmatic social-democratic politics of the NDP made no significant dent in the popularity of Social Credit by the time of the 1963 provincial election. In that election, Social Credit secured the most substantial electoral victory in its history, winning 60 of 63 legislative seats on the strength of about 55 percent of the total vote.[151] Still, the election was not without positive indications for the prospects of the NDP in Alberta. The party was able to make impressive gains relative to the CCF's performance in the previous election of 1959, as a strong

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[148] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 155.
[149] Leeson, 63.
[150] Leeson, 64.
[151] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Monday, June 17, 1963." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1963.

focus on running candidates in as many ridings as possible resulted in both a wider provincial presence and nearly double the share of the total vote. The party's strategy of using the most immediately salient provincial issues as the basis for opposition to the government had certainly not been rebuked in any undeniable way, and as such the election was viewed by party leaders as confirmation that they were on an appropriate path. Subsequently, the NDP stayed the course with a three-planked political model: "attack Social Credit and Manning; work hard on organization; keep policies flexible, pragmatic, and oriented to everyday pocketbook concerns."[152]

Perhaps the most important single issue that would shape the NDP's relationship to Social Credit during the 1960s was healthcare. Indeed, healthcare was arguably the focal point of Social Credit's hegemonic posturing vis-à-vis the NDP and the federal government throughout the decade. Just days prior to the 1963 election, Manning had announced the Alberta Medical Insurance Plan, a healthcare scheme which Alvin Finkel describes as involving "little more than the province's establishing an insurance plan via private insurers in Alberta who were willing to accept the maximum premium fixed by the government in consultation with the College of Physicians and Surgeons."[153] For Albertans, this mostly meant two things: being subject to monthly medical premiums in order to ensure access to services and being subject to hospital fees of two dollars per day – a dollar and a half for the chronically ill. There was a modest subsidization program attached whereby people with taxable incomes of less than 500 dollars received transfers on a sliding scale, but in the main this was a privately run healthcare system which reflected Social Credit's preference for policies which limited the government's role.[154]

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[152] Leeson, 89-100. Quote from page 100.
[153] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 144.
[154] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 144-145.

Notably, the Alberta healthcare scheme was implemented on the heels of Saskatchewan's NDP government implementing a system of universal government-provided health insurance, a move which fomented an unprecedented doctors' strike in Saskatchewan in 1962.[155] In this context, Manning was able to present the Alberta model as a distinct alternative not just to what was being embraced in Saskatchewan, but also to the model that would be implemented in Alberta if the NDP were to have its druthers. In campaigning on behalf of his private insurance plan, then, Manning repeatedly emphasized the degree to which universal programs like the one in Saskatchewan were limiting of personal choice: "What is meant by the term 'universal' is that the plan arbitrarily includes everybody whether they need the benefits and whether they wish to be included or not. It is a compulsory program in which participation is compelled by the state and not left to the voluntary choice of the citizen himself."[156] This sort of rhetoric was at the forefront of Social Credit's maintenance of conservative hegemony, and by 1965 it also became central to Social Credit's opposition to a new federal plan for universal nationwide health coverage.[157]

When the federal government announced in July 1965 that it would seek to implement a tax-financed universal Medicare program administered by individual provinces and territories, Manning went to the provincial radio waves to express his fears. If the federal proposal were adopted, he suggested, "Canada will have embarked on the road to a complete welfare state from which there will be no turning back." Continuing, he implored each Albertan to "let your [federal] government know beyond all shadow of doubt that socialists and collectivists are not

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[155] See Allan Blakeney, "The Struggle to Implement Medicare," in *Making Medicare: New Perspectives on the History of Medicare in Canada*, ed. Gregory P. Marchildon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012): 277-281.

[156] Clark Banack, *God's Province: Evangelical Christianity, Political Thought, and Conservatism in Alberta* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016): 143.

[157] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 148-150.

the only inhabitants of the field."[158] But Manning did not limit his campaign against Medicare to the province of which he was premier; he made himself available to national media to speak about his attitudes regarding what the federal proposal might mean. He talked with media outlets across the country about the "state regimentation" entailed by universal coverage, justifying his actions, which were uncommon for a provincial politician, on the grounds that "socialism was being foisted on an unsuspecting public and those in the know had a duty to speak out."[159] Direct attacks on socialist ideology cropped up again in Manning's rhetoric, a development of serious moment for the NDP's counter-hegemonic hopes in Alberta.

Manning's campaign against Medicare represented a return to the tactic of explicit anti-socialist attacks which had been so prevalent, and successful, in Social Credit's resistance to other leftist movements. But by the 1960s there was an important difference in how these attacks were presented. Previous attacks sought to equate Alberta's leftist movements with such phenomena as Nazism and a global conspiracy of financiers in order to attempt to dull the appeal of socialism for Albertans who were otherwise not inclined to think that socialism was "bad" in and of itself. But his rhetoric in the 1960s was different in that it simply assumed the badness of socialism. When Manning asserted that, "Canada is dangerously close to setting her feet on a path… [towards] a regimented socialistic welfare state," he did no work to explain why that would be a negative development.[160] He simply invoked the comparison of Alberta with the rest of Canada and left it at that. This reveals much about the nature of the ideological struggles in 1960s Alberta and demonstrates how Social Credit used a federal development to its advantage in the area of hegemonic maintenance vis-à-vis the NDP.

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[158] Quoted in Brennan, 151.
[159] Finkel, *Social Credit*, 151.
[160] Banack, 143.

Because any policies that could be deemed socialistic stood little chance of appealing widely at this time, the NDP's focus in the years prior the provincial election of 1967 was on negative, sometimes personal, attacks on Manning and other members of the Social Credit government. The provincial economy, still riding a seemingly endless wave of growth buttressed mostly by an oil industry which directly or indirectly employed about half of all workers in the province in the mid-sixties, did not provide good fodder for material criticism of the government.[161] So, the NDP concentrated its efforts on episodes like the so-called "Turcott Affair." Garth Turcott was a lawyer from Pincher Creek who, in a by-election of 1966, became the first elected NDP MLA in Alberta. In his short stint as an elected lawmaker, Turcott became famous as a rabble rouser who, first upon his entry to the legislature and later in his reply to the 1967 Speech from the Throne, focused relentlessly on allegations of corruption against two prominent Social Credit legislators. One-time Treasurer E.W. Hinman and Minister of Municipal Affairs A.J. Hooke had been accused of engaging in "business and land dealings which were in conflict with their public duties," and at the direction of Reimer and Notley, Turcott devoted his every energy to attracting the public attention towards these accusations.[162] Notley and Reimer felt this to be a viable political strategy at the time, an assessment which was probably incorrect as it ultimately prompted Manning to force a censure vote against Turcott and call the election of 1967. Nonetheless, the episode is important insofar as it embodied the NDP's mid-sixties political strategy and served as a harbinger of how the subsequent election would be contested.[163]

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[161] Employment statistic from Brennan, 141.

[162] Larry Pratt, "Grant Notley: Politics as Calling," in *Socialism and Democracy in Alberta: Essays in Honour of Grant Notley*, ed. Larry Pratt (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986): 27.

[163] Pratt, "Notley," 27-28.

The NDP campaign in 1967 was of an overwhelmingly negative nature, focusing on governmental corruption rather than, to give a few examples, the consequences of farm mechanization on rural families, land prices, urbanization, and the provincial industrial strategy.[164] Social Credit, for its part, returned the favour and ran a campaign which treated the NDP as its primary electoral opposition, even though a revitalized Progressive Conservative Party was becoming ascendant. During the week just prior to the election, for instance, Manning gave a speech laden with references to the "socialists" in the NDP and their allegations about Social Credit's cozy relationship with oil companies in the province. He accused the NDP, which had suggested an increase in royalties, of being naïve about the realities of resource development and emphasized that the exploitation of the tar sands was not an inevitability. For Manning, a flourishing oil industry, and by extension a flourishing provincial economy, was dependent upon "a stable political climate in which investors are not afraid to take the gamble involved in such development, which they are afraid of if there is any threat of socialistic intervention."[165] Again, Manning here posited conservative economic policy as the reason for Alberta's economic success, a tactic which continued to be efficacious as Social Credit won the election and the NDP remained without a single legislative seat.[166]

In a sense, the story of Social Credit's hegemonic maintenance ended here. The four years from 1967 to 1971 saw the government lose its main engine when Manning stepped down in 1968, and his successor, Harry Strom, proved to be an entirely unremarkable politician.[167] This did open the door for a new party to gain power in Alberta, but any notion that the power

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[164] Pratt, "Notley," 27-28.

[165] Speech quoted in Finkel, *Social Credit*, 169.

[166] Elections Alberta, "Candidate Summary of Results: General Election Results – Tuesday, May 23, 1967." Accessed at http://web.archive.org/web/20080625054137/http://www.elections.ab.ca/pastelections.html#1967.

[167] Strom was known for being extremely uncharismatic and unable to adequately control the direction of Social Credit after Manning gave up his premiership.

vacuum might have been filled by the NDP was mistaken. The provincial economy remained remarkably strong relative to the rest of the country, and the NDP's work in attacking Social Credit, if it had done anything at all, only suggested that it might be good to have a different group of politicians enacting the same kinds of conservative policies that Social Credit had been employing for decades. As such, the inter-election period before 1971 became a time of reckoning for the provincial NDP, a time to reconsider political strategy and ideological orientation.[168] In way of concluding, this period is worth accounting briefly, as it represented the culmination of more than three decades of counter-hegemonic struggle on the Alberta left.

Just subsequent to the 1967 election, Manning had published a book, *Political Realignment: A Challenge to Thoughtful Canadians*, which in part continued his attack on the principles advocated by the NDP. In the book, Manning accused New Democrats of espousing a "reactionary socialism" which, especially if some of the younger and more radical members in the party were to gain more control, would ensure that the NDP "remain a minority party dominated by hardline reactionaries and extremists."[169] Of course, Manning was writing as a propagandist using overblown and somewhat odd language, but his writing prefigured the main developments in the NDP over the course of the next few years. After the failure of the NDP's pragmatic approach to politics during most of the 1960s, there did in fact emerge a younger faction within the party which agitated for a return to more principled socialist politics. This precipitated a period of intra-party dissension at the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s.[170]

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[168]Finkel, *Social Credit*, 170.

[169] Ernest C. Manning, *Political Realignment: A Challenge to Thoughtful Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967): 77-78.

[170] Pratt, "Notley," 30. Manning stepped down as premier in 1968.

The youth movement against the moderate social-democratic politics of the provincial NDP was led by Ken Novakowski, leader of the New Democratic Youth (NDY). Novakowski was an unapologetic socialist who publicly lamented the state of the party, suggesting that under the leadership of Reimer, and later Notley, it had been moving gradually rightward, distancing itself from a positive vision of a better society, and neglecting non-electoral political work. On these grounds, Novakowski and the NDY became the Alberta section of the NDP's Waffle caucus.[171] The Waffle was a radical movement within the NDP that sought to "build an independent socialist Canada," and to make the NDP "a truly socialist party," and for a few brief years it played a serious role in the Alberta party.[172] It never harmonized with the more moderate elements of the party, though, and when Novakowski left for British Columbia in 1971 radical ideas again receded from the NDP's purview. Notley regained control over the party's direction and set about a hyper-focused 1971 election campaign which prioritized the goal of getting a legislative seat for the NDP. This resulted in Notley's election as the MLA for Peace River, a very small consolation prize for the Alberta left at the end of the nightmarish Social Credit era.[173]

Perhaps this episode was a fitting conclusion to the decade in which the NDP had taken up the left's counter-hegemonic torch in Alberta. The 1970s, just like the 1960s, had begun with the Alberta NDP embroiled in internal debate over what would be the most efficacious way to challenge a Social Credit government that had succeeded in turning Alberta into a province where conservatism was a mostly unquestioned dogma. And the fact that this debate still needed to be had was indicative of the solidity of the hegemony that Social Credit had established.

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[171] The Waffle name is said to have come from a quip made by Ed Broadbent about waffling to the left, rather than the right, as the party seemed to many to be doing at the time. See Morton, 92.

[172] The Waffle, "The Waffle Manifesto: For an Independent Socialist Canada." 1969. Accessed at http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/Waffle/WaffleManifesto.htm

[173] Pratt, "Notley," 35.

Whereas the provincial economy throughout the 1940s and 1950s had been sufficient to satisfy

most Albertan's expectations of the government, the 1960s in fact provided an even more

advantageous context for Social Credit to resist challenges from the left. Economic conditions

within the province remained conducive to the government's popularity, and the tumult that

began to affect the national economy offered an additional advantage to Social Credit, allowing

politicians like Manning to cite Alberta's unique prosperity as evidence of the superiority of

conservative governance. Episodes like the healthcare debate provided the platform for the

comparison, and for continued anti-socialist broadsides from Manning, and the NDP proved

unable to seriously challenge Social Credit in this context. That the NDP found itself in 1971 still

debating the best way to conduct counter-hegemonic politics in Alberta was fitting, then, as it

indicated just how enormously difficult the task had become.

Conclusion

One Thing or Another

The historical circumstances that defined the Social Credit era in Alberta were uniquely well suited to the hegemonic project that the government embarked upon. Decimating the provincial Communist movement was made possible by the fact of the Communist Party's being so strongly tied to the policies adopted by the international movement as represented by the Soviet Union and the Comintern. During the Second World War, as the Communist Party was made illegal in Canada and Party activists were interned, Social Credit could begin an almost risk-free campaign against Communist ideology. Then, as the "hot" war ended, the global political culture of the Cold War ensured that Communism would not return to the political landscape in Social Credit's Alberta. Socialists in the CCF did not face such an unfavorable international situation. Alternatively, though, they ran up against a set of provincial economic conditions which, throughout the 1940s, served to increasingly mitigate the appeal of their counter-hegemonic proposals. The steady growth of the provincial economy, and the methods by which Social Credit managed that growth, left the CCF with little hope of attracting Albertans to socialism in any large number. Finally, the social-democratic movement that emerged in the wake of the crippled socialist movement failed to significantly crack Social Credit's hegemonic apparatus largely because of national circumstances that were used to suggest the superiority of conservatism in Alberta.

Having shown that Social Credit's successful imposition of a conservative political order in Alberta was the result of an ideological campaign that was related to provincial, national, and international conditions, the preceding analysis has demonstrated an important fact about the

way that hegemony functions. It has been made clear that the developments on which hegemonic groups can draw in order to buttress their projects are many, meaning that even in circumstances where the immediate conditions for exercising hegemony may seem less than favourable, developments taking place elsewhere can be utilized instead. In other words, if it is not one thing, it could always be another. What this means for counter-hegemonic movements, then, is that they must be capable of waging struggle against existing orders in an equally broad way. In order to be successful, counter-hegemonic movements must similarly relate their campaigns to developments taking place at varying proximities from the immediate political terrain. Otherwise, they are unlikely muster political struggles that may truly make the ruling classes tremble.

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