

The Role of the West

It is important to remember that Canada experienced industrialization/urbanization *and* rural settlement at the same time. At the turn of the century in the Prairies (now the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta), large scale immigration and migration were taking place at the same time that people were moving from rural areas to cities in Ontario. Both urban problems and rural problems were the concern of religious groups. Immigration to Canada reached a peak in the 1900–1910 period and much of that immigration was to settle the prairie region. It was this frontier which later inspired the conceptual models of many of Canada's sociologists. S. D. Clark and Oswald Hall grew up on the Prairies. Canada's influential social and economic thinker, Harold Innis at the University of Toronto, along with William Mackintosh at Queen's were inspired by their Prairie experiences. Although Carl Addington Dawson, the first head of the Department of McGill, focused on urban problems in the Chicago tradition, he wrote a number of books on the problems of prairie settlement.

The Social Gospel Movement

The social gospel movement emerged among the non-establishment Protestant religions (non-Anglican, non-Church of England, non-Episcopal) as the problems of the new industrial age became more evident. In some cases, such as the Salvation Army, the denomination itself was a new expression of Protestantism. The essential core of the movement was that present problems could be solved and a new order could be created which would give advantages to all. While the social gospel did not actually promise the creation of heaven on earth, it saw religion as capable of creating a new order in conjunction with capitalism. However, such a partnership was not to be without conflict.

At Queen's, founded by the Presbyterians to educate their clergy, by the turn of the century President George M. Grant and John Watson and others were giving annual seminars for the clergy on new ways and new methods that could be used to cope with problems in their parishes, particularly in the rural west. Clergy made the long trip by train from the West to Kingston for these two-week seminars. Among them was Salem Bland who taught the first course in sociology in Canada at Wesley University in Winnipeg in 1906. McMaster University and Acadia University (both Baptist) followed the Methodist College in 1907. Sociological methods, it appeared, could be used to solve social problems in a Christian way.

The practice of the social gospel was limited by the power structure and the social position of the denomination in which it was practised. Advocating the conditions of the new order had to be congruent with the thinking of the church leadership, lay and religious. Social gospel leaders frequently found their efforts curtailed and their jobs within the church changed when they overstepped the limits. Those who associated themselves with the labour movement or the farmers' movement seemed to be particularly vulnerable. Salem Bland was asked to leave Wesley College in 1919 just before he published his book, *The New Christianity*. He remained a minister in the Methodist Church but never had the influence that his previous position provided (Campbell, 1983). J. S. Woodsworth, son of a Methodist minister, the brother of the first Dean of the School of Humanities and Law at Kwansai Gakuin University, and one of the key founders and first leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (the socialist party in Canada, and now known as the New Democratic Party) experienced similar curtailment by the Methodist Church. Now, J. S. Woodsworth holds the distinction of having one of the colleges at the University of Toronto named after him.

It is important to point out, that at the same time that they looked at new ways of solving the problems within their own country, these religions looked at other countries. Churches would have a Board of Home Missions and Board of Foreign Missions. The case of the Woodsworth brothers represents a family example within Methodism of the missionizing effect of the social gospel as well as some of the structural limitations on it.

The relationship between sociology, social service or social work and the social gospel as it evolved over the period 1900–1925 can only be given brief comment here. It appeared that the Protestant denominations