CHAPTER 11

LITERACY EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF THE RISE OF MONOPOLY CAPITALISM

Capitalist Development and the Surplus Population

The period from the late 1890's through the 1920's in Canada witnessed an important new transition in the capitalist accumulation process: the rise of monopoly capitalism and the demise of the free enterprise, or competitive capitalism that had been dominant since the 1860's. Emerging after a long and severe depression in the Canadian economy, monopoly capitalism represented the fusion of finance capital, industrial capital and a strong pro-business state--a powerful new phalanx which rapidly brought the national economy under its sway and made possible an era of rapid economic growth. [1] There was an accelerated concentration and centralization of capital, with small firms being forced out of business or swallowed up by giant new corporations, organizationally centralized and bureaucratized, integrated horizontally with suppliers of raw materials and vertically with distributors. [2]

The rise of the new monopoly system was accelerated by a vast new cheap energy source in hydro-electric power and a rapidly expanding iron and steel industry.[3] It made possible the growth of important new sectors in agriculture and industry, including mining, lumbering, wheat farming and the construction of railways to service them. All of these sectors had an insatiable demand for unskilled labour. [4] Avery observes that "Canada's captains of industry required a work force that was both inexpensive and at their beck and call", or in other words, a new exploitable surplus population that would permit the rapid expansion of production. [5]

The surplus of population was drawn from two main sources--internal pools of Canadian-born workers and European immigration. The former source was largely depleted by 1907, and immigration supplied the vast bulk of unskilled labour in the 1896 to 1920's period. [6] Between 1901 and 1911, for example, the population of Canada grew by an exceptional 34 per cent, largely because of immigration. [7] It has been estimated that three million people entered the country between 1896 and 1914. [8] Due to their labours, railway mileage doubled, mining production tripled, and wheat and lumber production increased tenfold between those years. [9] However, the surplus population, immigrant and Canadian-born, paid a high price for the gains of monopoly capitalism in Canada. They suffered severe exploitation--enduring systematic

underpayment for long days of unpleasant, physically punishing work--and often lived under wretched conditions. [10]

Frontier Workers

Some of the most harshly exploited labourers were those in isolated frontier work camps in mining, lumbering and railway construction. Historians Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook describe those working in railway construction as:

> the navvies, "foreign" and "white", who worked in clearing bush, mucking and laying the road beds for the railway builders. These workers, or bunkhouse men, often lived like indentured laborers. Their wages were low; their dependence on the contractor or sub-contractor for transportation, food, clothing and accommodation was nearly total and their ability to obtain redress of grievances was almost non-existent.[11]

Reacting to the harsh conditions in the work camps and to the neglect of frontier workers by governments, various private organizations began offering services, including educational ones, in northern areas. One of the most prominent was a pioneer adult education organization, the Reading Camp Association, later renamed Frontier College. The Rev. Alfred Fitzpatrick founded the Reading Camp Association in 1899 as a means of supplying reading materials, and later, basic literacy instruction and academic upgrading for workers in the isolated work camps in mining, lumbering and railway construction.[12] Prominent in the membership of the organization were a number of the northern employers who maintained such camps. [13] They contributed a large share of the private donations that sustained it. Various churches and church members also contributed heavily to its work. [14] Early in the history of organization, the role of “laborer-teacher” was developed, by which university students and others worked at the same full-time jobs as the camp men duringthe day and provided instruction for them in off hours. [15]

New Perspectives

The leaders of the organization, including Fitzpatrick and E.W. Bradwin (an early employee and later its head after the departure of Fitzpatrick in the 1920's), were influential through their work and writings in contributing to the development of two new perspectives on illiteracy. Other educators contributed to them, particularly in the decade of the 1920's, but no one else wrote as extensively as they.

The perspectives were developed in two distinct periods. The first emerged in the years from the founding of the Reading Camp Association in 1899 to about 1907, a period in which Canadian-born workers and British immigrants still outnumbered non-English speaking immigrants in the camps. Some important themes emerged in Fitzpatrick's and Bradwin's views during this time, relatively uninfluenced by the "immigrant question". The second perspective on illiteracy--in which the question of foreign labourers was central--emerged after Canadian immigration policies shifted,

leading to the massive influx of Southern European workers in to the camps. We will now explore the first perspective on illiteracy.

Literacy for "Mental and Social Uplift"

The writings of Fitzpatrick in the pre-1907 period generally reflected the concerns of middle class elements about conditions dependence on public charity, crime, public drunkenness, unsanitary living conditions and outbreaks of epidemics that were associated with the presence of resource and construction workers in the northern areas. [16] However, he rejected what was a prevalent conservative belief that these problems were the result of hereditary deficiencies among these men, and worked hard to disseminate his own view (as influenced by the social gospel and Progressive Movement thought of the time) that the major causes of these conditions were environmental in nature, and therefore remediable. [17]

What were these environmental influences? Fitzpatrick recognized that employer practices constituted one source:

> At present it is to be confessed with shame that the conditions in which these men labor are not always desirable, that a species of sweating system is not unknown in the development of our great natural resources.[18]

He criticized the lack of governmental regulation of 'the setting of wages and conditions by employers;

> To give employers and contractors a free hand in determining their relation to their employees is to grant a license often to compel men to work overtime and on Sundays, to live in small and unsanitary quarters, and is nothing short of criminal.[19]

He advocated that through the state, humane employment standards"should be exacted and systematically and rigidly enforced".[20]

Fitzpatrick's views on these employer practices reflected critique of 'laissez-faire' capitalism mounted by the mainstream, non-leftist, currents in the Christian social gospel and Progressive movements of the time. This reform thought represented a break with the conservative views of the late 19th century, which had justified the predatory behavior of the "captains of industry" by appeal to the social-Darwinist doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" as applied to human affairs. [21] The new reform thought advocated greater cooperation among the classes for the common good of the society, and saw the need for an expanded role for the state in the regulation of economic life. In their critique, the reformers deplored many of the exploitative practices of owners of business and industry, but these as 'excesses' which were

amenable to correction, and not indicative of an inherent tendency of the capitalist economic system. [22]

Education

Thus, even as Fitzpatrick identified some of the harsher aspects of the treatment of camp men by employers, he did not recognize these practices as forming part of a systematic pattern of class exploitation, and felt that they could be remedied through legislative means. Moreover, he saw these practices as distinctly secondary in importance to what he considered to be the main (environmental) cause of the poverty, crime, alcoholism, etc. among camp men: the lack of opportunity for education, and in particular, for literacy training in the camps:

> The problem of improving the condition of the semi-nomadic laborers who live in more or less temporary lumbering, mining, and railway construction camps is mainly educational. The majority of these men are comparatively illiterate, while thirty-five per cent are unable to recognize their own name....[23] (emphasis added)

Fitzpatrick and his colleagues believed that deprived of “mental and social uplift” that reading provides (reading of 'decent' and intellectually stimulating materials, that is), illiterate campmen were prone to various "moral diseases":

> Men whose spare time is occupied in gambling, drinking, listening to or taking part in the low jest, song and story, soon become depraved. Sundays and rainy days in camp, when men are off work, are the longest in the year. Men suffer more from ennui, from mental and spiritual languour, than from overwork on other days. They are then ready to jump at any suggestion, no matter how vulgar, that promises even temporary relief from such bondage. Their moral diseases, that are the result of this lack of social and religious restraint, are of a much more serious character.[24]

One of the "moral diseases" was crime. Fitzpatrick writes that, "Workers commit crimes they would never. have perpetrated had they had anything ennobling to occupy their minds."[25] The answer to the problem of "mental and spiritual languour" is education:

> The only means...that men have of building up their characters is bythinking right thoughts. If we expect workers to come up to the same standards as others we shouldsupply them with the means of education.[26]

The place to start was with literacy instruction conducted in the camps:

> The average boy leaves the public school from the third reader. These boys, as well as those who escape the school walls without any education, should be followed to the woods and mines .... Correspondence schools reach a small percentage of men in the mining camps, and railway employees, and in some cases are doing good work. They, however, cover only a small fraction of the available ground. Owing to the illiteracy of a large percentage of men in the lumbering, mining, and railway construction camps, there is a work here these schools cannot overtake. Men who can neither read nor write can only be benefitted by a resident instructor. Men who have an elementary education will be more likely to add to their knowledge under the direct inspiration and incentive of a teacher.[27]

In response to the criticism that camp education for frontier workers was too costly, Fitzpatrick replied that, "Camp schools are cheaper than soldiers," (i.e. workers who deliberately restrict their output), "paupers, drunkards and criminals."[28]

Social Justice

Given his belief that it was illiteracy, and not exploitation by employers, that was responsible for the social problems associated with frontier work, it is not surprising that he saw the provision of education as "more urgent" a goal than reform of employment practices. Fitzpatrick wrote:

> We should aim by legislation to secure--
> 1. The gradual shortening of the hours of manual labour until at least an eight-hour day is reached, and–
>
> 2. <u>What is more urgent</u> than the need for a shorter day's labor, the means of self-improvement during what unemployed hours are even how available on the part of all who toil in solitude.[29] (emphasis added)

Fitzpatrick and his colleagues in the Reading Camp Association vigourously campaigned for the second objective. They argued that "what these socially, intellectually and morally buried is charity, but social justice". [30] Fitzpatrick observed:

> It is sometimes asked why should you make these men the objects of charity? It is because the much despised shanty-man, miner and navvy contribute so largely to the production of the public revenue, because their backs are bent, their hands callous, their minds dwarfed and their spirits benighted, that the rich and poor alike are enabled to send their sons and daughters to the Public, the High School, College and University for a fraction of the cost. The city of Toronto alone has a population of about 225,000 persons. Out of the public revenue of Ontario, over one-third of which comes from woods and forests, there is

> spent approximately $400,000 annually for their education. There are about a quarter of a million men in the frontier camps of Canada upon whom there is spent less than $500 annually for educational purposes.[31]

However, even if it was the public at large which was mainly at fault for this unfair neglect of the education of frontier workers owners of the mines, lumber camps and railways that hired them shared some responsibility as well:

> The philanthropists who accumulate large fortunes while keeping within the letter of the questionable methods of society for obtaining wealth, and who afterwards gain the applause of their fellows by conferring benefits upon those who had no share in the production of that wealth are legion. The business men who look to the development of the character of the man who co-operate with them to exploit any given industry are comparatively few in number.[32]

Historical Continuity

The perspective on illiteracy which emerged from the work of Fitzpatrick and his colleagues in the Reading Camp Association in the 1899 to 1907 period, which we may term "literacy for mental and social uplift", bears a striking resemblance to the one formulated by Ryerson and his fellow educational reformers 40 to 50 years earlier indicating a large measure of historical continuity. In particular, both arose in a period of intensified economic exploitation and social disruption, and identified what were seen as the low moral standards guiding the behavior of the laboring poor--and not the harsh economic and social conditions--as the primary cause of the new social problems of the time, such as crime, "soldiering" and "pauperism". Moreover, both perspectives represented literacy instruction as a vehicle of mental and spiritual "uplift" for the laboring poor, i.e. a means of reducing personal and social deviance among them.

However, an important feature distinguishing Fitzpatrick's from Ryerson's perspective is the fact that the former embodies a critique of some of the exploitative practices of employers, and puts forward a limited advocacy of the material interests of the workers. T his innovation illustrates the influence of the reformist social gospel and Progressive movements during the period of the emergence of monopoly capitalism. In spite of this critical theme in Fitzpatrick's views, he was able to obtain the cooperation of a number of employers, both as members and financial contributors of the Reading Camp Association.[30] How was this possible?

Corporate-Liberalism

To answer this question, we must return to Fitzpatrick's distinction between those capitalists who "accumulate large fortunes while keeping within the letter of the questionable methods of society", and those "businessmen who look to the development of the character" of their employees (who he said are "comparatively few in number"). [34] Here, Fitzpatrick is identifying what was a real split within the ruling class between those who continued to cling to a more traditional, predatory "laissez-faire" approach, and a small but growing number of "enlightened" "corporate-liberal" capitalists, recognized the necessity of seeking some form of accomodation with moderate reformist elements, even if of a token nature, in order to forestall growing labour militancy in a time of rapid economic development. [35] Fitzpatrick openly allied with the Iatter. For example, in 1903 he praised such employers:

> Canadian railway companies, too, are awake to the importance of providing for the mental and social improvement of their men. They are spending money in Y.M.C.A. buildings, in libraries, in giving free transportation to car schools, and the Grand Trunk has recently initiated a system of train libraries for the benefit of its patrons. Canadian employers in the mining and lumbering industries have spent in the last few years over $50,000 for the amelioration of their employees.[36]

In spite of Fitzpatrick's occasional attacks on the length of the working day of frontier workers, the sanitary conditions in the camps, etc., his overall message could only have been received with sympathy among the new "corporate-liberal " fraction of employers. Even as he decried some employer practices, he clearly minimized their significance by identifying literacy as the primary source of the problems of camp men. Moreover, there was a distinctly religious tone in Fitzpatrick's writings, conveying a sense of missionary activity rather than of political activism. [37] (This was probably both a conditioned habit, given his background of church training, and a calculated tactic, in view of the fact that the Reading Camp Association depended to a large degree on contributions from churches and church members. Overall, Fitzpatrick's reformism was one that employers could live with, given the alternatives.

Therefore, it is not surprising to find that in 1903:

> a deputation of employers, prominent educationists and clergymen. ..waited upon the Ontario Premier and the Minister of Education. A grant of $100 was asked for each camp instructor.....The Premier promised the fullest possible consideration. The Ontario Government spent $1200 the first year, and $2000 last year, in initiating a system of camp libraries. An item of $4000 is placed in the estimates for the current year, for the purpose of extending the system.[38]

(Lest these grants be seen as anything other than what they are--tokens--it must be pointed out that there were more than 50,000 men laboring in the lumber industry alone in Ontario in 1903.) [39]

Through their support for Fitzpatrick's work, employers could appear as 'concerned' and 'responsible'. However, in addition to the legitimation function, we must not overlook what were more mundane, but significant material benefits derived by employers. Fitzpatrick wrote:

> The Vice-President of the Parry Sound Lumber Company, Mr. John McLelland, told the Premier and the Minister of Education, on the occasion of the recent visit of the reading camp deputation, that his company “had spent nearly five hundred dollars in three buildings for this purpose, and that after the test of two seasons, he believed it was money well spent, that it tended to bring in a better class of workmen, and to improve the men generally.”[40]

The presence of camp education facilities often had the effect of stabilizing the work force--preventing the frequent movement of the underpaid, overworked northern laborers from camp to camp. For example, R. Jackson, Superintendent of Woods for the Victoria Harbor Lumber Company wrote to Fitzpatrick that he was "satisfied the reading rooms and night schools very materially checked the 'jumping, of men". i.e. their frequent movement from camp to camp.[41]

The concerns of employers about their workers largely revolved around the problem of maintaining discipline and productivity during what was a time of rapid economic growth and severe competition in mining, lumbering and railway construction. For this reason, it is unlikely that many employers shared Fitzpatrick's larger, more exalted vision, i.e.:

> The association aims to dignify isolated manual labor and to free it from sordid and degrading conditions... labor thus ennobled and made intelligent will become what Carlyle foresaw it would become, "the grand sole miracle of man" and the key to the industrial, educational, social and religious problems of our time.[42]

However, there was sufficient convergence of interests between small Reading Camp Association and those employers influenced by new corporate-liberal ideology to make some limited cooperation possible.

Diversion from Collective Action

As for the reaction of workers in the isolated frontier camps to visits by representatives of the Reading Camp Association, we have only second-hand accounts of their views as submitted by organizers and instructors of the Association. If these are to be believed, it seems that even if the assumptions of the visitors tended to be middle class and moralistic, and if their rhetoric was frequently patronizing in its tone, many of the lonely and overworked camp men welcomed their presence and

appreciated the diversion which the small camp libraries and literacy classes afforded. Sometimes as many as a quarter or more of them took part in some way. [43]

For those individuals who suffered most from the mental privations of camp life, literacy instruction and reading materials represented one tangible means of personal development in what was otherwise a barren and stultifying environment. However, the presence of the Reading Camp clearly offered no stimulus for workers to undertake collective action against the exploitation they faced, and in fact the emphasis on individualistic self-improvement and conformity to dominant values probably served to divert them from it

Literacy and Canadianization

We have surveyed the first of two perspectives on illiteracy developed during the rise of monopoly capitalism in Canada. What demarcated the periods of dominance of the two perspectives was a change in the ethnic composition of the Canadian workforce, particularly as represented in the population of the work camps. Whereas in the period from 1899 to 1907, the majority (or at least a sizeable minority) of workers in the camps were British or Canadian born, in the post-1907 period immigrants from Central and Southern Europe came to predominate. E. W. Bradwin, an employee of the Reading Camp Association, pointed out in 1907 that the "foreign-born are becoming a fast increasing element of Canada's population" .[44] By 1912, Alfred Fitzpatrick was able to write that "The Canadian navvy, including the French-Canadian, has practically disappeared from our frontier camps". He observed that, "The manual labour is being done almost solely by the European navvy".[45]

Avery notes that:

> In the minds of many Anglo-Canadians the arrival of these "hordes" of foreigners stirred deep suspicion. The immigrants posed a serious challenge to Canadian institutions, particularly in the rapidly growing urban centres of Western Canada and northern Ontario where their concentration in ethnic ghettos made them, and their manifold problems, highly visible.[46]

The "immigrant question" became an explosive one, and Fitzpatrick and other educators of the time singled out education, particularly literacy education, as an effective means of responding to it. Let us now explore this new perspective on illiteracy and the background to its formulation.

The New Immigration

The major reason for the dramatic shift in the ethnic makeup of the workforce after 1907 was a change in the immigration policy of the Canadian government. According to Avery, in the view of the directors of the Immigration Branch:

> it didn't matter where immigrants came from as long as they could be made to fit Canada's economic priorities. Racial and cultural factors could not be ignored, but above all immigrants should be selected according to their ability to adjust to the environmental and occupational demands of the Canadian frontier.[47]

As the need for agriculturalists declined and the demand laborers in railway construction, mining and lumbering grew around 1907, employers increasingly criticized the heretofore favored British immigrants for what were seen as their lack of capacity for hard physical labour and their unwillingness to tolerate low wages and primitive living conditions. [48] They put heavy pressure on federal government to admit a greater number of those immigrants were considered to be more docile and physically hardy, including Italians, Poles, Bulgarians and Slavs. [49] The Immigration Branch obliged and:

> Increasingly, the long-standing goal of bringing into the country only the settler-laborer type of immigrant was displaced by a policy of importing an industrial proletariat. Immigration statistics reveal that the percentage of unskilled labourers entering Canada increased from 31 per cent in 1907 to 43 per cent in 1913-14, while the percentage of agriculturalists decreased from 38 per cent to 28 per cent. This change from settler to worker immigrants was accompanied by a change in the ethnic composition of migrants. In 1907, 20 per cent of the immigrants were from Central and Southern Europe; by 1913, when 400,000 men and women entered the country, this figure had advanced to 48 per cent.[50]

Unlike earlier immigrants from Britain, the new European immigrants often -arrived destitute, [51] unable to communicate in English, compelled to conform to the pattern favoured by employers in labour-intensive industries, i.e. to:

> roam the country to take up whatever work was available--railroad construction in the Canadian Shield in the summer, harvesting in Saskatchewan in the fall, coal mining in Alberta in the winter, and lumbering in British Columbia in the spring.[52]

In the words of historians Brown and Cook, "The new immigrant, unfamiliar with the country, often unable to speak English, desperate for work...became the exploited navvy of the northern work camps. [53]

> Author Vera Lysenko describes the plight of the foreign immigrants:
>
> They were systematically underpaid ... tortured by physical labour, torn by nostalgia for the old country, crushed by loneliness in a strange land, and by the fear of death which (they) often looked in the face.[54]

In spite of the acute social and cultural problems accompanying the influx of immigrants Southern and Central Europe, governments at both the federal and provincial levels took few steps to facilitate their integration into the life of the country.[55] The interest of th" federal government, in particular, began and ended with their utility as a source of cheap labour. [56] During this period, governments disputed over which level, federal or provincial, was responsible for immigrant education, and in the meantime left the matter to private agencies like protestant churches, the YMCA and Frontier College. [57]

Striking a Balance

For their part, the educators associated with immigrant education saw the task of providing training in literacy, the English language and "citizenship" (i.e. elementary training in Canadian history, civics, geography, etc.) as a vita one. On the surface, the views expressed by the immigrant educators indicated a wish to balance the needs of immigrants and the larger host society. For example, Fitzpatrick wrote in 1907:

> Here we have men, who have already spent a long day of ten or twelve hours at heavy toil, seeking night after night to acquire, through the aid of an instructor, a smattering of our language. Are they not, even after a few months of instruction so obtained, better fitted to participate in the life of a young country, and does not the work of the Reading Camp Association offer one means of solving the problems raised by the increasing inflow to Canada of other peoples?[58]

Fitzpatrick's remarks on the goal of "Canadianization" of immigrants struck a similarly balanced tone:

> What does instruction in citizenship involve? We mean by it, instruction in civics, in social rights and responsibilities. Our foreign-born workers are entitled to the education which will enable them more fully to understand what their rights are and how to secure them, and at the same time what are the attendant obligations and how to observe them. Through the instructor the foreign-born workman ought to be taught to read and write....rhey will learn, too, what government can do and is doing for them and what they can do and ought to do for the government.[59]

In a letter written in 1912 R. W. Leonard, Chairman of the Commissioners of the Trans Canada Railway (and a heavy employer of immigrant labour), commended the work of Fitzpatrick and his colleagues:

> From what I have seen of the work of your Reading Camp Association during the past few years, and having visited your Camps occasionally, I have formed a very favorable impression of the work you are carrying on.

> I enclose my cheque for $250 with best wishes for the success of your efforts in endeavoring to give the newly-arrived immigrant and the laborers employed on our public works some education that will tend to help them to become more desirable citizens.[60]

When taken out of their social and politica context, these sentiments convey an air of impartiality and reasonableness. Indeed, who could argue with the goal of helping immigrants to become more desirable citizens? Of course, what are missing are the definitions of these terms and phrases (e.g. "desirable citizens", "social rights and responsibilities", "problems raised by the ... inflow to Canada") and more fundamentally, the question of who is defining them and what is their location in the class structure. Here the rhetoric of immigrant educators concealed the reality of deep divisions on "immigrant question" which rendered a 'neutral' or 'impartial' stance impossible. To place the views of those concerned with immigrant education in their proper context in the post-1907 period, it is necessary at this point to explore the range of attitudes regarding immigration from Southern and Central Europe that prevailed in Canada at the time.

Nativism Vs. the Open Door

Attitudes towards large-scale immigration from Europe varied considerably among classes and social groups in Canada, ranging from strong nativist sentiment, involving opposition to further immigration, to the “open door” view, which encouraged it. The strongest pro-immigration lobby consisted of employers in labour-intensive industries like mining, railway construction, lumbering and farming. Their need for unskilled labour dominated the shape of federal immigration policy. For example, Avery points out that railway companies demanded:

> a flooding of the labour market with the type of Italians and other itinerant workers who would be hired cheaply and thus keep costs down. In short, the railway companies become the outstanding spokesmen for an open door immigration policy .... The mining and lumbering companies aided and abetted the efforts of the railway companies in seeking to keep the immigration door open. Corporate unity on this issue reflected economic interdependence.[61]

On the other hand, nativist sentiment was concentrated labour unions, churches and business circles in urban areas with immigrant communities. For example, labour unions asserted that while immigration policy was ostensibly aimed at importing agricultural workers, the new immigrants were really intended as a source of cheap exploitable labour for industry. It was charged that they drifted into urban areas and crowded the labour market, giving employers an excuse to lower wages and offer poor working conditions. As well, labour spokesmen severely criticized the common employer practice of breaking strikes through importing vulnerable and misinformed immigrant workers as 'scabs'.[62]

For their part, churches, and middle-class elements opposed immigration for social and cultural reasons. Avery points out that:

> Many Anglo-Canadians were. ..disturbed by evidence of social deviance among immigrant workers. The ethnic ghettos, which quickly sprang up in the major Canadian cities and almost all single-enterprise communities west of the Ottawa River, were increasingly thought of as a breeding ground for “filth, immorality and crime.”[63]

Racist sentiments were frequently expressed. For example:

> During the 1910 Session of the House of Commons the member for West Huron, E. L. Lewis, introduced a private members bill calling for the restriction of immigration from the area of Europe south of 44 degrees north latitude and east of 20 degrees east longitude in order to prevent Canada from becoming a "nation of organ grinders and banana sellers."[64]

The most potent source of anti-immigrant sentiment was to be found among businessmen in urban centres with large immigrant communities, such as Winnipeg, who feared a threat to established values institutions in the increasing numerical strength of immigrant groups. [65] Of particular concern were manifestations of immigrant radicalism. Avery observes that there were "increasing public pronouncements from prominent citizens which warned that the continual influx of European immigrants would threaten the stability of Canadian society".[66]

Radicalism

Avery points out that many immigrants were prepared to forcibly resist what he calls the “demands of exploitative capitalism”.[67] In discussing the 1896 to 1914 period, he states:

> Seasonal fluctuations in labour demand, and the tendency of most mining, lumbering, and railway companies during slack periods to discharge temporarily their unskilled employees, produced deep hostility among immigrant workers. These periods of idleness not only prevented the accumulation of funds, but actually depleted accumulated savings, thereby postponing a profitable return to the Old Country. Immigrant resentment over this cyclical employment pattern often expressed itself in militant demands for higher wages and better working conditions. When these methods failed, at least some immigrant workers were not adverse to collective action, and, in some cases, outright violence. Numerous incidents could be cited from the period 1896 to 1914 of immigrant workers in the rail, mine, and lumber camps resorting to collective action to remedy specific grievances. In many cases worker demands were accompanied by violence or the threat of violence.[68]

The resistance of immigrant workers to the exploitation they faced at the hands of employers through the 1930's ranged from spontaneous protests to support for industrial unions and socialist organizations. [69] For example, immigrants provided the bulk of the support for militant labour organizations like Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) [70] and the Communist Party. [71] After 1914, Marxist-oriented ethnic organizations became increasingly influential in immigrant communities, particularly among groups like Russians, Ukrainians and Finns. [72]

Immigrant radicalism proved to be the one issue which could sometimes unite both nativist elements, like anglo-Canadian businessmen, and normally pro-immigration groups, including employers in labour-intensive industries, around support for anti-immigrant measures like arrests, the crushing of strike action, deportation and even the outright halt of immigration from continental Europe. [73]

While the 'open door' was generally dominant in federal government policy in the early decades of the 20th century, it sometimes gave way in response to this pressure.

Literacy and Language Education

One of the most important forces shaping the objectives of literacy and language education programs for immigrants was the need on the part of the elites to counter what was perceived as the growing social power of immigrant groups in Canada. Dunn reports that:

> One of the earliest and most consistent themes in adult education activity is the push for "socialization" of minority groups into the political and cultural mores of the dominant class. During the years of 1897 to 1914 the Anglo-Saxon commercial and manufacturing elite in Winnipeg felt its political control slipping as the province experienced wave after wave of Slav and Jewish immigration. It was determined to shape the new society in its image....Rather than assuring the assimilation of the newcomers through provision of adequate social amenities and 'integrated residential patterns, the elite chose the route of assimilation through the education system. This was a major emphasis at the elementary and secondary level. One of Winnipeg's most prominent businessmen, James H. Ashdown, was a prime force in having the job done at the immigrant adult level as well....Mayor Ashdown was instrumental in having the Winnipeg school Board establish a system of evening classes in 1907. During that year ten English-language evening classes were opened for foreigners and six more were soon added, twelve of the total being north of the C.P.R. tracks. Evening classes had been requested since 1886, but only the immigrant problem seemed to have sparked any action.[74]

Here was one of the main themes of a new perspective on illiteracy: "Canadianization", or the inculcation of the values and beliefs of the dominant classes.

With the onset of World War I in 1914, there was intensified concern about immigrant radicalism among elites. Conditions like a 65 per cent increase in food prices between 1914 and 1917 led to growing labour strife. The strikers were joined by immigrant workers, many of whom had been interned as 'dangerous aliens' and then released to mining and railway companies (to meet a labour shortage) which had in turn seriously underpaid and mistreated them. [75] According to Avery, there was:

> a growing concern among both Anglo-Canadian businessmen and Dominion security officials about alien labour radicalism... In 1917 there were a record number of strikes and more than one million man days were lost. Immigrant workers were caught up in the general labour unrest and in numerous industrial centers in Northern Ontario and Western Canada they demonstrated a capacity for effective collective action, and a willingness to defy both the power of management and the state.[76]

In the 1914 report of the Reading Camp Association, Alfred Fitzpatrick appealed to the elite concerns about the growing radicalism of immigrants in an attempt to build support for his work:

> The horrors of war have clarified our national vision. In the past we have bent our energies to the securing of a great population. Today Canadians are awakening to the fact that if we would secure the well-being and security of this Dominion and maintain a worthy place within the Empire, we must with urgency proceed with the task of Canadianizing the foreigners within our shores, and bring them into intelligent harmony with our Canadian and British ideals.[77]

Referring to the work of his organization in frontier camps, he pointed out that:

> In the tents and buildings instruction is given in the evenings, on rainy days and on holidays, both to English-speaking men and foreigners. It includes the teaching of the English language and our ideals of citizenship to the non-AngIo-Saxons. The instructors demonstrate what it really means to be a Canadian. They carry on the process of assimilation in the only way feasible, namely by personal contact.[78]

Radicalism and Ignorance

Fitzpatrick's reference to intelligence (i.e. "intelligent harmony with our Canadian and British ideals") was a frequent one in writings. It was a prominent component of the emerging "Canadianization" perspective on illiteracy. That is, literacy was equated with intelligence, and iltletracy with ignorance. Moreover, intelligence was equated with acceptance of dominant Canadian values and institutions, and ignorance with acceptance of, or vulnerability to, "alien doctrines" (or "perverted revolutionary

doctrines"). example, E. W. Bradwin underscores the perceived connection between radicalism and ignorance:

> The demagogue, actuated by personal spleen or ambition, or, as is sometimes the case, lacking any real understanding of causes and their inevitable effects, comes to the fore. Such leaders are not steadied by knowledge, nor disciplined by hard thought. Zealous and imaginative, they advocate rapid advances along untried paths. The more vociferous their talk the greater is the influence among foreign-born camp men, otherwise sober-minded, but whose Hindi ht has been untried by abnormal mental environment.

In view of the connection between radicalism and ignorance, literacy instruction must become a vehicle for lessons in dominant social political values if "ignorant" immigrants are to become truly intelligent and "right thinking". C. M. MacInnes, a university professor and Canadian representative to the World Association of Adult Education durinq the 1920's in Europe wrote:

> It is vital that the education of the "new Canadians" is not confined to instruction in reading and speaking English, for within a very short time these newcomers from the ends of the earth can become naturalized Canadians. Unless something is done to make them understand the meaning of their new citizenship, and to impress them with their new responsibilities as well as their new privileges, they may become in Canada, as they have become elsewhere, dangerous material for the propagandist and the crank. It is the easiest thing in the world for the emissary of some revolutionary doctrine to convince the ignorant peasant from eastern Europe that the government of the new country to which he has come is as much his oppressor and his enemy as was the government of the old country which he has left. The outburst in Winnipeg in 1919 gives one indication of what must be expected if the problem of educating the foreigner is not seriously faced by Canadians. Adult education, therefore, must be vigorously pursued among these people in order to evolve right thinking, responsible citizens in the young democracy.[80]

The same theme is obvious in the writings of J. T. M. Anderson, a Saskatchewan educator (and later Premier of the province), asserted that:

> We must profit by the insight we are now getting into the "disruption and uneven growth" which is the result of a lack of national consciousness. Since the outbreak of the war it has come home to us very forcibly that Canada is a country full of unassimilated groups, with varying social ideals, varying languages, and varying ideas of Canadian citizenship and loyalty to the British Empire. Our ..governments should put forth every

> effort to encourage the establishment of night schools throughout the winter months in all rural non-English communities where illiteracy prevails .... The average of public intelligence, or especially in certain non-English districts, must be appreciably elevated if many of our New-Canadian fellow-citizens are not to remain the prey of certain unscrupulous manipulators in the guise of verbose political stump orators.[81]

Channeling Discontent

Some educators believed that immigrant radicalism stemmed in part from harsh economic conditions, and not just from the influence of agitators and "alien doctrines". For example, Bradwin observed that:

> the One Big Union, which ... reared its head in the mines and logging camps of Western Canada, and hissed its venom in the streets of Winnipeg, in June, 1919, was a direct product in part of the neglect of the navvy and other workers in the camps of Canada. It was an echo in the lives of men whose hearts were first made bitter by the slipshod methods of pay meted out to them for work in frontier places.[82]

However, even if this discontent was in part produced by material conditions, with the help of literacy education as conducted by camp educators it could be channeled into 'safer' pathways and need not result in radicalism. Fitzpatrick states:

> For many years the I.W.W. and other radicals have carried on an active campaign in the camps. Paid agents of these extremists present "red" viewpoints and cause trouble by their insidious talk. Thoroughly familiar with all phases of their subject, they often cause discomfiture to the man daring to question their theories. They take a pride in carefully schooling willing converts. These agents or teachers of perverted forms of socialism are in hundreds of camps. They have money and are well supplied with literature. They openly flaunt their propaganda and defy authority. Discontent, strikes and worse evils follow in their train. They also forward to the camps at which they work and near-by camps all sorts of "red" literature, such as "The Clarion", "Federationist," etc. I have been in camps where the only literature one could find was the fiery pamphlets and papers of "red" propagandists.
>
> The whole thing is indicative of changing social conditions. Not all of it can be combated, but at least it can be properly channeled and the rampage not allowed to go wholly unchecked. It is not at all surprising that the "red" flourishes in the camps. I have always contended that the soil there is exactly in the right condition for "red" seed. Neither the state nor the church has preempted and cultivated that ground. In pamphlets

> and lectures the Frontier College has always advocated that educational and welfare work should be carried on at all camps and works. The true remedy is the right type of instructor with the aid of books, magazines, papers, games and music.[83]

Similarly, Bradwin argues that education of immigrant workers as conducted by a "trained mind" (e.g. a university student) can counter the influence of radicals:

> Where is more required the mental stimulus of the trained mind than among the scores of men in a bunkhouse, or with the inmates of a string of cars in an extra-gang on the siding? Men sit nightly in such groups reading with avidity, by the glimmer of a candle stuck in a bottle, or from the light of a borrowed lantern whose cracked globe has been patched with flour and paper, pamphlets and circulars cooked to inflame, not tempered with saneness. Only the influences closest at hand most determine whether there is evolved a Lincoln or a Lenin....Help him shun the bypaths of sudden change and traverse the highway of saner progress. Education is still the sheet anchor of any peaceful commonwealth.[84]

In summary, -in spite of progressive sub-themes in their views (which responded to the immense social needs of immigrants), the dominant message of immigrant educators was a conservative one, addressed to the self-interests of dominant political and economic elites: either sponsor immigrant education, including literacy and

language training, as a means of helping immigrants to understand and embrace dominant values, institutions and lifestyles, or see them become increasingly disaffected and prone to radical solutions for their problems. This perspective can be called "literacy for Canadianization", and has been dominant during times of heavy immigration to Canada, from the early 1900's through the 1950's. [85]

Challenge

Although the "literacy for Canadianization" perspective was the dominant one during the early decades of the 20th century, and enjoyed the sponsorship of elites, it did not go unchallenged. For example, a writer for the militant Ukrainian socialist newspaper Robochny Narod (working People) provided an answer to this perspective on illiteracy, with its anti-leftism and idealization of conformity to the values of the dominant classes:

> Canada is one large country of literate illiteracy.... There are mostly Englishmen in Canada. All of them are literate, that is true, but after scrutiny, they are worse than illiterate. They aren't interested in a single progressive thought--the only thing they know is the dollar .... They are hardly interested in politics, except when it is a matter of how many

> dollars it will bring them...when one considers the English (Canadian) working class...they have no class consciousness and their social democratic movement is very weak, greatly weaker than the Ukrainian. In truth, the greater part of them are organized into unions, but these unions are not interested in anything. Each of them belongs to a union because the union assures him of higher pay. He doesn't think of anything but his pay.[86]

This biting satire (“literate illiteracy”) was no doubt occasioned by those Anglo-Canadian educators and elite representatives referred to militant and class conscious immigrant workers disparaging terms like "ignorant", "illiterate" and "easily misled". (For example, in calling for a halt to immigration from Central Europe, the President of the Canadian Manufacturers Association stated in 1929 that, "Large numbers of unemployed and illiterate people are liabilities and not assets".) [87] It is clear that the writer did not fetishize the mechanical skills of reading and writing, obviously placing a higher value on the capacity for critical thought independent political action on the part of the working class.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. Gregory S. Kealey, “Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980's,” Labour/Le Travailleur 7 (Spring 1981), p. 72.

2. Brian D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1979), p. 5.

3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Donald Avery, “Dangerous Foreigners” (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), p. 16.

5. Ibid., p. 17.

6. Ibid., p. 16.

7. Ibid., p. 16.

8. Ibid., p. 16.

9. Ibid., p. 16.

10. Ibid., p. 39.

11. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 114.

12. Edmund W. Bradwin, The Bunkhouse Man (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. xiii.

13. Canadian Reading Camp Association, 12th Annual Report (Toronto, 1912).

14. This is apparent in the annual reports of the Association in the years before 1910.

15. E.W. Bradwin, “Adult Education for Men of the Frontier” in J.R. Kidd (ed.) Learning and Society (Toronto, Canadian Association for Adult Education, 1963), p. 69.

16. For example, see Canadian Reading Camp Association, Third Annual Report (Toronto, 1902-03).

17. Ibid., Third Annual Report, and a quote from H.H. Honre in 12th Annual Report, op.cit.

18. Canadian Reading Camp Association, 5th Annual Report (Toronto, 1904-05).

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. See Herman Schwendinger and Julia R. Schwendinger, The Sociologists of the Chair (New York: Basis Books, 1974), chap 18; See also Gregory Baum, Catholics and Canadian Socialism (Toronto: James Lorimer &Company, 1980), p. 47-53. Fitzpatrick frequently included in the Annual Reports of the Reading Camp Association quotations from the writings of prominent figures in the American Progressive movement, including educationists like Dewey and social thinkers like Ross. Trained as a Presbyterian minister at Queen’s University in Ontario, Fitzpatrick reflected the thinking of the mainstream “progressive” wing of the social gospel movement of the time. (The “progressives” were in the majority, with “conservative” and “radical” wings in the minority.) The progressive current was very influential in th Presbyterian Church. In Baum’s words, progressives in the social gospel movement “understood sin largely in social terms and hence saw the appropriate Christian response to sin mainly as active commitment to reform projects and progressive politics,” (Baum, p. 48)

22. Progressives in the social gospel movement rejected the socialist orientation of the radical wing, who argued that the total reconstruction of society was necessary to expunge the sin in it. The commitment of the progressives was to reforms within the countries of the existing political and economic system. See Baum, ibid., p. 48-49.

23. Canadian Reading Camp Association, 4th Annual Report (Toronto, 1903,04).

24. Third Annual Report, op.cit.

25. Frontier College, 21st Annual Report, Toronto, 1921.

26. Ibid.

27. Third Annual Report, op.cit.

28. Ibid.

29. Canadian Reading Camp Association, 7th Annual Report (Toronto, 1906-07).

30. 5th Annual Report, op.cit.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Fitzpatrick wrote in the 1912 Annual Report of the Reading Camp Association that "The Association is composed of employers of labour and university students".

34. 5th Annual Report., op.cit.

35. Schwendinger and Schwendinger, op.cit., p. 136.

36. Third Annual Report, op.cit.

37. For example, in 1919 Fitzpatrick wrote that, "The Frontier college believes that the 'livingg epistle' counts for vastly more than the absentee itinerant missionary ... Was not this the method of the tent-building apostle and the house-building Nazarene?" see Frontier College, 19th Annual Report (Toronto, 1919).

38. Third Annual Report, op.cit.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. 12th Annual Report, op.cit.

42. 4th Annual Report, op.cit.

43. Third Annual Report, op.cit.

44. 7th Annual Report, op.cit.

45. 12th Annual Report, op.cit.

46. Donald Avery, "Dangerous Foreigners" (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), p. 37.

47. Ibid., p. 18-19.

48. Ibid., p. 19, 25.

49. Ibid., p. 27.

50. Ibid., p. 37.

51. Ibid., p. 22.

52. Ibid., p. 17-18.

53. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 114.

54. Avery, op.cit., p. 39.

55. Ibid., p. 124-143.

56. Ibid., p. 18-19, 25, 37.

57. Ibid., p. 142-143.

58. 7th Annual Report, op.cit.

59. Alfred Fitzpatrick, The University in Overalls (Toronto: Frontier College, 1923), p. 129-130.

60. 12th Annual Report, op.cit.

61. Avery, op.cit., 28-29.

62. Ibid., p. 14, 32.

63. Ibid., p. 41.

64. Ibid., p. 161.

65. Ibid., p. 63-64.

66. Ibid., p. 63.

67. Ibid., p. 62.

68. Ibid., p. 49-50.

69. Ibid., p. chap. 2.

70. Ibid., p. 53-55.

71. Ibid., p. 120-141.

72. Ibid., p. 59-62.

73. Ibid., p. 88-89.

74. Christopher Dunn, Continuing Education for Manitobans (Manitoba: The Manitoba Association for Continuing Education, 1978), p. 8-9.

75. Avery, op.cit., p. 68-70.

76. Ibid., p. 70.

77. Canadian Reading Camp Association, 14th Annual Report (Toronto, 1914).

78. Ibid.

79. Edmund W. Bradwin, The Bunkhouse Man (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 234.

80. C.M. MacInnes, “Canadian Adult Education in 1925" in J.R. Kidd (ed.) Learning and Society (Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education, 1963), p. 8.

81. J.T.M. Anderson, The Education of the New-Canadian. (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1918), p. 228.

82. Bradwin, op.cit., p. 225.

83. Frontier College, 19th Annual Report, op.cit.

84. Bradwin, op.cit., p. 234-235.

85. For example, see G.B. Milling, “Immigrant Meets the Union,” Food for Thought 13:4 (January 1953). The whole issue in which this article appears was devoted to the question of “immigrant adjustment” during what was a time of heavy immigration to Canada from Europe after World War II.

86. Avery, op.cit., p. 60-61.

87. Ibid., p. 112.