

Radical Pamphlets at the Library of the University of Prince Edward Island

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Gregory S. Kealey

IN THE SUMMER of 1989, following up on a tip from my colleague Andy Rowe, I visited Charlottetown to view a collection of radical-pamphlet material at the UPEI Library. I had written earlier to ask for a finding aid to the collection, but had been informed that nothing but a card index existed. Hence the necessity to visit the collection.

As is too often the case, my unanticipated arrival caused a flurry of activity culminating in an interview with the University Librarian. After a confusing conversation, I finally managed to identify the material that I was seeking. And sure enough, the Library does hold a major collection of radical-pamphlet material, primarily 20th-century and mainly Canadian. These materials are filed in alphabetical order by title on two ranges of eight-foot steel shelves. I would estimate that there is at least 50 or 60 linear feet of material. As had been indicated to me before my arrival, the only listing available is a card index which contains only title, author, and date of publication. This makes the collection very difficult to use.

The collection has been at UPEI since the late 1960s. It came to UPEI as part of their purchase of the stock of the Blue Heron Book Store in Toronto, which had been run by Peter Weinrich. (Weinrich later compiled two important bibliographies.)¹

Apparently UPEI, like many institution in the 1960s, was rapidly expanding its collection by purchasing collections intact. The University Librarian suggested in conversation with me that their primary interest in the Blue Heron collection had been for its literary titles. The radical material had come along with it, and remained unorganized owing to lack of interest.

Quick perusal of the collection indicated few unique titles, but it does contain much rare Communist Party of Canada pamphlet material. Indeed the one concession UPEI has made to the presence of the collection was to organize the Tim Buck

¹Peter Weinrich, *A Select Bibliography of Tim Buck* (Toronto 1974) and *Social Protest from the Left in Canada* (Toronto 1982).

pamphlet material separately. This special collection contains 62 Buck titles, which represents approximately 85 per cent of the titles listed in the Weinrich bibliography of Buck. The UPEI collection then joins that of the National Library, the National Archives of Canada, and the Kenny collection at the University of Toronto as the country's largest collections of radical material. It is certainly the largest in Atlantic Canada.

I am writing this research note in the hope that it will lead to more use of the collection and indeed that it might prompt UPEI to organize the material in such a way as to make it more accessible. If there are other collections of this kind sitting unorganized and unused in libraries or archives across the country, I would encourage readers to bring it to our attention.

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