

Canadian Universities, Academic Freedom, Labour, and the Left

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Article abstract

During most of their history, Canadian universities, institutions staffed by and serving largely middle class people, have not been hospitable to organized labour or the political left. Professors who expressed support for such causes generally found that doing so often strained the limits of academic freedom as it was understood by governing boards, administrators, a good many academics, and many people outside the institutions. If the situation has improved during the last three decades, one reason is that faculty unions have become commonplace. More important, however, may be that the outside world has come to pay less attention to what professors say, on almost any subject, than used to be the case.

Canadian Universities, Academic Freedom, Labour, and the Left

Michiel Horn

IN 1934 THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA classicist William Hardy Alexander used the pages of a recently established left-wing periodical to pose the question: "Will radical leadership emerge from our Canadian universities?" He answered in the negative. "The 'successful' way of life in our universities may be equated with the life of conformity both to doctrine and authority."¹ Five years later, Alexander wrote in a *Canadian Forum* article that there was an agreeable future in academe for the acquiescent, those willing to fit in, but not for those of a critical disposition. Addressing himself to a fictional "young man contemplating an academic career," Alexander noted that capitalism sanctioned "a most painfully unbalanced distribution of the satisfactions and opportunities of life, to say nothin of the bare necessities." But it was dangerous for academics to point this out, he added, for in a state university it was "invariably described as Bolshevism," and in a privately endowed institution the situation was even worse. "An unflinching examination of the defeat sustained by the 'good life' in modern capitalistic conditions is regarded as a personal criticism of the benevolent persons who have established the academic foundation."²

Most professors wisely did not challenge the economic *status quo*, Alexander continued: they were easily replaced, and the principle of academic freedom offered them little protection. If such freedom had ever existed in the past, and he did not think it ever did "in things deemed by the ruling powers to be essential to the preservation of their power," it was now in decline. "We affect to shudder at the fate of the German universities without quite realizing the tendency of our own to

¹W.H. Alexander, "Will Radical Leadership Emerge from Canadian Universities," *CCF Research*, 1 (July 1934), 15.

²W.H. Alexander, "'Noli Episcopari': Letter to a Young Man Contemplating an Academic Career," *Canadian Forum*, 19 (October 1939), 220-3.

move towards ... the same silence on 'essentials' accompanied by loud mouthings about inconsequential." *Noli episcopari*, do not join the professoriate, Alexander concluded, for the universities "are far too respectable either to fight or to tolerate within themselves a fighter."³

Alexander was overstating the case, for his "letter" was partly a parody. In spite of an occasional brush with notoriety, he himself had become dean of arts and science by the time he went to the University of California, Berkeley, in 1938. Still, his remarks were rooted in his experiences in Alberta, where he taught for almost three decades. More important, his message has had relevance in other places and at other times. By and large, Canadian universities have not welcomed adherents of the left on their faculties. They have, however, come gradually to tolerate them.

* * *

The Canadian universities with which W.H. Alexander was familiar mostly served the needs and interests of Canada's middle classes. They were very largely staffed by men and women (mostly the former) who had been born into professional, business, and well-to-do farming families, and who taught young people very largely drawn from backgrounds similar to their own. Paul Axelrod gave his monograph on student life in English Canada during the 1930s the title *Making a Middle Class*.⁴ This aptly describes the function of Canadian universities throughout their history.

Even during the last thirty to forty years, when student bodies have become rather more socially and ethnically diverse and when young women have become much more heavily represented, especially in the professional faculties, than ever before, the role of the university in "making a middle class" has remained essentially unchanged. The great majority of students have hoped to become teachers, lawyers, engineers, physicians, clergymen, social workers, and the like, or to find *management positions in the private- as well as public-sector economy*. Although universities may seem like élite institutions, most of those attending them have not expected to join the Canadian social or economic élites.

All the same, members of these élites play a key function in Canadian higher education. Universities and colleges have been supervised by lay governing boards on which wealthy and socially-prominent Canadians have usually been more than willing to serve. Wealth and success in business or the learned professions (especially the law) have always been welcome attributes for members of governing boards.

These lay boards have been (and still are) the employers of all those who work in the institution, with the right to appoint and dismiss. The boards' authority, although generally modified by a presidential right to recommend appointments

³Alexander, "Noli Episcopari," 223.

⁴Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montréal and Kingston 1990).

and dismissals, long influenced faculty staffing. Until faculty members came to be involved in recruitment during the 1960s, presidents, deans of faculties, and eventually department heads did the actual work of selecting candidates, but they tended to recommend men (and occasionally women) who were unlikely to encounter governing-board disapproval. "Safe and sound" candidates have usually been preferred. A.B. McKillop writes of mid-19th century hiring practices in Canada West: "Careful attention was paid ... to the academic pedigrees, social backgrounds, and personal connections of professors at Ontario universities in order to assure that no heretical views issued from the lectern. Family ties and letters of recommendation by scholarly acquaintances ... dominated academic hiring at the time."⁵ Since a central part of the purpose of higher education well into the 20th century was to build character and good deportment in students, those who taught them had to be sound themselves, had to hold unexceptionable ideas and to have proper relations. "Nothing is more important than to profess Correct Opinions, unless to possess a correct Acquaintance."⁶ Expressed by John Graves Simcoe, first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, the sentiment has effectively served many administrators (and not a few professors) as a guiding principle.

In 1914 President Frank F. Wesbrook of the University of British Columbia described one candidate as "a large, upstanding, athletic, manly fellow ... with very wholesome views, [and] with seemingly a very charming wife, who appears to be a good house-keeper."⁷ In recommending the young Harold Adams Innis for appointment in 1923, McMaster University's Humfrey Michell referred to him as "a very nice fellow in every way and one likely to be an agreeable colleague, a consideration which is an important one."⁸ That same year, McGill University Principal Sir Arthur Currie received a letter describing a candidate as having "a pleasant personality and good manners," and being someone who enjoyed participating in sports, "especially tennis and boxing."⁹ Academic achievement mattered, but the emphasis was on soundness and all-roundness, on "the whole man."

Men identified (on whatever grounds) as "radicals" usually got short shrift in the hiring process. The attitude of Sidney Smith, president of the University of Manitoba and later of the University of Toronto, was probably not atypical. Seeking to appoint an economist, he wrote of Robert McQueen in 1935: "I have been told that McQueen is a radical in his economic thinking and if this is the case I would

⁵A.B. McKillop, *Matters of Mind: The University in Ontario 1791-1951* (Toronto 1994), 88.

⁶John Graves Simcoe, quoted in S.R. Mealing, "The Enthusiasms of John Graves Simcoe," *Canadian Historical Association: Historical Papers* (1958), 61.

⁷University of British Columbia Archives, President's Office, microfilm reel 6, F.F. Wesbrook to S.D. Scott, 12 January 1914, copy.

⁸University of Western Ontario, Regional Collection, University Archives, Dean of Arts, box 25, Humfrey Michell to W. Sherwood Fox, 14 February 1923.

⁹McGill University Archives (MUA), RG2, Principal's Office (PO), c.61/1001, R. du Roure to A.W. Currie, 7 April 1923.

rule him out." Only after J.W. Daffoe, the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, assured Smith that rumours of McQueen's radicalism were "groundless" did Smith recommend him for appointment.¹⁰

Escott Reid was less fortunate. In 1932 the political scientist and recently-returned Rhodes Scholar passed up an opportunity to teach at Harvard University in order to become the national secretary of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIA). Active in the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), regarded as the "brain trust" of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF),¹¹ Reid shared the neutralist views current in LSR and CCF circles. This troubled influential members of the CIA governing board, and by 1937 Reid was actively looking for academic work.

In 1937-38 he had a replacement appointment at Dalhousie University, and from that vantage point he applied for a position at the University of Saskatchewan. Its president, James S. Thomson, asked Dalhousie's President Carleton Stanley for a reference. "They say he is somewhat radical in his outlook," Thomson wrote, "but probably he is none the worse for that." He went on to say that he was all in favour of free speech, but "at the same time, there is a wisdom and a discretion in all things and, particularly, in a chair of Political Science."¹²

"Mr. R. has something of a reputation for indiscretion in the matter of urging Canadian nationalism, and for radicalism generally," Carleton Stanley replied. "I was well aware of this when I engaged Mr. R., and heard, as I expected to hear, some rumblings about the appointment, even though it was known that he was here only temporarily."¹³ Did this frighten Thomson? We do not know; we do know he did not offer Reid a job.

Neither did Manitoba's Sidney Smith. Soliciting suggestions for an associate professorship in political science, he was told by an acquaintance, W.Y. Elliott, that "Escott Reid is knocking around loose." However, "his politics may not please you."¹⁴ Reid did not get an offer. In early 1939 he joined the Department of External Affairs — Under-Secretary O.D. Skelton was evidently unworried by his reputation — and had a distinguished career in the public service before becoming the first principal of York University's Glendon College in 1965.

A more recent and better-known example of an individual, thought to be radical, who was kept out of a teaching position for which he was well-qualified was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In his youth a supporter of the Québec labour movement, editor of a 1956 study of the 1949 Asbestos strike, the future prime minister paid

¹⁰University of Manitoba Archives (UMA), UA20, President's Papers (PP), vol. 2, S.E. Smith to A.K. Dysart, 11 January 1935, copy; J.W. Daffoe to Smith, 2 February 1935.

¹¹Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942* (Toronto 1980), 46-7.

¹²Dalhousie University Archives (DUA), MS 1-3, 299, R.A. MacKay Personal, J.S. Thomson to Carleton Stanley, 17 December 1937.

¹³DUA, MS 1-3, 299, Stanley to Thomson, 23 December 1937, copy.

¹⁴UMA, UA20, PP, vol. 21, W.Y. Elliot to Sidney E. Smith, 29 January 1938.

a price. His biographers write that he "was denied the teaching job he wanted in the Université de Montréal, where the government controlled appointments though the church hierarchy."¹⁵

If radicals of various kinds were not exactly welcome on university teaching staffs, some nevertheless managed to gain appointment, either because they came well recommended or because they had managed to hide their views. Others became "radical" some time after appointment. Professorial radicalism has usually been of the left-wing variety, critical of capital and supportive of labour. Since presidents and board members (and many academics) tended strongly to support the established capitalist order and to believe that overt criticism of it by academics was inappropriate (if not worse), conflict ensued from time to time.

By contrast, positions one might characterize as right wing have rarely brought trouble to those espousing them. Something of an exception occurred in 1916, when the University of Toronto political economist James Mavor attacked the forerunner of Ontario Hydro in the *Financial Post*, his perspective being that of a *laissez-faire* liberal critical of a government-sponsored monopoly. Upon reading several of Mavor's articles, Premier Sir William Hearst complained to President Sir Robert Falconer. The government of Hearst's predecessor and sometime colleague, Sir James Pliny Whitney, had created the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission in order to meet the needs and wishes of a large segment of Ontario's manufacturing industry. Hearst did not appreciate an attack from someone he associated with Toronto interests that opposed the Power Commission. Noting that Mavor had also criticized the Workmen's Compensation Act (presumably as an unwarranted intervention in the labour market), Hearst claimed that Mavor's writings brought "condemnation upon the University" and undermined the government's efforts to support it.¹⁶

Falconer passed Hearst's letter on to Mavor for a response. Little cowed, the economist wrote a long letter that controverted every point the premier had made and which Falconer passed on almost verbatim. Contrary to what one might have expected, Hearst backed off and did no more than send Falconer a face-saving letter. There the incident ended. Both Hearst and Falconer must have known that Mavor had powerful friends in the Toronto business establishment, among them bank president and chairman of the board of governors Sir Edmund Walker, board vice-chairman Zebulon Lash, and the utility and railway magnate Sir William Mackenzie. There was probably little point in taking Hearst's complaint further, since the board of governors was unlikely to take action against Mavor.

This did not mean Falconer simply passed over what had happened and forgot it. More than likely he was irritated with Hearst for seeming to threaten the

¹⁵Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall, *Trudeau and Our Times*, vol. 1, *The Magnificent Obsession* (Toronto 1990), 66.

¹⁶University of Toronto Archives (UTA), President's Office (PO) (Falconer), A67-0007/42, William Hearst to Robert Falconer, 2 November 1916.

university and with Mavor for providing Hearst with a reason to complain. Threats to the university's financial support had to be taken seriously, so that the incident unquestionably gave Falconer food for thought.

A few years later the writings of another political economist, Robert M. MacIver, led to a disagreement between Falconer and a wealthy member of the board of governors, Reuben Wells Leonard. A recent arrival from Scotland, MacIver in 1919 published *Labour and the New Social Order*, which supported workers in their efforts to organize. Leonard was hostile to anything that smacked of unionism. He also believed that professors should refrain from subverting an economic order in which he could discern no serious fault. After he got hold of MacIver's book in early 1921, he complained to Sir Edmund Walker about the Scot's "ultra-socialistic teachings."¹⁷

Walker's reply sounded a note of mild concern, but he added: "Nothing would seem more dangerous than to restrain a free expression of opinion by a professor short of almost anything but treason."¹⁸ Having received copies of this letter and Leonard's, Falconer evidently wanted to add his voice to Walker's. It would be "extremely injurious were the Board of Governors to attempt to restrain the expression of views on economic subjects which were different from their own," he wrote to Leonard. That was not the British way. Besides, "the most treasured privilege of the University is freedom of thought."¹⁹

Such freedom should not extend to the promulgation of "extreme, unusual or dangerous doctrine" such as the championing of labour unions, Leonard responded.²⁰ Falconer then restated his belief that academic free speech was beneficial and that Canada had nothing to fear from "the thoughtful, earnest man, who is endeavouring to arrive at principles that will stabilize the country."²¹ He did not persuade Leonard, who wrote later that year that, if MacIver were to be permitted to teach his ideas, "we should ... establish a Chair of Political Anarchy and Social Chaos, so that the people of Ontario, who pay for the University, and the students who take the courses, will know what is being taught under its proper name."²²

Leonard's hostility to unionization was extreme, and his criticism of MacIver seems to have lacked support among other board members. Nevertheless Falconer thought it advisable to call the political economist into his office in January 1921 for a chat about the latter's ideas. MacIver subsequently sent Falconer a statement of his views, commenting that this was not to be construed "in any way" as a defence of them: "To offer a 'defence' would ... be contrary, not only to the dignity of a University teacher but also to the idea of the University."²³ Should he be asked to

¹⁷UTA, PO, A67-0007/67, R.W. Leonard to Sir Edmund Walker, 14 January 1921, copy.

¹⁸UTA, PO, Walker to Leonard, 17 January 1921, copy.

¹⁹UTA, PO, A67/0007/65, Robert Falconer to Leonard, 18 January 1921, copy.

²⁰UTA, PO, Leonard to Falconer, 21 January 1921.

²¹UTA, PO, Falconer to Leonard, 22 January 1921, copy.

²²UTA, PO, A67/0007/72, Leonard to Falconer, 9 December 1921.

²³UTA, PO, A67/0007/65, R.M. MacIver to Falconer, 27 January 1921.

defend his views, MacIver added, he would feel his integrity as a teacher so threatened that he would feel compelled to look for another position.

Falconer had no intention of allowing matters to go that far. Having studied at the universities of Berlin and Marburg before the war, he was well-acquainted with the 19th-century German idea of *Lehrfreiheit* — the freedom of the professor to teach and publish — and the role of research as the basis of that freedom.²⁴ He valued MacIver's contribution to the university, moreover. Indeed, in 1923 he recommended that the Scot succeed Mavor as head of political economy. The board of governors accepted the recommendation, with Leonard registering a dissenting vote. MacIver served as head until 1927, when he resigned in order to join the faculty of Columbia University.

Interesting in their own right, the Mavor and MacIver incidents gained wider significance because of the speech (later published) on academic freedom that Falconer gave to the alumni association on 14 February 1922. He referred to neither incident but did address the issues they raised. The academic freedom enjoyed by professors was "one of the most sacred privileges of a university," Falconer said, but it was subject to limits. Like judges and civil servants, professors were not free to do as ordinary citizens did. "It is ... expedient that a professor in a State University should take no active share in party-politics" whether by running for office or engaging in partisan debate. Any discussion of "burning political questions" might harm his institution. "A government might well without giving any reason easily show its displeasure in such a way as to affect adversely the fortunes of the institution and the financial position of many guiltless and wiser colleagues." If, as seems likely, this was aimed at Mavor, Falconer concluded with some words meant for Leonard. "The best possible persons available for the professorial office" might well hold views that members of governing boards found uncongenial, Falconer said, but they would be unwise either to challenge a professor's competence or to deny "that there is no place in the university for his type of thought." It was better "to tolerate an erratic or even provocative teacher" than to disturb the normal functioning of the university.²⁵

Leonard stuck to his guns: "The inference I would draw from your Paper is the necessity for exercising extreme caution in the selection of professors."²⁶ Caution was, in fact, already the policy used in selecting professors. Falconer's speech was notice to any politically engaged or radically minded professors at the University of Toronto that they should think twice before expressing unconventional or controversial views on religion, politics, economics, or labour relations. At the five other provincial universities in existence at that time — New Brunswick, Manitoba,

²⁴Walter P. Metzger, "The Age of the University," in Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York and London 1955), 387.

²⁵Robert Falconer, *Academic Freedom* (Toronto 1922).

²⁶UTA, PO (Falconer), A67-0007/72, Leonard to Falconer, 24 April 1922.

Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia — circumstances were much the same.

The state of affairs in the private institutions was somewhat different. By and large the denominational institutions received no public financial support, and few of the non-sectarian institutions did. This meant that the displeasure of a provincial government need not concern professors or the institutions employing them.

It did not mean that professors were free from restraint in discussing public affairs. Their institutions relied heavily on tuition fees and gifts, and both might be endangered by a controversial or indiscreet professor. When such professors got into trouble, the inference that their opinions or activities must be the reason lay readily to hand. That was the case when Wesley College, Winnipeg, dismissed the church historian Salem Bland in 1917.²⁷ For years he had been an outspoken champion of the Social Gospel, critical of capitalism, and favouring a new order in which farmers and labour would get a larger share of the economic pie. His supporters believed that the financial crisis facing the college was being used to purge a man whose views offended powerful people on the college board of regents, a belief reiterated in 1977 by the political scientist Norman Penner.²⁸ There is no evidence for this, however.

In 1923 the University of Western Ontario economic historian Louis A. Wood wrote to the Progressive Member of Parliament W.C. Good that his (Wood's) support for the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), his interest in labour issues, and his being "offered a labor-progressive nomination for the [1921] federal election," had resulted in a demand for his resignation.²⁹ The available documents do not substantiate this claim. They indicate, rather, that the acting president, Sherwood Fox, had become persuaded that Western needed a business-oriented economist to head the department and that Wood did not meet this need. We can only guess why Wood resigned. His support for the UFO and the labour movement may have been at issue, but there is no evidence for this or for Norman Penner's claim that Wood was fired for his "radical views."³⁰

That professorial "radicalism" was generally unwelcome became abundantly clear during the Depression of the 1930s. Economic catastrophe had the effect of pushing a small minority of academics (perhaps thirty among a professoriate totaling some 3000) leftward. A few joined or sympathized with the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), and at least one, the poet and English professor Earle Birney, became a Trotskyist. Most were active in or hovered on the fringes of the CCF, the

²⁷Michiel Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1999), 50-1.

²⁸Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough, Ont. 1977), 178.

²⁹National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 27 III, CI, W.C. Good Papers, vol. 6, 5023-4, L.A. Wood to W.C. Good, 16 May 1923; also, vol. 8, 6250-1, Wood to Good, 5 July 1924. See also: Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 76-8.

³⁰Penner, *The Canadian Left*, 178.

new "farmer-labour-socialist" party that took shape in 1932, or in the organization unofficially linked to it, the League for Social Reconstruction.

Since even the LSR and CCF, firmly committed to achieving change by constitutional and democratic means, struck not a few Canadians as extreme, obvious involvement by academics in anything further left was imprudent. The historian Stanley B. Ryerson, who joined the CPC in his early twenties but kept this a secret, lost his position at Montréal's Sir George Williams College in 1937 after the principal learned that he had written some Communist party pamphlets under an assumed name. He did not teach in a university again until the 1960s. In a 1990 interview Ryerson spoke about several academics he knew in the 1930s who might have been philosophical Marxists, but he doubted any of them ever belonged to the CPC. Indeed, the party discouraged academics from joining, he claimed, because of the fear that they would be dismissed if their membership became known.³¹

No university seems to have barred professors from being active in the LSR and taking executive positions in it, though some presidents might have objected had the League been officially associated with the CCF. Involvement in that party was a different story. Membership in it was generally tolerated, but in late 1932 President Henry J. Cody of the University of Toronto instructed the historian Frank H. Underhill to resign from the executive of the Ontario CCF Clubs. Underhill gathered data about American and British academics who were active in politics, some, like the political scientist Harold Laski, in the British Labour party. This cut no ice with Cody. Much like Falconer, he believed that professors in provincial universities should eschew partisan activity, in any case of the left-wing variety.³²

Although W.H. Alexander's membership in the CCF must have been well-known at the University of Alberta, this caused no reaction. What did was an engagement to speak in Calgary late in 1932 on behalf of a CCF candidate in a provincial by-election. President Robert C. Wallace asked him not to, a 1930 resolution of the board of governors having banned political activity by professors. Alexander complied. This led a government backbencher, Fred White, to complain to Premier John Brownlee — the province was governed by the CCF-affiliated United Farmers of Alberta — who conveyed White's complaint to Wallace. He replied directly to White. "Professors are free to express their points of view at any time in whatever method they desire," Wallace wrote, but they should not take part in provincial elections. This was bound to drag the university into provincial politics, Wallace asserted, adding that he did not doubt "that the university would inevitably suffer."³³

³¹Interview with Stanley B. Ryerson, Montréal, January 1990.

³²Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 93-5.

³³University of Alberta Archives (UAA), RG 19, W.H. Alexander Personal, 81-37-9, R.C. Wallace to Fred White, 3 January 1933, copy. See also: UAA, Board of Governors (BoG), Executive committee, Minutes, 25 June 1930.

In late 1934 Alexander expressed a wish to seek the CCF nomination in a federal constituency in Edmonton. Wallace was unhappy, and in early January he asked the board of governors to consider a document he had drafted. It argued that federal politics were not so sensitive from the point of view of a provincial university that professors should be barred from commenting on them. But "a member of the staff cannot serve as a member of the House of Commons and carry on his duties to the University." He therefore "should not ... offer himself as a candidate without first resigning his university position."³⁴

Given an advance copy of this document and asked whether he wanted to appear before the board of governors in order to discuss it, Alexander declined. He did, however, identify the *non sequitur* in Wallace's argument. It might make sense to ask a professor who had won a seat to resign, but why make resignation a prerequisite for candidacy? Running was one thing, winning another.³⁵ A board member who belonged to the CCF made the same point, without success. Only two board members voted against the Wallace proposal. The ruling was "ridiculous," Alexander wrote to his friend Frank Underhill, not least because he would not have had a shadow of a chance of winning his seat. However, given a choice between political candidacy and his professorship, he preferred the latter.³⁶

Whether or not Wallace's objective was to discourage political candidacy in general or a CCF candidacy in particular must remain an open question. He must have known that in 1933 the University of British Columbia had granted — reluctantly, it must be said — a leave of absence to George M. Weir, head of the university's department of education, to run for election and take office as Provincial Secretary and Minister of Education. Weir was respectably Liberal, however, and the relations between the British Columbia government and its university were closer than those between the Alberta government and its university, so that when Premier T.D. Pattullo indicated that he wanted Weir to be given leave, board members thought they had no real choice but to grant the request.³⁷ At the time, no other provincial university permitted its faculty to run for office without resigning, although only the University of Saskatchewan had a clearly stated policy on candidacy.³⁸

At that institution only one professor was clearly identified with the CCF in the 1930s, the English literature scholar Carlyle King. He did get into trouble in 1938, but not because of his work in the CCF. It was, rather, his comments on Canada's foreign policy and the country's relations with Great Britain that caused offence. The British government "would go to war for only two purposes," he told a March

³⁴UAA, BoG, Minutes, 4 January 1935.

³⁵UAA, RG 19, W.H. Alexander Personal, Alexander to Wallace, 31 December 1934.

³⁶National Archives of Canada (NA), MG 30, D204, Frank H. Underhill Papers, vol. 2, Alexander to Underhill, 26 January 1935.

³⁷Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 101-04.

³⁸"Regulations of the Board," *Statutes of the University of Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon 1912), 53.

1938 meeting of the Young Communist League in Saskatoon, "to maintain the British Empire or to prevent the spread of Socialism in Europe."³⁹ Neither was in his view worth fighting for. When complaints reached President James S. Thomson, he deprecated King's comments but defended his right to make them. Half a year later, King stated his opposition to Canadian participation in the war that threatened to break out between Britain and Germany over the latter's claim to the Czech Sudetenland. Thomson met demands for King's dismissal with a public defence of academic freedom, but then undermined that freedom in a private meeting with King. Having gained the impression from Thomson "that another offence of the kind would bring a demand from the board for my dismissal," King told a friend, he had cancelled an undertaking to address another anti-war meeting.⁴⁰

At the University of Toronto, awareness that President Cody disapproved of the CCF led the social scientist Harry M. Cassidy to resign his membership. "I think that I can, for the present at least, be more useful if I am free of connection with a political party," he wrote to the St Paul's CCF Club in October 1933.⁴¹ At the same time he asked the secretary of the Ontario CCF Clubs to remove his name from the provincial speakers' list: "It would be easier for me to meet criticisms if my name did not appear."⁴² Two years later the economist Joseph Parkinson declined an invitation from CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth to join a committee formed to put the party's financial policies in simple language. "I have refrained from becoming an official of the CCF," he wrote, because "this step would put a weapon in the hands of opponents who take different views from ourselves as to the rights of a professor in a state university."⁴³ He offered informal help instead. We may infer he believed the LSR to be less open to criticism than the CCF, for the LSR's book *Social Planning for Canada* had appeared some weeks earlier with Parkinson listed as one of its seven authors. (The others were Eugene A. Forsey, Leonard C. Marsh, and Frank R. Scott of McGill, J. King Gordon, a travelling lecturer for the United Church of Canada and the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, the journalist and political organizer Graham Spry, and Underhill.)

The presidents and governing boards of the private universities were not, we may assume, particularly pleased when a professor became active in the CCF, but they generally put up with it. Academics at private institutions who were active in the CCF from the 1930s into the 1950s included Eric A. Havelock and John Line at

³⁹University of Saskatchewan Archives, President's Papers II B22(1), unidentified newspaper clipping, 30 March 1938.

⁴⁰NA, Underhill Papers, vol. 5, Carlyle King to Underhill, 6 October 1938. See: Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 104-05.

⁴¹UTA, H.M. Cassidy Papers, B72-0022/17(01), Cassidy to L. Eckhardt, 18 October 1933, copy.

⁴²UTA, HM Cassidy Papers, Cassidy to D.M. LeBourdais, 18 October 1933, copy.

⁴³NA, MG 28 IV I, CCF Records, vol. 109, J.F. Parkinson to J.S. Woodsworth, 20 December 1935.

Victoria University, George M.A. Grube at Trinity College, R.E.K. Pemberton at the University of Western Ontario, Martyn Estall, Glen Shortliffe, and Gregory Vlastos at Queen's, J. Stanley Allen at Sir George Williams College, King Gordon and R.B.Y. Scott at United Theological College, Montréal, and Forsey, Marsh, and Scott at McGill. (Havelock, Grube, Allen, and Pemberton ran as CCF candidates in federal and provincial elections.) Almost all also belonged to the LSR, and several were members of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, a movement of *Christian socialists founded in 1934*. Most faced few or no institutional barriers to their political involvement, but almost all experienced criticism. Moreover, four of them — Gordon, Forsey, Marsh, and Allen — lost their positions from 1933 to 1944 amidst suspicions of varying strength that their left-wing views had been at issue.

Among the four dismissals, the one that attracted most attention was King Gordon's. Appointed to teach Christian Ethics at United Theological College (UTC) in 1931, he lost his chair in 1933 when the college abolished it on budgetary grounds. (He left academe and did not return to it until he joined the department of political science of the University of Alberta in 1962.) Since there had been hostile reaction to the Montréal-based Social and Economic Research Council, in which Gordon was active, and to his rose-coloured account of the Soviet Union, which he and Forsey had visited in 1932, it was not surprising that some observers believed Gordon's opinions, more than UTC's financial crisis, to be the explanation of what had happened.

With enrolments and endowment income both falling, the financial crisis was genuine.⁴⁴ In 1932 the General Council of the United Church instructed UTC to reduce the number of professors from five to four within two years. UTC's board responded by abolishing the chair of one of the two members of the faculty who had joined the college most recently. The other was R.B.Y. Scott, an Old Testament scholar who was, like Gordon, active in the CCF and LSR, and who would later co-edit the book written by members of the PCSO, *Towards the Christian Revolution* (1936). The key difference between the two was that Scott was married while Gordon was not.

Upon hearing that Gordon's chair was to be abolished, some of his friends undertook to raise a salary for him. When Gordon declared himself to be willing to teach for the \$1,500 they were able to get together, the UTC board accepted the arrangement. In 1934, however, the board would not accept an extension of the arrangement, the board chairman stating that, since no one had approached the board, they had assumed that the support would end. He denied that disapproval of Gordon's socialism explained the board's decision: "Prof. Gordon is going because he is the latest comer and his chair can most easily be vacated."⁴⁵ Backing up this

⁴⁴Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 114-15.

⁴⁵NA, MG 30, D211, Frank R. Scott Papers, "Charge J. King Gordon 'Sacrificed' for Stand on Economic Questions," unidentified, undated newspaper clipping.

claim, W.D. Lighthall, a board member acquainted with Gordon, assured him: "The decision of the Governors was not influenced by any hostility to yourself or your work. That was a very minority attitude & was dropped."⁴⁶ The issues, wrote Lighthall, were the budgetary crisis and how to put into effect the instructions of the church council with least pain.

Gordon may have been tempted to believe this, but a number of friends and acquaintances encouraged him to be skeptical. Commenting in the weekly newspaper of the Ontario CCF, Graham Spry charged that the board's action resulted from "a deliberate and determined effort on the part of reactionary members of the board" to rid themselves of Gordon.⁴⁷ Recalling the matter in 1972, however, Gordon seemed unsure. "I doubt if you will be able to get 'proof' that the elimination of the chair of Christian Ethics was on account of the political views of the occupant," he wrote.⁴⁸ But he added that the board did seem curiously unwilling "to explore other methods of economizing" or to accept outside funding of his position for a second year. Indeed, were it not for the board's unwillingness to renew the 1933-4 arrangement, we could safely conclude that Gordon's views, however much some board members may have objected to them, were not at issue. Economies on the scale necessary to match the dismissal of one professor would have been impossible without a major cut in salaries that were none too generous to begin with. However, the board's failure to solicit continued outside funding gave grounds for suspicion that lingers to this day.

Research into the cases of Forsey, Marsh, and Allen offers evidence that, in apparent contrast to Gordon's experience, their non-renewals were related to their left-wing opinions and activity. All three were handled discreetly, however, and aroused little controversy.

Forsey was eased out of McGill on a pretext apparently scripted by Principal Lewis H. Douglas and executed by his successor F. Cyril James.⁴⁹ Forsey had been under a cloud since the early 1930s, when he drew criticism for his vocal attacks on capitalism and his favourable assessment of the Soviet Union. There had also been questions about the quality of his teaching and research.⁵⁰ But no principal wanted it to be thought that Forsey was being let go because of his opinions. In 1933 Sir Arthur Currie explained to Premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau that for two years he had been trying to shed Forsey without creating an uproar and hoped to be able to do so yet, but that it would not be easy. Noting "the great importance" which professors attached "to what they are pleased to call 'academic freedom'," Currie explained that if he were to dismiss Forsey "it will be heralded from one end

⁴⁶NA, MG 30, C241, J. King Gordon Papers, W.D. Lighthall to Gordon, 18 April 1934.

⁴⁷Graham Spry, "The Case of King Gordon," *New Commonwealth*, 27 October 1934.

⁴⁸J. King Gordon to the author, 2 October 1972.

⁴⁹Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 142-4.

⁵⁰Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 129-32.

of Canada to the other that McGill dismisses its professors because of their political views."⁵¹

When Forsey was given notice in 1940 that his contract would not be renewed in 1941 — he had been a sessional lecturer in political economy since 1929 — Cyril James referred to an understanding that the successful defence of Forsey's doctoral dissertation in the year just ended would be required for reappointment. Forsey and his department head, J.C. Hemmeon, denied that such an understanding existed: in vain. Forsey thought of putting up a struggle but thought better of it when he became aware that few of his colleagues — "rabbits" he called them in a letter to Frank Underhill⁵² — would support him. He left in triumph, having won a Guggenheim Fellowship, and upon returning to Canada from a year spent in the United States he became research director for the Canadian Congress of Labour. (In 1970 he was appointed to the Senate, serving until 1980.)

Marsh's removal was much easier. Almost from his arrival at McGill in 1930 he had taught only one course, the remainder of his time being devoted to directing the Rockefeller Foundation-funded McGill Social Science Research project. The grant, renewed once, was due to end in 1940. This provided the occasion for Principal Lewis Douglas, who had a low opinion of socialism and of the "collectivist" bias he perceived in the publications of the research project,⁵³ to give Marsh notice. Believing (mistakenly) that his salary was paid from the grant, Marsh went quietly.⁵⁴ During the war he worked in Ottawa and wrote the *Report on Social Security for Canada* (1943), one of the blueprints for the Canadian welfare state. After some years with the United Nations after the war, he joined the UBC faculty of social work in 1950.

The chemist J. Stanley Allen began teaching at Sir George Williams College in 1932. A member of the FCSO and LSR, he ran as a CCF candidate in Montréal's Mount Royal constituency in the 1940 federal election. He came in a very distant third but had greater success in local politics, serving during the war years as a member of the Montréal City Council and the Protestant School Board. Allen's Christian socialism, his work in the CCF, and his opposition to the limits imposed on the number of Jewish students in the college irritated more than one board member. In the late winter of 1944 Principal Kenneth Norris asked for Allen's resignation, stating as the grounds that his public life encroached on his teaching and his service to the college. A board member, D. Prescott Mowry, informed Allen some days later that his socialist activities constituted the real reason. The issue remains obscure, however: the historian Richard Allen has found that the board's

⁵¹MUA, RG2, PO, c.43/301, A.W. Currie to L.-A. Taschereau, 21 October 1933, copy.

⁵²NA, Underhill Papers, vol. 4, Forsey to Underhill, 2 May 1941.

⁵³MUA, RG2, PO, c.54/730, Lewis Douglas to E.W. Beatty, 3 February 1939, copy.

⁵⁴Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 141-2.

minutes contain no discussion of the case.⁵⁵ In any case, Stanley Allen believed that fighting his dismissal would damage both him and the college and resigned. Soon afterwards he moved to Ontario; he never taught in a university again.

A few private-university professors active in the CCF or other left-wing groups — R.E.K. Pemberton, Martyn Estall, Gregory Vlastos, R.B.Y. Scott — reported when asked in the 1960s that they felt no constraint and heard little or no criticism from within their universities. Others did run into trouble, probably none more spectacularly than the Victoria College classicist Eric A. Havelock. In the early 1930s, speeches made by him and his friend and colleague John Line, a professor of divinity in Emmanuel College, more than once aroused the ire of Premier George Henry. A member of the United Church, Henry thought it inappropriate that members of Victoria's faculty should engage in "wild tirades"⁵⁶ or belong to "an organization [the LSR] ... which is definitely affiliating itself with ... the CCF," a party Henry linked to "the Communism and Despotism of Russia."⁵⁷ President E.W. Wallace gently countered such complaints with references to the importance of academic freedom and "our British tradition of open discussion."⁵⁸

Line and Havelock were aware that some important Ontarians disliked their views, but so long as Victoria tolerated them they had scant cause for worry. Certainly Havelock felt few inhibitions when, speaking as a representative of the FCSO, he addressed the striking General Motors workers in Oshawa on 14 April 1937. Recalling the incident thirty years later, he said he was carried away by the "mood of defiance" he sensed in his listeners.⁵⁹ At one point he asked rhetorically whether the solicitousness for General Motors shown by Premier Mitchell Hepburn and his cabinet was a sign that they had a pecuniary interest in the company. No reporter was present, and the account that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on 17 April was second-hand: "Professor Havelock is alleged to have suggested that the Government's backing of General Motors ... possibly had been influenced by the shares of stock which the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet held in the Motor Company."⁶⁰

Premier Hepburn denied the suggestion, and Provincial Secretary Harry Nixon said that Havelock's remarks would be referred to the governing board of Victoria College. President Wallace called Havelock into his office and in the course of "a long and unpleasant conversation" — Havelock's words — charged him with

⁵⁵I owe much of my information about the case to Dr. Richard Allen of Hamilton, Ont., who has written about his uncle in a history of the Allen family, publication forthcoming. See also Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 169-70.

⁵⁶United Church/Victoria University Archives (UC/VUA), President's Papers (PP), 89-130V, vol. 53-4, George S. Henry to E.W. Wallace, 28 October 1932.

⁵⁷UC/VUA, PP, Henry to Wallace, 13 February 1933.

⁵⁸UC/VUA, Wallace to Henry, 8 February 1933, copy.

⁵⁹Interview with Eric A. Havelock, New Haven, Conn., April 1967.

⁶⁰*Globe and Mail* (GM), 17 April 1937.

harming Victoria, ordered him not do so again, and instructed him to apologize to Hepburn. Havelock did so; he also promised Wallace that he would "abstain from any platform discussions concerning controversial issues ... for at least a year" and even longer.⁶¹

Another classicist had accompanied Havelock to Oshawa, G.M.A. Grube of Trinity College. His name did not appear in 1937, but he did get into hot water for comments made during the Ontario CCF convention on 7 April 1939. *The Globe and Mail*, identifying him (mistakenly) as a "U. of T. Professor," quoted him as saying "that any war that would come in Europe at the present time would 'have nothing to do with democracy'." Grube made the comment in speaking to a motion that described the Canadian defence budget as "a waste of public funds in the interests of British imperialism."⁶² When some Ontario MPPs put the text of the motion in Grube's mouth and attacked him for it, they unleashed a storm that threatened briefly to blow away not only him but also his friend Frank Underhill.

Liberal and Conservative MPPs unanimously deplored Grube's supposed remarks. Several suggested that the University of Toronto should take him to task. Contacted by the press, President Cody pointed out that Grube was employed by Trinity College and therefore not the U of T's responsibility. When Premier Hepburn was told of this, he said that either Trinity should discipline "this foreigner" (a naturalized British subject, Grube was born in Belgium) or its link with the university might be adjusted in some way harmful to the college — perhaps be revoked.⁶³

At this point the Leader of the Opposition, George Drew, shifted the focus from Grube to the more familiar figure of Frank Underhill. The historian was notoriously a critic of the British connection and its potential for drawing Canada into a European war, and Drew's quoting of a provocative passage written more than three years earlier — it included the words "the poppies blooming in Flanders fields have no further interest for us"⁶⁴ — reinforced the hostility that many people, including several members of the university's board of governors, already entertained towards him. The difficulties created for Underhill by Drew's intervention were considerable. Cody berated him; he also had to explain himself to the board. "This is the worst business I've been through yet," he wrote to the journalist George Ferguson.⁶⁵ To another friend, the United College (Winnipeg) historian Arthur Lower, he wrote: "This trouble has been so extreme that we [he and Grube] pretty well have to keep quiet for a time I think the only effective protection that

⁶¹UC/VUA, PP, 89-130V, vol. 53-4, Havelock to Wallace, 1 and 2 May 1937.

⁶²GM, 8 April 1939.

⁶³GM, 13 and 14 April 1939.

⁶⁴Originating in a private document written for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, the passage had appeared, without Underhill's knowledge, in a book by R.A. MacKay and E.B. Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad* (Toronto 1938), 269.

⁶⁵NA, Underhill Papers, vol. 4, Underhill to George Ferguson, 21 April 1939, copy.

professors will have in a society like ours is to form a trade union of their own and affiliate with one of the American bodies."⁶⁶ (No faculty association existed at the University of Toronto before 1942; the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) was not founded until 1951.)

Underhill would face even more serious trouble in 1940-41, when he came close to losing his position.⁶⁷ Grube escaped such jeopardy. All the same, the Trinity authorities did not appreciate the attention he had drawn to himself and the college. Particularly unwelcome was Premier Hepburn's threat to alter Trinity's federation with the University of Toronto. The college board responded by sending Grube a statement that began ominously: "We believe that the issue in this case is not one of Freedom of Speech" but of responsibility. Professors should speak only when they were sure that their words would not harm those with whom they worked. Someone who spoke or acted "in a way that outrages the feelings of many of his fellow-citizens" ought to resign so as to save the college authorities from having to choose between restricting a professor's freedom or suffering the consequences of his irresponsible use of that freedom.⁶⁸

Grube had already written twice to Provost Frederick H. Cosgrave, expressing his regrets for the negative publicity his remarks had caused but also pointing out he had been misquoted and asserting his right to address issues of public policy. His response to the memorandum he received granted "that one has a loyalty to the institution with which one is connected" and that adverse publicity should be avoided whenever possible. Although he had until the recent events managed to avoid such publicity, he realized he needed to be "even more careful in the future" and undertook to try not to associate his name "with statements so construed that they are likely to give rise to the kind of emotional outburst which is regrettable from every point of view."⁶⁹ This seems to have satisfied the Trinity authorities, and in 1940 they acquiesced in his request to be allowed to run for the CCF in a federal constituency, on the understanding that he would resign if elected. (He finished third in Toronto-Broadview.) He also ran for municipal office during the war years. In June 1943, Provost Cosgrave mentioned to Grube "certain difficulties" that had arisen out of the character of some of Grube's "activities and utterances."⁷⁰ The record of the interview does not contain specifics, but six months later a report in the *Toronto Star* led Cosgrave to complain that the classicist was

⁶⁶Queen's University Archives (QUA), coll. 5072, A.R.M. Lower Papers, vol. 1, file A13, Underhill to Lower, 1 May 1939.

⁶⁷R. Douglas Francis, *Frank H. Underhill: Intellectual Provocateur* (Toronto 1986), 114-27; see also Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 154-65.

⁶⁸Trinity College Archives (TCA), Grube Provostial file, 987-0003, Memorandum to Professor Grube as Approved by Executive Committee, April 1939.

⁶⁹TCA, Grube Provostial File, G.M.A. Grube to Provost Cosgrave, 27 April 1939.

⁷⁰TCA, Grube Provostial File, Memorandum re Interview between the Provost and Professor Grube, 1 June 1943.

breaking the promise made in 1939 not to comment provocatively on current events. Trinity might "suffer severely," presumably through the loss of donations or even enrolments, if this sort of thing continued.⁷¹

Grube replied that he had been misquoted. The *Star* had reported him as urging the CCF, once in office, to act "quickly and ruthlessly" against its enemies. What he had actually said was "that a CCF government would have to use its power 'quickly, legally and democratically, but firmly and even ruthlessly' to put into effect its mandate." Grube assured Cosgrave that he had "never advocated anything but democratic processes, both in achieving power and in exercising it."⁷² This explanation seemed to be sufficient.

Of the academics who were active in the CCF in the 1930s and 1940s, none was more prominent than the McGill law professor Frank Scott. From time to time he came under attack, especially by businessmen and newspaper editors, for activities which included the national chairmanship of the party from 1942 to 1950, and for his views. Within the university, however, criticism was muted. Unlike Forsey and Marsh, Scott was tenured. He was also well-connected and well-known. In early 1943 Principal James's secretary, the influential Dorothy McMurray, suggested to her boss that the board should try to frighten Scott into silence. "Nothing much has been heard from Underhill ... since the Board of Governors there at least scared him," she wrote: "He hasn't published a controversial statement since, has he?"⁷³

This went too far for James and, we may assume, the board. We may also assume that they continued to look askance on his work in the CCF. When the deanship of law became vacant in 1948, Scott was next in line, but the board wanted none of him. As Principal James explained to the outgoing dean, C.S. LeMesurier, the position required full-time attention. For this reason "the Board has unanimously adopted a resolution providing that no individual who is ... an executive officer of a political party can be considered eligible for a deanship." James continued: "Quite frankly, I would be very doubtful, if I may judge the sentiment of the Board of Governors, whether [Scott] would be considered a desirable candidate even if he were to resign from executive office in the party to which he belongs."⁷⁴

LeMesurier gave a copy of this letter to Scott, who was sufficiently irritated that he considered challenging the board, using the offices of the American Association of University Professors. He thought better of this, but soon had new reason to be angry when the board adopted a new policy on political activity which

⁷¹TCA, Grube Provostial File, Memorandum, 14 December 1943. See: *Toronto Star (TS)*, 9 December 1943.

⁷²TCA, Grube Provostial file, 987-0003, Grube to Cosgrave, 22 December 1943.

⁷³MUA, RG2, PO, c.85/2202, [Dorothy McMurray], comments on [F. Cyril James], "Academic Freedom of Speech," n.d. [1943].

⁷⁴NA, Scott Papers, vol. 1, Academic Freedom file, F. Cyril James to C.S. LeMesurier, 10 October 1947, copy.

stated, among other things, that "the Board ... considers it adversely affects the interests of the University for members of the staff to hold positions on the principal executive body of any political party."⁷⁵ Although this was not to be applied retroactively, Scott took it as direct criticism of his own involvement and lobbied to have this part of the policy repealed. In March 1948 the board did so.

In 1961 Scott did become dean and spent three conflict-ridden years that he did not much enjoy. A few years afterwards he wrote about his earlier exclusion from the deanship: "Actually the situation suited me admirably. No one in his right senses wants to be dean, but he certainly wants even less to belong to a university which discriminates against its staff for political reasons."⁷⁶ His failure to gain promotion enhanced his reputation as a constitutional lawyer, enabling him to act as counsel in two high-profile cases, *Roncarelli v. Duplessis* and *Switzman v. Elbling*, the latter better known as the Padlock case.⁷⁷ Premier Maurice Duplessis, who was also Québec's Attorney General, was implicated in both, which led many law firms to back off. Scott took note of this and came in time to express appreciation for the academic freedom he had enjoyed. "I never at any time felt my position as teacher and writer was threatened," he wrote in the preface of his last book, "and while my behaviour was under close scrutiny and doubtless constrained in consequence, I owed the university my freedom from the much more inhibiting restraints imposed by the practice of law in which I was first engaged. A group of law partners can be even more repressive than a Board of Governors, as I was eventually to learn in the Padlock Act and Roncarelli cases."⁷⁸

One more person should be mentioned, chiefly because his experience does not fit the mould. Watson Kirkconnell was a professor of literature at McMaster University, a polyglot who had mastered more than twenty languages, and a committed but liberal-minded Baptist. Deeply suspicious of dictatorships of all kinds, he feared communists quite as much as fascists and served Ottawa during the war by monitoring the ethnic press for possible subversion. Cooperation between countries with conflicting ideologies was "necessary for the political equilibrium of the world," he wrote in 1944, but our view of the Soviet Union should be clear-eyed and "not based on sentiment and illusion."⁷⁹ Stalin was no greater friend of freedom than Hitler.

⁷⁵MUA, BoG, Minutes, 14 January 1948; NA, Scott Papers, vol. 1, William Bentley to distribution, 21 January 1948.

⁷⁶Frank Scott to the author, 11 September 1968.

⁷⁷The 1937 Padlock Act, officially known as "An Act Respecting Communistic Propaganda," allowed the authorities to padlock (and thereby deny use of) premises which the Attorney General or his designates believed were being used for the dissemination of communistic (not defined in the act) propaganda. See: Sandra Djwa, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F.R. Scott* (Toronto 1987), 297-317.

⁷⁸Frank R. Scott, "Author's Preface," in Michiel Horn, ed., *A New Endeavour: Selected Political Essays, Letters, and Addresses* (Toronto 1986), x.

⁷⁹Watson Kirkconnell, *Seven Pillars of Freedom* (Toronto 1944), ix.

Criticism of the Soviet Union was unfashionable in 1944: for three years Canadians had been propagandized to see the Soviets as gallant allies in the war against Nazi Germany. Kirkconnell came under attack, especially after he wrote a series of articles critical of Soviet foreign and domestic policy that appeared in the *Toronto Telegram* in the spring of 1945. Kirkconnell writes in his memoirs that Albert Matthews, chairman of McMaster's board of governors, told him in mid-May 1945 "that he had been waited on by Joe Atkinson, proprietor of the *Toronto Daily Star*, and a lady member of his editorial staff," who had urged that Kirkconnell be dismissed because of his articles in the *Telegram*.⁸⁰

There is no corroborating evidence for this story, but the *Star's* hostility to Kirkconnell is a matter of record. On 29 May 1945, an editorial charged that "those who stir up hostility to the Soviet Union, who try to weaken the bonds between the Allied Nations, are ... carrying on [Joseph] Goebbels's work now that his printing presses have been stopped."⁸¹ Two weeks later the *Star* accused Kirkconnell of misrepresenting the Soviet treatment of the Jews and claimed he had thereby "revealed his intention to arouse hatred toward Russia."⁸² Still, it seems less than likely that Atkinson sought Kirkconnell's dismissal. The *Toronto Star* supported academic freedom and free speech more consistently than almost any other Canadian newspaper of the time. In any case, Kirkconnell's chair was not in danger. When he left McMaster in 1948 it was to become president of Acadia University.

* * *

The Cold War that characterized international relations for many years after 1945 modified the pattern so far described. Communism appeared as the great threat, while the CCF gradually gained a degree of respectability. The party supported the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), formed in 1949, as well as the United Nations "police action" in Korea from 1950 to 1953, and came to be seen as anti-communist by all but fevered reactionaries. Nevertheless, many of its policies continued to meet the hostility of business. The party that succeeded it, the New Democratic Party (NDP) — it took shape in 1960-61 — seemed even less threatening. Nevertheless, stating views that could be characterized as communist or "fellow-travelling" could get those who expressed them in trouble, especially in the immediate post-war years. One thing remained constant: those who got into difficulties belonged somewhere on the political left.

The University of Alberta biochemist George Hunter provides an interesting example. Radicalized during the Depression, both Hunter and his wife were by the end of the 1930s sympathetic to communism though not, it seems, members of the CPC. Their involvement in aiding veterans of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) drew

⁸⁰Watson Kirkconnell, *A Slice of Canada: Memoirs* (Toronto 1967), 321.

⁸¹"The Nazi Line," *TS*, 29 May 1945.

⁸²"Soviet Russia and the Jews," *TS*, 14 June 1945. On Joseph Atkinson's attitude to the Soviet Union, see: Ross Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of the Star* (Toronto 1963), 325.

them to the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), which placed an undercover agent in Hunter's introductory course in 1939-40. In April this agent wrote a report, subsequently made available to President W.A.R. Kerr, stating that Hunter had used his last class of term to make some remarks whose "general trend ... was anti-Christian and pro-Marxism."⁸³ In time this resulted in a directive to Hunter to cease his custom of using the last class of term to link the course and his research interest in nutrition to wider social, economic, and political issues. In the process a cloud gathered over him. Both the president and members of the board came to think of him as a communist.⁸⁴ This served him ill nine years later.

Sometime after the war, Hunter resumed his custom of delivering a "last lecture" in which he discussed national and world events. In early April 1949 this prompted an inquiry by a newspaper reporter and a complaint from seventeen of the 257 students in his course.⁸⁵ Some of his comments had been provocative — he had denounced the 1945 US decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and had predicted that the recently signed North Atlantic Treaty was more likely to bring about war than to prevent it. The complaint started a process that culminated in Hunter's dismissal, with 24 hours notice, on 29 June 1949. (He received about twenty weeks' pay in lieu of notice.) He returned to Great Britain, whence he had come thirty years earlier, and never taught in a university again.

Outside the university the dismissal was widely seen as an attack on academic freedom, with Hunter's last lecture and his support for the peace movement and other left-wing causes identified as the reasons for the board's action against him. The truth is more complicated and may never be fully known. The university did not give Hunter a reason for dismissal, and it declined to make any reason public, but President Robert Newton stated that Hunter's political views were *not* the reason. That is also too simple. Some board members had, in fact, wanted to fire Hunter in the fall of 1947 for his alleged communism, and this motive cannot have been absent from their minds two years later. Newton, however, had argued against doing so, and since the board could not dismiss Hunter without a presidential recommendation, Hunter had stayed on.

It does seem that Newton had by 1946 come to the view that Hunter was dishonest, disloyal, and disagreeably combative, and regarded him as an intolerable nuisance. But two letters he received in September 1947 apparently persuaded him that dismissing Hunter because of his political views would be a mistake. "Have you any avowed Communists on your academic staff and, if so, what is your attitude towards them?"⁸⁶ Newton had asked McGill's Cyril James and University of

⁸³UAA, RG19, Personnel files, 73-112, George Hunter file (GHF), "Re: Prof. G. Hunter, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta," 12 April 1940.

⁸⁴Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 150-2.

⁸⁵Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 195-203.

⁸⁶MUA, RG2, PO, c.118/3209, Robert Newton to F. Cyril James, 3 September 1947; UTA, PO (Smith), A68-0007/30(01), Newton to Sidney E. Smith, 3 September 1947.

Toronto president Sidney E. Smith. James replied that he would be disinclined to pay attention to whether a faculty member was a communist or not, "provided that his political beliefs did not interfere with the efficiency of his teaching and his general cooperation in the work of the university."⁸⁷ Smith replied that he knew of "only two avowed communists" among the faculty — he did not name them — and "to date" they had been "very discreet." To act openly against them would be a mistake, he continued, for they would thrive on persecution. "Of course, if any member of the staff participates in activities which would carry the disapproval of his colleagues, one would be on good ground for tough treatment."⁸⁸

Newton already knew that Hunter, able and accomplished as a scientist but prone to biting sarcasm, was disliked by many of his colleagues. What Newton needed was an opportunity to mete out the tough treatment Smith had mentioned. Hunter's classroom comments in 1949 provided that opportunity. If journalists writing in the newspapers as well as in *Time*, *Saturday Night*, and the *Canadian Forum* assumed that Hunter's political views were the reason for his dismissal, Newton was willing to let them think so. He was secure in the knowledge that he enjoyed the support of most of the faculty in dealing harshly with the biochemist. Alberta's dean of law, W.F. Bowker, assured Frank Scott (who had written to obtain more information than was contained in media reports) that Hunter's alleged communism had not been at issue, so "academic freedom was not involved." Bowker added that Hunter had been "quarrelsome and obstinate and disaffected," and although individually his actions had been no more than "pin-pricks," together they had been intolerable.⁸⁹

Another Edmonton friend whom Scott wrote, a CCF member of the legislature named Elmer Roper, offered a different reason for Hunter's dismissal. As far as he could determine, Roper wrote, Hunter was "a communist or a very rabid fellow traveller" who had been indiscreet in expressing his opinions in class and outside. This, presumably, was the reason for his dismissal.⁹⁰ (It was relevant to Roper's assessment and Scott's reaction to it that there was no love lost between the CCF and the communists.) Scott ignored the contradictions between the two reports he had received in informing Arthur Lower that Hunter seemed to be "an impossible fellow to represent because he insisted on filling his lectures full of political propaganda."⁹¹ There was broad agreement at the time that politics should be left out of the classroom.

The post-war fear of "reds" affected several other academic careers. At Queen's University the mathematician Israel Halperin was implicated in a possible

⁸⁷MUA, RG2, PO, c.118/3209, James to Newton, 10 September 1947, copy.

⁸⁸UTA, PO, A68-0007/30(01), Smith to Newton, 5 September 1947, copy.

⁸⁹NA, Scott Papers, vol. 1, Academic Freedom Correspondence 1938-1950, W.F. Bowker to Scott, 18 October 1949.

⁹⁰NA, Scott Papers, Elmer E. Roper to Scott, 24 October 1949.

⁹¹NA, Scott Papers, Scott to A.R.M. Lower, 27 October 1949, copy.

breach of the Official Secrets Act during the inquiry made into the disclosures by Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk in the Soviet embassy who defected in September 1945. Halperin was put on trial, but the charges against him were dismissed. Nevertheless a member of the board of trustees, D.A. Gillies, stated "that Halperin's record as a Communist fellow traveller indicates that he is not the type of individual who should be teaching in a Canadian university."⁹² Principal Robert C. Wallace thought this unwise, but Gillies had some support from other board members. In the end Chancellor Charles A. Dunning saved the day for Halperin, arguing that it would seriously damage the reputation of Queen's if it dismissed a man who had been cleared by the courts.

Halperin's colleague Glen Shortliffe became a Cold-War casualty in an unusual way.⁹³ A scholar of 19th-century French literature and history, to whose study he brought a perspective in which the concept of class conflict took a significant place, Shortliffe was also interested in current French politics. In 1945 he began to contribute talks on this subject to the CBC radio program *Midweek Review*. These received a generally favourable response, leading to an invitation to share the political commentary on another CBC program, *Weekend Review*, starting in the fall of 1948. Speaking more regularly than in the past, Shortliffe had to inform himself about areas other (and more controversial) than his beloved France. Soon he was at odds with the editors of the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and the *Montréal Gazette*, both of whom thought he was too friendly to communism. By the end of 1948 written attacks on Shortliffe's alleged communist sympathies, joined to criticism of Queen's for failing to silence him, had been forwarded to Principal Wallace by at least three members of the board of trustees.

In February 1949 Shortliffe spoke about the trial of Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty and the conflict between church and state in Hungary, comparing that country's experiences with anti-clericalism with those of late 19th-century France. This prompted another strongly-worded letter attacking Shortliffe, one Wallace decided to pass on to him. It was not the only letter of its kind that had reached him, Wallace told Shortliffe. Criticism had also come from people close to the university. This was a problem, for a fund-raising campaign was about to begin, and Shortliffe's views were unpopular with the very people from whom large sums were expected.

The historian of Queen's University, Frederick W. Gibson, writes that Wallace, while believing in academic freedom, "unfortunately" gave more weight to his university's need for money, hoping that a word to the wise would lead

⁹²QUA, coll. 1125, F.W. Gibson Papers, vol. 4, Israel Halperin file, D.A. Gillies to R.C. Wallace, 30 May 1947. All documents in the Gibson Papers are photocopies of documents in other collections, almost all of them in the Queen's University Archives and chiefly the records of the Principal's Office.

⁹³Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 186-90.

Shortliffe to “tone down his comments and be more prudent and discreet.”⁹⁴ Having learned to his shocked surprise that his broadcasts might do damage to Queen’s, Shortliffe decided simply to drop them. “I do not believe my own views on freedom ... to be sufficient justification to bring opprobrium upon my colleagues,” he wrote to Wallace.⁹⁵ A few days later Shortliffe added that he had “contempt” for “the motives of those who choose to attack the University because of their disagreement with the view of one member of its staff.” So long as influential people did so, however, universities and their faculty members were put in “an almost impossible situation.” Since he had “no desire whatever ... to become the centre of a *cause célèbre* which could harm only myself and the University,” his decision to end the broadcasts stood.⁹⁶

The story did not end there. Shortliffe’s failure later in 1949 to gain admission to the United States after he had accepted an offer from George Washington University in St Louis may have been a consequence of his broadcasts. (In October, when the US attorney general said he was admissible after all, he no longer wanted to go.) In 1954 a further incident occurred. Invited to teach French to subalterns in the summer school of the Royal Military College, Shortliffe was relieved of his duties on 8 June, just as the course was about to begin. His efforts to obtain an explanation were for several months unsuccessful. Not until December 1954 did he get a letter from the minister of national defence, Ralph Campney, who explained that “active participation in public controversy on the part of ... officers is naturally viewed with disfavour and the Armed Forces are inclined to regard those with an established tendency in this direction as somewhat unsuited for the task of instructing junior officers.”⁹⁷

Questioned in 1961 by a CBC writer gathering information for a program on security screenings in Canada, Shortliffe stated that his experiences in 1949 and 1954 had undermined his scholarship. Shaken by what had happened, he had decided “not to write at all on any subject which might have social significance for our thought police.” This had ruled out a subject that had been of great interest to him, namely the impact of the Revolution of 1871, the class war evident in it, and the murderous reaction to it, on certain French writers. Instead he had begun to work on language laboratory techniques, which being apolitical were eminently safe. “In other words I think I have voluntarily blown my own brains out.”⁹⁸

The Cold War also affected the careers of the economic historian Henry S. Ferns and the theoretical physicist Leopold Infeld. Ferns’s left-wing associations — he had been a Marxist while at Cambridge in the 1930s — contributed to the

⁹⁴Frederick W. Gibson, *Queen’s University, vol. 2, 1917-1961: To Serve and Yet Be Free*, (Kingston and Montréal 1983), 291, 292.

⁹⁵QUA, Gibson Papers, vol. 4, Glen Shortliffe to Robert C. Wallace, 15 February 1949.

⁹⁶QUA, Gibson Papers, vol. 4, Shortliffe to Wallace, 23 Feb. 1949.

⁹⁷QUA, Gibson Papers, vol. 4, Ralph Campney to Shortliffe, 13 December 1954.

⁹⁸QUA, Gibson Papers, vol. 4, Shortliffe to Monroc Scott, 18 February 1961.

nonrenewal of his teaching contract at United College in 1947 but did not keep him from being appointed at the University of Manitoba.⁹⁹ After being offered an associate professorship in history and economics at Royal Roads Military College near Victoria, BC, in the spring of 1949, he received a Civil Service Commission letter in August, just before he was to begin teaching, informing him that the Department of National Defence had judged him to be unacceptable. No explanation was offered, and Ferns never got one. Instead he settled for close to half a year's pay and moved to England, where he had a distinguished academic career.¹⁰⁰

A member of the department of applied mathematics at the University of Toronto, Leopold Infeld also left Canada, though under different circumstances from Ferns's.¹⁰¹ Associated with several left-wing causes after his arrival in Toronto in 1938, the Polish-born Infeld nevertheless experienced little or no criticism before the late winter of 1950. At that time his sabbatical plans became embroiled in politics. A journalist, upon interviewing him, formed the impression that Infeld was politically unreliable and asked in print why a man who had access to atomic secrets was being permitted to spend part of his sabbatical in Poland, a country embedded in the Soviet bloc. This led George Drew, who had become Leader of the Opposition in Ottawa in 1949, to ask the same question in the House of Commons.¹⁰² Infeld had no access to atomic secrets, as the government (no doubt briefed by the RCMP) knew. However, with the sabbatical having become controversial, President Sidney Smith, who had some months earlier approved Infeld's plans, now tried to get him to change his mind and, when Infeld would not, refused to recommend his sabbatical to the board of governors.

Infeld, already in England by this time, was reluctant to abort his sabbatical plans and resigned at the end of the summer, much to Smith's relief. As he explained to the chairman of the board of governors, Eric Phillips, he had been readying himself to recommend Infeld's dismissal but had not relished doing so because he anticipated a storm of protest from faculty and students.¹⁰³ Infeld's resignation prevented this.

Infeld settled down at the University of Warsaw and made a significant contribution to the development of theoretical physics in his native country. He remained active in the international campaigning for peace and nuclear arms control, and in 1955 he was one of eleven signatories (two others being Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell) of the manifesto against nuclear weapons that led the industrialist Cyrus Eaton to establish the Pugwash conferences. In 1995 the sole surviving

⁹⁹Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 190-1.

¹⁰⁰H.S. Ferns, *Reading from Left to Right: One Man's Political History* (Toronto 1988), 284-96.

¹⁰¹Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 203-11.

¹⁰²Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 16 March 1950, 793.

¹⁰³UTA, PO (Smith), A68-0007/062(18), S.E. Smith to W.E. Phillips, 22 September 1950, copy.

signatory, Joseph Rotblat, won the Nobel Prize for Peace.¹⁰⁴ In 1995, too, the University of Toronto posthumously made him a professor emeritus. The Cold War having ended, it had become possible to see Infeld clearly at last.

During the 1950s there were no high-profile cases of the kind that marked the 1930s and 1940s. The best-known dismissal in Canadian university history, that of the historian Harry S. Crowe from United College, had little if anything to do with his left-wing views or activities.¹⁰⁵ Crowe was a member of the CCF, to be sure, and after he left United College in 1959 he became research director for the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers. But there is no real evidence that his politics affected the decision of the board of regents to give him notice. However, labour relations were at issue, for Crowe's vigorous defence of what he believed to be his rights led to his first dismissal. The board clearly thought him to be an employee who did not know his place.

A sign of the changing times was that, starting in the 1940s, a growing number of universities adopted policies that allowed professors to run for political office and to take a leave of absence if they succeeded in gaining election. In his study of class and power in Canada, *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965), the sociologist John Porter stated: "It would probably be difficult to find another modern political system with such a paucity of participation for scholars."¹⁰⁶ All the same, when the national secretary of the CAUT, Stewart Reid, polled a handful of academics who had been nominated for House of Commons seats in the 1963 federal election, he learned that most reported having had no difficulty getting leave to run.¹⁰⁷ Something of an exception was the Dalhousie political scientist James Aitchison, whose offer of an NDP nomination in a Halifax constituency in 1962 met with objection from the board of governors. The opposition, it seems, was less to his candidacy than to the party. After Reid supplied information about the state of affairs in other Canadian universities, however, the board relented.¹⁰⁸

A shortage of qualified academics that became noticeable by 1962 and grew steadily more serious from that year into the very early 1970s created the conditions for increased faculty involvement in university decision making, while also making academic tenure more secure. As well, it made left-wing political affiliation seem less important than in an earlier age. In this more permissive climate, even the occasional Communist was able to survive, something that would have been difficult to imagine during the Depression or World War II. *A Place of Liberty* was the title chosen for a book of essays about university government that appeared in

¹⁰⁴ Leopold Infeld, *Why I Left Canada: Reflections on Science and Politics*, trans. Helen Infeld, ed. Lewis Pyenson (Montréal and London 1978), 67-9; *GM*, 14 October 1995.

¹⁰⁵ Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 220-45.

¹⁰⁶ John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto 1965), 503.

¹⁰⁷ NA, RG 28, I 208, CAUT Papers, vol. 2, file AF & T.

¹⁰⁸ NA, RG 28, I 208, J.H. Aitchison to J.H.S. Reid, 1 May 1962.

print under CAUT auspices in 1964.¹⁰⁹ For some academics, access to the freedom celebrated in the book was a recent concession, indeed.

Conditions changed dramatically in the late 1960s. The student movement is beyond the scope of this essay, but it provided the occasion for a new kind of faculty radical — “new left” was a term soon widely in use — to challenge universities they believed to be too closely tied to corporate capitalism. The McGill political scientist Stanley Gray was an example of the type. In February 1969 he joined several students in disrupting meetings of the university senate and board of governors, chiefly in protest against the establishment of the Faculty of Management. If this had the force of novelty, so did the university’s response. Seeking to determine whether cause existed to dismiss Gray, Principal H. Rocke Robertson offered him arbitration by a committee to be named by the CAUT. Gray accepted the offer. A committee headed by Walter Tamopolsky, dean of law at the University of Windsor, ruled in August 1969 that “the manner and the circumstances in which Mr. Gray acted constituted gross misconduct,” justifying his dismissal.¹¹⁰ He left university life and became active in the labour movement.

A more spectacular instance of conflict involving a university administration on one hand and some of its students and faculty on the other occurred in 1969 at Simon Fraser University (SFU).¹¹¹ Opening in 1965, SFU attracted a good many students and teachers who wanted to break with academic tradition. Some were vocally critical of capitalist society. This was especially the case in the department of Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology (PSA), whose founding chairman, T.B. Bottomore, recruited men and women with a wide range of political views, among them several “new leftists.” Since SFU was one of the hotbeds of the student movement in 1968-69 — a student sit-in led to more than a hundred arrests — the resulting mixture proved highly volatile. Several faculty members cooperated with students to develop a set of procedures for governing the department that diverged widely from those drafted earlier by the Simon Fraser University Faculty Association and adopted by the university’s senate and board of governors. When the department insisted on using its own procedures to select a new chairman, it was put under trusteeship. The anger this generated was intensified when the university’s tenure committee overturned several positive recommendations made for PSA members by the dean’s committee. Since the negative decisions mainly affected the more radical members of PSA, they claimed that this was a purge — a claim made credible by the strong academic record of several of those affected.

In September 1969, eight members of the department voted to support a student-sponsored strike intended to secure the approval of President Kenneth B.

¹⁰⁹George Whalley, ed., *A Place of Liberty: Essays on the Government of Canadian Universities* (Toronto and Vancouver 1964).

¹¹⁰Ronald Lebel, “Board Dismisses McGill Lecturer, Recommends Year’s Compensation,” *GM*, 19 August 1969.

¹¹¹Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 313-15.

Strand and SFU's governing bodies for PSA's procedures. Strand suspended the university's statement on academic freedom and tenure to fire all eight — Kathleen Gough Aberle, Saghir Ahmad, Mordecai Briemberg, Louis Feldhammer, John Leggett, Nathan Popkin, David Potter, and Prudence Wheeldon (two, Popkin and Wheeldon, were eventually reinstated). Not only did this step and its aftermath seriously divide the university, but in 1971 it prompted the CAUT to censure SFU, which remained under this sanction until 1977.

The 1960s sellers' market in academic employment abruptly became a buyers' market in 1972. As a consequence, young scholars identified as radicals once again faced growing difficulties in being appointed, gaining renewal of their contracts, or getting tenure. The chairman of the CAUT's Academic Freedom and Tenure committee, A.E. Malloch, reported in 1972 that some professors were using budgetary cutbacks to undermine intellectual diversity: "The time has come ... when departments, by a delicate mixture of non-renewals and new appointments, can insure that no one teaches in the department unless he shares a particular orientation toward the discipline — defined by the voting majority of the department." This had implications beyond disciplinary orientation, of course. "To repeat the blunt question put to me last autumn by a departmental chairman: 'Yes, but how do I recognize a good radical sociologist when I see one?'" The CAUT believed that professors should have the major role in personnel decisions, Malloch continued. However, "if the procedures of the Policy Statement [on Appointments and Tenure (1967)] come to be used as a kind of formal orchestration of our ... intolerance or prejudices, then they will appear infinitely more mischievous than the naked authoritarianism of bad old deans and department heads."¹¹² Like Walt Kelly's Pogo, Malloch had "met the enemy, and he is us."

Three high-profile cases involving the alleged purging of political radicals occurred in the early and mid-1970s.¹¹³ Two involved McGill. At the centre of one was the political scientist Pauline Vaillancourt, a Marxist, feminist, and Québec nationalist. Denied a renewal of her contract in 1972, she appealed the decision. A committee headed by the University of Toronto law professor David L. Johnston (later principal of McGill) identified several irregularities and inconsistencies in the department's handling of her file and recommended that she be given a further three-year contract. The board of governors accepted this recommendation, but Vaillancourt took a tenured appointment at the Université du Québec à Montréal instead.

The sociologist Marlene Dixon was also a Marxist. From the moment she joined the faculty of McGill she experienced heavy weather. Believing that most of her colleagues did not want to her to be tenured, she resigned in October 1974. Two years later she published *Things Which Are Done in Secret*, a book that

¹¹² A.E. Malloch, "Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure: Annual Report," *CAUT Bulletin (CAUTB)* 21, 1 (October 1972), 7.

¹¹³ Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, 317-18.

expresses disdain for "value-free social science" and argues that the "liberal university" will not protect the academic freedom of radicals such as herself.¹¹⁴

At the centre of yet another controversy was a teacher of social work, Marlene Webber. A member of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), she resigned from Renison College, an Anglican institution affiliated with the University of Waterloo, during her final year of a three-year contract, charging that its principal and board would not reappoint her because of her politics. Moving to the Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1976, she learned within three months of arriving there that her contract would not be renewed for 1977-78. A CAUT committee of inquiry chaired by the University of Toronto political theorist C.B. Macpherson found "that there had been a serious breach of academic freedom in that the university had based its non-renewal on the political activities of Professor Webber ... without providing admissible and cogent evidence that these ... constituted professional wrongdoing."¹¹⁵ When Memorial would not agree to binding arbitration of the dispute, the CAUT in 1978 censured the president and board of regents. The censure remained in place for a decade.

* * *

In the early 1970s the situation changed because academic jobs suddenly ceased to be plentiful. With academic recruitment entering a slump from which it has not yet recovered, many candidates have sought to make themselves acceptable to hiring committees in a variety of ways. This has usually meant adopting current academic fashions and publishing articles and books intended to demonstrate that candidates are at "the cutting edge" of their disciplines. It has usually also meant avoiding social and political causes that have the potential of offending members of hiring committees. As a result political radicals have once again found it difficult to obtain appointments

Historically, the opinions of professors — overt and covert — have tended to cluster near the social and political centre. This seems to have changed little during the last 25 years. It is true that most of the academics who contribute conspicuously to public debate — David Bercuson, Michael Bliss, Barry Cooper, Tom Flanagan, to name a few — are identified with the political right. But that may say more about the preferences of the print media than about the political convictions of academics as a group. Those same media preferences make it hard for left-wing or pro-labour academics to get much exposure. Melville Watkins, as a left-wing economist a rare bird indeed, has retired. James Laxer, a political scientist who once ran for the NDP leadership, appeared regularly in the *Toronto Star* for several years, but his byline now is rarely seen. The *Star*, it should be added, is the only major newspaper in Canada not clearly identified with the right.

¹¹⁴Marlene Dixon, *Things which Are Done in Secret* (Montréal 1976), 273-81.

¹¹⁵Helen Baxter, "CAUT Board Votes to Censure Memorial," *CAUTB*, 25, 11 (December 1978), 1.

It does seem likely, however, that professors as a group (with many individual exceptions) have become somewhat more sympathetic to the claims of organized labour since the mid-1970s. The reason is that, starting in Québec in the early 1970s, Canadian academics have increasingly reorganized themselves into faculty unions, certified as bargaining units under the terms of provincial labour relations statutes.¹¹⁶ In this respect they have a good deal in common with the experience of other public-sector employees since the 1960s. Except in Québec, however, faculty unions have been reluctant to affiliate with over-arching labour bodies, signalling a continuing ambivalence towards unionization or “blue collar” workers or both. Furthermore, at a few universities a majority of faculty members resist unionization, and minorities at unionized universities continue to oppose the step taken by their colleagues. All the same, even critics of unionization might agree that the procedures worked out by faculty unions to deal with tenure, promotion, and dismissal have made it impossible to discipline or dismiss anyone without showing cause. They have also made it difficult as never before for administrators or professors to expel “radicals” and other mavericks.

For many years universities were inhospitable places for people on the left, and professors by and large took little notice of organized labour. It would be going too far to say that, at the beginning of the 21st century, we have entered a golden age of academic tolerance for radicals, or that the labour movement enjoys much support in the groves of academe. Yet it is true that the academic environment is more tolerant of leftists than in the past, and the word “unionization” does not arouse the hostility it once did.

Might W.H. Alexander’s advice to a young man contemplating an academic career today be more encouraging than in 1939? A bit more, perhaps, but surely not much. It may be easier for leftists to survive in academe, but they seem to have little impact within the university or beyond it. One looks in vain for today’s equivalents of those professors who tested the limits of academic free speech in the inter-war years, advocating social democracy and labour’s right to organize. Even academics who locate themselves on the left seem to be saying little in an age in which neoliberalism is close to being the dominant ideology. Perhaps they seek to have no influence beyond that which is achieved by their scholarship. If so, it has been all too easy for the media to trivialize or ignore them. The universities and, indeed, Canadian society, face huge challenges from those for whom the mantra “private is good, public is bad” has the force of revealed truth, who exalt the “free market,” who glorify the pursuit of self-interest. Those who do not share the neo-liberal dogma, and that must include everybody on the left, would do well to speak out in defence of what they value.

¹¹⁶Michiel Horn, “Unionization and the Canadian University: Historical and Personal Observations,” *Interchange*, 25, 1 (1994), 39-48.