PIERRE TRUDEAU, ORGANIZED LABOUR, AND THE CANADIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEFT, 1945-2000

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s relationship with labour unions and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party of Canada from 1945 to 2000. Trudeau was an extremely influential historical figure, both as prime minister (1968-1984), but also before his entry into formal politics, when he traveled and studied around the world, became deeply influenced by leftist movements and intellectuals, and sought to modernize Quebec, which in his view was falling behind English Canada in terms of technological, social, and democratic development. In essence, Trudeau sought to forge a liberal democracy he thought absent in Quebec, and found his staunchest allies to be trade unionists and socialists. In the end, however, Trudeau largely abandoned those movements because he felt winning liberal freedoms required the shelving of socialist objectives. This would, in turn, be his justification for joining the Liberal Party in 1965.

As Prime Minister, Trudeau opposed the objectives and philosophies of his former left allies, even as he maintained his image as a progressive. So while many saw his Just Society, his approach to public and Canadian ownership of energy, his New Society, and his Charter of Rights and Freedoms as left-wing initiatives, I argue that Trudeau’s actions were undertaken not to challenge capitalism, but to strengthen it, primarily through the empowerment of business and the disempowerment of unions and the economically-disenfranchised.

Ultimately, this dissertation asserts that Trudeau cannot be classified as a socialist, but must be seen as a liberal preoccupied, not with liberty and equality, but with the continued pre-eminence of capitalist property relations.
Acknowledgements

I have many thanks to give for the help, advice, and support I have obtained during the course of preparing this dissertation. I want to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and the Canadian public by extension, for their generous financial support over the course of both my Master’s and Doctorate programs of study. I also wish to gratefully acknowledge the financial support given by Queen’s University; these sources have allowed me to undertake important research and obtain specialized training. As a child of parents of lesser means, I could not have obtained this education without generous and well-funded public research entities. Much the same should be said about archival staff at various institutions, who offered the direction and logistical aid needed to complete this project.

I must also thank the Trudeau family, and Pierre Trudeau’s literary executor Marc Lalonde, for giving me substantial access to Trudeau’s personal papers, without which this project would have been impossible. I am appreciative that Mr. Lalonde and the Trudeau family have made such important papers available for scholarly analysis. I must show gratitude to Mr. Trudeau himself, whose impeccable record-keeping and extensive publications makes analyzing him a daunting, yet fruitful and organized, process. I am certain that I will not be the last, nor am I the first, to find great historical and philosophical value in said papers. He truly does haunt us still.

Other individuals and institutions were invaluable in helping me access key collections. Ed Broadbent opened up many of his restricted papers for my research and Janet Solberg was very generous in me giving full access to her father David Lewis’ papers, as was Marie-Ève Marchand in allowing me to use Jean Marchand’s collection. Staff at the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Union of Autoworkers (now UNIFOR), the New Democratic Party, and others made sure that I had the resources needed to complete my research and writing.
I would be remiss if I overlooked influences during my years at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. Linda Kealey and Bill Parenteau were always encouraging scholars, from my first year onward to working together on research relating to the New Brunswick working class. David Bedford was always a kind professor and advisor, taking interest in my research and introducing me to key intellectual theories that shaped my understandings of socialism and capitalism. David Frank was a driving force in my development as a scholar, researcher, and writer. It was in his class where I first began to explore the Trudeauvian relationship to socialism and liberalism, and I will always value the two summers during which I was his research assistant. Finally, I cannot forget Don Wright, who not only combined my dual interests in politics and history, but was an excellent undergraduate thesis supervisor, dedicated to helping me succeed even long after I had left UNB. He also shares with me an interest in the implications of Trudeau’s life and times, and is someone with whom I feel a real sense of friendship.

Queen’s University has been no less foundational. Professors like Ariel Salzmann and Emily Hill were integral in helping me understand the global trends in capitalist development, Rosanne Currarino helped me develop historiographic skillsets, as well as an understanding of the United States context that so often illuminates Canadian events, and Marguerite Van Die was a major inspiration in my drive to pursue and publish research on Christian socialism and the working class. This is on top of other professors like Tim Smith, Jeffery Brison, Amitava Chowdhury, and Jeffrey McNairn, who have helped me develop as a student, researcher, and instructor. Equally important were the staff in the History department, who were always there to answer questions, provide much-needed reminders, and in general be a source of stability as the terms rolled by.
Of course, I cannot forget Ian McKay, who has been a truly dedicated supervisor, both for my MA and PhD. On absolutely everything, from assisting with grant applications, to reviewing article drafts, to giving me incredibly detailed feedback on my chapters, he has been positively fundamental in my growth as a scholar and person. I could not have had a better supervisor, who has challenged my work for the better, has been invested in my success broadly defined, has always encouraged me to explore new ideas and avenues, be they academic or otherwise, and perhaps most importantly, had always been a person with which I could have frank discussions with. I came to Queen’s to work with him, and I have no reservations in saying that it was, and will continue to be, one of the best decisions of my entire life.

My scholarly and personal development has been deeply shaped outside academia over the past years by various influences and friendships within organized labour. In these efforts, I’ve been fortunate to meet upstanding people, to put into practice my historical knowledge and research, improve the quality and accessibility of my writing, and help make Kingston, Ontario, and Canada a better place to live and work. Specific thanks goes out to the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Kingston and District Labour Council, who have welcomed me with open arms, and provided space for me to teach, and more often, to learn.

But most important of all has been my wife Briana Broderick. I met her on my very first day in Kingston, and my love for her has increased every day since. If this adventure had resulted in nothing but meeting her, it would have been worth everything to me. She has been a source of stability, of care, of comfort, and of confidence for nearing six years, helping me with everything, challenging me with new ideas, dissuading my insecurities, and scrutinizing my work with the combination of love and honesty that only she can provide. I owe to her everything.
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<tr>
<td>6&amp;5</td>
<td>Six and Five Anti-Inflationary Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACTC</td>
<td>Average Comparability of Total Compensation</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>Alberta Federation of Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIB</td>
<td>Anti-Inflation Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCFL</td>
<td>British Columbia Federation of Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBRT&amp;GW</td>
<td>Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers</td>
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<td>CCF</td>
<td>Cooperative Commonwealth Federation</td>
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<td>CCL</td>
<td>Canadian Congress of Labour</td>
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<td>CCPI</td>
<td>Committee for the Canadianization of the Petroleum Industry</td>
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<td>CEP</td>
<td>Centrale des enseignants du Québec</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
<td>Canadian Labour Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPU</td>
<td>Canadian Paperworkers’ Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSN</td>
<td>Confédération des syndicats nationaux</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTCC</td>
<td>Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUPE</td>
<td>Canadian Union of Public Employees</td>
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<td>CUPW</td>
<td>Canadian Union of Postal Workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIRA</td>
<td>Foreign Investment Review Agency</td>
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<td>FUIQ</td>
<td>Fédération des unions industrielles du Québec</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTQ</td>
<td>Fédération des travailleurs du Québec</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAI</td>
<td>Guaranteed Annual Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>IAM</td>
<td>International Association of Machinists</td>
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<td>IWA</td>
<td>International Woodworkers of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSR</td>
<td>League for Social Reconstruction</td>
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<td>NBFL</td>
<td>New Brunswick Federation of Labour</td>
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<td>NEP</td>
<td>National Energy Program</td>
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<td>NDP</td>
<td>New Democratic Party</td>
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<td>National Union of Public and General Employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<td>PCO</td>
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<td>Parti social démocratique du Québec</td>
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<td>SFL</td>
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<td>UFD</td>
<td>Union des forces démocratiques</td>
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<td>UAW</td>
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<td>United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers</td>
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Archives and Archival Collections [all are at Library and Archives Canada, unless otherwise noted]

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Pierre Elliott Trudeau was one of Canada’s most controversial individuals and Prime Ministers. For the purposes of a doctoral thesis, he provides an engaging focal point. While much has been written on Trudeau, there exists at least one area in which Trudeau’s life, thought, work, and legacy remain under-studied: his relationships with organized labour and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation/New Democratic Party. This thesis is an attempt to augment the work done by other scholars in better understanding Trudeau’s legacy. This introduction will lay out the dissertation’s chapters and explore one of its key concepts—the agonistic relationship between democratic socialism and liberalism. This is vital because while I argue Trudeau firmly and consistently adhered to the latter, he certainly was connected to labour and left movements: as an ally in the 1940s to the early 1960s and as a foe while in government.

Chapters two and three examine 1945 to 1958, where we study Trudeau’s relationship with the CCF and organized labour respectively. They show that while Trudeau was a staunch ally of the labour and social democratic movements, these alliances were based upon the promotion and preservation of liberal economics, politics, and class relations. In the other words, labour and the left for Trudeau had an instrumental value in achieving a stable liberal order. No one can deny the effort Trudeau expended on the causes of unions and social democrats, but one must be cognizant of how the rationale and limits of such support both defined his politics and foreshadowed his anti-labour and pro-capital politics as prime minister.
Chapters four and five span the 1956-1968 period. Chapter four contextualizes Trudeau’s rejection of the CCF because of his conviction that liberalism must be the unifying force in a progressive common front against Maurice Duplessis, first in the educational movement known as the Rassemblement and then as a party in the Union des forces démocratiques. Chapter five analyzes Trudeau’s decision to become a Liberal in 1965. It examines the left’s reaction to this event as well as Trudeau’s rejection of the CCF-NDP on the grounds of its weakness in Quebec, its supposed capitulation to separatists, and his lingering feelings of betrayal and rejection over the left’s failure to support his Rassemblement and UFD.

Chapter six examines Trudeau’s program for the “Just Society,” with a specific focus on the Guaranteed Annual Income and tax reform. While Trudeau’s rhetoric of a Just Society emphasized the pursuit of equality for Canadian individuals and regions, the actual policy thrusts regarding a GAI and tax reform signaled a commitment to the status quo, privileging capital over labour, and preserving an age-old liberal distrust of the ‘idle poor’ more than a commitment to guaranteed human dignity. This chapter demonstrates that NDP and labour activists critiqued the incongruities between the Just Society’s lofty ideals and the actions of Trudeau, offering in the process a more egalitarian counter-vision of social policy in general and taxation more specifically.

Chapter seven reveals how Trudeau’s analysis of increased foreign economic control, along with high energy prices and precarious supply chains, led to the creation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency and the National Energy Program, respectively. The former was publicized as a moderate program, one which welcomed investment provided that it led to a net benefit for Canadians. The latter combined taxation,
subsidization, and nationalization to secure Canadian energy supplies, institute a pan-
Canadian regime of revenue-sharing, and provide lower energy prices to oil-dependent
industries. While the NDP and labour largely decried the limitations of the NEP and FIRA,
they begrudgingly supported Trudeau’s efforts because there were few alternatives,
because they correlated with some of the interests of the industrial working class, and
because the NDP had largely pushed for the adoption of FIRA and NEP-like programs,
meaning that too strident an opposition to them would be akin to attacking one’s own
record. Still, the chapter notes substantive differences in the ways economic democracy
and nationalism were approached by the two sides, with labour and the NDP still largely
speaking in democratic socialist tones.

Chapter eight focuses on inflation and wage and price controls. Trudeau saw
inflation as both a cause and a consequence of Canadians’ excessive expectations.
Canadian workers were overpaid and overprotected with respect to their American and
Third World competitors. Inflation was a symbol of the class strife, societal distrust, and
lack of individual responsibility that arose from their selfishness. The answer to such social
ills was wage and price controls. Applied to major firms, and to nearly every unionized
workplace, such controls would act as a psychological medicine for citizens, training them
to desist from their narrow and ultimately anti-Canadian pursuit of their economic interests.
While Trudeau portrayed this policy thrust as one that both protected the vulnerable, and
laid down a framework for stable growth, labour and the NDP believed the program
unfairly provided rigorous regulations with respect to wages and an abundance of
loopholes with respect to prices. They thus perceived controls as an anti-labour and pro-
capital tactic that would take away collective bargaining rights in an effort to increase profit margins.

Chapter nine ties directly into the questions that emerged from controls, specifically those relating to labour relations, rights, and freedoms in a post-controls world. (This imagined future was called the “New Society.”) Trudeau’s goal was to supersede combative industrial relations by creating consultative tri- and multipartite bodies in which government would work with labour and capital to keep inflation low, prevent strikes, and modernize collective bargaining. Trudeau thus saw a role for organized labour in the post-controls world, but only as a subservient force, one which would not act militantly on behalf of its members, but would discipline them, so that they subscribed to the view that prosperity came not through socialism or working-class solidarity but via the trickled-down wealth generated by lower wages, precarity, and reduced labour rights. Important here is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which Trudeau put forward as a pedagogical device whereby Canadians would be taught to embrace the rights he considered integral to a free and democratic society. Conspicuous by their absence were labour and social rights. The NDP and labour would largely oppose Trudeau’s tripartism, feeling it robbed workers of their rights and independence. Yet they lacked the same decisive action when it came to the Charter.

The conclusion examines Trudeau’s post-political life. It looks at his own reflections upon his legacy, the continuing contradictions of capitalism, and the rise of neo-liberal politics in the post-1989 world.

Much of this thesis relies upon a conceptual framework that allows us to distinguish analytically between liberalism and democratic socialism. Thus we must briefly explore a
couple key theoretical concepts that offer us a purchase on Trudeau’s organizing ideas. How, despite always being a self-proclaimed liberal, could Trudeau embrace aspects of democratic socialism and find amongst its adherents some of his key supporters?

Perhaps the most important theoretical concept for this thesis is Ian McKay’s Liberal Order Framework, which provides an analysis of two factors. According to McKay, liberals envision society structured by liberty, property, and equality all placed in a systematic hierarchy. While socialists rank liberty, and especially equality, above property, liberals place the right of private property at the pinnacle and equality at the bottom. Though liberals often place constraints on private property, their goal has always been to preserve it as an institution. In liberal reforms, vestiges of liberty and equality had to be maintained lest conventional liberal-capitalist property relations be lost. In other words, the only way the masses would accept a system of property relations that actually undercuts the principles of liberty, equality, and democracy, is if they can be persuaded that private ownership of the means of production and distribution defines a free society rather than limits it.¹

But convincing the populace, most of whom will hold insignificant and largely non-capitalized forms of private property, that this institution is of value to all classes, was and is not a straightforward process. Rather it demands of this system’s supporters the construction and defense of a form of political and cultural hegemony. The key aspect of hegemony is the portrayal of one’s interests as being homogenous with those of society—in other words, the capitalist class holds power primarily by painting the capitalist mode of production and distribution, with its accompanying inequality and private ownership, as

beneficial to all classes. For example, a pervasive trope in such hegemonic representation is that of hydraulics: the job creators’ wealth creates a tide that raises all boats, or trickles down to nourish lesser organisms. One sees similar arguments when public ownership is chastised as inefficient, and when unions are attacked for making life difficult for the creators of wealth. In all these cases, the hegemonic powers, through control of the state and major institutions of civil society, paint their interests as the interests of all. The majority of Canadians buy into this system. They seek to prosper as individuals within it, rather than challenging or ending it.

But this state of things is not guaranteed. Hegemonic forces are often subject to crises. Crises in hegemony occur during times of social and economic strife, when (as Antonio Gramsci puts it) the “formerly hegemonic class is challenged from below and is no longer able to hold together a cohesive bloc of social alliances.” American historian Michael Denning puts it aptly when he said that a hegemonic crisis is a “moment when social classes became detached from their traditional parties, a situation of conflict between represented and representatives.” This is when those who rule a society, and their underpinning philosophies, lose the confidence of those they rule.2

The economic collapse of 2008, and especially the Great Depression, are flashpoints in which the ruling class had difficulties convincing subordinate classes that everyone shares the same interests. For example, after the recent collapse, more people became cognizant of their identity as 99%ers, and more readily critiqued trickle-down economics and financial deregulation. Similarly, I argue that during much of Trudeau’s

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political life one can find similar crises in capitalism that raised significant questions about Keynesian models, energy pricing and availability, the spectre of rising labour militancy, rising social expenditures, and public expectations: all forcing liberals like Trudeau, so keen on preserving capitalism, to modify it without abandoning its foundational precepts. McKay’s Framework explains this process—termed passive revolution\(^3\)—by which the liberal state can sustain the property arrangements that serve its interests, even as there are collapses in hegemonic blocs as articulated by Gramsci and Denning. An example can be found in the ways a liberal state was able to neutralize the threats it faced from socialists, communists, and workers during and after the Depression. When faced by fundamental challenges, the liberal order

executed far-ranging changes in its social and political project to ‘include’ some of those previously excluded, with the quid pro quo that they divest themselves of the most radical aspects of their oppositional programs (such as demands for a comprehensive change in property relations or in the nature and function of political ‘representation’).\(^4\)

The result was that even though labour was included in the economic order through collective bargaining, and social programs were implemented, the liberal order was saved. Though their concessions constituted a substantive change, liberals nonetheless created a stable model of industrial relations conducive to their own survival. The liberal state was thus able to absorb leftist programs, refashioning them as showcases of a benevolent liberalism deceptively claiming to value equality and liberty as much as property.

\(^3\) Passive revolution is defined as “any historical situation in which a new political formation comes to power without a fundamental reordering of social relations.” This form of revolution does not constitute war as in the French and American Revolutions, but instead shares much in common with the fundamental re-ordering of liberalism in postwar liberal democracies, and even in the rise of Mussolinian Italy. Without a fundamental re-ordering of the Canadian state, liberals were able to modify the ways in which the state interacted with citizens, corporations, and organized labour. *Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 428.

These very same passive-revolutionary processes would be applied in Trudeau’s era, whereby he would reform and create programs, not to attack capitalism, but to make it stronger, nimbler, and perhaps most important, remove the ability of its opponents to critique it with any political traction. All of his programs, from anti-inflation efforts, to collective bargaining reforms, to the Just Society, to FIRA, the NEP, and the Charter—all responded to crises in postwar Canadian capitalism with a view towards empowering capitalists, weakening labour and left voices, and furthering an individualistic conception of rights, freedoms, and social spending.

Even during his years as an ally to labour and the CCF, Trudeau critiqued the elite, not as a socialist bent on a post-capitalist Canada, but as a child and member of the ruling class worried about how his liberal comrades had failed to heed the warnings from Europe: that the working class would rise against an unreformed capitalism. Thus, much of Trudeau’s left activity was a warning flare to liberals: that if they gave the workers nothing, workers might well take everything. He thus saw it as his responsibility to ensure a modern, stable, and peaceful liberal order, first in Duplessis’ Quebec, then during the Quiet Revolution, and subsequently across Canada as a whole.

McKay’s understanding of liberal order, along with Gramsci and Denning’s articulations of hegemony and associated crises, are vital in buttressing a key factor that will play out throughout the dissertation: that while Trudeau’s ties to labour and the CCF were genuine, and he found comrades in the fight for liberal freedoms amongst democratic socialists, there existed a fundamentally different frame of reference between Trudeauvian
liberalism on the one hand, and the social democratic and labour left traditions on the other.\textsuperscript{5}

While such distinctions may be blurrier in our contemporary political context, it was still the case that the CCF-NDP and labour-left had a different vision than Trudeau of society, of justice, of liberty, of equality, and of democracy. This basic distinction is explored throughout this thesis. Trudeau must be recognized as a fairly conventional liberal in favour of conventional capitalist social relations, but he cannot be understood without a consistent frame of reference that allows us to orient ourselves with respect to the labour and left movements with which he interacted.

\textsuperscript{5} For the purposes of this dissertation, the ‘labour left’ is understood as those unions more likely to articulate socialist positions in terms of economic democracy and equality, rather than act as bargaining agents in a more limited sense. It also includes to a large degree those unions and labour federations affiliated and sympathetic to the CCF-NDP during the period covered by this thesis, though some non-NDP left unions are included as well. In any case, the unions included were large bodies. Many of them were, during the Trudeau years, highly active politically, produced numerous publications, and maintained and made available substantive archival collections. The labour-left includes the CLC and its provincial federations, CUPE, USW, UAW, UE, CBRT&GW, CPU, CUPW, IAM, PSAC, CSN, and others—but as a rule did not encompass craft unions, such as those active in the building trades.
Chapter 2

Le Parti “qui appartient aux peuples:” Trudeau, socialism, and the CCF, 1945-58

This chapter examines how Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s connections to socialism and the CCF related to his liberal political, social, and economic beliefs. His support for the CCF was based on liberal-democratic rationalizations. He had serious doubts, some with justification, about its potential in Quebec. Ultimately, the chapter explores how he prepared the way for his independent political efforts through the Rassemblement, which was formed in 1956 and will be explored in a subsequent chapter.

While originally educated at Brébeuf College and l’Université de Montréal, Trudeau as a young man found inspiration beyond a Quebec many felt was mired in a corrupt xenophobia. ¹ Harvard was a bastion of liberal enlightenment wherein Trudeau learned of the importance of constitutions, the dangers of extremism, and the virtues of liberalism and Keynesianism. In the words of Clarkson and McCall, at Harvard he “had passed nowhere near the political left.”² Rather, they hold that he found socialism at the London School of Economics under the tutelage of Harold Laski, a Marxist professor, Labour Party Chair, and defender of individual liberties.³

John English holds that Trudeau’s international education allowed him to shed the intellectual baggage he had acquired in nationalist Quebec. As English remarks, Trudeau

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¹ Max and Monique Nemni, Young Trudeau: Son of Quebec, Father of Canada, 1919-1944, Translated by William Johnston (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006).
knew nothing of Keynes before Harvard, where his studies “celebrated liberal democracy.” Trudeau then studied in France, with its numerous and powerful leftists. English argues that Laski had a defining impact, sparking Trudeau’s interest in socialism and federalism. Laski was so impressive that although Trudeau had completed Harvard PhD comprehensive exams, he asked Laski at the LSE to supervise his thesis.

Max and Monique Nemni believe Trudeau’s departure from Quebec was, in Platonic terms, his exit from the cave of nationalism and corporatism. They note the importance of Keynes, who “set his system within a capitalist, democratic, and liberal society.” Paris, they argue, continued Trudeau’s leftward drift, where he came to appreciate the primacy of individual rights. They argue that Trudeau adopted socialism in London upon encountering both the social and economic planning of Attlee’s Labour government and the teachings of Laski.

All three biographical studies argue that Trudeau became a liberal and then a socialist as he witnessed and analyzed the collective efforts to rebuild Europe before returning to lead Quebec into the modern era. In this and the following two chapters, I

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5 Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall, *Trudeau and Our Times: the Magnificent Obsession*, 124-27, 130, 134-5, 168-9, 171-2, 195; PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 7, file 28, “Transcript of the Record of Mr. Pierre E. Trudeau,” 3 June 1946. Trudeau largely corroborates the idea that Harvard was a liberal awakening for him, where he began to realize that dignity did not merely emanate from God, but was based in inherent human rights. Likewise, he began to see how individuals’ willingness to be governed was as important as governing itself. See PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 22, file 12. For another work which emphasizes the influence of Laski, see Nino Ricci, *Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009).
6 Plato’s *Republic* contains the Allegory of the Cave, in which a group of people are chained in place, the only information presented being light and shadows on a wall. Should a prisoner be freed, they would not only realize that the shadows are illusions, but would exit the cave, seeing the brilliant eminence of the sun. This person’s worldview would be shaken, and they may seek the shelter of their prior ignorance. They may also inform the remaining prisoners, who would likely mock and show hostility towards them.
argue against this interpretation. Trudeau was and remained a liberal. For example, Trudeau gave a 1947 lecture in Paris about Canadian politics asserting that while a two-party system provided stability, it was problematic because both old parties were conservative. While he dismissed most third parties for their narrow foci, the CCF was an exception. While such a lecture might seem to suggest that Trudeau was a budding socialist, we must consider the following, which the Nemnis themselves quote:

I would be remiss if I left you with the impression that the class struggle in Marxist terms is already under way. Liberalism in Canada has not yet completely fulfilled its historic role: the momentum of the middle classes has not yet crashed against the wall of the proletariat. The two opposing forces still have enough room for manoeuvre to be able to reconcile their divergent interests in the parliamentary system.

Here is a statement emblematic of Trudeau’s complex adherence to liberalism. While in 1947 he seemingly acknowledges certain tenets of Marxism, more important was his hope that Canada as a wealthy liberal nation could stave off class conflict “since we are not prisoners of some bitter history of caste or privilege.” Trudeau’s idyllic view of class conflict and mobility in North America was indicative of a liberal, rather than socialist, outlook.

Of specific influence upon him was Laski’s 1925 work, A Grammar of Politics, which in 1993 Trudeau remembered as an “encyclopaedic work that for some unknown reason no longer gets any attention.” Laski’s text seemingly supports freedom in a manner akin to liberalism: “What seems to be the permanent essence of freedom is that the personality of each individual should be so unhampered in its development, whether by authority or custom, that it can make for itself a satisfactory harmonization of its impulses.”

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9 Max and Monique Nemni, The Young Trudeau, 114-5
Laski argues, however, that rights as understood by liberals elude those without wealth:

“The whole character of social life and…the State is above all determined by its division into a small number of wealthy persons and a large number who dwell upon the margins of subsistence.” Laski was thus suggesting that inequality creates a fundamental deficit in freedom and democracy. The solution to this quandary was that “there must be a sufficiency for all before there is a superfluity for some.”

To facilitate this, the state must strike at intergenerational inequality and private property:

Anyone…who regards the casual and haphazard character of the modern business man will realize how rarely he is competent for the proper performance of his task…We do not allow a doctor to hand over his practice to his son unless the son has obtained the necessary qualifications; but the son of a business man may succeed to his father’s enterprise without regard to the quality of his mind or the knowledge of its processes.

Similarly, Laski describes liberty as “the eager maintenance of that atmosphere in which men have the opportunity to be their best selves.” He seems again to be working within liberalism, until asserting that liberty required not only equal opportunity, but virtual equality:

Political equality…is never real unless it is accompanied by virtual economic equality; political power, otherwise, is bound to be the handmaid of economic power…The early history of socialism is most largely the record of a perception that the concentration of property other than labour-power in a few hands is fatal to the purpose of the State. It was that perception that Marx, in the Communist Manifesto, made the foundation of the most formidable political philosophy in the modern world…It is overwhelmingly right in its insistence that either the State must dominate property, or property will dominate the State.

Property holds a foundational importance for Laski, who declared that it “perpetuates the division into rich and poor, and separates the poor from the conditions which make possible

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10 Trudeau, Memoirs (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 46.
their effective citizenship.” While he conceded that societies that embraced private property have been the most innovative, Laski rejected private property as a universal concept. Referring to historically and culturally contingent factors such as chattel slavery, eminent domain, and building regulations. Laski argued that rather than attack the concept of property, what progressives must challenge were any institutions of property that bred inequality, inefficiency and injustice:

The antithesis between individual property rights in the essential means of production and the fulfilment of the democratic idea; the thesis that liberty is a concept devoid of real meaning except in the context of equality… [and] that in any society, even when based on equal and universal suffrage, the existence of serious economic inequalities biases the incidence of government in favour of the rich.\(^\text{12}\)

The appropriate response to this challenge for Laski was clear: “The survival of political democracy today is, all over the world, definitely impossible if it cannot conquer the central citadel of economic power. There cannot, in a word, be democracy unless there is socialism.”\(^\text{13}\)

While not adopting Laski’s prescriptions and outlooks, Trudeau always regarded the English scholar highly. In a 1992 interview with future Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff, who was a volunteer on Trudeau’s 1968 campaign, Trudeau argued that he was influenced both by the Grammar and by the way Laski combined both high-minded scholarship and practical activism with the Labour Party. Trudeau valued Laski as a gateway towards understandings of law, governance, and the welfare state. He also warmly recalled Laski’s seminar discussions with such key Labour politicians as Aneurin Bevan, who introduced Trudeau to the practical considerations of implementing ideological systems. That Laski

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 162, 173-9, 216.
was unpopular with both liberals and communists alike also appealed to the contrarian in Trudeau.\textsuperscript{14}

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The key Trudeau scholars also take for granted an interpretation of Quebec history that overemphasizes the authoritarian actions of Maurice Duplessis.\textsuperscript{15} They thus juxtapose the illiberal ‘dark ages’ of Duplessis and the ‘liberal enlightenment’ of the Quiet Revolution.\textsuperscript{16} As Gérard Pelletier trumpeted, he and Trudeau were part of a special generation, the first to stay in Quebec and change things. Neo-nationalists René Lévesque and Pierre Vallières would agree in large part, as they also emphasized the role of middle-class liberals in ending the ‘great darkness.’\textsuperscript{17} Many scholars have critiqued this interpretation. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff has argued that while the Liberals positioned themselves as the vanquishers of the \textit{grande noirceur} and inheritors of the Quiet Revolution, they were complicit in Duplessis’ actions and dismissive of the reformers who would come to challenge them and their ideals. In essence, she asserts that the L/liberal

\textsuperscript{15} For more on Duplessis by supportive voices, see Robert Rumilly, \textit{Maurice Duplessis et son temps} (Montreal: Fides, 1978) and Conrad Black, \textit{Duplessis} (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).
\textsuperscript{16} See Ronald Rudin’s \textit{Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). Rudin describes a historiography divided between those who argued Quebec was fundamentally different due to the Catholic Church, low industrialization, and a distrust of modernity, and others who proposed that Quebec was similar to broader North America. See also Rudin, “Revisionism and the Search for a Normal Society: A Critique of the Recent Quebec Historical Writing,” \textit{Canadian Historical Review} 73 (March 1992): 30-61; Ian McKay, “For a New Kind of History: A Reconnaissance of 100 Years of Canadian Socialism,” \textit{Labour/Le Travail} 46 (Fall 2000): 116.
\textsuperscript{17} One need only examine the Nemnis’ dedication to \textit{Trudeau Transformed}: “To the memory of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a man who sought the Truth, for the Good of his people.” This reverence is not unique. Kevin Christiano spoke of Trudeau as being sent to save a people, by superseding the culture and time that oppressed them. See Pierre Elliott Trudeau: \textit{Reason before Passion} (Toronto: ECW Press, 1994); see also B.W. Powe, \textit{Mystic Trudeau: The Fire and the Rose} (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2007). Richard Gwyn, \textit{The Northern Magus}, 34. For Lévesque’s and Vallières’ views, see René Lévesque, \textit{Memoirs}, trans. Philip Stratford (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 184-6; Pierre Vallières, \textit{White Niggers of America}, trans. Joan Pinkham (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 42.
interpretation of the Quiet Revolution was predicated upon the erasure of their shared ideological links to Duplessis and of the efforts of non-liberal reformers:

The Liberals appropriated all that was new and dynamic on the Quebec scene. In the name of a liberal society, modern, efficient, planned, and organized, they denounced their predecessor and despised their successors. They behaved indeed much like other rebels of the 1960s….brandishing the wheel they had just invented and using it to roll over the past.18

Not only do such liberal interpretations ignore democratic socialist, working-class, and communist activism in Quebec before the 1950s,19 but they impose a crude hero/villain dichotomy, as Jocelyn Létourneau remarks with respect to students in Quebec who have absorbed the lessons of their high school courses:

C'est ainsi que la majorité d'entre eux ont repris le discours bien connu, procédant d'une vision mi-fictive et mi-réaliste des choses, assimilant Lesage, la Révolution tranquille et sa politique ouvrière aux idées de progrès, de modernisation, de rattrapage et d'âge d'or. Par opposition, ils ont apparenté Duplessis, son régime et sa politique ouvrière au «moyen âge» québécois, à l'époque de la «Grande Noirceur», à l'anti-ouvrierisme et à anti-communisme fanatiques, à l'autoritarisme et à l'autocratisme. Faits à signaler, la plupart des éléments d'information et d'interprétation à partir desquels les étudiants ont composé leurs réponses ont été resitués par rapport à une trame mythologique comportant trois moments forts: la conspiration d'un tyran, l'arrivée d'un sauveur et l'inauguration d'un âge d'or.20

On a similar note, Létourneau notes the myth of Trudeau in a 1989 study on public understandings of Quebec history, in which he discerns a general tendency to depict a “light-switch province” that was off in the postwar years only to be illuminated in 1960 by liberal reformers. Enlightened liberals are thus juxtaposed to an evil Duplessis: “What we know of Québécois history of the 1950s and 1960s is an inseparable blend of the thought of professional researchers, intellectual activists, direct political actors, and average citizens who had come to abhor Duplessis.”

Such interpretations have been strenuously contested. The 1994 study *La société libérale duplessiste* argued that Quebec had been a liberal society since the 1840s. While Duplessis often acted undemocratically, he embraced the ideological essence of liberalism, the reverence for private property. Such liberalism

se nourrit de la reproduction d'institutions, à des degrés divers certes, mais ultimement antidémocratiques...alors même que la démocratisation tend à s'approfondir (droit d'association, extension du droit de vote) dans la sphère publique, l'organisation de l'institution centrale du capitalisme qu'est l'usine demeure autoritaire et fondamentalement antidémocratique... 

As Laski and McKay argue, liberalism and democracy are not intrinsically linked; the actions of Duplessis and other liberal-'democratic' leaders are evidence of this. Trudeau’s interest in socialist politics stemmed not from any systematic critique of capitalist social relations, but from his dissatisfaction with the elitist and anti-democratic liberalism familiar to him from his youth. Similarly, his interest in the CCF stemmed from what John English

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21 Jocelyn Létourneau, "The unthinkable history of Québec,” 114.
calls his “correct” evaluation that in it, one found the only federal party to consistently advance the cause of civil rights. Trudeau’s connections to the CCF were kindled through friendships23 and influences including Frank Scott, Eugene Forsey, and Thérèse Casgrain. Trudeau, before leaving for Harvard, had met with Scott, who was, in the opinion of Stéphane Kelly, a “Canadian Laski.” Trudeau would himself claim in 1981 that Scott “taught me all I know.”24 As McCall and Clarkson remark,

Scott became a cardinal influence on Trudeau’s thinking. His stance on the importance of the constitution in a representative democracy, his defiant views on the evils of capitalism, and his vision of a just society were coherent expressions for the Canadian reality of the liberal ideas Trudeau had studied abroad.25

The foremost expert on Frank Scott is Sandra Djwa, who notes his desire to make Quebecers and their issues central to the CCF. Trudeau’s files have a 1943 article by Scott which proclaimed that “le C.C.F ne peut se sauver lui-même ni sauver le Canada sans le secours de Québec. Car sans Québec, il n’est pas un partie canadien, mains un parti canadien-anglais.”26 Scott spoke of a capitalist colonialism forced upon both French and English Canadians by those who suppressed labour, exploited resources, and siphoned off wealth. This was colonialism without national allegiance. Thus, the CCF was founded with the goal of freeing all peoples from economic imperialism.

23 Trudeau would remember the CCF as the only party in which he had made sustained friendships during this time. PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23, file 3, “Interview between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Graham,” 28 April 1992.

24 John English, Citizen of The world, 366. Scott was vital in the development of CCF policy, philosophy, and organization. He was National Chairman from 1942-50, and with Frank Underhill wrote the Regina Manifesto. See Davis Lewis and Frank Scott, Make This Your Canada: A Review of CCF History and Policy (Toronto: Central Canada Pub. Co., 1943) and Frank Scott, A New Endeavour: Selected Political Essays, Letters, and Addresses, ed., Michiel Horn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); Stéphane Kelly, Les fins du Canada: selon Macdonald, Laurier, Mackenzie King et Trudeau (Montréal: Boréal, 2001), 195; “CanLit Papers,” Quill & Quire, April 1981.

25 Clarkson and McCall, Trudeau and Our Times: the Heroic Delusion (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), 34.

Djwa draws a connection between Scott and Trudeau, arguing that they were brought together in a dialectic of socialism. Some writers, including biographers of Tommy Douglas, describe Trudeau as one of Scott’s students, while others acknowledged the quasi-fatherly role Scott played in Trudeau’s emergence as a progressive anti-nationalist.  

Djwa insightfully shows the extent of Scott’s influence:

Scott’s pioneering articles clearly provided direction to Trudeau. Trudeau began as a democratic socialist, much in the Scott mould, who gravitated to socialist philosophy because of his repugnance for the injustice of society. In looking for remedies, as Trudeau recalled, ‘I found them first of all in the study of socialist thought.’

Yet Djwa’s categorization of Trudeau is unsubtle. Though drawing *inspiration* from socialism, Trudeau was not a socialist himself. Rather, Trudeau read Scott and Laski for their views on democracy because they penned sharper analyses than did contemporary liberals. They offered ways, if only unintentionally, for liberalism to redeem itself with a democratic ethos. Trudeau, through a 1969 speech for Scott’s 70th birthday, would emphasize above all the liberal elements of Scott’s political efforts, evidenced—for example—in his defense of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* from censorship, rather than his belief in inequality’s incompatibility with democracy. Likewise, Trudeau’s 1992 interview with Ignatiefed emphasized a certain reading of the socialist tradition—essentially one that constructed it as a minor correction to liberalism’s tendency towards an anachronistic

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individualism. Trudeau could see a path through which liberalism could marry capitalism with justice and compassion.  

Eugene Forsey was a man of many activities and ideological allegiances. Like Scott, he was a Montreal Anglophone constitutional scholar concerned with the precarity of civil liberties. It was primarily through his job as research director for the Canadian Congress of Labour that Forsey crossed paths with Trudeau, who would make him a Senator in 1970. The role of Anglophone socialists like Scott and Forsey in Quebec is contextualized in a 2005 paper by Sean Mills which looks at the League for Social Reconstruction during the 1930s. His thesis is that 

spurred by attacks on democracy, the LSR began associating French-Canadian nationalism with fascism, and came to see it as a significant obstacle to forging a new national purpose, and, ultimately, to building a democratic socialist society. Because the league believed that Quebec was 'in the grip of a clerical fascist movement,'... the LSR promoted liberal rights as a primary tenet of its ideology and redefined the very meaning of the democratic nature of its socialist program.

What Mills shows is that the Quebec left shelved “anti-capitalist ideals to defend liberal values against an increasingly dangerous fascist threat.” As Scott remarked to future NDP leader David Lewis:

In Quebec the immediate need is to stop corporatism and fascism; the only hope...lies in the chance that a genuine French liberal party may grow; therefore we in Montreal are anxious to help liberalism, not to attack it. We

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31 The League for Social Reconstruction sought as its goal the study of socialism, and was comprised mostly of academics seeking to improve society through revolutionary, yet parliamentary, means. See Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).
shall not disband as a party, but we shall co-operate…with the nascent liberal group.\textsuperscript{32}

While this approach led to setbacks for Quebec socialism, it helped the LSR articulate critiques of liberalism. When speaking of the Padlock Act and the lack of a Liberal resistance, the LSR claimed that “if democracy is ever superseded in Canada, the history of its lingering death will be dated from this failure of the Liberal government to stand by its principles.” Another claimed that a “failure to act…against this outrageous repression of liberty in Quebec will make it clear to every Canadian democrat…that liberalism is dead, buried by a Liberal government.”\textsuperscript{33} Trudeau’s characteristic deployment of certain socialist themes in the interest of building liberalism was, then, a continuation of a strategic vision enriched by central intellectuals of the CCF in Quebec.

Thérèse Casgrain was, like Trudeau, drawn from the French-Canadian elite, her husband a Liberal minister under W.L.M. King. She became Quebec CCF leader in 1951 and was, according to former Ontario CCF leader Donald MacDonald, “the most outstanding woman in French Canadian life since Confederation.”\textsuperscript{34} Anglo-Montrealers keen to cross the cultural divide supported her. She withstood heavy attacks from Duplessis, employers, regressive clergymen, and even some Anglo CCFers. The Quebec

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\textsuperscript{33} See also the League for Social Reconstruction Research Committee, \textit{Democracy Needs Socialism} (Toronto: Nelson and sons Limited, 1938).
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wing in 1956 changed its name to the Parti social démocratique du Québec partly as a result of her tenacity.\textsuperscript{35}

Casgrain seemed both impressed and dismayed by Trudeau. On the one hand, M.J. Coldwell remarked that “Thérèse had the idea that Trudeau would be eventually the party’s shining light in Quebec.” This is confirmed by Michel Vastel, who claims that Casgrain offered Trudeau the leadership on a “silver platter.”\textsuperscript{36} Yet despite Trudeau’s promise, he was deemed an inconsistent ally more apt to travel abroad than to work at home for socialist causes. Casgrain years later would write a book on the CCF-PSD in Quebec, in which she divides supporters into three categories: labour, “la haute-bourgeoisie,”\textsuperscript{37} and the Three Doves (Trudeau, Marchand, and Pelletier). She noted that although Trudeau never became a member, he donated time, ideas, and money because he was greatly impressed with the CCF’s democratic nature:

Cet homme qui s’est battu toute sa vie pour voir naître une véritable démocratie au Canada a dit, assistant à titre d’observateur à un congrès du CCF à Toronto: “Je ne croyais jamais voir ainsi la démocratie en action en terre d’Amérique.”\textsuperscript{38}

In the end, Casgrain argued that it was Marchand and Pelletier who pulled Trudeau away from the CCF, but her disappointment can be contextualized more broadly. Casgrain was

\textsuperscript{35} Casgrain, \textit{A Woman in a Man’s World}, 116-21. There is archival evidence that as early as 1949, Casgrain, Scott, and others had talked about a name change. McGill University Rare Book Collection, Canadian Cooperative Federation-New Democratic Party. Quebec, 1941-1962, Vol. 1, file 8. See also CCF-NDP Fonds, Vol. 365, file 1, “CCF National Executive Meeting,” 10 September 1955.


\textsuperscript{37} This included herself, Scott, Lewis, and others who came to the CCF because they felt they had the requisite skills to restructure society along democratic socialist lines.

\textsuperscript{38} Casgrain Fonds, Vol. 11, file 1, Thérèse Casgrain, Manuscrit inachevé, “Les raisons pour lesquelles le Québec a dit non au CCF” (1981), 203.
known for hosting and facilitating labour and CCF meetings, encouraging a generation of leaders.\textsuperscript{39} In her eyes, it was a tragedy that many remarkable men who in their hearts were radicals and reformers sacrificed their ideals to their careers rather than suffer the repeated defeats of a new party. Some, in a hurry to achieve positions of leadership on the political scene, preferred the well-paved avenue of the Liberal Party to the rough footpaths of the CCF.\textsuperscript{40}

It is of Trudeau, and those like him, that she speaks, even if his name was not explicitly mentioned.

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For much of the 1950s, within the CCF Trudeau was seen as a trustworthy supporter.\textsuperscript{41} A 1953 letter from Donald MacDonald praised Trudeau’s Cité Libre articles specifically and his thoughts more generally. In 1957, MacDonald shared with Trudeau a confidential CCF report about the party’s weaknesses in French Canada. He hoped Trudeau could bring about “a socialist equivalent of that historic working partnership between the two great races upon which this nation has been built.” Labour newspapers have Trudeau attending CCF-PSD meetings, including photos of him laughing with Tommy Douglas. The party also solicited his participation in an advisory panel and he was asked to help the CLC’s political education department get the CCF “out of the woods.” That Trudeau was not a member was irrelevant. The CCFers were interested in his expertise, and likely wanted to


\textsuperscript{40} Casgrain, \textit{A Woman in a Man’s World}, 124-5. See also Michiel Horn, “Lost Causes: The League for Social Reconstruction and the Co-operative Commonwealth in Quebec in the 1930s and 1940s,” \textit{Journal of Canadian Studies} 19 (Summer 1984): 132-56.

\textsuperscript{41} This section is derived from previous research. See Christo Aivalis, “In the Name of Liberalism: Pierre Trudeau, Organized Labour, and the Canadian Social Democratic Left, 1949–1959,” \textit{Canadian Historical Review} 94 (June 2013): 263-88.
recruit him without applying excessive pressure. He was, after all, highly non-committal about such matters. As Trudeau would note years later at the aforementioned Scott birthday celebration: “I was in the CCF at the time. Or almost.”

Rumour in May 1956 even had it that Trudeau was running for the PSD. Two telegrams (one from Casgrain) congratulated him for his candidacy, and a *Le Devoir* article reported that “beaucoup de gens aimerait le voir en Chambre, où il serait un grand défenseur des idées sociales.” The same issue declared that the PSD had named four candidates, including Trudeau. This was in conflict with a USW election report that did not mention him. Indeed, Trudeau did not run, but did campaign for Jean-Robert Ouellet in the election. His files contain a campaign speech which argued that though the Liberal Party had suggested uniting opposition against Duplessis, working with them was antithetical to the democratic cause:

> The true forces of opposition in Quebec are those who want to change something more than the men who wield power, the true forces of opposition want to change our reactionary political and economic institutions. This is why the true advocates of social change are refusing to enter into cannibalistic alliances with the Liberal Party, and that is why they are making collective appeals to the voters, showing them the only true alternative to corrupt governments.

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Trudeau closed by asking: “when will we elect men and parties who are the servants of the people, and not of a financial clique?” Along such lines, Trudeau would often celebrate the democratic roots of the CCF/PSD, which despite its small stature, worked to empower its members, appealed to reason, and eschewed corruption: “si vous êtes social-démocrate, vous n’appartenez pas au parti social démocratique: c’est ce parti qui vous appartient.”45

Various items from Trudeau’s files would continue the attack on the old parties for opposing those “qui [se] situent authentiquement sur le plan du progrès social et démocratique.”46 In honing in on the Liberals, Trudeau demolished in advance what was to become the Liberal myth of the Quiet Revolution—the very one he would perpetuate to his own advantage in later years:

De 1896 à nos jours, sans interruption, la province de Québec a élu une députation en majorité libérale à la Chambre des Communes et sauf une interruption de quinze ans sur soixante elle était gouvernée par des libéraux à Québec. Or il n’est pas une de ces victoires qui n’ait été basée sur l’appel au préjugé racial…ou sur la corruption élector systématique. Et si les libéraux voudraient maintenant nous faire croire que si notre démocratie est pourrie, notre sens social affadi, notre système d’éducation raterdaire (sic) et notre économie colonalisé, c’est uniquement la faute à M. Duplessis?47

Trudeau also preserved a PSD campaign poster that attacked the old parties for their hostility towards labour. “Workers,” it exclaimed, “support your friends and defeat your enemies…Your only friends are those who have never broken faith with the workers of Quebec and Canada: The Social-Democratic Party of Quebec.”48 Its platform for labour and workers supported their struggle for a better life:

46 PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 28, file 16, “Défi aux vieux partis de révéler d’où vient leur caisse électorale,” Le Devoir, 30 May 1956;
Les travailleurs de la Province de Québec peuvent être assurés que dans le combat qu’ils livrent pour obtenir leur juste part de la richesse nationale, le Parti social démocratique est toujours à leur côté. Celui-ci a...le même but que le mouvement syndical; à savoir l’établissement d’une démocratie économique sociale.49

At his core, Trudeau distrusted the Liberals primarily because they were not committed to democracy. As a journalist he attended their 1958 provincial convention. His report hammered them for their undemocratic traditions and single-minded electoralism:

Le Congrès a prouvé une chose avant tout. A en juger par leurs représentants officiels, les libéraux de la Province de Québec ne sont pas intéressés en premier lieu à l’idéologie politique, ni aux réformes démocratiques…. Ils sont allés à Québec pour une seule et unique raison: se choisir une chef.50

Back on the CCF front, Trudeau in 1958 met with various labour activists and CCFers on behalf of the Boag Foundation, which had as its focus “the educational purposes of the socialist and working class movement.” It sought to produce a synthetic work, with Trudeau on the editorial board, about a social purpose for Canada. This was not the first time Trudeau collaborated with CCFers on research. In 1949 he was recruited to the “l’Équipe des Recherches Sociales” along with Casgrain, Forsey, Scott, Pelletier, and Marchand.51 The project, organized by the CCL, sought to research Quebec issues around Catholic doctrine, natural resources, foreign relations, federalism, and the state. Ultimately, Trofimenkoff speaks of the group’s failure, noting that though many went on to work on Cité libre, the journal’s focus on French-Canadian institutions left little space to build

connections with English Canadians. Despite this, *Cité libre* cannot be disconnected from Trudeau’s wider expressions on liberalism, socialism, and the CCF.

*Cité libre* was a publication founded by young, progressive, and ambitious French Canadians, for whom Trudeau served as contributor, editor, and financier. Trudeau in a CBC interview characterized the “influential little magazine” as a refuge for free and critical expression: “We discussed amongst ourselves the possibility of being able to publish what we had on our minds and we came to the realization that there were no publications in existence then which would take what we wanted to say, so we decided we had to found [*Cité libre*].” Many CCFers were deeply impressed by *Cité libre*. Donald MacDonald praised the nascent periodical, while Michael Oliver, a future NDP President, said it was Canada’s only “creative left-wing social and political journal” – partisans of *Canadian Forum* might have disputed that generalization! Others have struck more critical notes. Nationalist scholar Denis Monière asserts that *Cité libre*’s authors were, while concerned with elements of capitalism, ultimately pro-capitalist. They put forward social programs to act as wholly inadequate palliatives for capitalism’s consequences. In stark contrast with Trudeau’s claim that the journal was a harbinger of a new Quebec, Monière quotes frequent *Cité libre* contributor Pierre Vadeboncoeur as saying that “The *Cité libre* group was not…attempting to introduce new ideas, but merely point out some old ones.” In 1970, Frank Scott’s correspondence would note that while some tried to

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intellectually connect the LSR and Cité libre, the link was weak because Trudeau and Cité libre were “never overtly socialist.”

From the pages of Cité libre came one of the most pointed critiques Trudeau ever made of the CCF. In December 1952, he ultimately deemed the CCF a “purely theoretical option” in Quebec due to its overwhelmingly English image and character. On a similar note, Trudeau in a 1953 presentation argued that the party would remain weak in Quebec until it addressed French-Canadian concerns regarding language, religion, and culture, and did so in French and with Francophone members. Trudeau was not the only one to point out these realities. A 1945 CCF memo was blunt in saying that without French-Canadian members, the Quebec wing merely constituted “a clique of parlour socialists.”

David Lewis in an April 1950 letter to Scott noted the dearth of French-speaking members; Jacques Morin, Quebec CCF secretary, wrote to Ottawa in 1951 with an equally sad synopsis of the party’s narrowness. Not only did he speak of insufficient funds and isolation, but he also noted the many claims on the time of Francophone CCFers, who would “be [better] employed making contacts, [in] public relations, recruiting…than being clerks of the English organization.” A 1953 report further acknowledged that “perhaps the greatest sin…of the CCF is that not enough was done to bring at least representatives of French Canadians into our movement from the very outset.” Scott would admit

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retrospectively in autobiographical notes that the organization’s ideas were produced “almost exclusively through English-speaking Quebeckers.”

However clearly many CCFers saw the problem, they seemingly lacked the financial or organizational capacity to fix it. Even David Lewis would, in a letter to a Francophone member, begin by saying “Forgive me for not replying in French, but I am sure that you understand English, and it is easier all around.” The member had requested that the national leader be bilingual, which Lewis rejected: “such a request would only be a slap in Mr. Coldwell’s face and would make you people look a little ridiculous.” One hopes that the categorization “you people” did not refer to Francophones en masse, but Lewis’ overall lack of tact prompts precisely such a suspicion.

Indeed, one of the darkest moments for the CCF’s Francophone membership came during the mid-1950s, when four western MPs, including future leader Hazen Argue, made anti-Francophone and anti-Catholic claims. They asserted, inter alia, that English should be the language of Parliament. Quebec CCFers were appalled. Scott would intimate to Stanley Knowles that the “cause of socialism” had been harmed. Casgrain considered leaving the party. Tommy Douglas took this possibility very seriously. “I am terribly sorry,” he wrote Casgrain, “that you have been caused so much heartache at a time when I know the CCF movement in Quebec has all the problems it can handle without any of us

58 Casgrain would note in a letter to Lewis that the CCF failed to provide a full-time staffer in Quebec or French materials in Ontario. There was little knowledge of Quebec in the national office. Trofimenkoff, “Therese Casgrain and the CCF in Quebec,” 158-9.
increasing the load which you are carrying.” He would nevertheless suggest that a mass Quebec resignation would “delight the forces of reaction,” and he tried to mend fences by claiming that these insults did not invalidate the CCF’s support of minority rights or of its Quebec section. Casgrain’s reply indicates that while committed to the party, and thankful for the apology, she retained feelings of betrayal:

I will sincerely tell you that this entails an awful lot of patience and tolerance. One cannot but wonder if the time will ever come that a thorough understanding of each other will take place. To have a successful marriage there must be give and take from both party (sic). In the case of French Speaking Canada, it seems that they do all the giving and never get any much thanks for it.

In the end, Casgrain hoped for continued educational efforts and that the Quebec section be consulted before any statements were made that directly concerned French Canada. Trudeau did not seem to come up during this fiasco, but it likely influenced his ultimate opinion on the CCF’s potential in Quebec.

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Returning to Trudeau, and placing him in a wider context, we can see that he often critiqued the contemporary status of property rights and inequality, but did so from a definitely liberal position, though one with Laskian undertones. Trudeau argued that while “Western Man” had vastly improved his overall standard of living, he had established “institutions wherein the principle of maximum self-assertion by all was eventually to lead to maximum insecurity for many.” Trudeau elaborated:

The present private enterprise economy is geared to the satisfaction of individual needs, but not to that of collective needs. Consequently there is a

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gigantic lag in the provision of education, hospitals, slum-clearance projects, recreational opportunities, highways, and other public services.

For Trudeau, these inequalities cheapened democracy and human rights:

The cost of education and medical…services prevents all citizens from having an equal chance of developing their intellectual and physical capacities. The high cost of litigation…makes a farce out of the right of equality before the law. And the cost of conducting elections nullifies high-sounding platitudes about political equality.

From this position emerges an intriguing critique of property relations, which Trudeau perceived to be “hampering the march towards economic democracy” because “the ancient values of private property have been carried over into the age of corporate wealth.” These values bestowed rights upon shareholders while excluding workers who “have invested the better part of their lives and of their hopes in a job and may be expropriated from it without compensation.” This inequality erected a wall of prejudice against reform, and a wall of money against democratic control. Powerful financial interests, monopolies, and cartels are in a position to plan large sectors of the national economy for the profit of the few, rather than the welfare for all. Whereas any serious planning by the State, democratically controlled, is dismissed as a step toward towards Bolshevism.62

Though it seems that Trudeau was skeptical of private property, he was simply borrowing from Laski the idea that property is something to be transformed rather than abolished. Trudeau would thus claim that socialism was an ideology seeking the proliferation of property, and that the interests of labour and socialists were inexorably linked to a decentralization of wealth, accompanied by a modest increase in planning. Key here, as noted in Le Devoir, is a reverence for private property as an essential element of individual

liberty and democracy: “Le socialisme n’est pas contre la propriété…mais pour la propriété qui soit répartie dans les mains de plus grand nombre et non seulement dans les mains d’une petit groupe d’exploiteurs.” Although Trudeau critiqued the anachronistic characteristics of private property, he held that it could, by being placed within a rational, modern context, achieve the ideals conventionally ascribed to it by his fellow liberals.63

Trudeau frequently addressed economics in his writings, lectures, and interviews. While he showed radical flashes, his positions remained within the realm of Keynesian thought. He would in 1954, for instance, publish a Cité libre piece that provided a predictable distillation of the kind of Keynesian counter-cyclical economics utilized by modern and progressive governments—it was, in the words of Gilles Dostaler and Frédéric Hanin, “un ‘cours 101’ de Keynésianisme.”64 In 1955 Trudeau, while noting the perils of foreign ownership, also emphasized its benefits, which would become even more apparent with a change in federal policy:

Je crois qu’il est grandement temps que le gouvernement canadien apprenne à financer son développement par d’autres moyens que les recours aux placements étrangers. Pourquoi n’appliquerait-il pas, même en temps de paix, les mesures prises durant la dernière grande guerre. A cette époque, en effet, on fit à maintes reprises, appel au people par le truchement des “Emprunts de la Victoire”, pour aider à dérayer le coût si élevé.65

Trudeau is suggesting that when the development of a resource or industry is vital to Canadians, the government should raise collective investment bonds. This departs from the

traditional model of nationalization by proposing a future in which the citizenry as a whole is a collective venture capitalist.

Along similar lines, a 1958 *Cité libre* piece focused on the question of the foreign domination of Canada. While still within a liberal framework, Trudeau praises the CCF and proclaims his faith in planning when necessary. He argues that while the old parties would often trumpet nationalist causes, they did little to promote the actual measures of economic sovereignty that gave such notions concrete meaning. Ironically, the least nationalist of the parties, but the most committed to economic freedom through planning, was the CCF—an important consideration indeed, given that “la domination politique et la domination économique sont inextricablement liées.” Canada was enmeshed in a deeper relationship of domination than other advanced nations because while others had borrowed to rebuild after the war, Canada had relied instead upon American investment. Canada had won the better short-term deal, but, unlike the Europeans, had over the long term lost its sovereignty. To lessen foreign dominance, Canada should gradually regain control over its natural resources and refine them domestically. Encouraging labour unions was vital because their push for higher salaries would keep more money in domestic circulation. Trudeau, however, seemed skeptical of his proposals ever being implemented in the current climate of political listlessness. He was doubtful that the people were ready for the economic planning required, because only the CCF was speaking of it, with the other parties all sat back and profited handsomely from the *status quo*.66

Trudeau in 1958 also sought to allay Quebecers’ fears of social programs. If the state could plan sewers, could it not also “organize a teaching brigade to develop our

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minds?” Instead of seeing the state as a “taloned ogre,” Trudeau envisioned it as a protector capable of preventing exploitation by capitalists, both foreign and domestic. Trudeau critiqued elites who denounced public programs as affronts to freedom, all the while reaping subsidies and preferential treatment from friendly politicians.67

Looking back from 1992, Trudeau observed that while as a young man he had been fairly conservative in his economics, he had since learned that the market did not instantiate morality. So while he accepted the capitalist’s predominance in producing wealth, he felt the state and civil society needed to promote fairness and opportunity, not nepotism and vested interests. Achieving these ideals require some public ownership, but only in cases of severe market distortion. The government’s main goal should be to ensure that society had constituted effective counterweights to police, but not to ultimately disrupt, the wealth producers. Trudeau rightly remembered that his views had been anything but radical, that they conformed with the contemporary Keynesian consensus, that they had roots in Canadian history, extending back to Macdonald, and that they testified to his position as a “pretty middle of the road liberal.”68

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While Trudeau often held up the CCF-PSD as the democratic standard, he would begin to move away from the party. He believed liberal freedoms were gravely endangered by Duplessis. A 1958 Cité libre piece called for the union of all democratic forces, liberal and socialist alike. Quebec, Trudeau argued, was not ready for socialism. Socialism must be

sacrificed because “les forces politiques réformistes dans cette province sont trop pauvres pour faire les frais de deux révolutions simultanément: libérale et la socialiste.” For the good of all progressives, “il faut commencer par réaliser la démocratie et pour cela il faut unir les démocrates sous une seule enseigne.”

Trudeau had made a similar claim in 1952, when he argued that until Quebec learned to value the individual, socialism would be untenable. Interestingly, Trudeau’s call for an alliance with Liberals starkly contrasted with his earlier statements:

Les vieux partis absorbent volontiers du sang nouveau; mais aucun ne se métamorphosera jamais en parti social (à supposer même qu’il le veuille), à moins que le poids de la caisse et des anciennes fidélités, à droite, ne soit controbancé par la présence sur le flanc gauche d’une force démocratique.

Trudeau’s perception of Quebec as uniquely undemocratic was pronounced throughout this period. In 1958 he wrote about obstacles to democracy in Quebec. He argued that the province’s undemocratic ethos went back to the 1700s, when the British parliamentary system was forced upon an untrusting population. Trudeau presented an ultimately bleak appraisal of Quebec democracy: “In 1958, French Canadians must begin to learn democracy from scratch. For such is the legacy of a history during which...they hammered the process of parliamentary government into a defensive weapon of racial warfare, and as Catholics they believed that authority descendeth from God in God's good time.”

70 Trudeau, “Réflexions sur la Politique au Canada Français,” 68. Trudeau here is speaking within his own religion, as he was a life-long Catholic, though one who came to distrust the Church’s hierarchical nature. For more on Trudeau and his faith, see John English, Richard Gwyn, and Whiney Lackenbauer eds., The Hidden Pierre Elliott Trudeau: The Faith Behind the Politics (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004).
While repeating his conviction that democrats in Quebec were starting from nothing, Trudeau was also declaring his profoundly liberal conception of history. The “obstacles to democracy” he discerned—nationalism, religion, and political corruption—were untainted by socio-economic associations. Past generations of socialists are erased in this memory; the only memorable “radicals” came from the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. Likewise, economic democracy makes but a cameo appearance: “democracy cannot be made to work in a country where a large part of the citizens are by status condemned to a perpetual state of domination, economic or otherwise.”

Trudeau would also write in Cité libre as though Quebec leftists had no prior tradition: “Le CCF n’existe pas au Québec parce qu’il n’y existe pas de radicalisme canadien-français.” The CCFers’ failure was due to their inability to understand Quebeckers’ political immaturity and incapacity for dissent that came with being “behind the times.”

Even amongst the CCFers this viewpoint was seductive, with labour leader and PSD executive member Bill Dodge agreeing in a 1965 letter that Quebec lacked “any form of radical thought.” Trudeau repeated this line of analysis at a 1958 FTQ meeting: “French Canadians don’t believe in democracy and its moral code...They have never believed in the democratic system which was imposed upon them.” He found agreement from Michel Chartrand, Casgrain’s successor as leader, who announced that Quebeckers “simply don’t

73 Trudeau, Socialism in Quebec, 30 December 1953.
believe in the politics of democracy.” Chartrand’s wife would echo this view, noting that “l’idée socialiste en politique n’avait aucun racine au Québec.”

Simply put, it was Trudeau’s view that without a liberal project in Quebec, nothing else progressive was possible. Quebec, languishing in the Dark Ages, had to achieve liberalism before it could aspire to socialism. It remains a deeply improbable and exceptionalist interpretation of Quebec history. Yet it plainly had its uses. In its dichotomizing stance, and in the role it assigned to liberals as saviours, the Trudeauvian narrative placed liberals and Trudeau himself in the position of heroes within an emergent political myth-symbol complex. He and the citélibristes were not merely updating the age-old verities of Québec liberalism, according to this narrative, but were prophetic voices crying out in the wilderness:

We were talking about things that seemed to be obvious to most democratic countries but which here were bringing us condemnation from all quarters, not only clerical but the economic, the social, the bourgeoisie, everybody was thinking that we were talking about horrid nonsense; impossible things. Therefore, for most of the history of Cité libre, we did seem to be talking about things that would only be realized in a millennium.

Throughout the decade, even given his calls to renounce “une certaine conception du capitalisme,” Trudeau’s approach entailed the preservation and promotion of traditional liberal ideals. Conversely, he evinced disdain for only the most spectacular of capitalist excesses. Capitalism, as structural reality and daily experience, was essential to, and essentially uncontested by, Trudeauvian liberalism.

76 Trudeau, “Réflexions sur la Politique au Canada Français,” 65.
But how then was it that PSD-CCFers, some of whom would cry betrayal and shape a counter-myth of Trudeau as a corrupted ally, so fundamentally misconstrued his trajectory and motivations? Was it because they were unaware of his liberal goals? Were they desperate for French-Canadian leadership? Or was it that many socialists had migrated so far to the right that a left-leaning liberal could sit amongst them and generate a minimal sense of ideological incongruity?

The “corrupted ally” thesis holds that Trudeau’s liberal ideals were imperceptible to the CCFers with which he worked. On the contrary, the alliance was likely both clear-eyed and genuine on both sides. While the CCF-PSD was a socialist party, it was still committed to individual liberty, and could welcome a dissatisfied liberal like Trudeau. One can look to the CCF’s 1957 federal election platform documents to illustrate the extent to which the party and Trudeau supported the same positions. On the matter of economic planning, the CCF and Trudeau held in common the importance of successful businesses, public investment in strategic resources, and the reduction of monopolistic power. The CCF also suggested the development of a public investment corporation, something Trudeau would introduce as prime minister. The party was a proponent of modernization, but with a guarantee that workers would share in the bounty; this was not altogether incompatible with Trudeau’s approach to property, which supported its diffusion and democratization through the recognition of workers’ rights. CCFers, moreover, shared Trudeau’s belief that public education and quality housing were vital to social justice and democratic enrichment. Yet it is in the field of human rights and civil liberties where one finds the most compelling similarities. The CCF held that although organized labour was the premier force fighting for democracy, its work could only proceed on the basis of basic
freedoms. It thus argued that freedom required a bill of rights that would safeguard free speech, association, and religious belief, along with racial, cultural, and linguistic equality. The party also promised to repatriate the constitution—a goal many would hold later defined Trudeau’s legacy.\(^77\)

Secondly, as noted above, many CCFers longed to find a strong, French-Canadian leader. Trudeau was frequently asked to participate in CCF-PSD events, even confidential ones, without taking up membership, because his opinions were valued. As a friend of the party, Trudeau, who might some day turn into a full member, was treasured. As we will see later, Trudeau was still being recruited by the party up to the very eve of his declaration for the Liberals. The social democrats knew Trudeau was not a prototypical CCFer, but he was a leader who had connections to Quebec labour leaders, journalists, and the leaders of the CCF. Even though he did not run in the 1956 election, well-positioned CCFers still hoped he would one day not only join but lead the party.\(^78\)

Third, and of greatest significance, was the CCF’s rightward shift in the 1950s. Trudeau found a home in the party because it had moved towards his ideological stomping grounds, rather than the opposite.\(^79\) Ben Isitt looks to the 1950 federal CCF convention as a turning point in the party’s history, when the CCF brass pushed a definitively anti-communist line and shut out radicals who were blamed by many, including Forsey, for


\(^78\) PET Fonds, 02 Vol. 23, file 16, Michael Oliver to Trudeau, 29 June 1956.

weak electoral results. The CCF national executive, to help neutralize these radicals, instituted unprecedented authority over provincial bodies. The convention was for Isitt a process wherein CCF leaders, eschewing the democratic ethos once held to be one of the movement’s defining traits, attacked left elements in the party.80

For our purposes, the matter of socialism in the CCF was most important. In this case, it was also the ‘moderates’ who carried the day, with leader M.J. Coldwell arguing that class struggle was an outdated concept redolent of the CCF’s Regina Manifesto. The Manifesto was a document confident in its socialism, passionate in its advocacy of planning, ardent in its defence of freedom, restless in its fight against poverty, and steadfast in its desire to see the scourge of capitalism eradicated. One of its drafters had been Scott, who believed that although its provisions could be achieved democratically, they were nevertheless revolutionary:81

We aim to replace the present capitalist system, with its inherent injustice and inhumanity, by a social order from which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated, in which economic planning will supersede unregulated private enterprise and competition, and in which genuine democratic self-government, based upon economic equality, will be possible.

The Manifesto’s closing passage sounded much the same note:

No C.C.F Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Cooperative Commonwealth.82

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Ironically, Scott was a prominent voice at the 1950 convention arguing for a reappraisal of socialist values. For him, increased stability and prosperity within capitalism meant that CCF methods had to change to ensure socialism’s relevance. While Scott hoped that “liberal capitalism has learned enough from Mr. Keynes and from war planning to be able to avoid any economic crisis as severe as that which gave birth to the CCF,” he felt socialism was needed even in prosperity to ensure equitable distribution. Scott also noted that socialism was the key defender of democratic freedom, not only from communism, but from capitalism. Scott thus made socialism and political democracy indispensable to one another:

Socialism is most concerned with the human spirit, with its freedom, its growth, its emancipation, and with ownership only in so far as some of its forms are obstacles to this freedom just as other forms seem essential to it. Socialism expresses in the fullest degree the great traditions of political democracy.\(^8^3\)

Scott thus offered a modernization of CCF doctrine for a post-depression society. Nationalization would still be a tool, but without a broader and more comprehensive vision of controlling the means of production. A CCF government should focus on regulation, taxation, ending monopolies, and providing business incentives.

What now would differentiate the CCF from the Liberals? Scott responded by noting that although the leading Liberals had introduced CCF-inspired programs, they would continue to champion regressive causes: they would be the voice against workers and for capitalists, against the public commonwealth and for private dominance, against expanding opportunity and for maintaining privilege, for corporate control of their own party and against its grassroots. In essence, new socialism would emphasize democracy

\(^8^3\) Scott, *A New Endeavour*, 90-7.
and seek out scientific ways to deal with society’s concerns, while liberals would preserve doctrinaire ties to capitalism and the corporate elite. David Lewis would later note that Scott’s speech solidified the belief that “socialism is as valid a creed for a prosperous nation as for a depressed one, for it is concerned with the quality of social life, not just with the amount of wealth produced.”

Scott therefore rejected Frank Underhill’s claim that “until the threat of Soviet Totalitarianism has been removed, freedom is a more fundamental issue than socialism.” Though conceding that capitalists sometimes backed liberal freedoms, Scott argued that they often sought to limit the freedoms of those they ruled. Capitalism may have ironed out its most egregious depression-era flaws, but it still entailed an undemocratic system of ownership and production. While the profit motive was deemed a valuable force for democratic societies, production must suit human needs before profit. Similarly, M.J. Coldwell in 1956 spoke of the need to leave revolutionary socialism behind. Canada had, under CCF pressure, developed post-1945 cushions against crisis. Social programs and labour rights had changed the nation, and CCF policy needed to work within the new world it had helped forge. Likewise, Coldwell held that planning and social ownership must not proceed as envisioned in the Manifesto. The party must eschew a “doctrinaire” approach, choosing to be “empirical in our approach to problems as they arise.” This was not for Coldwell a rejection of socialism, but an acknowledgement of new realities.

As Isitt and Nelson Wiseman have observed, the 1950s was the period in which the CCF, to garner a wider appeal, issued the Winnipeg Declaration. Looking to the document

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itself, they note its emphasis on sharing the proceeds of postwar prosperity through healthcare, good housing, and gainful employment. While the Declaration does note inequality, excised from it is any reference to class; and while capitalism is held to be “basically immoral,” there is no plan for its destruction, only a suggestion that society be “based on mutual respect and on equality of opportunity.” Although the Declaration still advocated a modicum of public ownership, it also underlined a guarantee of property rights, the celebration of private enterprise, and the goal of proliferating private property via homes and farms. Paralleling Underhill, the Declaration saw the key struggle not as one of capitalism versus socialism but rather as one pivoted on the issue of “whether mankind shall move towards totalitarian oppression or toward a wider democracy within nations and among nations.”

Expanding on Underhill is important, given his integral role in the CCF’s formation, but also because of his starring role regarding liberal passive revolution and his belief that socialism was a luxury on top of liberalism. Underhill often critiqued socialism and his own prior involvement in it. Not only did he deny approving the final line of the Regina Manifesto calling for the end of capitalism, but he also declared that he “was one of the first in the CCF who began to have doubts about the far-reaching socialism of the Regina Manifesto.”

Douglas Francis, in his biography of Underhill, argued that totalitarianism led him to distrust socialism and embrace liberalism; for Underhill in the 1950s, the major struggle was not

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capitalism versus socialism, but democracy versus totalitarianism. While Underhill did not argue explicitly that socialism and democracy were incompatible, he worried they might be:

Was there a contradiction between socialism and democracy? Underhill denied that there was, so long as socialism was based on liberal ideas...Still, there were inherent dangers in socialism. There was the danger of putting the means to achieve democracy above the ideal of a democratic state: to value strong leadership, centralized control, and the curtailment of immediate freedom as ends in themselves rather than as a means to achieve the higher ideal of democracy.  

Underhill was echoed by Trudeau in the late 1950s. Both of them were marginalizing liberal socialism in favour of more basic liberal democratic rights. Any other approach would entail capitulation to totalitarianism. One can clearly see an increasing acclimatization with liberalism in the Declaration and amongst the CCF leadership in the era of the Cold War, one not altogether incompatible with Trudeau’s own framework.

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Even closer to Trudeau’s political outlook was the prospectus for an updated version of 1935’s *Social Planning for Canada*. Like the *Regina Manifesto*, the original *Social Planning* needed to be revisited, because while past socialists had built programs predicated upon the destruction of capitalism, the postwar economy suggested that, at least on the surface, capitalism had bested socialism. Still, only socialism was capable of dealing with the complexities arising from new found prosperity. Modern socialists would not necessarily fixate on redistribution, but shift their sights from consumer spending to such social endeavours as healthcare, education, research, and housing. The state must

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ensure the social costs of capitalism were balanced by the benefits of social investment, especially in spheres capitalism failed to address. It was a most Trudeauvian prescription.

In the context of an evolving CCF, one can thus clearly see how Trudeau would be welcomed into the party. Indeed, his migration to the CCF was likely one anticipated goal of these transformations: by intertwining socialism with liberalism, the new-style social democrats sought support from people just like him. Why, then, did Trudeau still abandon the CCF-PSD despite its efforts to move towards the centre, emphasize a bill of rights, and a “functional” approach to public ownership? Trudeau was, in spite of the CCF-PSD’s efforts, still uncomfortable with socialism as a general philosophy, and, like Underhill, was still convinced that socialism had to be sacrificed for liberalism. While we can see numerous instances of Trudeau evincing hopes for CCF-PSD success, and working closely with its members, the fact remains that he never became a member and would eventually claim to have been little more than an “outside observer” to the party.90

One Trudeau piece, perhaps more than any other, shows how his liberal views were incompatible even with a diluted CCF programme. In an argument from 1950 for “functional politics,” Trudeau argued that no ideologies or dogmas—not nationalism, clericalism or socialism—should be allowed to so arouse emotions that they obscured the choices affecting French Canadians. It is striking that the one ideology he exempts from this rationalist stricture is liberalism, the ideology which underpinned his worldview. Socialism was something that could prove valuable to a free society, but not in any inherent way; liberal freedoms were unqualified good things in themselves. Social freedoms, on the other hand, were perhaps unrealizable, and of value only insofar as they stabilized the wider

liberal project. Once one looks through this lens of functional politics, one can see how Trudeau studied the ideas of socialism from Laski, Scott, and the CCF-PSD and ultimately concluded that they offered at best supports for an emergent liberalism. Socialists, though correct on isolated issues, lacked the enlightened rationality of a liberal like Trudeau: their theories “nous font bondir d’enthousiasme ou d’indignation, sans raison.”91

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One can go beyond Canada’s borders to see how Trudeau, while deeply influenced by socialism, never accepted it as an alternative to liberalism. Trudeau would make two key trips to the communist world: to Moscow in 1952 and to China in 1960. His Moscow trip led him to write a series of communiqués for Montreal’s Le Devoir. The pieces paint a nuanced picture of the USSR, neither a workers’ paradise nor a hell on earth. For Trudeau, such first-hand experience was important. Dialogue between communists and capitalists was vital in ensuring peace, and that any self-respecting social scientist should explore the USSR before critiquing it. He argued that while the Soviet oppression of religion had been overblown in western depictions, the Soviet people were bombarded by cult-like images of Stalin, preceded by “Marx le prophète” and “le précurseur Lénine.”92 While they seemed content with their relative prosperity, Soviets, on Trudeau’s reading, revealed how far removed from liberal freedoms they remained:

Il est vrai qu’on fait grand état de “l’autocratique.” Mais autant que j’ai pu voir, cela consiste à dire, à des périodes et à des endroits rigoureusement déterminés que le service à la cantine est trop lent, que la salle des spectacles est mal balayée, et que le Plan n’exige pas assez du travailleur. Mon étonnement devant l’unanimité, ma surprise devant l’absence totale de contradictions sur des points importants... faisait rire. “Pourquoi

critiquerions-nous? Tout ici est orienté vers le bien commun.” Et ils définissaient la liberté comme la faculté de choisir le bien, c’est-à-dire ce qui a été défini comme tel par les autorités.  

Trudeau noted that the Soviet economy retained many of the democratic deficits common in capitalist societies. While the signs of progress were everywhere, such progress was being defined, not by the people, but by technocrats. Trudeau took note of extravagant subways on the one hand and poor housing on the other. He concluded by asking if the Soviet revolution had really been worth it, and answered in the negative. Despite the resolve of the people, there were still hardships, inequalities, and a yearning for U.S.-style prosperity. Revolutionary bloodshed had not guaranteed social progress. The inequalities Trudeau saw in Russia dividing workers from non-workers reminded him of the West. What, then, had Russia’s multiple wars, revolutions, and political oppressions really accomplished?

Trudeau felt another way was possible, in which workers through constitutional means improved capitalism without revoking the rights of the capitalist. In the end, Trudeau was offering a critical, liberal interpretation of the Soviet Union. His trip was not, as was and is often claimed, evidence of his communist leanings, but rather the result of his curiosity about the Soviet model. Similarly, he and Pelletier would note that when they were students in Europe, they encountered many communists, whom they perceived as “intellectual totalitarians.” Communism was an ideological novelty for the two young liberals. It held little permanent appeal for them. When back home, Trudeau often

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95 Trudeau, “Est-ce pour ça qu’on a fait trois révolutions?” Le Devoir, 21 June 1952; Bob Plamondon, The Truth about Trudeau (Ottawa: Great River Media, 2013), 33-44 insinuates Trudeau’s sympathy with Communism. For a contemporaneous critique of Trudeau for not being sufficiently anti-communist, see R.P Léopold Braun in L’action Catholique from 17 to 21 November 1952. Trudeau would offer a response
recalled the stark inequalities of the Soviet Union and the greater power workers enjoyed in Canada.\textsuperscript{96}

Trudeau’s trip to China was described in his co-authored 1961 book, \textit{Two Innocents in Red China}. While Trudeau’s son Alexandre later wrote, in the introduction to a re-edition of this book, that his father’s trip was connected to his flirtations with socialism and his disdain for Cold War rhetoric, and indeed Trudeau and his co-author Jacques Hébert\textsuperscript{97} did note the successes of China’s socialist experiment, the book was, more than anything, a warning to capitalists about the dangers China posed to their predominance.\textsuperscript{98}

In a \textit{Montreal Star} piece publicizing their trip and book, Trudeau would note that China was presenting itself as an example of how communism could help the Third World develop. Should it succeed, China-as-inspiration would pose a significant challenge to “the West in both trade and ideology.” André Laurendeau also noted the extent to which the authors saw the planning and ambition of Chinese leaders as a potential shining light to the world’s poor and disenfranchised. Trudeau did indeed paint a picture of Chinese planning that, while not advocating it be applied in Canada, did note its successes. In short, Trudeau noted that countless activities in China were built around ‘the plan,’ a quasi-mystical concept encompassing the entirety of economic life. Trudeau saw some advantages in such


\textsuperscript{97} Hébert was a Quebec journalist, civil rights activist, and humanitarian whom Trudeau would make Senator in 1983. See Jacques Hébert, \textit{Grande branle-bas: le Canada, espoir du Tiers monde} (Montréal: Quinze, 1980); \textit{Bonjour, le monde! Où il est question de la jeunesse, du Canada et du monde} (Montréal: Éditions R. Davies, 1996); \textit{Duplessis, non merci!} (Montreal: Boréal, 2000).

an approach. For example, it left managers and workers to focus solely on improving productivity. Yet while the plan facilitated impressive feats, it also led to bottlenecks. In a sense, China was “progressing so fast that it could not keep up with itself.” Trudeau perceived in China the awakening of an industrial giant.99

In the end, Trudeau was no more converted to communism in China than he had been in the USSR. Nonetheless, he rejected the capitalist dismissals of communism as slavery:

When you approach a worker his face lights up…This proud man bears little resemblance to the slave portrayed by the anti-Chinese propaganda that prevails in the West. Moreover, how could the tremendous progress…have been achieved in eleven years by slave labour? The genius of Mao is to have persuaded hundreds of millions of people…of the grandeur and nobility of their task.

Trudeau continued:

One may disagree with the methods used; one may reject the governing principles; one may be repelled at the thought of such a system ever being established in Canada; but...if China, with its forestation projects, can make the Gobi Desert fertile; if China can overcome droughts and floods by its indefatigable construction of canals and dams; if China succeeds in building its industrial progress on its inexhaustible reserves of manpower and natural resources…then China’s methods are going to be imitated by the two thirds of the human race that goes to bed hungry every night. And the moral indignation of the West will be powerless to stop it.100

These travel accounts tell us much about Trudeau. He was willing to see in socialist experiments elsewhere attempts to remedy deficiencies in liberal democracy, and thus left the impression in some minds of pro-communism. Yet in fact, Trudeau’s analyses of

100 Trudeau and Hébert, 97-8;
socialism served as warnings to western liberals to change their ways and seek compromises with their ideological opponents. To survive where others had perished, the western bourgeoisie had to take careful note of its opposition. By choosing to recognize and negotiate with workers, and by taking an open approach with China and the USSR, the liberal capitalist class stood a better chance of surviving with its predominance unscathed. If liberals failed to address the concerns of the working class at home, or the peasantry abroad, they would have no one to blame for their demise but themselves.

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As the 1950’s drew to a close, Trudeau distanced himself from the CCF. He had not yet gravitated towards the Liberals. While he held that socialism must be secondary to the liberalism not yet achieved in Quebec, he was still distrustful of the Liberal Party. As Trudeau noted in the 1990s, his life before his formal entry into politics was rife with eligible suitors, to whom he was reluctant to commit. In his own words:

I wasn’t a joiner…never joined even the N.D.P. when I was campaigning in Canada for the C.C.F. as it then was, never joined the Liberals though I in the sixty election told people they should vote for Lesage and wrote it. But I was…au dessus de la mêlée, I was trying to judge things from the outside.101

The solution, it seemed, was a third way in the late 1950s—Le Rassemblement des forces démocratiques, a body meant to unite democratic individuals in opposition to Duplessis and for fundamental liberal democratic freedoms.

101 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 24, file 2, “Interview between Trudeau and Michael Ignatieff.”
Chapter 3

Trudeau, Organized Labour, and the Promotion of a Liberal Democratic Society,
1945-58

In the previous chapter we examined the role the CCF-PSD and socialism played in Trudeau’s liberal thought. This chapter, focused on his pre-1960 connections to labour unions, builds upon it. It was Trudeau’s wish to see Quebec labour become a politically active force for modernity and democracy, education, and social amelioration. While some invoke this labour activism as evidence of Trudeau’s leftism, I see it as part of his desire to promote liberalism. It was from an instrumental standpoint that he perceived workers and labour. Trudeau’s support of labour was also based on a particular understanding of labour’s plight in Quebec and the province’s weak liberal democratic institutions. Likewise, his critique of Quebec’s economic and political rulers focused mostly on their assaults on freedom and resistance to social equality—both flagrant invitations to class warfare. In the end, it was Trudeau’s view that industrial society “will not provide us with liberty and justice unless it is subject to the forces of an enlightened and powerful trade union movement.”

As Reg Whitaker has argued, and as we explored in the previous chapter, Trudeau’s support of labour and the left in the 1950s must be understood as an instrumental one: he saw in the workers’ democratic demands the possibility of Quebec attaining a mature liberalism, characterized by a stable state capable of defending contractually-defined property relations. Trudeau tirelessly lectured those in power about workers’ rights – at

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times sounding almost revolutionary – but his support for workers was contingent upon their support for a narrow conception of their own rights. His democracy, in short, was always strictly qualified by his liberalism.²

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The 1949 Asbestos Strike necessarily looms large in any evaluation of Trudeau and labour. Trudeau deemed it a “turning point in the entire religious, political, social, and economic history” of Quebec. The demands of the workers, organized in the Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada (CTCC), were basic: they wanted, in addition to wage increases, union security provisions and protections against asbestos dust.³ As Michael Behiels explains, the strike became an emblem of progress held up by liberals and neo-nationalists alike — a harbinger of the Quiet Revolution. Frank Scott deemed the strike a “traumatic” experience that shook society, spurred the secularization of the CTCC, and politicized journalists and professionals.⁴ The strike was portrayed by supporters as one that entailed the defense of fundamental rights and freedoms against a corrupt government. Illegal in a technical sense, it was a morally justified struggle for larger principles. As the CTCC would put it: “la Justice et la légalité peuvent être en désaccord dans un régime politique où les intérêts de la haute finance travaillent contre le bien commun.” The CTCC in March 1949 elaborated upon this point:

En réponse aux fantasistes déclarations du Premier Ministre et du Ministère du Travail, il apporte un démenti catégorique; il démontre que les seuls

responsables du conflit actuel sont ‘nos lois anti-sociales’ et la ‘coalition politico-financière’ perpétuelle de gouvernement provincial.\(^5\)

The Asbestos Strike was portrayed as one that highlighted the larger questions of rights and freedoms in Quebec. It is therefore unsurprising that Trudeau would champion a strike pitted against an undemocratic political regime. Trudeau’s role in the strike itself was limited, but historians and contemporaries note that it was perhaps the most important event in his life before his official entry into politics. Jean Marchand in 1986 remembered how Trudeau spurred the workers with a fiery rhetoric, urging them “to resist the authorities by any means necessary.” The Nemnis note that the strikers referred to Trudeau as Saint Joseph, the patron saint of workers. English speaks of Trudeau giving speeches that extolled the values of democracy and liberty in accessible language, and Michel Vastel tells of Trudeau and Pelletier’s run-in with police after refusing to leave town.\(^6\)

While Trudeau generated a reputation at Asbestos, more important was his editing of a chapter in *The Asbestos Strike*, a book lauded by left allies like Forsey and Scott, who called it their “long-gestating baby” and a “masterpiece” which revealed capitalistic excesses, promoted working-class history, illuminated Quebec institutions, and heralded the Quiet Revolution.\(^7\) Contributor Réginald Boisvert argued in 1956 that should they

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accomplish nothing else, the book’s originators had made a “contribution majeure à l’édification de la société canadienne.”

Trudeau’s introduction makes the argument that the strike coincided with a major turning-point in history, when Quebec’s elites were stalled in an anachronistic, nationalist past, disassociated from emerging economic realities. They failed to realize the need for a new socio-economic order. After travels and studies abroad, Trudeau had come back to a Quebec which, while undergoing change, suffered under the same decrepit Depression-era leadership. Interestingly, Trudeau would also speak of how Quebec labour before the strike was largely part of this same old order. This observation was supported by Jean Marchand, who argued that the CTCC in the early days was definitely nationalist, confessional, pro-corporatist, and the chaplains played a dominant role. Often Catholic action took priority over professional and purely union action. Industrialization was viewed with suspicion and we produced resolutions…against rural depopulation and for a return to the land.

Also in agreement was Réginald Boisvert, who offered up a prime example of the “grande noirceur” paradigm wherein Quebec society was depicted as a remnant of the Dark Ages:

The CCCL was founded and nurtured in a society which was still largely made up of peasants, where the city worker was little more than an artisan. In its thirty years of existence, the CCCL had shown little dynamism and, like most of the institutions in French Canada, it had been created to achieve a purely negative goal: to protect the workers of Quebec against…the virus of modern ideals.

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8 PET Fonds, 02 Vol. 23, file 16, Reginald Boisvert to Trudeau, 1 June 1956.
10 Jean Marchand quoted in Michael Behiels, 123.
Although Trudeau’s and Marchand’s characterizations cannot be dismissed out of hand, they are perilously lacking in nuance. Behiels notes that the CTCC had already begun a transformation into a more combative labour movement before well before Asbestos, while Jacques Rouillard has demonstrated that the CTCC engaged in no fewer than 53 strikes between the wars. Claude Couture also observes that Quebec labour’s plight before 1949 was in many ways comparable to that of its Ontario counterpart, while labour historian Desmond Morton points out that the “CTCC led some of the biggest strikes in Canada during the 1920s, thirty years before…Asbestos…made it one of several precursors of the Quiet Revolution.”12

In addition to their factual incompleteness, Trudeau’s and Marchand’s abstract portrayals were sociologically naïve. They ignored the reality that the masses were strongly influenced by their material needs and experiences—ones now emerging within an urban, industrial, and inter-connected Quebec. Yet Trudeau’s description of Asbestos placed all its emphasis on ideology:

In 1949, the memorable asbestos strike occurred because the industrial workers of Quebec were suffocating in a society burdened with inadequate ideologies and oppressive institutions; because the national importance of the working class was out of all proportion to its low prestige.

The asbestos strike...was significant because it occurred at a time when we were witnessing the passing of a world, precisely at a moment when our social framework—the worm-eaten remnants of a bygone age—were ready to come apart.13

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Key to the modernization and liberalization of Quebec was a free trade union movement. In this, Trudeau not only defended the *de jure* recognition of unions, but asserted that union rights must be sufficiently protected to allow workers a measure of equality vis-à-vis employers. As he noted in his *Asbestos* epilogue, “if the right to strike is suppressed, or seriously limited, the trade union movement becomes nothing more than one institution among many in the service of capitalism.” Without a fair form of industrial relations, “justice — if indeed there is any justice present — *never* proceeds from the contract.”

This high estimation of trade unions as a force for change led to a Trudeauvian declaration of the ideals of industrial democracy:

> Even full recognition of trade-unionism in its present form will not be a sufficient guarantee of producer rights in the industrial age. In the political sphere, men fought for centuries to prove that there is no substitute for self-government. In the economic sphere, it is inevitable that sooner or later the same struggle be fought and won. Man does not live by bread alone, and he will never be content until the dichotomy between those who may arbitrarily command and those who must humbly obey is abolished, even in the economic sphere. Industrial democracy will not be reached any more easily than political democracy was, but it must be reached. Even today men are labouring to lay the foundations of a society of equals; and the sooner such problems as price arbitration, and cooperative management or ownership of industry can be seriously discussed, the better this society will be.

While Trudeau's theory of economic democracy was vague, it recognized, if only abstractly, the concept that ‘beyond the ballot box,’ workers should have some semblance of equality vis-à-vis their employers. This proposition encompassed the belief that modern conceptions of ownership, while not invalid, unfairly ignored the worker’s investment in his or her job and workplace. Trudeau would parlay this position into a defense of equal

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14 Trudeau, “Epilogue,” 347-8;  
rights between capital and labour with respect to their legal obligations in strikes and lockouts:

Lorsqu’une entreprise décide de faire un lockout, dit-il, aucun groupe d’actionnaires ne peut passer outré et faire fonctionner une partie de l’entreprise. De même, aucun groupe d’ouvriers devrait pouvoir travailler dans une entreprise atteinte par une grève. Pour qu’il y ait égalité entre les deux parties, il faudrait que ce principe soit respecté.  

Asbestos 1949 thus stimulated in Trudeau some progressive thoughts about industrial democracy. Yet, in the end, the strike’s primary significance for him resided in its catalytic role in ushering a backward, almost medieval people into the modern world.

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The 1952 strike at Louiseville left a smaller historical footprint. Although Trudeau was not directly involved in it, his ruminations on Louiseville showcase his disdain for class conflict and reverence for liberal order. Louiseville, a small town north east of Montreal, was the site of an eleven-month textile strike kicked off because, just as the sides were reaching an understanding, the employer demanded that four key articles from the collective agreement be repealed. The company hired strike-breakers who attacked the workers; the union office was also ransacked in what the CTCC called a “terreur.” As the Nemnis note, Duplessis harangued the union for forgetting that “society rests upon two pillars: religious authority and civil authority. Any sabotage of one or the other leads to anarchy.”  

In the end, the CTCC was defeated.

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Trudeau’s perspective was expressed through a radio report sharply critical of all involved, including the union. All parties had failed in the promotion of democracy, a form of government in which, as he quipped, heads are to be counted rather than broken. Trudeau opined that the union had, by calling for a general strike, rashly discarded democratic processes and “semblait oublier que pour prévenir le dictature il n’était quand même pas nécessaire de recourir à l’anarchie.” Ultimately, Trudeau placed this catastrophe in the context of an undemocratic Quebec that lacked the Anglo-Saxon tradition of educating its people in the idea that “c’est le peuple qui est souverain ici, et non pas certaine caste, ou certaine oligarchie, ou certains individus.” Ironically, Trudeau’s aversion to the union’s supposed ‘anarchy’ held much in common with that of Duplessis:

Bref il faut prendre parti pour ou contre la démocratie, pour ou contre les totalitarismes. Si nous choisissons la démocratie, l’ordre social sera ce que nous le ferons, d’une élection à l’autre. Si nous nous éloignons de la démocratie, la mépris des tribunaux s’ajouter à la haine du gouvernement; la désobéissance civile deviendra le recours inévitable contre les lois mauvaises; et si la violence éclate, nous aurons un carnage.18

In a 1957 speech alluding to Louiseville, Trudeau argued that it was better for workers to be standing in the National Assembly than marching upon it. Trudeau’s assertion in this case that a general strike could be equated with anarchy suggested that his democratic vision did not extend to workers transforming the economic order, but simply entailed their participation in the existing one. The Nemnis draw a connection between Louiseville and Trudeau’s appraisal of socialism: “We can now understand why...Trudeau did not recommend socialism even though he cherished it; the Louiseville strike had shown him

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that French Canadians had not acquired its indispensable prerequisite: democracy. Without democracy, socialism can all too easily degenerate into totalitarianism.”

The final strike of note was Murdochville in 1957, regarded as a seminal event in Quebec history—indeed, sometimes deemed a ‘second Asbestos.’ The strike occurred because the mining company local was attempting to recertify with the United Steelworkers (USW). The company, fearing a powerful union, fired the local president and 100 others. This was seen as an attempt to deny workers their right to organize and select a bargaining agent of their own choice. The strike was marred by violence, legal conflict and defeat for the workers. Many were not hired back, and the USW was required to pay 1.5 million dollars in damages. The labour press in both French and English Canada denounced the violence, deeming the dispute a low point in Canadian industrial relations due to attacks on women and children and the death of a striker in an explosion many felt had been rigged by the employer. Subsequently, the event was called “Murderville,” and it was taken to epitomize “dictatorship.” Others argued the community epitomized the “20th century feudalism” typical of company towns. In such an environment, democratic discourse and collective bargaining were bound to be imperiled: as Guy Lamarche put it, “the lord who is master of a city means to remain master of his own castle. Feudalism excludes debates between the serfs and the lord.”

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19 “Il vaut mieux avoir des homes debout à Québec que ‘marcher’ sur Québec,” CTCC Le Travail, 22 February 1957; Max and Monique Nenni, Trudeau Transformed, 299.
Local strike bulletins placed special emphasis on the presence of Casgrain on the picket line. She pledged to continue supporting workers and their struggle in the 1957 election. Likewise, they received support from Lewis and Coldwell, who commended their battle for labour rights, social justice, and the redistribution of wealth. One article blasted bourgeois conceptions of liberty, arguing that they gave the workers little but the freedom to be hungry, exploited, injured, and precariously employed. A chink in the armour of liberty weakened its overall strength—the struggles of all were inextricably linked. In this analysis, “social and economic progress finds its deep moral justification only when it serves the emancipation and the development of human being[s]. We are fighting to liberate men from fear and anxiety due to [economic] and political insecurity.” The Steelworkers’ bulletin also spoke of Trudeau supporting the struggle. He was quoted as saying that trade unionism would ensure the people of Gaspé a share of their region’s wealth, and set right the trend of a region he deemed “economically backward.”

It was important for Trudeau that workers be represented as “striking for recognition,” and not just for “certain advantages.” His files contain badges that stated “J’ai fait du piquetage à Murdochville” and “Marche sur Québec pour la défense du droit d’association.” Matching the highly-charged environment, Trudeau’s rhetoric was at times inflammatory. He intimated on the CBC that Quebec’s workers should “show their economic force” and even rise up “in arms” (though he quickly corrected this suggestion). His picket-line activities were no less flamboyant, including driving a large truck through

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22 The 1957 bulletins, titled in English as Strike Bulletin, are found in USW Fonds, Vol. 8, file 3.
tear gas, overturned cars, and a barrage of stones to help set up the picket line. It was these heroics that likely earned him the death threats alluded to in his diary.\textsuperscript{24} Trudeau also spoke of how this ordeal highlighted the exploitation and underdevelopment in Gaspé: it had shown how “notre compagnie anonyme (Noranda) laquelle appartient à des actionnaires étrangers à la Gaspésie puisse exploiter le sol et les travailleurs.” Here was a relationship of exploitation that could only change through organization: “La révolution industrielle ne s’y est fait qu’au profit du plus grand nombre que le jour où les travailleurs ont se donner des associations ou syndicats assez forte pour négocier d’égal à égal avec le patronat.”\textsuperscript{25}

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Beyond the picket line, Trudeau devoted time to educational, legal, and technical tasks. Eloquent, bilingual, and educated, Trudeau felt that he had much to offer the movement. Likewise, the movement filled him with passion and a sense of purpose: “I was trying to discover how I could be useful, what would be the useful vehicle to change the mentalities and the politics of Québec.”\textsuperscript{26} Between his time abroad and before this labour work, he had worked as civil servant in the Privy Council. His memoirs chronicle his resignation to work with labour in Quebec. After informing his boss, Gordon Robertson, about his plans,\textsuperscript{27} this exchange took place: “Why?” he [Gordon] asked me. “You are useful here and we need men like you. You have a good future if you stay here. Why leave?” To which Trudeau responded:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 15, file 13, “Causerie par Pierre E. Trudeau,” 25 August 1957.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 22, file 12; PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23, file 3, “Interview Between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Graham,” 28 April 1992.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Robertson was one of Canada’s most influential civil servants. See Robertson: \textit{Memoirs of a Very Civil Servant: Mackenzie King to Pierre Trudeau} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
\end{itemize}
Because I want to return to Quebec...Right now Quebec is where the important battles are being fought. That’s where I can feel most useful, even if my influence is only marginal. The labour movement is offering me work and…”

Robertson interjected by saying

“Wait a minute! It was in the 1930s that the unions needed support. Now they are strong and powerful; they don’t need help anymore.”

Trudeau believed he would be of greater use in the labour movement than in the public service. Even in the movement, Trudeau acquired no full-time positions but was a freelancer, travelling across Quebec to help with bargaining, arbitrations, accounting, and writing. He remembered these times fondly, recalling not only the support he provided, but how he honed his legal skills and his knowledge of small communities.

Trudeau wanted to be a professor, but found such posts elusive, due in part to his opposition to Duplessis. Although he was offered a job at Queen’s University in the 1940s, he wished to work in Quebec, where he was offered adjunct work that was, in his and his allies’ estimation, beneath him. Labour activism thus afforded him an opportune way of displaying his skills. Moreover, his decision might also be linked to Laski’s belief that all citizens must have an adequate education preparing them to reason, critique, judge, and decide on those matters applicable to their lives, entering a world that respected their right to shape its “outline and substance.” Trudeau wanted to help workers better understand their lives, workplaces, and political culture, all from a liberal perspective.

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28 Trudeau, Memoirs, 64-6.
29 Trudeau, Memoirs, 67-9; Edith Iglauer, “Profiles: Prime Minister/Premier Ministre,” The New Yorker, 5 July 1969. Trudeau did, however, show interest in work at the CCL in 1949. A letter sent to Assistant Research Director Andy Andras introduces Trudeau, speaking highly of his education, character, research, and knowledge of Quebec. Nothing came of this. See PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 11, file 23, Jacques Perrault to Andy Andras, 28 April 1949.
30 PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 33, file 6, Trudeau to J.A Corry, 3 November 1964; Harold Laski, Grammar of Politics, 114-5.
Trudeau taught courses on a variety of issues. He had one consistent desire: to educate workers on their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. His courses were popular, so much so that he was offered the job of principal of the Labour College of Canada in 1960, a position he declined.31 A 1953 edition of the Canadian Miner described him as a “well qualified lecturer” whom unionists “were fortunate in getting for their school.” USW Education Director Gower Markle’s gratitude for Trudeau’s efforts was heartfelt: “We realize that this course was given at considerable personal sacrifice and this makes us more fully aware of your services and contribution.” Paul King, on behalf of the Labor Committee against Racial Intolerance, expressed gratitude for Trudeau’s participation in a 1955 event, given the many other obligations in Trudeau’s very active life. In general, Trudeau was in demand because of his education, his notoriety, and his ability to address workers bilingually. Perhaps the most revealing courses Trudeau taught were those on economics, in which he illustrated Keynesianism, supply and demand, the role of the firm, and its relationship to the worker. Trudeau felt the purpose of such an education was to provide his audiences with “an understanding of the vital role of workers in the country’s economy.”32 Trudeau gave the workers Keynesian prescriptions to amend the flaws in the economic order. They were mild even by the reformist standards of Keynes:

Quelle que soit la quantité de biens ou de services produits par notre système économique, l’acte même de les produire engendre nécessairement un revenu suffisant pour que nous puissions tout acheter. Mais si les consommateurs n’achètent pas ce qu’ils ont le pouvoir de faire, alors les producteurs ne pourront pas écouler toute leur marchandise, il y aura

31 Max Swerdlow, *Brother Max: Labour Organizer and Educator* (St. John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1990), 104. The Labour College, still in operation today, provides basic skills in economics, politics, organization, communication and other fields for union leaders.
chômage...Donc pour stabiliser l’économie, il suffit d’assurer le pouvoir d’achat de la société en entier, en consommation courante et en investissements.  

According to Trudeau, a society could generate enough revenue to purchase its own goods, providing that government would, through Keynesian tools, stabilize the economy to ensure balance between production and purchasing power. However, Trudeau dismissed a Keynesianism focused on redistribution: “Une solution radicale: Que les pauvres aient plus à dépenser et les riches moins à épargner. Ceci n’est pas possible politiquement. Voyons les autres solutions.” It is clear that Trudeau’s conception of expanding purchasing power, aimed at enhancing spending among all social classes, eschewed directly redistributive efforts. In contrast, the CTCC often discussed the need for more purchasing power for workers. Adrien Plourde, who would work with Trudeau on arbitrations, attended a 1954 summit on the metallurgical industry in Geneva, where both labour and capital accepted the need to enrich the world’s poor so as to increase their purchasing power.  

Trudeau’s notes for a series of 1953 classes extolled supply and demand as an excellent model under ideal conditions. In his words, “sous un régime de compétition parfaite, aucun entrepreneur, aucun consommateur, et aucun facteur de production n’est assez puissant pour contrôler le courbe de l’offre ou la courbe de la demande; tous payent les prix du marché.” While Trudeau was clear that perfect competition was non-existent, his overall estimation of competitive systems was a positive one. He supported a capitalist system based upon rational and self-interested profit maximization. Under the current

34 It is likely the case, however, that Trudeau understood that strong unions promised their members a redistribution of wealth to the workers from the capitalist class. Ibid; “Plus de pouvoir d’achat pour combattre le chômage,” CTCC Le Travail, 19 November 1954.
order, cartels and monopolies benefited from manipulations which allowed them to exploit, in Trudeau’s words, “principalement le travailleur.” Because maintaining the equilibrium point of a theoretically free market works best for all members of society, the exploitation of worker and consumer was a “perte économique pour le pays.” These lessons were consistent with his approaches to macroeconomics in Cité libre and other media. His goal was not to show workers a different way of envisioning economics or the social order, but rather to help them grasp the current one. Whatever the pedagogical soundness of the strategy, it is noteworthy that a “radical” Trudeau would make so little room for radical economics.

Trudeau, on the contrary, would remain throughout his adult life an advocate of the tried-and-true categories of liberal political economy. And no less liberal, in this philosophical sense, was his stance as a ‘labour advocate’ in the 1950s. Throughout his labour work he was in quest of a constitutionalization of labour’s position, one that would impose order on the industrial relations system, with each side acknowledging the property rights of the other. Labour rights and freedoms were means to an end – that of shoring up a liberal democratic order. They were seen to be the results of a fundamentally sound social process. Similarly, employers who stood in the way of such constitutionalized liberal democratic rights were not judged to be embodiments of social contradictions, pursuing their interests as defined by a complicated economic order. They were often seen to be driven by narrowness, malice, ignorance, or mere obstructiveness.

If Trudeau’s forays into labour education are evidence of his dedication to the modernization of Quebec through the working class, his arbitration efforts also made him an apostle of modernity. Like Forsey, Trudeau considered collective bargaining to be a functional prerequisite of a modern liberal order, one that endowed industry with something like a constitution. Labour’s rights and freedoms were interpreted as means to the ends of working-class participation in the democratic system. Trudeau as an arbitrator was renowned for his passion, skill, and dedication. He was praised in a 1953 radio report for “tout le zèle et le dévouement qu’ils ont apportés à notre cause.” While Trudeau would represent labour across a whole host of industries, including transportation and pulp and paper, his most significant cases were those on behalf of miners and steelworkers. Such workers were often found in the forefront of key Quebec labour conflicts like Murdochville and Asbestos.36

Trudeau’s report in 1953 on behalf of USW 4551 in its dispute with Quémont Mining attacked the company for sidestepping seniority and adequate pay. Trudeau focused on the ideas of class collaboration under capitalism:

Sous notre régime économique, les unions ne peuvent pas s’attendre à ce que les salaires soient une constant des profits et pertes d’une entreprise. Mais d’autre part, un entrepreneur ne peut se soustraire à ses obligations économiques et sociales sous prétexte que ça lui “coûte cher.”37

Indeed, while Trudeau argued that union demands are ultimately contextualized by the profit of the firm, this fact must not be exploited by the capitalist to avoid obligations or impede progress. “Trop longtemps, les entreprises au Québec se sont contentées de jouer

le rôle assez peu glorieux de suivantes, sur la route du progrès social et de la réhabilitation des masses ouvrières,” wrote Trudeau in 1953 while representing Arvida workers.\footnote{PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 17, file 6, Trudeau, Marcel Pepin, and Adrien Plourde, “Factum Syndical,” 20 June 1953.} Irresponsibility would lead to embittered relations and class war. Trudeau implied that the company was stoking the fires of class conflict by its refusal to pay adequate wages and accept a dues check-off, deemed by Trudeau to be an increasingly-common aspect of labour contracts in Canada and an important element of labour’s right to association.\footnote{Trudeau, “Rapport de l’arbitre désigné par l’union,” 11 September 1953. The check-off requires that the employer will, on the union’s behalf, collect dues off paycheques. See PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 19, file 12, United Steelworkers of America Local 4516, “Submission of the Union,” June 1953.} For Trudeau, the only explanation for this obstruction was the malicious and otiose outlook of an employer keen to fight a weaker opponent:

> Il est quelque peu incompréhensible…que l’on puisse encore rencontrer des patrons qui refusent même de discuter de la retenue syndicale….Cela ne peut s’expliquer que par une obstination systématique à considérer la classe ouvrière comme ennemie irréductible dont il faut à tout prix détruire les associations de protection de d’entraide. Ce genre de patron tolère que l’union ouvrière existe, puisque la loi l’y oblige, mais il refuse absolument de collaborer avec elle; ces patrons, au fond, croient à la lutte des classes, et ils veulent s’assurer qu’ils lutteront contre un ennemi faible.\footnote{PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 19, file 6, Trudeau, “Rapport de l’arbitre désigné par l’union,” 11 September 1953.}

In a final gesture raising the ire of Trudeau, the Quémont mining company justified its hardline by citing the union’s pro-CCF stance, an argument Trudeau interpreted as an encroachment on the right of political conscience. Employers could make political donations to parties—why should union members not be free to do so?\footnote{PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 19, file 10, Trudeau, “Rapport de l’arbitre désigné par l’union,” 1 October 1953.} If class conflict erupted due to contentious bargaining, the fault would lie squarely on the shoulders of a vindictive capitalist class:

> La Province de Québec serait ainsi embarquée dans une ère de grèves purement politiques, et l’on pourrait sans difficulté en attribuer la
Beyond arbitrations, Trudeau prepared written statements for numerous labour bodies, including a 1954 submission to the Tremblay Commission on Constitutional matters on behalf of the FUIQ, founded in 1952 as the CCL’s provincial body. Combining both constitutional and social concerns, the submission stands out as an articulation of Trudeauvian liberalism and contextualizes his understanding of Quebec labour’s position in relation to English Canada. As Trudeau put it, while workers should contribute to constitutional debates, guaranteeing their basic physical well-being was a priority. The material and philosophical were merged in Trudeau’s claim that the FUIQ was searching for “rien de moins que le plein épanouissement de chaque travailleur dans la ligne de ses possibilités humaines.” (The echoes of Laski are evident). His submission argues that while a reformed constitution was vital, it would not improve lives as directly as reformed economic structures. A unified and democratic Canada would not rest simply on a strong constitution. It would also rely on workers having a better life.

La [FUIQ] consacre le meilleur de ses efforts à l’amélioration de la condition ouvrière…Car en contribuant à libérer le travailleur de l’esclavage de la matière et de l’angoisse de l’insécurité, elle le met en état de s’intégrer en homme libre et réhabilitée dans une société d’égaux. Ensuite seulement, les hautes valeurs que la société prétend incarner deviendront une réalité accessible à l’ensemble du people, et celui-ci aura un intérêt acquis à les voir s’épanouir.

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44 PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 16, file 4, Trudeau, “Mémoire de la Fédération des unions industrielles du Québec à la commission royale d’enquête sur les problèmes constitutionnels.”
Trudeau would also argue that Quebec needed to improve its labour standards. Quebec workers were struggling with higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of socio-economic development.45

In a later piece chock-full of persuasive arguments, one core passage seemed to encapsulate Trudeau’s social liberalism and federalism:

The workers want to safeguard the respect of all human values and they uphold the inviolability of the person as the basis of civil and political society...In particular, they are deeply committed to the democratic system and to the liberties on which that system is based. They uphold the equality of all before the law and they maintain that Canada’s real character — the union of two large ethnic groups — calls for an intelligent and open kind of federalism.46

Although this passage, to a certain degree, merely ventriloquized the workers’ concerns,47 it deftly captured the inherent interplay between philosophy and daily life. It exemplified the liberal approach Trudeau took towards enlightening Quebec and raising up its workers.

As in his arbitration arguments, Trudeau held that the elite had a responsibility to prepare the working class to be full citizens. Anything less not only tarnished the ideals of liberty and freedom, but blocked the achievement of Quebec and Canada’s full potential. This perception had roots in his experiences of growing up in Depression-era Montreal, a city in which a privileged Francophone could hardly help noticing the harsh social inequalities all around him. Trudeau noted especially the writings of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, who upon seeing the suffering of the destitute of Europe, wondered how any of them could achieve greatness without social, educational, and material opportunity.

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45 See CLC Fonds, Vol. 136, file 18, Gilles Beausoleil, Wages in Quebec and Ontario, August 1954, corroborates much of Trudeau’s claims.
47 Eugene Forsey, for instance, loved the report, but felt that Trudeau was inserting his own opinions on certain matters when he should have better consulted the membership or policies of the CCL. PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 16, file 7.
Likewise, in retrospect, Trudeau felt such social ills conspired in the assassination of untold future Mozarts.48

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Trudeau throughout this period believed that workers had a right and responsibility to play a bigger role in politics. While Trudeau early on was more or less amenable to labour unions supporting the left, he would ultimately come to believe that the answer to Quebec’s anti-democratic quagmire lay in a new political formation: the Rassemblement.

As explored in the previous chapter, Trudeau believed that entrenched forces wished to deny workers meaningful participation in politics. In a 1952 critique of French-Canadian politics, he chastised the financial, rural and professional classes for their resistance to reform, which he felt would emerge from “la classe ouvrière (peut-être aidée par des ‘collets blancs’ de condition quasi-prolétarienne).” In 1953 he welcomed a growing awareness of corruption as catalyzed by “le travail d’éducation remarquable du syndicalisme.” This educational work was a sign that the political culture was being positively imbued by “une masse prolétarienne qui s’organise pour prendre une plus large part du bien commun.” Pelletier would make similar arguments, noting in 1958 that while “French Canadian workers are still only in the early stages of acquiring an overall political sense,” labour leaders now realized that they must go beyond bargaining into politics. This evolution was important for Pelletier because the financial and logistical power of labour

48 Saint-Exupéry’s line “Mozart assassiné” is found in his 1939 work, Terre des hommes; PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23, file 7, “Interview between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Graham,” 4 May 1992.
gave a voice to political dissidents like Trudeau.⁴⁹ “Il est temps,” Trudeau proclaimed, “de démolir le préjugé voulant que les travailleurs ne doivent pas se mêler à la vie politique de leur pays. Comme tous les autres citoyens, les travailleurs ont le droit et le devoir de participer à la démocratie et à la recherche du bien commun avec les autres citoyens.”⁵⁰ He would make a similar, though more forcefully worded intervention in 1954, when he slammed the provincial elite and apolitical labour leaders:

Sans doute on ne pousse pas l’impertinence jusqu’à dissuader complètement les travailleurs d’aller voter. Ni ne méprise-t-on l’aide apportée au moment de la campagne électorale par quelque chef syndical influent. Mais on tient pour une nécessité absolue que ce vote et aide s’exercent dans les cadres idéologiques traditionnels, en faveur des vieux partis, et à l’avantage des intérêts nantis. De la politique, pas trop! Et surtout défense absolue de songer aux candidatures travaillistes aux partis nouveaux, ou à l’action indépendante.⁵¹

In an October 1953 interview, Trudeau again explained how pivotal it was that workers comprehend their own political significance: “The idea is to make them conscious of their responsibilities as citizens…Many of them are not conscious of expressing their will in an election. We don’t want them to vote like people backing horses at the racetrack.” His paternalistic stance at such moments was revealing. In his view, workers were obliged to become free-standing citizens, a role for which currently they, in treating the franchise like a betting slip, were not prepared. And as important as educating the working class for citizenship was the dampening down of class conflict. In September 1954, Trudeau warned that if workers were denied access to the political system, they might languish in isolation.

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or be drawn towards “les fruits noirs de la guerre des classes.” In 1958, he similarly advised that only if industrial democracy were adopted could “this society … be equipped to prevent the current industrial revolution from turning into a violent one.”

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Did it not follow that workers, upon whose political activism so much depended, needed their own class-based party? Trudeau early on thought labour should cooperate with the CCF-PSD, as both were dedicated to policies of modernizing Quebec and to educating its working class in democratic citizenship. Workers themselves, however, rejected the CCF-PSD as an option, as evidenced by the party’s dismal results. The FUIQ was impressed by CCF-PSD policy—its 1955 manifesto echoed many of the party’s social democratic ideals—but on the whole was indecisive with regard to supporting such a party. Though the FUIQ manifesto embraced social democracy as an alternative to both capitalism and totalitarianism, it focused on the defense of property rights and French-Canadian traditions:

Alors que nous vivons dans un monde divisé en deux, soit d’une part les forces capitalistes, soit d’autre part les forces totalitaires, nous refusons de croire que nous avons à choisir entre ces deux régimes. Nous préconisons une social-démocratie. Nous voulons un socialisme démocratique qui respectera la propriété personnelle, les traditions et la foi des masses canadiennes-françaises.

Civil and political rights, an end to the state repression of free unions, a social welfare state, the public ownership of natural resources—all these FUIQ demands foreshadowed a time, said Trudeau, when people and their elected representatives would set productive and

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developmental goals, all the while respecting the property rights of the current capitalists owning the resources in question.\textsuperscript{53}

Interestingly, the committee which drafted the report was divided along lines of party affiliation, with a majority desiring a new social democratic political party with a French Canadian essence, and a minority recommending the CCF. The upshot was that neither recommendation was implemented, and the manifesto was thus adopted without concluding anything on the party question. A subsequent resolution, however, affirmed that the CCF would continue to be the arm of social democracy in Quebec. Nevertheless, official support of the CCF by the FUIQ did not silence detractors amongst its own members who, like Trudeau, were convinced that the CCF did “not exist in Quebec.” “French Canadians are dissatisfied with the old parties, but there is a great apathy among the members,” they argued. “The structure of the party has been superimposed on the people. We must create our own party and the Manifesto is a basis for a common front.” Others held that because Quebeckers were unprepared for the CCF, supporting it was harmful and fruitless. So while the CCF enjoyed official FUIQ support, there were tensions amongst the rank and file, to such an extent that some attendees broke off to form an (ultimately stillborn) francophone socialist body.\textsuperscript{54}

The CTCC would at times, as in the 1952 provincial election, endorse candidates, in this case four specific Liberals, three of whom were elected. (Labour support was, some


estimated, responsible for the election of half the Liberal caucus.\textsuperscript{55} Likewise, the CTCC targeted four Union Nationale candidates hostile to labour, and defeated three of them. Michael Behiels notes how, despite these successes, these electoral efforts were unpopular with conservative elements within the union. The result was that in September 1952, the CTCC expressed a preference for lobbying, studying policy, and educating members on general political issues over formally endorsing parties. It would for instance, publish voting records from provincial and federal legislatures.\textsuperscript{56} Such evidence showed, in February 1958, that the CCF was the most amenable to such labour reforms as the check-off, paid vacations, and old-age pensions. Nonetheless, the CTCC declined to declare for the CCF. In conformity with this official neutrality, the union in 1954 outlined a Gompersian line: workers, it argued, should support honest politicians and trounce dishonest ones. If there was any explicit support for the CCF, it was from CTCC President and future Quebec NDP leader, Gérard Picard. While he did not in his capacity as president endorse the party, and often spoke against endorsements, he eventually held the CCF-NDP up as the standard for workers in their struggles. It was his hope in 1957 that Quebec would give it greater support, so that it could put into action its program of economic and social justice.\textsuperscript{57}

The CTCC did try to get directly involved in formal politics, if only half-heartedly. Before the 1952 provincial election, Pelletier and Marchand approached Trudeau and presented him with the opportunity to run as an independent candidate in and around the

mining communities where labour support might be considerable. Trudeau was quite interested. The scheme never materialized. Pelletier later admitted that the project had been naïve. Trudeau, when pressing for specifics about support, platform, and finances, received no answers.58

Needless to say, the stances of the two labour federations with which Trudeau worked closely did not inspire much confidence in the future of independent labour politics in Quebec. Support for the CCF ranged anywhere from ambivalent to non-existent. Behiels notes that the FUIQ manifesto debacle “discouraged and disillusioned” Trudeau, and was a catalyst in his desire to formulate a new, broader political movement.59

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Seeing his worker-students as vessels to be filled with the truths of liberalism, Trudeau flourished in this context. Liberal ideas were, of course, already active at work among working-class Quebeckers. Not only did the FUIQ and CTCC affirm individual property rights as sacrosanct, but their rhetoric during such flashpoints as Asbestos was designed to appeal to people like Trudeau, who while not sharing the material experiences of workers, identified intellectually and emotionally with the emancipation of a Quebec trapped in ‘feudalism’ and ‘totalitarianism.’ When strikers went to the media with claims, as at Murdochville, that democracy was “en péril dans le Québec,” or declared that trade unions were essential to democracy, they were enlisting liberal sentiments on behalf of the right of association. They were urging resistance against, as the aforementioned USW

58 Max and Monique Nemni, Trudeau Transformed, 261-2.
59 Michael Behiels also notes that the CTCC efforts to fund and endorse selected independent candidates failed. Behiels, Prelude to the Quiet Revolution, 146.
strike bulletins would put it, “la Gestapo Duplessiste à Murderville.” Similar claims would be made regarding Quebec Bills 19 and 20, which essentially allowed the Minister of Labour to decertify any union suspected of communist activities, or any public sector union engaged in strike action. The CTCC would in 1954 argue that such laws eliminated all due process for unions, and that the broad definitions of “communism” under Bill 19 criminalized any labour activity with which the government disagreed. In simple terms, the union proclaimed that

Notre Marche Sur QUEBEC a pour but de réveiller l’opinion publique, lui faire comprendre que les organisations syndicales protestent pas pour le plaisir mais parce que la “LIBERTE D’UN GROUP” IMPORTANT de citoyens est “EN DANGER.”

Again, the issue is portrayed, not as one narrowly concerning the rights of labour or the working class, but as one involving the democratic rights of the general citizenry. The workers were thus able to create a sense of crisis in Quebec’s hegemonic order, appropriating the language of liberalism to identify their interests (a strong and recognized labour movement) as at one with the interests of all classes (democracy, free expression, and social stability.) As Marchand would note looking back on these years, more than any other institution, organized labour was the “chien de garde” of democracy.

This conflation of labour and liberal freedoms can also be found on the federal stage. Two such displays came from the CLC in the 1950s. The first, by CLC president Claude Jodoin, held that world peace depended upon free trade unions. Not only were they

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a barrier against Nazism and Stalinism, but also against corporate dominance. Jodin’s message was one of conciliation with the capitalist order. He demanded strong cooperation between labour and management: “I can assure you…that the organized Canadian labour movement is not interested in control at all. What we are interested in is to get the best working conditions…and the best social benefits….for all Canadian citizens.” The second example comes from Andrew Brewin, an NDP MP during the 1960s and 70s, and a lawyer who had defended interned Japanese Canadians. In a 1956 address, he held up the need for a constitutional bill of rights that would guarantee basic liberal freedoms. He argued that the working class, resistant by nature to totalitarianism, had a central role in championing these freedoms. Brewin felt that workers would not be happy, whatever the standard of living, without their freedom. Unions were therefore called upon to “defend freedom and individual rights with the same courage and energy” with which they had defended “collective bargaining rights and living standards.”

An interesting piece from the same period comes from CTCC President Picard, speaking on the Asbestos strike and defending private property in a manner reminiscent of Trudeau. His argument was, in all likelihood, both sincere and tactically deft. Catholic social thought, including Papal Encyclicals, had noted social justice could exist only on the condition that the property rights of capitalists be respected. As Rob Dennis, a scholar of social Catholicism in Canada, notes, the CCF and radical labour criticism of property in the depression era and shortly after created much tension in Quebec. The supposed

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challenge to property loomed large. Picard claimed that propaganda that aimed to arouse fears about property rights was seeking to fool the public into believing that only conservatives supported property rights against leftist confiscation. This tactic angered Picard, because such conservatives were seeking to uphold a form of private property that was unjust in its prioritization of the corporation over individuals:

Le droit de propriété est bien ancré dans l’esprit du peuple et l’on a voulu exploiter cette notion fondamentale pour protéger les compagnies d’amiante, comme si elles étaient en danger sur ce point.

En régime capitaliste, surtout dans la grande entreprise, les propriétaires ne sont pas des personnes physiques, comme dans le cas de la petite propriété, mais des sociétés par actions, des sociétés anonymes qu’on appelle communément compagnies.

In Picard’s estimation, attempts to paint the workers and their defenders as communists were demagogic. The Asbestos strikers were not attacking private property in general but the impersonal corporate form of property instantiated in the company before them. They actually championed individualistic and decentralized ideals of self-earned property secured through toil. His was a critique of a form of capitalism, not capitalism generally. Picard targeted the large-scale, anonymous, and impersonal capitalism that epitomized the postwar economic world. The solution to the ills it generated was the modernization of property rights to incorporate, as Trudeau himself would suggest, new social and economic realities.

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In an almost uncanny sense, labour held similar views to Trudeau on many issues, especially those relating to the belief that the activities of an organized working class were integral to the forging a more stable, productive, and free society. Yet, at bottom, Trudeau’s support for labour was an instrumental one. It was not based on a thorough critique of capitalism nor upon a belief that workers should seize the reins of power. Rather, their place was that of catalysts in the liberal democratic reform of Quebec. He shaped his interpretation of the labour movement according to his underlying value-system—one shaped by a liberalism nuanced by the teachings of his socialist mentors. His approach to workers suggested not a solidarity among equals, but a mission of enlightening his inferiors. It was also, as we have seen, a stance predicated on the fear of what a working-class revolution might entail. Trudeau felt workers must be guided by the tactful reforms of a benevolent educated elite. If not for good and just laws, along with adequate living standards to buttress them, the social order would collapse. The responsibility, and indeed, hope of the social order lay with his class. The workers might be the engine of change, but such a mechanical object required a skillful operator. Or as Trudeau himself would say: “when too many people understand there is nothing inevitable about their filthy slums, their inadequate food, or their degrading conditions of work…when order cannot be reconciled with justice and when hatred has stifled love, the time for negotiations is over.” The statement was, in the Nemnis’ interpretation, “sounding the alarm” of class strife. Trudeau held that the working class, despite its centrality to a modern and free Quebec, could become “the worst of all dictators.” The catalyst was never to be mistaken for the primary agent. We can certainly see, in Trudeau’s ominous warnings, a call for an order crafted by the middle class over the proletarian throngs who, after fulfilling their duty to overturn a
regime representing the ‘dark ages,’ should return to a position of fealty towards one made up of enlightened liberals.66

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In the end, it was clear that for the major forces of labour in Quebec during this period, formal political alliance, especially within the CCF-PSD, was unlikely. This was almost certainly a fundamental consideration for Trudeau, who founded his Rassemblement on principles that labour could support. Based on education and alliance-building, it did not require massive financial or logistical investments that could harm the unions’ ability to service members in their more direct representative tasks. Rather it could be, as the FUIQ had foreseen, merely a vehicle for the political expression of the unions’ direct demands. Further, its multi-party approach would protect labour leaders who feared endorsing specific parties. Trudeau saw a niche in Quebec’s political landscape, and sought to fill it. In the late 1950s, the question remained: could he generate support and momentum from such a diverse base of anti-Duplessis forces?

66 Max and Monique Nemni, Trudeau Transformed, 98-9, 154-5.
Chapter 4

“Notre tâche, comme le disait P.E. Trudeau, est de créer la démocratie:” Le Rassemblement, l’Union des Forces Démocratiques, and the New Party, 1956-61

As seen in the previous two chapters, Trudeau had established by the late 1950s deep connections with both the trade unions and the PSD/CCF. Despite these ties, Trudeau had come to suspect by the mid-1950s that neither movement offered Quebec what it needed most: a force to displace the Union Nationale via a liberal democratic revolution. In his evolving politics, paralleled by that of Jean Marchand, the new mantra was to be “démocratie d’abord.”1 This chapter will examine three movements related to this call. The first two were political projects with which Trudeau was deeply involved: the Rassemblement des forces démocratiques and the Union des forces démocratiques. In both, it was Trudeau’s desire to see a unification of democratic forces in Quebec to oust the Union Nationale.

The third was the newly-arisen New Party, which would come to be known as the NDP. It was the outcome of a marriage between the CCF and the CLC. In the late 1950s, numerous educational efforts were made to advertise the party, not only to the working class, but also (a party memo explained) to the ‘liberally-minded,’ which comprised not only “the ‘intellectuals’ of a progressive turn of mind” but “all of the public likely to respond to the New Party appeal not covered by the CCF and Labour Movement—i.e. ‘the general public.’”2 In this way, CCF efforts in the 1950s to liberalize its ideological appeal

2 The Canadian Labour Congress was created in 1956 as a result of linking the Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. In Quebec’s case, the FUIQ would merge with the Fédération provinciale du travail du Québec to create the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec in 1957. CCF-NDP Fonds, Vol. 377, File 1, “The Liberally-Minded.”

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through the Winnipeg Declaration continued by making a specific appeal to the liberal middle class.

By the end of this period, Trudeau was no more settled in his vision of his political future. The movements he had backed failed. He still saw the CCF-PSD as futile and the Liberals as undemocratic. The death of Duplessis in 1959, and the rise of Lesage in 1960, however, would begin Trudeau’s passage towards the Liberal Party and 24 Sussex Drive.

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The Rassemblement was formed after the 1956 Quebec election in which the CCF-PSD did very poorly and the Liberals were crushed by Duplessis’ juggernaut. Trudeau’s contemporaries, biographers, and other historians note the Rassemblement’s failure as a key moment in his ideological, political, and personal development. For some, it constituted Trudeau’s “real entry into politics.”

As the Nemnis note, the first meeting of the Rassemblement took place shortly before the 1956 election. It was this meeting that expressed the need to create dialogue among democratic forces. A second, held right after the election, repeated this call for a new political democracy with greater urgency. The Rassemblement’s goal was clear: to provide political education to the Quebec citizenry so as to better unite democratic forces. The organization embodied these democratic principles through writings that laid out a platform combining a reverence for classical liberal freedoms, a commitment to educational and social programs, and a moderate approach to economic planning. It was not radical, the Nemnis admit, but it did challenge Duplessis. English notes the

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Rassemblement’s goal was to create a coalition of liberals, social democrats, and labour activists, and highlights the jostling between Trudeau and the PSD-CCF therein. What we gather from Trudeau scholars is that the Rassemblement was formed in response to a crisis in democracy, was built upon fundamental human rights and the ideal of an activist state, and sought to create alliances across the democratic political spectrum.

The UFD was even more illustrative of Trudeau’s political outlook nearing the end of the 1950s. According to the Nemnis, Trudeau saw the UFD as a more effective weapon against the Union Nationale. It would potentially unite workers, liberals, and socialists in a political force, rather than (as with the Rassemblement) a largely educational venture. In the end, the body was stillborn, quashed according to the Nemnis by the CCF-PSD and labour, both insistent that social democracy be emphasized. English notes that the campaign for the Rassemblement created acute tensions, both personally and ideologically, between Trudeau and his labour-left allies.4

Our analysis of these two projects will focus on their respective ideological statements. Trudeau in both cases drafted their central documents. Further, we will examine how labour and the CCF-PSD responded to the movements. What I hope to show is that their collapse was not based upon Trudeau’s naiveté or dilettantish nature, nor sabotaged by the PSD-CCF. It stemmed, rather, from an incompatibility of strategic and ideological goals, that is, from a deep-seated difference between social democracy and liberalism.

Trudeau’s Memoirs gives only brief space to the UFD and Rassemblement. Faced with a moribund CCF-PSD, and an undemocratic Liberal Party, he had to

fall back on organizations such as the Rassemblement…This fragile and short-lived body undertook to defend and promote democracy against the

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threats posed by corruption and authoritarianism. There was also a later initiative, Union des forces démocratiques, which I founded. Its aim was to create an effective coalition...for the 1960 provincial election. We wanted to unite all the opposition parties around their principal shared objective: making Quebec a genuine democracy, and getting rid of the government machinations that were endangering people’s freedoms... It was a matter of having all the defenders of these liberties put aside their differences...to bring down the government.5

Interviews with Trudeau corroborate this viewpoint. For Trudeau, the 1956 election had demonstrated that, under normal political conditions, Duplessis was unbeatable.6 This meant that democrats needed to move beyond the existing parties, looking instead to educational efforts that awoke the electorate, and eventually, to the creation of a single-issue party to defeat Duplessis:

I said look, we have a lot of people, some are supporting Liberals, some are supporting the Creditiste Party, some are supporting the C.C.F., the N.D.P. and so on. Let’s get together and not fight, divide our forces against l’Union Nationale. Let’s make sure that we are all fighting for the same things. And the one common thread that we have together is we all believe in democracy and we believe that it’s badly practiced under the Union Nationale...So I began developing those ideas in my writings and in my meetings and I was trying to have...a basic educational movement but with an emphasis on political action, which in my mind was to lead to some coalition where maybe a share of seats or an agreement on some basic elements of a program where we could unite all against l’Union Nationale and that was the essence of my thinking in those days.7

Trudeau’s files reveal much more, including the Rassemblement’s declarations of principles that he drafted. In words that strikingly echoed Laski’s definition of liberty, Trudeau sounded this note: “Les hommes vivent en société afin que chacun puisse se réaliser au maximum. L’autorité politique n’a de justification que pour permettre

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5 Trudeau, Memoirs, 70-1.
l’instauration et le développement d’un ordre qui favorise une telle réalisation.” Trudeau would continue by outlining what freedoms should be sacrosanct, including association, speech, assembly, and equality before the law, all facilitated through a parliamentary democracy with universal suffrage. Democracy must be built upon the idea that the few do not rule the many. Trudeau was not calling for socialism, but for class collaboration in the interests of democracy. The Rassemblement would thus appeal to the working classes first and foremost, would not be a slave to the upper classes or wealthy donors, and would become a movement “dont l’idéologie incarne la volonté de toutes les classes de la société.”

Trudeau’s economic program for the Rassemblement was constructed on the basis of such cross-class ideals. Economic activity must be geared toward human needs and the Rassemblement would strive for a Keynesian program of high employment, managed natural resources, productivity-enhancing technologies, and a more equal division of wealth. It would fight for an economic system that abolished “l’exploitation de l’homme par l’homme.” Trudeau went on to affirm that the means to accomplish this objective were varied, including nationalization, private ownership, cooperatives, and more generally the adoption of whatever “s’adapte le mieux aux conditions et besoins du moment.” While Trudeau acknowledged that ideology influenced what actual individuals believed were the most ‘pragmatic economic methods,’ he felt that decision-making could be made a rational process through various planning, management, and research boards designed to inform public opinion and leaders. This was not altogether incompatible with the Regina.

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8 PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 27, file 1, Trudeau, “Project de déclaration de principes du Rassemblement provincial des citoyens.”
Manifesto’s democratically-accountable planning boards managing a rational and just economy.

Trudeau then went on to address the workplace, as it was there that one found “le moyen naturel d’assurer ce niveau convenable tout en vivant dans la plus grande liberté possible.” The Rassemblement would guarantee the freedom to form unions, as well as upholding standards concerning safety, wages, old age security, and unemployment insurance. Trudeau also addressed workplace democracy. He blamed dehumanizing work on an industrial system that failed to narrow the gap separating powerful owners and managers from workers. Society needed to create an economy which trended towards the democratization of enterprise, but in which profit generation, even if tempered through redistribution, would still be rewarded. Trudeau noted that because “l’individualisme et l’appât du profit seront des ressorts importants de l’activité sociale,” the state would be needed to ensure adequate social standards.9

Trudeau thus substantiates sociologist Denis Monière’s critique of Cité libre. Monière depicts a journal that, for all its apparent radicalism, ultimately affirmed the legitimacy of capitalism. In Trudeau’s model, social programs were vital, but needed to be pegged at a level that did not sap “le sens de la responsabilité personnelle.”10 In sum, the Rassemblement’s declarations show that Trudeau, having dallied with more radical expressions of politics, now (and henceforth) embraced a reformist liberalism reaffirming individual freedoms.

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9 Ibid.
10 Denis Monière, Ideologies in Quebec, 246-9.
Trudeau and the Rassemblement’s first president, Pierre Dansereau, worked hard to give the new formation a high profile in the media. The two of them often affirmed that they sought the social, economic, and political reform of Quebec through an educational movement based on the rapprochement of labour activists and intellectuals. In a 1956 *Quartier Latin* interview, Trudeau said that the Rassemblement was “un mouvement d’éducation et d’action politique” that would replace irrational forms of collective expression: “Nous voulons substituer au mouvement de group plus ou moins instinctif une réaction de la conscience individuelle en face du problème politique.”\(^{11}\) When asked why the Rassemblement spoke specifically to the working class, Trudeau responded by saying that historically, the workers’ importance on the political landscape had been underestimated and suppressed.

The Rassemblement would also produce a series of bulletins that offered insights into its ideology and its organization. In keeping with its desire to promote democracy, the bulletin would send out a series of general questions that its various sections could discuss at meetings. Such questions included ones focused on such issues as balancing minority rights in a majoritarian electoral system, the conditions under which citizens could align with organizations against the state, the limitations placed on citizens by existing laws, and potential contradictions between capitalism and democracy.\(^{12}\)

The bulletins also indicate the influence Trudeau had on Rassemblement activities. The Rassemblement’s executive committee demanded, for instance, that a proposed Trans-

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\(^{12}\) Sections were organized in various Quebec cities, and they served as local meeting hubs. There was also a section in Ottawa; PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 27, file 3, *Bulletin du Rassemblement*, January 1957.
Canada pipeline be regulated in such a way that the wealth generated would benefit the people of Quebec and Canada. It must not subordinate “le bien commun aux profits particuliers.” Along similar lines, and in relation to the Murdochville strike, the Bulletin not only defended freedom of association, but reaffirmed support for the people of the Gaspé. Industrial policies in the area were backward, the company was opposing basic human rights, and the government had arbitrarily rejected a democratic system of industrial relations. The Rassemblement’s goal was thus to appeal to Quebeckers to unite in defense of their basic freedoms.¹³

Labour’s response to this program was lukewarm. Although labour activists comprised around half of attendees at early meetings, the CTCC’s involvement was limited. Marchand, despite initially supporting the Rassemblement because of its educational mandate and support of inter-class dialogue, became detached, not only because he felt a concrete approach was lacking, but also because he felt CLC-affiliated unions would abandon the Rassemblement if asked to do so by their national leaders. Thus, the only concrete support given to the movement by organized labour came from the FUIQ, whose executive committee in 1956 unanimously voted to support it.¹⁴

The FUIQ in 1957 advertised the Rassemblement as a democratic movement transcending class: “Toutes les classes de la société, tant ouvrière qu’agricole, universitaire, ou autre, doivent s’unir pour…lutter ensemble, former un groupe homogène et trancher de façon démocratique les grades questions qui nous sont posées aujourd’hui.”

FUIQ Secretary-Treasurer Roméo Mathieu noted that the FUIQ’s strategy entailed a recognition that unions must reach beyond their memberships to shape the world: “Le syndicalisme, pour remplir son rôle et bien server ses membres, doit s’identifier avec la société. Il doit participer à l’épanouissement et à l’émancipation économique et sociale de l’individu pour le meilleur bien de l’Homme.” He would therefore support the Rassemblement, a “mouvement composé d’hommes de toutes les classes de la société, d’hommes libre et imbus du désir d’injecter à notre système politique un sérum vraiment démocratique.” It was a body that supported the working class, but avoided the drawbacks of too “travailliste” a demeanour.15

Key PSDers claimed to be the engine behind the Rassemblement’s creation. Casgrain notes that after the 1956 election, “the provincial council…believed it would be useful to unite under the same banner all those who wished to establish a truly democratic regime in Quebec...So the PSD organized a meeting with the aim of bringing together all those who opposed the Duplessis regime.”16 Bill Dodge, then an executive member, registered a similar claim:

The forming of this organization was…an accident arising out of a decision by the [PSD] to convene a broad conference of intellectuals to solicit their support for the P.S.D. in a Quebec election campaign...Instead of a declaration of support for the P.S.D. the meeting ended with the setting up of a committee to study the situation. The result was ‘Le Rassemblement.’17

What Dodge suggests here is that, at least initially, the PSD envisioned the Rassemblement as an initiative to support the party. Others like Trudeau sought an independent body. Indeed, from its inception, the party question would haunt the Rassemblement. One problem was that the term “democratic forces” was never defined. Some members, for instance, thought that the Rassemblement should be a force “d’éducation et d’action démocratique fondé pour lutter contre la situation dans laquelle les vieux partis ont plongé la province.” On this and other readings, the parties deemed anathema to the Rassemblement included not only the Union Nationale but all others (excepting the CCF-PSD.) In the end, a resolution to declare this position the official policy was defeated by a vote of 34 to 45. Likewise, a resolution demanding a clear definition of those parties the Rassemblement considered democratic was defeated 31 to 38.\(^{18}\) Behiels argues that this controversy meant that

> No matter what the delegates might say to the contrary, the Rassemblement became identified publicly as the educational wing of the PSD. This is precisely what the movement’s founders, Trudeau, Marchand, Pelletier, Laurendeau, and Dansereau, had been determined to avoid.

In effect, Behiels argues that this development all but eliminated the potential support of left-wing Liberals and went against the Rassemblement’s stated objectives, the coalition of all left-wing forces and the entrenchment of democratic norms and practices in Quebec.\(^{19}\)

> Trudeau was baffled that the PSD, “qui avait un nombre insignifiant d’électeurs, encore moins d’adhérents, et aucune existence parlementaire, ait refusé si obstinément toute formule de Rassemblement qui ne fut pas la réplique exact du P.S.D.”\(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) Behiels, *Prelude to the Quiet Revolution*, 252-3.

his part remembered the Rassemblement as little more than “a half-way house to absorption by the Liberal Party.” In its unclear identity and ultimate failure the Rassemblement constituted “a vindication of the decision of the P.S.D. to continue to operate independently.” Casgrain in 1981 remembered that the Rassemblement had caused many PSDers to lose interest in their own party. Likewise, Casgrain validates Trudeau’s fear that the PSD was trying to co-opt the Rassemblement for its purposes: “immédiatement après la naissance du Rassemblement, les membres du PSD tentèrent d’amener les adhérents à ce mouvement vers leur parti.”

But perhaps the most passionate critiques came from Pierre Vadeboncoeur, a CTCC-CSN staffer, Citélibriste, eventual separatist, and friend of Trudeau. He accused the Rassemblement and UFD of blunting the left in Quebec. Rather than moving centrists leftward, it brought “des hommes de gauche au groupe de droite, ce qui est un peu plus le contraire de ce qu’on visait.” According to Vadeboncoeur, the Rassemblement had dealt the left a more grievous blow than anything, that other forces, including the Liberals, had been able to muster. It provided an arresting example of:

l’opération droittiste classique…avec une dextérité et une efficacité dont le parti libéral eut été, par définition, absolument incapable…Le Rassemblement et l’Union des forces démocratiques ont cristallisé en dernière heure des forces dont on aurait pu penser qu’avec un peu de courage, elles se coaliseraient autrement.

Such critiques of the Rassemblement were warm-ups for those directed against the UFD, a movement championed in Trudeau’s 1958 Cité libre article titled “Un manifeste démocratique.” Trudeau asserted that no one party possessed the requisite organization and

21 CLC Fonds, Vol. 387, file P17, Bill Dodge to David Sherwood, 7 December 1965; Thérèse Casgrain, Manuscrit inachevé, 209.
democratic ethos to best Duplessis. A new coalescing force had thus become a necessity. Although the Nemnis call this piece one of his least convincing and Behiels derides its “boy scout amateurism,” I see it as a genuine expression of Trudeau’s liberalism. First, he argued that the Liberals, despite improvement under Lesage, had been guilty of years of “pactes de non-agression” with Duplessis. They were thus complicit in his anti-democratic laws and practices. Trudeau then moved on to the CCF-PSD which, while deeply principled and intellectually rigorous, was ultimately deficient as a stand-alone body:

C’est que le coût…en temps et en énergies humaines, des minimes avances du P.S.D dans la Province reste effarant. Car il ne s’agit pas d’équipes nouvelles venant sans cesse s’ajouter aux anciennes; il s’agit d’équipes successivement brulées les unes après les autres, et dont les débris, comprenant des hommes de grande valeur, sont souvent devenus inutilisables pour les efforts subséquents...Le parti semble toujours perdre en gens désabusé un nombre égal à chaque nouveau courant de recrues enthousiastes. 23

Trudeau would also note that despite the transformations of Quebec society, and the admirable efforts of party stalwarts, the PSD was no better off in 1958 than it had been in 1944. He would thus restate his core thesis: what Quebec required was a minimal level of democratic governance. It was a position he shared with Le Devoir journalists. They argued that before specific programs were proposed, a democratic order was required as their foundation. 24

Trudeau posited that democracy came in two stages: one in which it was established, and another in which it grew under the protection of its supporters. Quebec, on his reading, was trapped between the stages. As he had argued in Some Obstacles to Democracy, the province had never been obliged to fight for a democracy that had been

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23 Behiels, 254; Trudeau, “Un Manifeste démocratique.”
24 Roch Denis, Lutte des classes, 187.
forced upon it. So while he would concede that elements of democracy (like constitutions, laws, and suffrage) were present, those in charge of these and other aspects of democracy operated with a cynicism and instrumentalism that undercut democratic values as ends in themselves. Reactionary forces, with their roots in church dominance, absolute monarchy, and feudalism, and making use of a state-of-siege mentality, perverted the British-bestowed parliamentary system. 25

In short, Trudeau would argue that “ceux qui refusent de collaborer à l’instauration d’une démocratie politique, sous prétexte que…ils en sont déjà à préparer la démocratie économique et social commettent une erreur stratégique très grave. Car il faut à tout prix fabrique l’enveloppe démocratique avant de se diviser sur la définition de son contenu.” Trudeau would elaborate on the gravity of this error by saying that Mussolini and Hitler had come to power in part due to fragmented social and liberal-democratic forces. He would chastise socialists and labour activists who deemed themselves “trop évolués” for liberal democracy, and in so doing, greased the slope to totalitarianism:

Moi aussi je crois à la nécessite d’un dirigisme pour maximiser la liberté et le bien-être de tous, et permettre à chacun de se réaliser pleinement. Mais je préfère renoncer au socialisme plutôt que d’admettre qu’on doive l’édifier sur fondements non démocratiques: la Russie nous a démontré que c’est la voie du totalitarisme.

Trudeau did, despite this Cold War-tinged rhetoric, concede that liberal democrats likely lacked the answers to questions of education, health, housing, and economic equality. There would thus still be a need for social democrats. Nevertheless, it was his conviction that liberal democrats and social democrats were both proponents of democracy. Their

25 Trudeau, “Un Manifeste démocratique;” For another piece that explores Quebeckers’ siege mentality as created by their minority status and regressive institutions, see Gérard Pelletier, “Réflexion sur l’état de siège,” Cité libre, February 1957, 32-40.
primary goal must be to unite against extremists. Once they had vanquished their common foe, people would then be able to freely debate the merits of liberalism and socialism.

Before closing the manifesto, Trudeau pre-emptively addressed objections to it. For example, he anticipated an argument that social democrats could not fight for liberal democracy without entrenching the bourgeoisie. No, he responded—just the opposite had happened in England and Sweden, where socialist parties had been built up upon liberal democratic foundations, allowing them to resist totalitarianism. Quebec leftists did not have the same foundations. They lacked the centuries-long tradition that had nourished British democracy. In response to the claim that the PSD constituted the left’s only avenue, Trudeau argued that parties were only significant when they could orchestrate change in the parliamentary system. The powerless PSD was in no such position. Socialists must eschew doctrinaire, narrow, and exclusive approaches. What was ultimately required was a broad alliance of socialists, workers, and liberals, who would all shelve their particular projects for the wider ideal—liberal democracy—that supposedly underwrote them.26

Trudeau would also promote the UFD at McGill in 1959, declaring that disunity within opposition forces constituted a principal barrier to democracy. The silver lining was their shared perception of democracy’s fundamental importance. As Trudeau put it, “even the socialists realize that democracy is a necessary precursor to Socialism.” Thus, the only two viable options were to form a loose coalition of parties or to undertake the construction of a new party of democratic forces. Trudeau was partial to the latter option, holding it to be the “only way out.”27 Likewise, he took to Radio-Canada to defend his proposal, again

26 Trudeau, “Un Manifeste démocratique.”
conceding that while formally Quebec enjoyed a parliamentary democracy, authority rather than liberty remained its guiding principle. Democratic unification was vital because it offered a counterbalance to the Union Nationale’s antidemocratic status quo. Trudeau in this interview would be attacked by a Union Nationale member, who asserted that Trudeau, in his claims that Quebec was not a democracy, was arrogantly dismissing all those who had been elected—democratically—under the banner of the Union Nationale. While according to the Nemnis, the Union Nationale participant was panned for his disrespectful tone, he raised a valid point: Trudeau rarely showed how one might distinguish a valid liberal democracy from an invalid one.\footnote{“Foire d’empoigne autour de la démocratie,” 27 November 1958, <http://archives.radio-canada.ca/politique/droits_libertes/clips/12888/> (27 August 2013).}

The PSD, after the experience of the Rassemblement, came to be wary of alliances. Casgrain remembered how Trudeau called for democracy first. He attacked the PSD for blunting the Rassemblement and declared that social democracy must be secondary to liberal democracy. In essence, Casgrain saw the UFD as “la suite logique” of the Rassemblement, and notes that it was rejected by the PSD and FTQ, drawn as they were to the coming New Party. Contemporary sources document sharp critiques of the UFD by the PSD, especially in discussions focused on ideological assimilation by liberals.\footnote{Casgrain Fonds, Vol. 11, File 1, Thérèse Casgrain, Manuscrit inachevé 210-2. Stanley Knowles notes that Casgrain was the chair of the official debate in which the CCF articulated its unanimous support for the New Party. See Knowles, The New Party, 45.}

The most important example comes from a 1959 report containing, according to Roch Denis, the most substantive critique of the UFD. It was the PSD’s position that it “considered impossible and immoral the fusion of the Social Democratic Party with the Liberal Party for the restoration of a purely liberal democracy which [already] exists in our
province.” The PSD refused to “deprive people of the possibility of establishing economic and social democracy.” Further, the report maintained that accessible education, adequate social security, and economic activism were the driving forces in democratizing Quebec, as evidenced by the farmers’ and workers’ centrality in making change. PSDers sought broad alliances based on promoting both liberal and social democratic freedoms. One could indeed regard Asbestos and Murdochville in this manner. Such struggles were important as steps towards a liberal democratic polity, as Trudeau had persistently argued, but they were also organized by and suffused with the quite different spirit of people struggling for social and economic equality. The struggles Trudeau persistently ‘liberalized,’ his social democratic critics no less persistently ‘socialized.’

Vadeboncoeur for his part referred to the UFD as little more than “le club de M. Trudeau.” Here was an excellent tool for the Liberals, because it neutralized forces on their left flank:

Le parti libéral, débordé sur la gauche par le PSD, et qui voit loin, rève de le scinder. C’est un rôle pour le quel lui-même ne vaudrait rien mais le nouveau club peut lui être utile à cet égard. Le parti libéral désire en tout cas détacher quelques adhérentes social-démocrates par le moyen d’une attraction centriste exercée par ledit club. Il n’est pas important que celui-ci réussisse; il suffit qu’il existe. Il amuse in the meanwhile quelques personnalités qui, de sympathies gauchistes, ne font de mal à personne pendant que l’affaire dure et restent disponibles pour bien des choses sauf pour la gauche. Il gagne du temps sur elles; c’est toujours ça.

Michel Chartrand, who was by 1959 Casgrain’s successor to the PSD leadership, firmly rejected alliance with the Liberals. Such a pact would violate PSD principles

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because the Liberal Party was funded by the “gros intérêts financiers et asservi à la même caisse électorale que l’Union nationale.” The Liberals offered nothing to guarantee Quebecers “que le programme et la politique du parti seront modifiés en vue de satisfaire les besoins…de la population et lui donner la démocratie économique.” Chartrand’s wife, Simonne, herself a peace, labour, feminist, and socialist activist, would critique Citélibristes like Trudeau because despite their supposed identities as “socialists,” their efforts did little to further democracy. Simonne and Michel, in contrast to Trudeau’s UFD, envisioned the necessity of a party that extolled socio-economic democracy and equality, and united with labour and cooperative groups.\textsuperscript{32}

Finally, a 1960 report by the PSD, found in Trudeau’s files, expressed an even deeper critique of the UFD. It noted that while the aforementioned 1959 strategic report lent support to the New Party, it also allowed for discussions with those willing to pursue social and economic democracy. (Neither Liberals or UFD members seemed interested in it, on their reading.) The report argued that the fight for “démocratie d’abord” ignored so much and offered so little, especially when it came to expanding liberty for the people of Quebec.\textsuperscript{33}

Trudeau and the PSD were in strong mutual disagreement about the nature, ingredients, and existence of a democracy in Quebec. The Trudeauvian claim that liberal democracy did not exist in twentieth-century Quebec was a spurious one in the eyes of


\textsuperscript{33} Michel Forest, “Secretary’s Report, Social Democratic Party of Québec Provincial convention,” 1-3 April 1960.
social democrats. Likewise, Trudeau, at least to a point, recognized the anti-democratic tendencies that existed in the province’s economic and social structures, but felt reforms would have to wait. The PSD rejected this call to tolerate inequality in the guise of promoting democracy. A democratic revolution required social and economic transformations.

Labour activists for the most part also did not connect with Trudeau’s UFD. They were weary of the Liberals, whom they saw as equally intolerable, and in some cases, worse than Duplessis. In 1959, Labour World/Monde Ouvrier, the FTQ’s official organ, would offer a “triste consolation”: Newfoundland Liberal premier Joey Smallwood was “encore pire que Duplessis” in his disregard for civil rights while dealing with the International Woodworkers of America. His “dictature politique” suggested that the time had come to “aidez ces courageux grévistes à se débarrasser de leurs condition d’esclavage. Il faut maintenant les aider à secouer la dictature politique.”

Further, FTQ president Roger Provost would chastise Jean Lesage for his refusal to denounce Smallwood, citing his indefensible reluctance to comment on matters outside his jurisdiction. In Provost’s view, the commitment to democracy should know no bounds:

Par suite du refus de M. Lesage de désavouer son collègue libéral de Terre-Neuve, M. Smallwood, nous nous voyons dans l’obligation d’affirmer, jusque preuve du contraire, que son programme ouvrier n’est que paroles en l’air... Alors qu’un membre de son parti est en train d’étouffer la liberté démocratique d’association à Terre-Neuve, M. Lesage se retranche prudemment derrière sa juridiction provinciale. Qui ferait entendre la voix

des travailleurs opprimés, des pays totalitaires, si le mouvement syndicale avait ce respect hypocrite des juridictions nationales.\textsuperscript{35}

In another piece, Liberal Lester Pearson was harangued because, although noting aspects of the Newfoundland law did not appeal to him, he then gave Smallwood the benefit of the doubt. Newfoundland Liberal MP Jack Pickersgill added that union certification was a “privilège et non un droit.” CCF forces, on the other hand, were commended for their solidarity with the IWA. Stanley Knowles urged that Smallwood’s actions and the failure of the old parties to respond to them appropriately made the case ever clearer for the New Party.\textsuperscript{36} At least as far as the FTQ was concerned, political alliances with the anti-democratic Liberals, of the sort recommended by the UFD, were highly questionable. Lesage’s refusal to take a stand was revealing. \textit{Even if} the FTQ felt liberal democracy was the first thing needed in Quebec, they saw the actually-existing Liberals as a barrier to that goal.

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While little has been written on the New Party project specifically, its importance in CCF-NDP history is conveyed through key works. Walter Young in his analysis of the CCF covered its transition into the NDP. He argued that while the New Party grew out of the desperation of the 1958 election, it was consistent with the desire to form a labour party along British lines. Nevertheless, he also held that the New Party was “more liberal and less socialist.” Desmond Morton outlines a similar position. He maintains that the CCF was not only looking to recover from a series of electoral disappointments, but in its


alliance with labour and the liberally-minded, continued the shedding of a Depression-era image that began with the burying of the Regina Manifesto.  

The most important source on the New Party is Stanley Knowles’s 1961 book on its organization, history, and philosophy. The New Party was to offer a “clear-cut choice” to the “tweedledum and tweedledee” old parties. While Knowles was proud of the CCF, he considered the formation of the New Party to be timely. The CLC at its 1958 convention had called for the creation of a “broadly based people’s political movement, embracing the CCF, the labour movement, farm organizations, professional people and other liberally minded persons interested in basic social reform through our parliamentary system.” The CCF would reciprocate the CLC’s proposal made months later by reaffirming their “democratic socialist” ideals, but in the context of a “broadly based people’s political movement” that would expand the spectrum of those interested in building a “society on moral foundations of social justice and human dignity.” Two years later, the CLC and CCF would again release complementary resolutions. The CLC held that the past two years had further convinced them of the need for a new party, and would reiterate support for a party of farmers, labour, and the liberally-minded that would “faithfully serve the best interests of all the people of Canada.” The CCF resolved that a National Committee for the New

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38 Knowles was a vital figure in the CCF-NDP as well as the Canadian labour and Christian socialist movements. See Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, Stanley Knowles: the Man from Winnipeg North Centre (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982); Gerald G. Harrop, Advocate of Compassion: Stanley Knowles in the Political Process (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1984).
Party be created. This was not to be a radical project, and targeted so centrist a route that even Trudeau claimed it was “not far enough to the left.”

Much came to be written on the question of “liberally-minded” supporters. It was the New Party’s central ambition to attract political independents not affiliated with the CCF, including former Liberals or Progressive Conservatives. For scholar of the CCF-NDP tradition Walter Young, the New Party should be “a party of all the democratic left,” including those adrift from the old parties searching for a “sound alternative to the political right of Canada.” Young felt the New Party would ultimately replace one of the two old parties as a clear-cut choice for progressives and ‘independents’:

The Independent feels...that while the older parties have reluctantly accepted the notion that government is and must be a positive force in the nation, they consistently and persistently refuse to utilize the power of the state to promote the liberty of the individual—the chief end of the democratic welfare state. He is independent because he has found the older parties wanting in progressivism, lacking a broad democratic base, and he has found too that the older parties are more the tools of the Canadian Manufacturers Association and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce then they are leaders of the populace.

We can see in this statement a clear indication that the New Party was courting small-l liberals who desired an activist state to promote social well-being and individual liberties. It was, in essence, the call of the Rassemblement. Further in collaboration with Trudeau’s approach, Young would note that the independents loathed doctrine—whether it entailed idolizing capitalism or venerating the “old socialism” of the CCF. Young would thus cast the New Party’s leftism in moderate terms. New Party proponents appreciated the need,

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not to fully plan the economy, but to ensure that regulation and well-directed investments prevented economic crises.

Young attacked the socialism of the CCF by saying that most Canadians were not socialists in the sense of recognizing class struggle and supported state ownership of the means of production. Indeed, they had repeatedly rejected such visions of socialism: “the attitude of the purists is one which I personally find repugnant for it implies a desire to stuff socialism down the throats of the people whether they like it or not.” Young held that if CCF stalwarts persisted in defending doctrinaire socialism, they would turn away the liberally-minded. The New Party must be new and offer a home to all those of the centre left, including “the timid liberal.”

Young was not alone in calling for a liberalization of the social-democratic left. Frank Underhill, a man who denounced his own role in writing the Regina Manifesto, would also place his hopes in a liberal regime. Underhill began by noting the reasons for the CCF’s failure, including W.L.M. King’s appropriation of left ideas and voting bases. He also articulated his own belief that a party of the left promoted class division and “bitterness.” Laudng capitalism’s “marvelous recovery,” Underhill predicted the international waning of left parties. The CCF had failed to adapt to the affluence of contemporary Canada. Underhill conceded that there were still numerous social problems festering in this golden age, but they were emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social, rather than economic.

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41 Ibid.
CCF-NDP files are also replete with memos extolling the looming New Party and describing its image. It was to be progressive yet not radical, fresh yet “solidly based in Canadian history,” idealistic but electable in all regions. It should be the most “violently anti-Communist” party. It should be “capitalistic,” amenable to small business, and “in favour of free enterprise,” while applying socialist solutions in isolated cases. The goal was to juxtapose a novel and dynamic New Party to the decrepit old parties, a New Party for the “everyman” to the old parties’ class interests. It was imperative to go beyond the CCF’s traditional working-class, farmer, and intellectual socialist base to encompass many other Canadians. The word “socialist” should be shelved due to its negative connotations. References to unions should be replaced by references to working people. The ineffective CCF should be buried. It was especially important to de-emphasize the concept of class—especially the “working class”—because Canadians had and/or desired a middle-class identity.43

In short, what was needed, according to liberals like Underhill, and New Party theorists like Ken Bryden, was a revision of the concept of socialism. The New Party was to be based not on Marx, Christ, or the Regina Manifesto, but on such liberal voices of John F. Kennedy and John Kenneth Galbraith.44 The goal of this new socialism—in reality, a left liberalism—was that private affluence be both encouraged and conscripted—in order to provide healthcare, parks, schools, universities, and so on. As intimated by both Michael

44 Galbraith was born in Canada, but would become an economist especially important to left-leaning American Democrats. His works will be partially explored in later chapters.
Oliver and Frank Scott, socialism must no longer obsess over the control of production, distribution and exchange.\textsuperscript{45}

Indeed, a joint publication by the CLC and CCF in 1958 asserted that farmers, workers, and the middle class all had “the same common aims”: democracy, equal opportunity, security, and educational enrichment. They also had “the same common enemies” in the monopolistic greed, privilege and profiteering championed by the old parties. They could thus form a party in which “Canadians from every walk of life will find opportunity for participating in the exciting march forward in the continuous human struggle for progress and a better life.” Clearly, class struggle was passé. The New Party imagined a political order in which all Canadians—from a Prairie wheat farmer to an Oshawa autoworker to a Montreal businessman—shared similar interests. As Leo Zakuta notes, many labour leaders backed the New Party because they could fit it into a broader process in which the socialist principles of the Regina Manifesto and even the Winnipeg Declaration were watered down even further in a pragmatic philosophy that imposed no barriers to them. There was little in the New Party that urged them to go beyond their immediate socio-economic interests, narrowly construed.\textsuperscript{46}

Stanley Knowles in his role as CLC Vice-President proselytized for the New Party with gusto. An April 1959 piece would, in building on CCF history, welcome those liberally-minded Canadians who sought basic social reform not offered by the old parties: “we invite Canadians from every walk of life to participate with us in this exciting effort,

\textsuperscript{45} CCF-NDP Fonds, Vol. 377, File 1, “Frank Underhill Speech.”
as we seek to carry forward in our time the continuous human struggle for progress and a better life.” Eugene Forsey in 1959 would support the New Party, arguing that non-partisan Gomperism, whatever its achievements in the United States, had no place in Canada, where a stronger party system undermined the effectiveness of individual lobbying and voting. Labour’s pursuit of “friends” would necessarily encompass parties rather than individuals, and only the New Party would offer such a sympathetic ear to trade unions. It is clear here that Forsey speaks not of ideology, but of democratic procedures, and in so doing, defends the New Party in a way highly amenable to liberally-minded Canadians looking for a pressure group on specific policy points, rather than a party seeking to transform society.47

Still, many were quick to note that despite the new affinity with centrisn, there still existed factors that distinguished the New Party from the Liberals. A 1959 New Party seminar in Winnipeg, while extolling the important role of liberally-minded members and celebrating labour and the CCF’s anti-communist crusades, did not shy away from the need for increased public ownership to rein in the capitalist “hysteria” of private industry. The party should commit itself not only to defending existing public services, but also to a program extolling the virtues of public ownership. It should denounce the irrationality of private enterprise and provide a shopping list of about-to-be-nationalized industries. Further, in a discussion group led by Frank Scott, it was determined that Canadians should, more via public ownership than the empowerment of Canadian capitalists, exert greater controls over their economic destiny. Finally, an internal CCF document decried the chaos resulting from profit and competition. It affirmed its unequivocal faith “in social

democracy (both economic and political.” In this piece’s view, liberal notions of equality had value, but only in a society in which profit motives were minimized. Clearly, even as the talk of becoming the new Liberal Party was fashionable, not all were ready for the great transition.48

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Discussions of the New Party in Quebec are vital to any contextualization of Trudeau’s trajectory. The formation of the New Party and how it related to other political projects, is examined by Roch Denis, André Lamoureux, and Edwidge Munn respectively. Denis notes that the FTQ’s decision to back the New Party marked the end of the UFD, created by Trudeau with the aim to “convaincre les dirigeants ouvriers de faire l’union démocratique avec les libéraux, contre le création du parti des travailleurs.” Denis also maintains that the New Party and UFD were incompatible, with Trudeau calling for a basic democracy, and the FTQ for solutions to the social, political, and economic problems of the masses. Lamoureux rejects Trudeau’s belief that the New Party was transplanted into Quebec from English Canada. He asserts that the roots for such a party in Quebec stretched back to strikes like Louiseville and to the repressive labour legislation of Duplessis. The New Party was a valid extension of the PSD and FTQ.49 Munn for his part notes that the FTQ, in the struggle to oust Duplessis, saw two options:

créer un parti unissant toutes les classes de la société sur un programme minimum, soit la restauration de la démocratie politique (c’est le projet d’union démocratique de P.E. Trudeau); ou créer un parti politique distinct dont le programme répondrait aux besoins des masses laborieuses, des agriculteurs, des professeurs, etc. et qui instaurerait un régime de démocratie non seulement politique mais aussi économique et sociale. Dès sa fondation,

la FTQ souscrit à cette dernière idée, mais précise cependant qu'elle ne cherchera pas à mettre sur pied un parti ouvrier autonome, basé uniquement sur le mouvement syndical.\textsuperscript{50}

It was clearly the case that the FTQ sought a more holistic definition of democracy. It wanted a party which, while having as a focus the interests of working-class people, would be a party for all classes.\textsuperscript{51} So while the New Party paralleled the UFD’s inter-class alliance, it went beyond it, in offering a more expansive vision of social and economic democracy.

The New Party’s outreach to the liberally-minded in Quebec was similar to that of the federal party. A resolution coming out of the PSD’s 1959 strategic report called for unity with the FTQ to form “a popular broadly-based party.” Attracting the much-touted “liberally-minded” was often invoked as a key goal.\textsuperscript{52} In April 1960 the \textit{Nouvelles de nouveau parti} presented a series of quotes from prominent supporters. FTQ president Roger Provost would speak of labour creating a broad alliance with those deeming themselves liberally-minded, helping achieve labour’s social and economic goals, and offering Quebec an honest and democratic government. PSD executive member Michel Forest would call the New Party a rare opportunity to form an “alliance des forces progressives” in favour of economic planning and liberation. Finally, Chartrand would hold that the PSD was eager to work with “les hommes libres” willing to join their efforts to end the existing economic dictatorship.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Edwidge Munn, “L’action politique partisan à la FTQ (1957-1976),” \textit{Labour/Le Travail} 12 (Fall 1983): 52.
A second piece would examine the victory of New Party candidate Walter Pitman in a Peterborough by-election, which occurred because he, rather than retain the approach of “une certain gauche doctrinaire et masochiste,” had banned the very word socialism from his vocabulary. Such an excision had helped him win support from all classes. Pitman recommended other New Party candidates do the same. Likewise, the *Nouvelles* described a December 1960 New Party meeting in Montreal. While policy discussions centred on fighting for the “plus grand bien-être pour le plus grand nombre,” the methods to achieve this objective remained undefined. Nonetheless, they did not include the dogmatic errors of past socialists. Rather, they entailed embracing a formula that unequivocally respected the dynamic and innovative role of the private sector. This concept of the New Party was predicated on rejecting a narrow class focus, and making it “une place égale à toute personne d’esprit progressif: un parti populaire et non pas un parti travailliste.”

At the same meeting David Lewis delivered a speech noting that those liberally-minded Canadians who came from the intellectual classes vital to the development of new ideas and movements were integral to the New Party’s success. Indeed, Lewis would hold that despite the historical ties professionals had enjoyed with the old parties, the fact was that artists, writers, doctors, lawyers, educators, and clergymen were all, by virtue of their training, linked in the “struggle against injustice and inhumanity” and hence shared the central goals of the New Party.

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Ultimately, the goal of the New Party in Quebec and Canada was a system containing two parties, neither of them socialist. What was needed, rather, was one party of the conservative right, and another of the liberal left. As it stood, claimed one analyst, “our nation does not have two parties which generally represent on the one hand, the conservative right and on the other the liberal left, largely because a major section of the liberal left (the democratic socialists) are organized in a separate party—the CCF.” In essence, the reason the Liberals did not faithfully represent the left was because of the CCF. Therefore, the goal of the New Party was to win over the liberal elements of both old parties, as well as maintain their ties to the ‘socialist-liberals.’ They would thus eliminate one of these two parties, becoming Canada’s preeminent small-l liberal party. The categorization of socialists as liberals (rather than as part of a different ideological family) shows the extent to which the New Party project was one of liberalization. The New Party Clubs were vital because they facilitated involvement outside the old labour and CCF circles, giving liberals a stronger voice during this formative period. The clubs were thus meant to empower, indirectly at the expense of socialist and working-class elements, Canada’s farmers, businessmen, and professionals.56

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Trudeau would praise the New Party, if only in contrast to the PSD. If we look back to his democratic manifesto, we recall his criticism of the CCF-PSD’s unwillingness to put aside its pipe dreams and fight for freedom alongside Liberals. Conversely, Trudeau felt

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that the New Party spoke of ‘démocratie d’abord,’ pragmatism, and class collaboration as he did. This was a marked improvement over the ideological isolationism of the PSD:

*Cet isolationnisme entêté est peut-être appelé à disparaître; car le Congrès national du P.S.D tenu en juillet dernier, a marqué son adhésion unanime à la résolution du Congrès du Travail du Canada, adopté en avril 1958, aux termes de laquelle “on sent le besoin d’un mouvement politique populaire ayant une base très large et qui grouperait le P.S.D., le mouvement syndical, les organisations d’agriculteurs, les membres des professions libérales et toutes autres personnes d’esprit libéral.”* 

Trudeau then approvingly quoted Knowles saying that it was time to appeal more convincingly to a wider swath of the citizenry. Then, why did the Quebec PSD, which had much less to lose, reject his UFD?

*Que le P.S.D national, fort de remarquables traditions parlementaires et de l’adhésion de 10% de l’électorat, en soit amené à avouer son impuissance dans son identité actuelle, cela donne à espérer que le P.S.D québécois mesurera l’efficacité de son action avec un peu plus de réalisme.  57*

If anything, the unification of socialists, workers, and the liberally-minded was most urgent in Québec: “Au national, ou la démocratie est fermement établie, le P.S.D. éprouve la nécessité de se fonder dans un parti nouveau. N’est-ce pas encore plus urgent au Québec où la démocratie est menacée?” Marchand would opine that the CCFers had learned that their initial class parameters had limited their potential. Their new efforts signaled a “maturité politique et un meilleur sens électoral.” 58

Despite the generalized fawning over a new liberal dawn, there were a few dissenting voices. Kenneth McNaught, the biographer of J.S. Woodsworth, argued that the CCF’s first leader would have rejected the recent love-in for capitalism, the infatuation with Galbraith and Kennedy, and the classification of the middle class as the only major

creative force in society. In McNaught’s view, the inherent frailties of capitalism had not been solved. He was dismayed by the party’s renunciation of socialism. Galbraith’s theories—barbituates in McNaught’s view—would simply allow the continued dominance of corporate wealth over all aspects of Canadian life, manipulating the people to an extent that would “rival the thought-control of communism.” Woodsworth would never have renounced, his belief in a cooperative economic order:

That which gave Woodsworth his great strength was the ability to define and hold to a basic principle...A nod in the direction of equality of opportunity would not have satisfied him. An unequivocal declaration of belief in equality accompanied by a clear renunciation of the principle of competition would still have been the sine qua non.

He might well have been unpopular were he here today, but for the health of the New Party, it is a shame he is not.59

Looking back, McNaught notes how this period was one of ideological struggle in the party, with him carrying the banner of social ownership against “moderates in the labour and New Party movement.” Recalling his 1961 polemic specifically, he conceded that while his tone may have been abrasive, he felt justified in his belief that the party was sacrificing essential principles in the pursuit of power. McNaught also recalled Ramsay Cook’s retort, which critiqued his viewpoint as one characterized by a fetishization of the past, a rejection of the contemporary economic context, and a fear of striking a balance between power and principle. Party stalwart Carlyle King had conversely intimated to

McNaught that he agreed with the belief that while the New Party was the force for the democratic left, it would require “a constant stream of constructive socialist criticism.”

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What can we conclude from these developments? It is clear that Trudeau, the PSD-CCF, and labour had each developed distinct analyses of the political system they wanted to transform. Undoubtedly, in the small world of Montreal left politics, personalities made a difference. Trudeau may well have been offended by social-democratic friends who did not take his projects seriously. Advocates of the PSD-CCF and New Party may have been put off by Trudeau’s cavalier dismissal of their decades of struggle, and by his suggestion that they resign themselves to being the junior partners of the Liberals. Indeed, Trudeau would a half century later lament his colleagues’ role in derailing his projects, especially the Rassemblement:

 Ça n’a pas fonctionné parce que…les gens étaient assez ancrés dans leur parti qu’ils n’avaient pas envie de risquer d’aller au pouvoir avec l’autre si eux-mêmes pouvaient aller au pouvoir seuls. C’était le vice, le vice logique que je voyais. Duplessis serait toujours là…chacun veut aller au pouvoir tout seul pour le battre.

Yet, despite these conflicts, the New Party was something clearly marketed towards the likes of Trudeau. There may have been debates determining the current state of liberal democracy in Quebec, but the fact was that all three initiatives — New Party, UFD, and Rassemblement alike — sought to unite liberals and socialists. So while Trudeau may have argued that democracy must come first, the New Party’s mild push for economic

60 Kenneth McNaught, Conscience and History: A Memoir (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 155; for Cook’s retort to McNaught, see “The Old Man, the Old Manifesto, the Old Party,” The Canadian Forum, May 1961.
democracy was in large part drawn up according to Trudeauvian specifications. Why then did Trudeau, after seeing the decision of the PSD to unite with labour and the liberally-minded, not join with them to fight for democracy? Why, despite the praise he would bestow upon the New Party in 1958 for forging a popular movement beyond the borders of socialism, did he call it as early as January 1961 a “mort-né” in Quebec? Why, after the defeat of the Union Nationale by a democratic party in the Quebec Liberals, was the time now not ripe to offer a true debate between liberalism and socialism to the Quebec electorate? The answers to these questions can be found in the history of Quebec nationalism and the applicability of the NDP to Quebec, as many scholars have urged. Yet they also should include the manifest reality that, however much the CCF-NDP tried to liberalize its image and philosophy, it would never fully be a movement acceptable to a liberal like Trudeau.

While Trudeau’s migration to the Liberals over the course of the early 1960s was neither immediate nor consistent, it did follow the logic of the positions he had articulated since the mid-1950s. He admired the New Party, and the early NDP, because he liked the liberalism they espoused. Indeed, Trudeau would, as he had in the 1950s, support social democrats in cases in which he felt the Liberals acted in an illiberal fashion, as in Lester Pearson’s decision to house nuclear weapons. What is perhaps most interesting, however, is how the New Democrats, despite Trudeau’s distance from them, would still attempt to woo him. This would continue until up to the very moment when the famous three wise men announced their Liberal candidacies in 1965. Indeed, Trudeau would remain until then

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a man whom, according to Gérard Pelletier, the NDP “would have welcomed...with joy.”

While Trudeau never committed himself to Canada’s preeminent social democratic movement, many of its key members regarded him as an ally, and were rather shocked when he joined the Liberals. They might have been less surprised had they paid closer attention to his ideological development.

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Chapter 5

Democracy Renewed, Socialism Eschewed: Trudeau, the Liberals, and the NDP, 1960-68

If last chapter focused on the New Party, the Rassemblement, and UFD, this chapter will first examine Trudeau’s migration to the federal Liberal Party. The chapter will then examine Trudeau’s first electoral campaign in 1965, along with the resulting reaction from leftists close to him. The chapter will close with Trudeau becoming a Liberal MP.

This chapter will not provide a detailed analysis of the Quiet Revolution and left-wing nationalism in Quebec. It will focus instead on how we encounter a Trudeau, now far less organically connected to the trade union movement, whose principal relations with the left were with the NDP and social democratic intellectuals, who were now weaker than before. As he would note in a 1963 letter, his work as a professor meant that gone were his “free and easy years” of trade unionism.

This chapter demonstrates that although democracy, according to Trudeau, had been reinstated in Quebec, he evinced no willingness to enhance the formal individualistic guarantees of liberalism with the sorts of rights defended by social democrats. He was still firmly liberal in his convictions. As had been the case with his pro-labour activism in the


2 PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 33, file 5, Trudeau to Aileen Desbarats, 16 October 1963.
1950s, governed always by the goal of promoting liberal democracy in Québec, so it was with his ‘radicalism’ of the 1960s, which was instrumentally designed to provoke the Liberal Party to a greater consistency and clarity. In both cases, advancing the ideals of labour and the left was a means to an end: a more rational, functional, liberal order.

It was on 7 September 1959 when Maurice Duplessis died suddenly, to be succeeded by Paul Sauvé. Although Sauvé might have been able to salvage the Union Nationale legacy, he too died after a heart attack on 2 January 1960. He would be followed by long-time labour minister, Antonio Barrette, who was defeated in 1960 by Lesage. In Cité libre Trudeau produced pieces both before and after the election announcing his perceptions, intentions, and analysis, as well as expressing the resentments he still held towards the CCF-NDP over the Rassemblement and UFD. Trudeau chastised the PSD because it was of “d’opinion qu’idéologiquement ils ne pouvaient pas discuter d’union avec un parti aussi ‘pourri’ que le parti libéral.” Trudeau noted bluntly that this strategy had failed. The PSD’s push for ideological purity had led to its justly-deserved downfall:

De la sorte, et par un juste retour des choses, ceux-là mêmes qui prétendaient ‘préserver’ leurs électeurs contre d’‘avilissants’ contacts avec les libéraux, aujourd’hui mettent ces électeurs dans l’obligation de voter libéral, sans condition et sans garantie...Les socialistes...se sont gardé les mains pures...en se coupant les mains.  

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4 Barrette was a labour activist for the International Association of Machinists in the 1930s. See Antonio Barrette, Mémoires (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1966). Pelletier would write a piece on Barrette, focussed on the ironies, hypocrisies, and significance of him being the first “working class” premier. Pelletier, “Un premier ministre ‘ouvrier’?” Cité libre, March 1960, 13-4.
Trudeau was under no illusion that the Liberals, whom he once dubbed “the party of conservatism,” were perfect. They too had refused “de se compromettre avec d’hommes de la gauche démocratique, voire même avec d’authentiques indépendants.” Nevertheless, the Liberals had won Trudeau’s support because, in his books, they constituted the only viable democratic choice. The reality was that the PSD had allowed the Liberals to monopolize oppositional forces, and created a situation in which leftists, René Lévesque, for example, lacked any other avenue to power. A subsequent effect was that the Liberals lacked sufficient pressure from the left, and thus proposed few structural changes to challenge the wealthy interests that bankrolled their party. Trudeau’s views may have been expressed in a petty manner, but he had grasped some truths regarding the CCF-NDP’s ill-preparedness for the 1960 provincial election. While a series of internal reports were initially optimistic about the election, envisioning as many as 30 PSD candidates, there was eventual skepticism about any such endeavor. The upshot was that, as a July 1960 report states, the party felt it was best that it not contest seats, because it had little chance of winning them.6

So what of Trudeau’s prediction for the election? While warning against “le prophétisme,” a Liberal victory was clearly welcomed, even if it might crystallize undemocratic elements in the party that, under ideal circumstances, might be excised. In all this, Trudeau put little stock in the CCF-NDP. The alternative to the Liberals, should they lose, was not socialism but his own program of democracy first: “Alors il faudra de nouveau chercher une formule pour faire l’unité des forces réformistes. Et j’espère que

cette fois, on mettra moins d’obstination à ne pas comprendre l’urgence pour notre Province du mot d’ordre ‘Démocratie d’abord.’” Regardless of the accusations Trudeau made against Liberals in the 1950s, he now felt they were indispensable to democracy in a way socialists were not. Looking back from 1992, Trudeau argued that the Liberals had been lucky in 1960: while the progressive movement in Quebec was weaker for not following through with his UFD, the Liberals were in the right place and time to fill the void created by the death of Duplessis.  

After their win, Trudeau would give cautious praise to the Liberals, and continued to jab at the CCF-NDP. He began by noting that the reign of the Union Nationale had been one of tyranny, corruption, and disregard for common good. Thus, the day was one to celebrate, for it was the Liberals, and only the Liberals, that had delivered liberty. Trudeau felt the election, characterized as it had been by no distractions from the PSD, illuminated the question, “pour ou contre la vigueur et le progrès, pour ou contre la démocratie?” He would elaborate: “En l’absence de tiers-partis, le sentiment de faiblesse chez l’Union nationale joint à l’apparence de renouveau chez les Libéraux, suffit pour donner à ces derniers les votes marginaux qui signifiaient la victoire.” This was important for Trudeau. After all, the Liberals had won by the skin of their teeth. Even the microscopic presence of the PSD might have killed democracy. The socialists, Trudeau proclaimed wryly, had abandoned any political significance in their refusal to align with the Liberals:

La gauche québécoise restera sans influence électorale utile si elle ne trouve pas quelque moyen d’agir de concert. Peut-être devra-t-elle se résigner à

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ouvrir des consultations au moyen de quelque Rassemblement, ou de quelque union des forces démocratiques...  

To a certain degree, voices in the PSD—such as that of W.H. Pope, writing in 1960—agreed with Trudeau’s assessment:

There was a general satisfaction with the results of the Quebec election and with the decision...not to contest this election. If we had contested it, all we could have managed to do would be to allow the UN to hold on to power...This would have been bad for Quebec and Canada and disastrous for the SDP.

But while Trudeau commended the Liberals’ victory, he was not ready to trust them. As had been the case during the previous regime, the democratic opposition must come from civil society. The Liberals’ reformist zeal was as tenuous as their electoral results. It might well be dulled altogether in favour of catering to the party’s traditional base. The informal opposition must offer them conditional support: when the Liberals advanced democracy, they should be praised, and when they fell back into alignment with the elite, they should be chastised.

So while Trudeau was not fully committed to the Liberals, he was much less optimistic about the Quebec New Party/NDP. Debate on this point, especially between Trudeau and fellow Citélibriste Marcel Rioux, was stormy. In 1960-1, Rioux spoke of the election’s significance and the role of the New Party going forward. Like Trudeau,

8 Trudeau, “l’Élection du 22 Juin 1960,” Cité libre, August-September 1960, 3-8. The piece noted that if as little as 95 votes shifted, the result would have flipped.
11 Rioux would become an ardent separatist, and his friendship with Trudeau would lapse by the time the latter became a Liberal. For more by Rioux, see Marcel Rioux and Yves Martin, French-Canadian Society (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964); Marcel Rioux, La question du Québec (Montreal: Parti Pris, 1976); S.M Crean and Marcel Rioux, Two Nations: An Essay on the Culture and Politics of Canada and Quebec in a World of American Pre-Eminence (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1983). See also Jules Duchastel, Marcel Rioux: entre l’utopie et la raison (Montréal: Nouvelle Optique, 1981).
Rioux saw the Liberal victory as monumental and inspiring. Nevertheless, it was Rioux’s view that the New Party offered an avenue through which the French-Canadian left, especially if attuned to Quebec sensibilities, could challenge the old parties. In essence, he felt the Quebec left had a greater role to play than merely serving as a wing within the Liberal Party.12

Trudeau was fiercely opposed to Rioux’s recommendation, and felt the need to inform *Cité libre* readers that the latter’s opinion was not that of the journal. Trudeau made it clear that though *Cité libre*’s support for the Liberals was conditional on their commitment to the “restoration” of freedom, it was unwise for Quebec progressives to abandon the Liberals for a party that was little more than a “ramassis de doctrinaires sans racines et de chefs syndiqués en quête d’un gîte politique.” Trudeau still felt scorned by those labour activists and socialists who had abandoned his democratic projects. The very existence of the NDP in Quebec would have been unnecessary if only its partisans had listened to him:

Nous songeons, non sans amertume, aux années perdues de 1956 à 1959, alors que l’Union nationale devenait sénile et que le Parti libéral était terrassé par sa défaite au fédéral: le Rassemblement et plus tard l’Union des forces démocratiques tentaient alors un regroupement des gauches qui aurait pu éventuellement déboucher sur un nouveau parti.13

As the Nemnis note, “Trudeau had not yet come to terms with the failure of the Rassemblement and [the] Union of Democratic Forces. He simply could not understand why the people responsible for this failure were now rushing to the new party.” They also note this 1961 article as a turning point: when before Trudeau would occasionally claim

the language of socialism, “he would, from then on describe *Cité libre* as a magazine on
the ‘liberal left’ or ‘non-partisan left.’”\(^{14}\)

One can see this trend illuminated by Marchand, a vital influence in Trudeau’s
transition to full-fledged Liberalism.\(^{15}\) In December 1960, Marchand dismissed socialist
parties because in democracies, a government must reflect all classes; otherwise, one was
bound to confront violence, as in Cuba and the USSR. Marchand dismissed class-based
politics as emphasized by some unions and the CCF tradition:

> Je ne croyais pas à un parti ouvrier…pour deux raisons: premièrement parce
qu’en principe c’est inadmissible, et, deuxièmement, parce qu’un tel parti ne peut prendre le pouvoir que par la force…Le bien commun politique ne pouvant s’identifier au bien particulier d’une classe.

Marchand would continue:

> Un parti greffé sur une seule classe ne peut trouver l’appui démocratique minimum à l’obtention du pouvoir politique. Comme le pouvoir est la fin même du parti politique, ou bien ce parti de classe pourrira dans l’opposition ou bien il tentera de s’emparer du gouvernement par d’autres moyens que les moyens démocratiques.\(^{16}\)

Marchand was painting the Liberal Party as the party of choice for democratic progressives.
It was not just Trudeau and Marchand who saw these developments as ones limiting the
relevance of the New Party. The attendees to a 1961 New Party seminar in Quebec, while
more supportive of it than Trudeau, echoed many of his positions, including the belief that
the party was a “mort-né,” had few hopes of winning, and served only to split the Liberal

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\(^{14}\) Max and Monique Nemni, *Trudeau Transformed*, 419.

\(^{15}\) Trudeau would in 1983 credit Marchand for his entry into politics. PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 52, “Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Question and Answer Session,” 10 March 1983.

vote. Further, many felt the Quebec Liberals deserved an opportunity to live up to their reformist credentials.\footnote{PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 28, file 22, Michel Forest, “La gauche et le Nouveau Parti,” 4 February 1961.}

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Trudeau’s dissatisfaction with the CCF-NDP was not based solely on the reformed Liberals or his personal feelings of betrayal. There was also the national question. As his Memoirs note:

The party’s program, similar to that of the British Labour Party, appealed to me. But initially the excessive centralism of the CCF and its ignorance of French Canada bothered me a great deal. And later, when it swung to the other extreme, the NDP’s support for the “two nations” doctrine made me give it up for good.\footnote{Trudeau, Memoirs, 70.}

Another statement from 1992:

It was only [in] the C.C.F. where I had a lot of friends…but somehow [the] C.C.F didn’t seem to understand Quebec…[it was] when they decided to opt for the two-nations theory which is so contrary to my whole approach to Quebec nationalism that I said this isn’t the party for me.\footnote{PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23, file 3, “Interview between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Graham,” 28 April 1992.}

As corroborated by Pelletier, Trudeau was in the 1950s put off by the CCF’s socialism, which was insensitive to the desires of progressive Quebeckers.\footnote{Gérard Pelletier, Years of Impatience: 1950-1960, 145-7.} The issue in the early 1960s, however, was now the NDP’s supposed kowtowing to the separatist cause, specifically at the 1961 founding convention. David Sherwood, in his 1966 Master’s thesis on the NDP and French Canada, noted a highly optimistic tone to the Quebec delegation, eager to put behind them the Anglo-centric CCF and build a party of the left in Quebec for Quebeckers, in which the NDP constitution recognized Quebec’s special status. First came the convention programme accepting that the term “nation” could be applied to both

\footnote{17 PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 28, file 22, Michel Forest, “La gauche et le Nouveau Parti,” 4 February 1961.}
\footnote{18 Trudeau, Memoirs, 70.}
\footnote{19 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23, file 3, “Interview between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Graham,” 28 April 1992.}
\footnote{20 Gérard Pelletier, Years of Impatience: 1950-1960, 145-7.}
English and French Canada, and that Canada was made stronger through the cooperation of its “two national cultures.”21 Beyond this, however, were amendments from the floor that specified that all references to ‘nation’ in the constitution be replaced by ‘federal.’ The justification for this change, accepted almost unanimously by the delegates, was as follows:

Considérant que les Canadiens d'origine française constituent une nation distincte, et que de leur point de vue le terme 'national' ne peut s'expliquer à l'ensemble de la population canadienne ni à un parti ou un organisme aspirant à représenter l'ensemble de cette population. Considérant que le terme 'national' appliqué au Nouveau Parti apparaîtrait à bon droit à l'immense majorité des Canadiens français comme l'expression d'une mentalité incompréhensive sinon assimilatrice à l'endroit de la nation canadienne-français…22

Chartrand rationalized these constitutional changes as ones that incorporated a political language for French Canadians that reflected their national values.23

Forsey for his part opposed the two-nations concept. For him, Canada was one nation with two primary linguistic groups. It was “lunacy” to form a new national party and then have it claim there was no Canadian nation. While Forsey would at times still vote for, and donate to, the NDP, he would never join the CCF’s successor. His daughter would note this change as a turning point in his life, creating deep tensions with friends in the party. Forsey would also recall how the two-nations policy affected Trudeau. Even as prime minister, Trudeau would chastise the NDP for its appeasement of Quebec nationalists. Others would also take a skeptical view, including H. Blair Neatby, who would argue that there was still a fundamental disconnect between English-speaking and

22 Chartrand quoted in Sherwood, “The N.D.P in French Canada,” 68,
French-speaking members, the former simply trying to placate the nationalists, and the latter not satisfied with any such concessions.24

On this note, Trudeau would during this period write a series of articles that showcased his views of federalism and socialism. On the whole, they indicate that however important the national question was for Trudeau, the issues of socio-economic ideology weighed more heavily. In covering the 1962 provincial election, Trudeau, as a self-proclaimed ‘man of the left,’ would lambaste NDPers, who in their struggle for leftist purity were willing to upset the Liberal Party and allow the Union Nationale to run up the middle.25 The NDP was for Trudeau a lost cause in Quebec because it was framed, as had been the case with the CCF-PSD, by its “termes de référence sur le plan politique se situent hors de la province de Québec.” The only left in Quebec that was electable was the Liberal Party’s left wing, typified by Trudeau’s future rival, René Lévesque. The socialists, out of jealousy and bitterness, refused to give full credit to progressive liberals. In short, Trudeau felt the name “New Democratic Party” was a misnomer because the body was not democratic in its cadre-style rule, was not new due to the carry-over from the CCF-PSD, and was even precluded, due to its microscopic size, from claiming the status of “party.”


25 Trudeau would get his way, as the NDP would not contest the election, leaving the Liberals as the only party of “the left.” The FTQ for its part, would also sit on the sidelines because the NDP was unprepared. See “the QFL and Politics: Electoral Campaign...No, Recruiting Campaign, Yes,” Labour World/Monde Ouvrier, October 1962; “No NDP Candidates Entered for the Provincial Election,” Labour World/Monde Ouvrier, October 1962.
All this meant that NDPers needed to attach “plus d’importance à l’avenir de la démocratie québécoise qu’au nom de leur parti.”

A more substantive piece came in *Social Purpose for Canada* (1961), a book designed to revise *Social Planning for Canada* (1935) by reconceptualising socialism for a prosperous world. Trudeau’s piece dealt with the issue of socialism and federalism, and would again demonstrate his concern with socialism’s centralizing tendencies as perceived by French Canadians. Socialist parties the world over were reappraising their economic doctrines, Trudeau declared. They realized that centralized planning and nationalization were anachronistic. Trudeau thus felt that Canadian socialists had failed to adapt to federalism because they still dreamt of a federal government wielding strongly centralized powers. Trudeau sought to showcase the opportunities for a socialist federalism. The route to democratic socialism was through “bridgeheads” in the provinces: “federalism must be welcomed as a valuable tool which permits dynamic parties to plant socialist governments in certain provinces, from which the seed of radicalism can slowly spread.” Because provinces experienced political, social, and economic development at different rates, federalism allowed socialism to be adapted to various contexts. It also required that socialists shed doctrines, asking no more than “how much reform can the majority of the people be brought to desire at the present time?” Socialism, therefore, must not be inflexible, but rather “must stand for different things in different parts of Canada.” Trudeau here, in speaking of socialism as an outsider, portrays it not as an ideology distinct from

liberalism, but merely an outgrowth from it, one placing more emphasis on compassion, planning, and social security.

Trudeau felt this divergent approach to ideology and federalism was better utilized by the old parties than the CCF-NDP, which often spoke as a singular body, a process bound to leave Quebec voters, as well as many others, frustrated. Trudeau outlined in detail not only the Rassemblement and UFD controversies, but then, in an ironic twist, chastised the CCF-NDP for being too hard on Quebec nationalists:

The Quebec organization squandered its efforts and ridiculed itself by running spurious candidates in two or three dozen ridings at each federal election…mainly in order that the electorate of the rest of Canada might be momentarily fooled into believing that the party was strong in Quebec. Then in 1956 and 1957, when efforts were being made to enlarge the left in Quebec by grouping all liberal-minded people in the Rassemblement, members of the CCF…refused to envisage any orientation that might lead to the setting up of a left-wing political group…Finally…when the CCF decided it was no longer here to stay but here to merge into a new party, the Quebec branch of the CCF—on the grounds that it had to wait for the new party—rejected the Union des forces démocratiques, with the consequences, in June, 1960, that the Union Nationale party was defeated by the Liberals alone.

Such references are necessary to illustrate what great pains were taken by the CCF in Quebec in order to avoid ‘nationalist deviationism.’ In view of Quebec’s past, such a course was not without justification, but it obviously went too far when it precluded the Quebec left from exploiting the same type of elementary opportunity as that which permitted the launching by Mr. Ed Finn of a new party in Newfoundland, even though the new party had not yet fired the starting gun.27

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27 Trudeau, “The Practice and Theory of Federalism,” in Social Purpose for Canada, ed. Michael Oliver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 371-6. The comparison to Newfoundland is unfair. Trudeau’s Rassemblement and UFD were liberal democratic endeavours linked with the Liberals, while the Newfoundland Democratic Party was created with the support of the CCF, CLC, and Newfoundland Federation of Labour to contest the election against Liberal premier Joey Smallwood, and would merge with the NDP upon the latter’s formation. For more by Finn, see Under Corporate Rule: The Big Business Takeover of Canada (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1996); Living with Uncle Sam: Canada-US Relations in an Age of Empire, eds. Bruce Campbell and Ed Finn (Toronto: James Lorimer, 2006).
Trudeau was asking the NDP to walk a tightrope of sorts. He wanted the party to be more accommodating to the Quebec and Francophone viewpoint, even to the extent of supporting predominantly liberal-democratic formations in Quebec, but would soon after chastise it for bowing to the nationalists. It becomes clearer that, given the volatility of this position, Trudeau’s grievances with the NDP were based on discordances between socialism and liberalism. It might seem that Trudeau was included in this book as a socialist, but he approached this task as an outsider, speaking of socialists and the “socialist mind” in a distanced fashion. The Nemnis take note of this text as evidence of Trudeau’s “ambiguous relationship” with socialists.\(^{28}\) In fact, Trudeau in the piece would declare again and again that liberal values outweighed socialist ones. When he said that all things are up for debate, this implicitly excluded core aspects of his liberal paradigm. In this paper, Trudeau is therefore holding that liberal democracy and Canadian federalism—a “chose donnée”—are both fundamental. Socialists had to work within these frameworks or face irrelevance.

Trudeau was in a sense correct regarding the powder keg that existed for the NDP on the national question. Not only did the provincial association delay its founding convention until 1963, but it also became racked by divisions that led to the left-nationalist party, the Parti socialiste du Québec, breaking off at that first convention. As David Sherwood notes, papers prepared by Chartrand and others advocated sovereignty-association, with Quebec becoming a republic with control over its internal affairs, from criminal law to culture to finance. The relationship between Canada and the State of

Quebec would be adjudicated by a court. While the NDP was open to recognizing a distinct nation of French Canadians—Charles Taylor would say that “le Canada français constitue incontestablement une nation”—these particular proposals were unacceptable.29

Leading more directly to the schism was a paper by the nationalist contingent outlining strategies in Quebec. The first was deemed the Status Quo, in which the Quebec NDP would exist as in other provinces. The second option would fully sever ties between the NDP and the Quebec socialists, leaving the NDP to contest federal elections only. The third option upheld a similar division of labour, but would maintain a connection. In essence, the nationalists carried the day, and what resulted, according to Taylor, was a “gentleman’s agreement” whereby the two separated parties would respect each other’s electoral jurisdiction. In the end, the PSQ would be little more than a blip on the Quebec electoral map before folding in 1968.30

Tensions over the national question are also covered by Ramsay Cook, who would leave the NDP to support Trudeau. Cook noted that while the NDP should be commended for facing the questions of Anglo-Quebec relations, a two-nations policy endangered Canada. Cook, like Trudeau, was asking the NDP both to abandon its ideological anachronisms around centralization and to embrace the provinces, but not so much so that it encouraged alternative political interpretations of the federal-provincial relationship. For Cook, the NDP was divided by fundamental philosophical differences. Moreover, it

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continued to see federalism primarily as an obstacle, whereas Trudeau saw in that structure the only way to govern Canada.³¹

In addition to spurning the NDP’s two-nations policy, Trudeau’s 1961 essay articulated socialism in a way utterly detached from its core attributes. He suggested a “pragmatic” socialism in which “the basis of a socialist ideology is to work out a certain set of human values, for the fostering of which society is held collectively responsible.” He would continue by noting that a socialist program must be based upon the creation and attainment of minimum standards of the above-mentioned values. It sounded rather progressive, and was perhaps something with which many NDPers agreed, but it was in almost no way socialist. Trudeau’s conception of “socialism” is tantamount to a minimum platform, almost completely void of specifics. For Trudeau, liberal freedoms and federalism are universal and non-negotiable, and infringements upon them are to be decried and given no quarter. Socialist freedoms, however, are acceptable only in certain political and economic contexts: while socialists must be willing to compromise their core values, liberals should remain resolute in theirs.³²

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While Trudeau’s work with labour diminished during this period, one of his most significant projects was a constitutional brief for the FTQ, CSN, and the l’Union catholique des cultivateurs. While the unions initially accepted its federalist line, they would later reject it as nationalist sentiments grew. Trudeau, however, would publish his version in Federalism and the French Canadians, where he would again intertwine liberalism and

federalism. Trudeau would argue that a focus on cultural questions often led to a discounting of the experiences of working people: “I am afraid that excessive preoccupation with the future of the [French] language has made certain people forget the future of the man speaking it.” The worker for Trudeau lived precariously, was most affected by policy, would suffer most under any nationalist economic regime, and would benefit most from an open and free-trading economy. Nationalist economics for Trudeau were but a tool to insulate the French Canadian professional classes from competition. Trudeau’s position developed in dialogue with his long-time economic confidant, Albert Breton, who argued that nationalists restricted markets to lord themselves over the local working class. For Trudeau and Breton, the solution for the common man was not socialism but trade liberalization. Trudeau noted that any dream of Quebec’s economic independence had been rendered impossible given the province’s connections to Canada and the USA, so all economic policies must be conceived in the framework of a continental economy in which capital could flow freely. In Trudeau’s mind, and here he borrowed from Breton, “emotional” campaigns around buying Canadian or promoting national ownership were ultimately detrimental to workers. They threatened to transform them into a “captive market” dominated by an elite with no incentive to increase efficiency or respond to

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consumer demands. Only by adopting free-market principles and rejecting isolationism—which was a strategy that merely “increased prestige and dividends for propertied classes”—could workers flourish.34

In Breton’s work, the issues of class are squarely in the forefront. Breton argued that the nationalist ideology was the product of an aspiring middle class from the dominant nationality. Not only did Breton argue that separatism became more popular as income rose, meaning that the poor were rightly opposed to nationalist panaceas, but also that the economic benefits of nationalism were siphoned off by this middle class. In this way, an economic order designed by nationalists, less efficient than a liberal one, would see its more meagre wealth monopolized in non-working-class hands. Breton and Trudeau were positioning classical liberals as the premier allies of the working class. This argument was a relatively late addition to Trudeau’s ideological arsenal. Hereafter it because a central one. Trudeau would often argue, as Prime Minister, that socialists and union leaders cared not for Canada’s working masses: only those who steadfastly defended the ideals of liberalism stood up for them.35

For all these liberal nostrums, Trudeau’s constitutional brief was rich in egalitarian rhetoric. It proclaimed, in a paraphrase of Laski, that all should “have the essential before a few are allowed to enjoy the superfluous.” (Trudeau did not define either “essential” or “superfluous.”) He defended trade liberalization as a program whose social costs could be offset by social programs paid for by the revenues generated by a vibrant economy.36

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Yet in this liberal mode, Trudeau had unmistakably classified social programs, not as core attributes of democracy, but as peripheral luxuries. His argument was never that ‘society must sacrifice superfluity, including private property if need be, to constitutionally guaranteed social standards,’ but rather that ‘if society can afford social programs and most support them, we should consider them.’ Trudeau, while laying out his understanding of economic realities and constitutional goals, accepted as truth a modified trickle-down theory. Social programs were palliatives to be made available only if politically viable. As he argued in a 1960 interview, capitalism, however exploitative, was the indispensable generator of material happiness: “Je pense que les deux ont raison, les uns qui disent c’est la source de l’exploitation et les autres qui disent c’est également le system qui a permis le monde d’arriver au plus haut de vrais avances matériels.”37 So while Trudeau noted the need for providing for “necessity” before “superfluity,” the “superfluity” in this case was not wealth and privilege, as per Laski, but rather education, healthcare, and housing. The essentials were the economic ‘facts’ that underpinned international capitalism and structural inequality. Once the essentials of property rights and capitalism were protected, the masses could perhaps enjoy the fruits of their contingent social rights.

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Despite such continued, and more fervent, declarations of his liberal economic ideals, and his critiques of the New Party, Trudeau was not closed off to an NDP eager to recruit him. Trudeau would also continue critiquing the Liberals, with one of the best examples being his analysis of their 1961 federal convention, summed by the words

“nothing new.” The convention was a watershed, Trudeau declared, with three routes available. The first was to follow W.L.M. King’s approach, occupy a large ideological swath and following the tides of the electorate. The second option, and Trudeau’s choice, was to position itself as a viable party of the left. In the end, the Liberals took door three, the tired centre-right route, which gave primacy to the “fidélités bourgeois et capitalisantes.” So for Trudeau, the Liberals’ refusal to embrace progressive trends created, at least for the time being, crucial room for the NDP to breathe if it could seize the moment with pragmatic policy.38

Still, his biggest critique of the Liberals came in 1963 with regard to the nuclear arms issue. It began with what is now a famous saying by Vadeboncoeur, who called Pearson “le défrôqué de la paix.” Trudeau attacked Pearson no less vigorously. In pursuing power, he had degenerated from an anti-nuclear Nobel laureate to someone who believed that Canada must embrace mass death. Added to his excoriation of Pearson were critiques of other Liberals whose silence was deafening. As Trudeau said, it seemed the only time Liberals could critique their leader was after he was gone. Such a bovine deference highlighted the moral and intellectual bankruptcy in the party: “dites n’importe quoi, pensez n’importe quoi; ou encore mieux, ne pensez rien du tout; mais mettez-nous au pouvoir, parce que c’est nous qui pouvons le mieux vous gouverner.” In the end, Trudeau said, pragmatism was one thing, but integrity and democracy were easily discarded: he would vote for the NDP in 1963 and even campaigned in Montreal for Charles Taylor.

Yet, Trudeau was not making a case for the NDP, but against the Liberals. Additionally, critiques of the Liberals centred on particular weaknesses regarding

corruption and opportunism, rather than on their ideological deficiencies. Nevertheless, the NDP’s principled stand against nuclear weapons made it acceptable, if only as a protest vote. This piece seemed to arouse moderate interest within NDP circles, with Tommy Douglas’ files containing a translated version that highlighted passages about the Liberals’ win-at-all-costs mentality, the NDP’s moral high-ground, and Trudeau’s assertion that while he may have discarded his “youthful revolts…for the love of reality and efficiency,” he would not support Pearson’s betrayal.39

One of the most intriguing attempts to make Trudeau an NDPer came in 1965, when Kenneth McNaught asked him if he would admit that his ideals were informed by socialism. Trudeau’s answer was emblematic of his functional approach, and his oft-repeated assertion that socialists numbered among his biggest intellectual influences:

> Our discussion slowly focused on whether or not he should formalize the socialism that clearly informed [Trudeau’s Social Purpose] essay...Somewhat euphoric, I ticked off a half-dozen of the main CCF planks; after each Pierre said simply, ‘d'accord.’ At the end of this arrogant catechism I said I had a party membership card and would he care to sign it. With a grin he declined: 'One at a time, but not all together.'40

More significant were talks of him becoming an NDP candidate in 1963, recruited to give the party a credible image and leadership in Quebec. Internal party sources indicate that “it was hoped that P.E Trudeau would accept the candidacy in the riding of Papineau, but after some consideration he declined.”41 Along this line, in 1962 the NDP proposed a federal-provincial commission on federalism and bi-culturalism that would be appropriated by the Liberals in 1963 as the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Interesting

40 Kenneth McNaught, *Conscience and History*, 139.
41 CCF-NDP Fonds, Vol. 454, file 9, David Sherwood, 129. Papineau is Justin Trudeau’s current riding.
as yet another instance of Liberal poaching of an NDP innovation, its deeper significance can be discerned in the NDP’s capacity to influence the very make-up of the committee. They wanted Trudeau amongst such NDPers as Morton, Scott, and Oliver. Finally, Trudeau would be approached in 1964 by NDPers at the University of Toronto to have his name grace their new clubhouse. Trudeau responded graciously. Although flattered, he felt worthy of the distinction.42

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One of the most important developments of this period was Trudeau’s participation in a group that produced the manifesto “Pour une politique fonctionnelle,” published in May 1964. The “functionalists” who produced the manifesto—including Albert Breton and future Trudeau cabinet minister Marc Lalonde—declared liberal freedoms in Quebec to be under imminent threat from anti-liberal tendencies like clericalism and nationalism, putting the province’s fledgling democracy and economy at risk. In the authors’ minds, economic nationalism accomplished little beyond creating inefficiencies and preventing opportunities. It aggravated unemployment for the already poor, enriched a sliver of the middle classes, and pushed Quebec towards “the formation of two societies, each unfamiliar with the needs of the other.”43

The manifesto moved on to the question of inequality, noting the systemic and historical failure of media and government to address it. It focused more on inequality between regions than classes, and couched its solutions, not in any great overarching

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framework, but as responses to the inefficient application of human capital. Equality here is sanitized of class distinction. It pertains to opportunity rather than condition. The manifesto concludes with a clarion call for political realism—an ideological call against ideology. Solutions to problems were not found in ideologies, but in individual responses to individual events. Larger frameworks were blind alleys, and Canadians must “descend from the euphoria of all-embracing ideologies and come to grips with actual problems. Planning for instance, is largely a technical problem, but it is becoming an ideological pass key.” This was not to say Trudeau and his colleagues denied the importance of an activist state; indeed, Trudeau still saw government, as he had in the 1950s, as key to promoting a functional liberal order. But still, we see again in the manifesto a defense of liberal democracy as something that transcended ideology. Trudeau, willing to dismiss socialism, nationalism, and economic democracy, refused to discuss the ideological character, historical variability or contemporary negotiability of liberal freedoms. Dorval Brunelle notes the piece as one of a liberal bent that marked, along with the statements of the Rassemblement and the UFD, an effort on the part of Trudeau to articulate a form of individualism similar to that of the Liberal Party.44

Despite all this, the functionalist manifesto fit into the spectrum of what had become acceptable NDP thought. A party newsletter would speak of it with great fondness, noting especially its commitment to democracy, universalism, and rationality: “Les idées qui se dégagent de cet ensemble coïncident assez bien avec celles que le Nouveau Parti

Démocratique…Elles évoquent le danger constant que présente toute forme de dogmatisme rigide ou de veulerie politique à l’endroit de la liberté.”

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In 1965, of course, Trudeau announced not just his liberalism, but his Liberalism. Desmond Morton and *The Economist* deemed the news to be the “harshest blow” to the 1965 federal NDP campaign. Tommy Douglas would face questions about the move of the three “socialists,” and while he questioned whether they ever were socialists, he recalled how they had once supported the party. The *Toronto Star* would note that the NDP was struggling in Quebec and desperately needed the likes of the three wise men.

This was not the first time Trudeau would consider becoming a Liberal. Most Trudeau scholars have noted that even in his youth, Trudeau wished to be a statesman, and, in Canada at least, he would eventually have to join the Liberals to become one. As Clarkson and McCall note, Trudeau declared in the 1940s that “I don’t want to be a missionary all my life. When I join a party, it will be the Liberals.” Trudeau’s *Memoirs* would note serious discussions about joining the Liberals, spurred by Marchand, beginning in 1962; the two of them, with Pelletier, might well have joined in 1963 had it not been for the nuclear issue. While they did join in 1965, it was far from being a sure thing. Only Marchand’s persistence guaranteed that all three entered into the party. Trudeau would himself in a December 1968 interview state that Marchand was the prized acquisition.

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because of his labour ties; Trudeau was just “part of a package deal” whom the Liberals did not welcome “with [a] great deal of enthusiasm.”

Even during these talks, Trudeau had not fully severed his NDP links. Not only does André Lamoureux note that Trudeau and Marchand were at the Quebec NDP’s 1965 convention, but Trudeau’s files indicate that he made a sizable donation to the campaign of Charles Taylor, against whom he would run soon afterwards. The donation was confused by the party for a membership request, which Trudeau rejected. In fact, his files show membership cards to the federal and provincial parties, but Trudeau took the time to write a note on the back of the envelope to say that while he had donated money, the “memberships” had arrived unrequested.

While Trudeau would become a Liberal in September 1965, he knew that he and Pelletier would have to explain their decision. So they took to the pages of Cité libre, answering three questions. Why politics, why federal politics, and why the Liberals? They chose politics because, as long-time social critics, they felt they should make an effort to change society themselves, especially in quelling nationalist sentiments. On why they chose federal politics, they argued that since the fall of Duplessis, the best Quebec politicians had turned inward, and left a vacuum in Ottawa. They wanted to ensure that Quebec was still heard across the river. They chose the Liberals because of that party’s ability and willingness to deal with the country’s core issues; the NDP had not proven able to rise beyond the confines of CCF support, would not form government, and was most

48 Lamoureux, Le NPD et le Québec, 148; PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 28, file 27.
likely to split the progressive vote so as to empower the right. It thus offered little more than the prospect of “dying with honour.”

As Walter Stewart put it in his 1971 analysis of Trudeau:

Gifted men who wish to enter politics almost inevitably gravitate to the Liberal Party and soon disappear, together with whatever advanced ideas they may have held, into its all-engulfing maw. Trudeau’s own political career is a case in point; he backed the NDP right up until the point when he wanted to get something done, then joined the Liberals and took on a protective conservative colouration.

At a press conference announcing their decision, the wise men emphasized that only the Liberals could address the difficulties dividing French and English Canada. Trudeau also noted that he had spent recent years as a professor educating his students in constitutional law; it was now the time to transform the law at its point of origin. He would also, when asked about his ties to the NDP, admit prior support, but qualify it as merely episodic. He would take a functionalist approach to the question, saying that he supported the NDP when the issues warranted it, but now the issues required he be a Liberal.

In the press, the issues of ideology came up repeatedly, with Trudeau and company asserting that while the Liberal Party was acceptable to men of the left, it required changes that they were committed to making. Trudeau would claim that the only difference between him and NDP opponent Charles Taylor was their respective “choice of instruments.” For Trudeau, politics was about selecting the instrument that best allowed one to express and

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49 Trudeau and Pelletier, “Pelletier et Trudeau s’expliquent,” _Cité libre_, October 1965, 3-5. The piece is also translated in Pelletier, _Years of Choice_, 178-85.
implement policy; for him, a man of the “centre gauche,” the Liberals were the only choice because “l’instrument NPD” was unviable. As Clarkson and McCall would note, Trudeau had likely realized years before that “the Liberal Party was the only possible instrument for his ambitions.” Ultimately, Trudeau would suggest that the Liberals were in the process of transformation, hopefully “dans le sens que je désire.”

Trudeau and Pelletier would also, shortly after being elected, give a fairly detailed interview with Pierre Berton, focusing on their ideological ties. Berton would note the interesting phenomenon of Trudeau, Pelletier, and the Francophone left in the federal Liberal Party. Trudeau would downplay left-right ideological divides. He emphasized “acts” instead. Later on, Berton noted how the provincial Liberals were brimming with former NDPers, to which Trudeau replied that no provincial NDP existed in Quebec. This fact, argued Trudeau, explained why he and Pelletier—“a couple of progressive guys”—had gone Liberal. Berton would then ask about the difficulties Trudeau and Pelletier would face on account of their past NDP connections. They responded by saying their proximity to the NDP had been overemphasized, with Pelletier suggesting that while NDP approaches to foreign policy and social matters were appealing, their ultimate vision of Canada jarred on him. Trudeau would note that while he did see some of his views reflected in the NDP, he rejected their support for special status. He was closer to right-leaning Liberals on “certain economic questions.”

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52 McCall and Clarkson, *The Heroic Delusion*, 41. These and other clippings dealing with the 1965 election can be found in PET Fonds, 02, Vol. 34, file 5.  
Not surprisingly, other Citélibristes would respond to Trudeau and Pelletier, questioning their rationale. They were shocked by the move of their erstwhile comrades, trampling on a legacy of progressive thought, politics, and activism. Such critics would suggest that the three men’s choice was one governed by expediency. The three intellectuals had joined a party all three of them had critiqued vigorously, and in so doing, they “ferment les yeux sur le passé du parti parce qu’ils considèrent qu’il y a ‘urgence’ du fait que le principe même de la Confédération est actuellement en danger.” Such writers argued that it was wrong to impose a false dichotomy of federalism vs. separatism on the full spectrum of issues, and it was nihilistic to dismiss the NDP.54

One of the sharpest critiques came via private correspondence. In a scathing letter to both Trudeau and Pelletier, Pierre de Bellefeuille, a friend of both, expressed his shock at their decision. They had gone from chastising the defrocked priest of peace to serving under his command. Indeed, Bellefeuille said despairingly, “Déjà, mon vieux Pierre, le machine t’a eu.” Perhaps his most cutting statement made reference to the betrayal of the left in the article announcing their “volte-face:”

L’aspect le moins explicable et le plus détestable de ce texte—et de ce que tu racontes, Pierre, d’après les journaux, à tes assemblées—c’est son rejet facile du NPD, presque une hargne. Ce texte confirme d’éclatant façon ce que je croyais déjà savoir au sujet de Gérard, mais pas de Pierre : vous n’êtes pas des hommes de gauche. Vous parlez de la gauche de l’extérieur.55

This excerpt captures the fact that, despite his clearly articulated liberal convictions, many had genuinely seen Trudeau as a man of the left until 1965. They then realized, in hindsight,

that he had often spoken of the left from a guarded distance. In 1965—as in 1949—the left was to be used, not joined.

There was not a huge outpouring from the Quebec labour press over the decision, though Labour World/Monde Ouvrier did chastise Marchand for using the CSN to jump into power. It noted how Marchand had been a “puppet” for Liberal leaders, how he had sold out his members for lower standards, and how his political activism over the years, aligned with the “petit-bourgeoisie,” amounted to little more than an “aristocratic anti-Duplessism” seeking to steer people to the Liberals.\footnote{56}

Perhaps most interesting were the statements of Charles Taylor.\footnote{57} He was “astonished” by Trudeau’s turn, seeing a good deal of irony in competing against the man who had supported and donated to him. Taylor argued that the wise men’s belief that they could make the Liberal Party progressive was naïve. They clearly “surestiment leurs pouvoirs.”\footnote{58} Taylor then critiqued the Liberals in much the same way Trudeau had before him. It was a party tainted with “un esprit profondément antidémocratique,” which was manifested in Trudeau being parachuted into a safe Anglophone riding\footnote{59} on less than a month’s notice. Taylor had campaigned there for more than two years.\footnote{60}

\footnote{56} “Who is doing what in Trade Unionism?” Labour World/Monde Ouvrier, October 1965.
\footnote{59} Pelletier noted how Trudeau initially wanted to run in a rural, agricultural area, but most everyone felt it was foolish due to his popularity with urban non-Francophones. Pelletier, \textit{Years of Choice}, 189.
\footnote{60} PET Fonds 0 2, Vol. 34, file 2, Guy Ferland, “Charles Taylor à l’université Sir George Williams: ‘il faudra plus que des homes à prestige comme Marchand, Pelletier et Trudeau pour sauver le Canada.’”}
More comprehensive was a Taylor editorial, which began by noting that the NDP program was the only progressive one, and that Liberals were burdened by philosophical and structural limitations. He noted that while the Liberals had painted themselves as advocates of a classless party, the truth was that their party was dominated by individuals with intimate ties to the corporate community. It had a distinctly upper class air. Taylor predicted sharp tensions between the wise men and the establishment, as they were “trois hommes qui compaient parmi les partisans les plus lucides du programme de gauche.” Their project of pulling the party leftward was difficult to reconcile with its past history. There were few leftist avenues in a party whose financing and power structures were tailored for capitalists.61

In the end, Taylor still hoped that the wise men’s journey would translate into at least a modicum of reforms. He noted, predicting the future, that Trudeau as a Minister of Justice would implement reforms to make the law work better for Canadians. Yet he reminded them that they owed their success to the working class of Quebec, which had brought them to prominence and seen them as allies. A few years later, Taylor would look back on Trudeau’s turn, and would invoke the spectre of Duplessis, whose actions and influence had fixated Trudeau upon individual liberties. Trudeau had never evinced a true commitment to the CCF’s “economics of reform.”62

Perhaps the most acute analysis of Trudeau’s move came in an October 1965 critique by renowned Quebec nationalist and poet, Gaston Miron. He argued that while he did see the wise men as leftists, theirs was definitely a liberal left. This meant that their

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62 Ibid; George Bain, “A Conversation with the Prime Minister (II),” Globe and Mail, 22 May 1968.
critique of the social and political order was usually about those at the helm, rather than about underlying systems:

Presque jamais par eux le système n’est mis en cause, ce sont toujours aux hommes qu’ils s’en prennent, de faire si mal fonctionner le système, c’est-à-dire la démocratie libérale. Ce n’est pas pour rien que M. Trudeau, en 1962, exhortait le N.P.D provincial à se constituer en aile gauche du parti libérale. Quant à leur socialisme? Les mesures socialistes dont ils se sont faits les champions sont celles du néo-capitalisme.⁶³

An even more direct critique came from Maurice Blain, who wondered how the three men who had dedicated themselves to leftist causes could survive within an opportunistic and anti-democratic party dedicated to capitalism. In short, these “hommes de gauche” had selected for their electoral vehicle a “parti de droite.” In fairness, Blain would agree with the arguments Trudeau had made about the difficulties of establishing socialism in North America: in the age of modern planning, the ideas of the left could be, and were being, appropriated by liberals. Nevertheless, the historical inequalities and inefficiencies of capitalism were still present, and the NDP was the only party willing to address them, as “le seul animateur d’une véritable pensée politique.” Further, the party had seen recent success nationally and provincially, with increasing vote totals and second-place finishes. Blain claimed that the NDP had begun to solidify in Quebec. The wise men’s decision was likely to have a detrimental effect on its development.⁶⁴

For many, then, Trudeau’s decision to go Liberal was both surprising and ideologically incongruous. Nevertheless, our examination of Trudeau has demonstrated

that while the Liberals had often been the butt of his attacks, and the CCF-NDP a recipient of his support, he had made it clear from the mid-1950s onward that his political ideals were liberal. He championed labour and the left as a means of securing liberal democracy—not as movements in themselves.

Trudeau himself collected readings on the definitions of ideology in Canada during the period, including Gad Horowitz’s 1965 article in *Canadian Dimension*, which argued that socialism was more akin to Toryism than liberalism in its outlook and philosophy. Horowitz gives examples, some of which Trudeau underlined, about how liberalism differed fundamentally from socialism. Horowitz noted that what many people referred to as socialism in North America was New Deal liberalism, defined by basic reforms and programs with a “pseudo-socialist tinge,” still fully infused with the advancement of society through competition. Conversely, ‘genuine’ socialism stresses the good of the community as against possessive individualism; equality of condition as against mere equality of opportunity; the cooperative commonwealth as against the acquisitive society.65

From this standpoint, Trudeau, at his most “radical,” had never been more than a New Deal liberal. Another article shortly after his rise to power and annotated by Trudeau himself made a connection between him and Mackenzie King. Both were comfortably within Canada’s liberal tradition. Trudeau could hardly scrub off “the spots of the Liberal leopard.”66 Trudeau’s claim that he espoused no ideology beyond pragmatism was an echo of none other than Mackenzie King himself.

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Trudeau made a dizzying ascent from lowly backbencher to Pearson’s parliamentary secretary to Justice Minister to Prime Minister. This dissertation is not concerned with this oft-told story. Trudeau, due to his travels, associations, and writings, had inadvertently convinced people, Liberals and otherwise, that he was a socialist, one trying to worm his way into power. These accusations would never leave him, and are still repeated in contemporary polemics. His files would also contain paranoid newsletters that proclaimed that “Fabian Socialists” like Trudeau were usurping power in Ottawa, part of a surreptitious NDP conspiracy. One editorial cartoon, published years after Trudeau’s prime ministerial record had rendered implausible any accusations of socialism, had a picture of him, projecting a shadow in the shape of David Lewis, the implication being that Trudeau was the front-man for a secretive socialism. Even during the leadership race, Trudeau would receive letters noting that his ties to the CCF-NDP would constitute a barrier in western Canada, where many Liberals detested the “half-baked socialism of the Rev. T.C Douglas.” He would still enjoy the support of some of those close to him on the left, like Frank Scott, who while still committed to the NDP, felt Trudeau possessed not only the intellect and constitutional grasp to guide Canada but was also a progressive who could shake up the Liberals. Unlike Casgrain and Forsey, Scott would reject Trudeau’s invitation to sit in the Senate, and would be critical of his kowtowing to corporate interests. When Trudeau was returned to office in 1980, Scott admitted to being “slightly pleased,” but was

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discouraged by the Trudeau majority, especially given the upsurge in NDP support. He would always, however, remain impressed by Trudeau, and remembered their friendship fondly.68

From the perspective of this study, it is more pertinent to note how the NDP and labour responded to Trudeau during his 1968 rise to power. The NDP’s Federal Secretary, Clifford Scotton, wrote to UAW President Dennis McDermott to note that Trudeau’s government was likely to be a conservative one, aligned with big business and chambers of commerce. Tommy Douglas and his staff responded to numerous letters on the Trudeau issue. They pointed out that Trudeau could not be seen as an NDP defector because he had never been a member. His actions had proven him to be a “reactionary,”69 rising to power via a “Trudeaumania epidemic,” whose superficiality recalled the Liberal campaigns Trudeau had denounced in the 1950s.70 Both Douglas and Cy Gonick admitted that Trudeau had captured some of the NDP’s momentum. In Gonick’s words, one found in Trudeaumania a process whereby Trudeau challenged, as the NDP had challenged, some old myths and methods of politics. For Douglas it produced “a reasonable facsimile of a new progressive, dynamic and radical party,” however “superficial” it was.71

69 For a contemporary study which argued Trudeau was a rare politician who straddled both the radical and reactionary lines, making for what was likely to be a “quixotic” tenure as prime minister, see Peter C. Newman, Nation Divided: Canada and the Coming of Pierre Trudeau (New York: Knopf, 1968), 457, xiv-xv.
Future NDP leader Ed Broadbent wrote in 1970 of Trudeau as the chosen one of the Liberal Party. He combined a counter-cultural image with an inner rigidity. Indeed, here was a “swinging Mackenzie King.”

Trudeau is the Liberal for our season. He is neither reactionary nor progressive...Both in content and mode of action is that which frequently results when an intelligent youth confronts the ideas of seventeenth-century English liberalism: its declared openness barely conceals an intolerant rigidity. Trudeau is wedded to no economic system but has a bias favouring capitalism. Loathing nationalism, he is indifferent to continentalism...Measured against any meaningful criteria from the left, the Prime Minister has so far established himself as probably the most conservative head of government we have had since the Second World War. This is not to say that he has failed to innovate. It is to say that his innovations have been both conservative and effective.

The labour press saw in Trudeau not an ally from the 1950s, but a man of the upper classes, of the corporate elite, and of the party that historically had done little for the working class. The Canadian Railwayman, while speaking of Trudeau the labour lawyer, civil rights advocate, and supporter of the little guy, argued that power had warped his ideals. The United Packinghouse workers would mock Trudeau’s rapid rise to power by arguing that “Pretty Boy Pierre” was all flash and no substance, especially when it came to social, economic, and labour legislation. They satirized him and his flamboyant dress by calling him sweetie, baby, and pet. In essence, the article painted a Trudeau insensitive to

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73 Broadbent notes on pages 6-7 Trudeau’s struggles for civil and labour rights in 1950s Quebec, but says that he was seen as progressive only insofar as he was resisting actual reactionary forces under Duplessis; Ibid. 3-4.
the lives of working people and the poor, deeply loyal to the entrenched elite, and woefully out of touch with regular Canadian sensibilities.75

UAW local 112 would reject the media’s swooning over this political “Lover Boy,” while local 222 would recall Trudeau’s former support of the NDP. How many old ideals, it wondered, had Trudeau betrayed to become the Liberal leader? The former “swinger” would, rather than shake things up, follow the conservative paths of former Liberals; he would, in the opinion of The Fisherman, “swing” to an “old time tune.” The International Association of Machinists would remember Trudeau’s left ties, but emphasized his “façade of progressivism.”76

The CBRT&GW, a union for which Trudeau had once served as arbitrator, adopted a more nuanced (and less emphatically-gendered) tone.77 While the expectations roused by Trudeaumania were unrealistic, Trudeau could be expected to rejuvenate his party, pull in NDP supporters, and enact some good legislation. Nonetheless, the Liberals’ pact with business was unbreakable, and Trudeau’s calls for “pragmatic” politics implied that “he will not push anything controversial if he feels the opposition from interested parties is too strong.” In other words, he was a man of the status quo. A later piece was more confrontational, presenting Trudeau as a “swinging reactionary” to the right of both

75 Isaac Turner, “Dear Mr. Prime Minister, You Need a Friend—Just Like Me!” Canadian Packinghouse Workers, January 1969.
77 For more on the CBRT&GW, which was originally known as the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, see William Greening, It was Never Easy, 1908-1958; a History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (Ottawa: Mutual Press, 1961); Warren James Sheffer, “Railway Bound: the CBRE, the ACCL, and the Development of a National Working Class Community, 1908-1930” (Master’s Thesis, Queen’s University, 1996).
Pearson and PC leader Robert Stanfield. Finally, there was a piece on Trudeau’s supposedly radical past. It noted his NDP and labour ties, but concluded that not only were his current ideas regressive, but his party was vehemently anti-labour.78 Other unions would make similar claims, painting Trudeau as a Liberal with a dandy’s style, who upheld a vision of Canadian society that saw workers, their rights, and their aspirations as ones that conflicted, in essence, with the ideals of liberal democracy. The battle lines were drawn for the next sixteen years.

There were some exceptions, however. The most interesting can be found in a glowing telegram sent to Trudeau by a CUPE local in 1968. The unionists announced they had decided to affiliate with the Liberal Party. They noted that “the present leader, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau has by his past record evidenced a high level of social and economic awareness in his political philosophy regarding a just society for every Canadian at every station in life.” Trudeau would thank them for their support and dedication to political debate, assuring them that labour would be included in his government’s efforts. On a similar note, a letter to Trudeau from a Quebec postal worker was optimistic about Trudeau’s rise to power, primarily because his work in Cité libre had emphasized the centrality of the right to strike and bargain collectively.79

79 PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 308, file 18, Don Roach to Trudeau, 21 June 1968; Trudeau to Don Roach, 24 June 1968; André Théroux to Trudeau, 10 May 1968. Labour historian David Frank notes how Trudeau was, at least in the beginning, seen as a pro-labour reformer. It was this that made his betrayals all the more stinging. See Provincial Solidarities: A History of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour (Edmonton: AU Press, 2014), 148-50.
So how did Trudeau in the 1940s and 1950s, a socialist and labour activist in the eyes of many, become a Liberal now claiming to be, not “a man of the left,” but “essentially a pragmatist” who would not be a “Santa Claus” giving away “free stuff” via social spending? It was not, as some assumed, a case of ideological drift within the man himself. Trudeau’s functionalism and instrumentalism remained constant. Both had historically determined that his loyalty to the labour-left would be insignificant when compared to the promotion of liberal democracy.\textsuperscript{80} That he would fight for liberal ideas by invoking social and labour traditions makes sense in a Canadian context. Many social democrats and trade unionists were as ardent as Trudeau in defending civil liberties and even individual property rights. Nevertheless, when it came down to it, even a watered-down socialism in the New Party and then the NDP clashed with Trudeau’s supposedly non-ideological ideology of liberalism. Trudeau envisioned economics, liberty, equality, and class in ways that were not those of socialism. His instrumentalism and functionalism of the 1940s and 50s deployed the working classes as the engine of Quebec’s economic, social, and political modernization. Now the same ideological framework would deploy labour and the left as the ‘others’ against which true liberals must mobilize.

\textsuperscript{80} John English, \textit{Just Watch Me}, 4, 31.
Chapter 6
The (Un)just Society?

The “Just Society” is still understood as a key slogan of Trudeau’s government, and the image of a left-wing Liberal Party, keen to address the underlying problems of Canadian society, has endured. This chapter seeks to complicate this image by examining how Trudeau envisioned and challenged poverty and inequality. Specifically, we will examine the “Just Society” by focusing closely on wealth redistribution through tax reforms and the proposal for a guaranteed annual income. The Just Society was popularized in a 1968 speech written by Ramsay Cook. The slogan was originally a throw-away phrase.¹ It then came to designate the wider trajectory of Trudeau’s first government after it was taken up by Trudeau himself. While many hoped it signaled a serious attack on injustice, others took it up ironically as a rhetorical weapon to critique the government’s hypocrisies.²

In the speech, Trudeau (through Cook) argued that Canada “must move forward towards a more equal division of our abundance, towards better relations between the various groups which make up our ethnic mosaic, towards a more vital democratic system and towards more certain guarantees of our fundamental freedom. That, is...what the Liberal party calls the Just society.” A Just Society would be one in which “equality of opportunity is ensured and the individual permitted to fulfill himself in the fashion he judges best.” It was also an unabashedly capitalist entity. To help the poor, one must first

¹ Cook, Teeth of Time, 39, 73-4, 179.
attend to the rich, since their wealth was the precondition of any successful reduction of poverty. Trudeau would state that there had been an excessive focus on redistributive justice, and he wished to prioritize measures “that can affect the productivity of our country, and hence the total provision of economic well-being...and its competitiveness in the changing conditions of the modern world.” Without doing so, Canada could never “have the basis for a society from which poverty has been eliminated.”

In a 1990 article, “The Values of a Just Society,” Trudeau argued that while he held freedom in the highest regard, such freedom required equality — not of condition, but of opportunity. While Trudeau sympathized with the “adolescent” pursuit of pure equality, such utopianism was inferior to a liberalism that combined the dynamism of capitalism with “direct action by the state to protect the weak from the strong,” capable of creating an “equality of opportunity for all Canadians regardless of the economic region in which they lived, or regardless of the language that they spoke.”

He was reiterating an argument he had articulated in 1971: “Canadians are...products of a belief that every member of each generation must start the race evenly, enjoying no insuperable advantage.” Further, Trudeau would note that the public misunderstood the Just Society, which was less about social equality, and more about regional development:

The Just Society means not giving...a bit more money or a bit more welfare. The Just Society...means permitting the province or the region as a whole to have a developing economy...Not to try to help merely the individual but to

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try to help the region itself to make all parts of Canada livable in an acceptable sense.  

Regional redistribution would foster prosperity, extend opportunity, and reinforce unity. In this sense, the “just society” was as much about empowering the capitalist class in Canada’s far-flung corners as it was a vision of an expanded welfare state. It was fully compatible with competitive individualism, because the Just Society freed “an individual so he will be rid of his shackles and permitted to fulfil himself in society in the way which he judges best, without being bound up by standards of morality which have nothing to do with law and order but...with prejudice and religious superstition.” This abstract individual was an almost Nietzschean entity, engaged in a necessary struggle against society as he or she pursued individualistic life goals.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the just society’s class limitations came in 1968, when Trudeau said it would have to include a charter of rights, equality between French and English, a more responsive government, and a modern criminal code. Social and economic equality was excluded: “But, once again, to distinguish perhaps the concept of a just society from economic reforms...I would say it is essentially a question of reforming our legal structure, our political structure, and our governmental structure.”

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Labour found in the Just Society a superb rhetorical tool. Its spokespeople often quipped that the just society was “just for the rich.”

Telegram and letters to Trudeau chastised him, noting that until the poor could access necessities, education was universal, and the wealthy paid higher taxes, “there can be no ‘just’ society in the present system:”

If the Just Society as proposed by the Liberal Party and yourself during the June 1968 election campaign is to become a reality, the Federal Government must be prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to bring about the affluence in our society that we talk of so freely. When poverty and deprivation have been eliminated from our country, then and only then can we claim [to be] heirs to an affluent and just society.

Although each labour newspaper had its own way of challenging the Trudeauvian concept, a few unifying themes can discerned. One was that the Liberal iteration of justice was a false one, and lacked what could and would be provided by an NDP government aligned with labour and working-class interests. Such an argument would look to the underlying structures of injustice and inequality, and was often skeptical of any actual “Just Society” coming into being under the aegis of the old parties. There was also a perception that Trudeau’s hope-inducing oratory belied the fact that his policies implied that “people in the lower income groups have just got to learn their place in this just society of ours.”

In other words, Trudeau’s Just Society was but a slick slogan. As more than a few sources

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12 Isaac Turner, “Dear Mr. Prime Minister, You Need a Friend—Just Like Me!” Canadian Packinghouse Workers, January 1969.
would note, Trudeau not only quietly cut back on his invocations of the Just Society, but even in 1970 distanced himself from it altogether: “I don’t use the term anymore because it has become a kind of slogan and I don’t like slogans.”

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The NDP echoed the belief that Trudeau’s just society was “just for the rich,” and collated a series of quotations that charted Trudeau’s distancing from his Just Society claims. Early quotations declared that “justice will prevail today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow,” while later ones noted that “we are all invited to join in this bold enterprise...to pursue the distant ideal of a just society.” Finally, Trudeau shrugged off the ideal: “Well, on the just society, let’s lay that one to rest for a bit, because when we said that Canadians were interested in the just society, we never said we would bring it in overnight and it would be here once and for all.” In the NDP’s view, this progression illustrated “Trudeau’s diminishing attachment to the concept of a just society...The promise has accordingly been laid to rest.”

Some of the sharpest critiques of the Just Society came from David Lewis, who although familiar with Trudeau during his years as a CCF fellow traveler, had never been enamored of his annoyingly non-committal ally. First, Lewis questioned Trudeau’s emphasis on wealth generation. As he put it, the “problem before us...is not the limit to our capacities and resources, but their efficient use and the just distribution of the fruits of that...Slogan,’ W.J.S. Claims,” Canadian Transport, 15 May 1968; “Trudeau: The Man Behind the Mask,” Canadian Transport, 15 January 1969.

15 CCF-NDP Fonds, Vol. 445, file 17, Mark Eliesen to Sam Ross, 15 October 1968; Mark Eliesen to Marion Bryden, 23 October 1968.
use.” In contrast to Trudeau, who maintained the same law applied to rich and poor alike, Lewis believed that the law favoured entrenched interests that were opposed to “fundamental changes in social structures and in the relationships between the strong and the weak:”

Equality before the law is an ideal which, in a society riddled with inequality, cannot be achieved. In my view, a legal system is developed to protect existing relationships rather than to bring to life some abstract concept of justice. This invariably means that system tends to protect the status quo and to resist rather than encourage change. In a society characterized by inequality of income, of living standards, and of status, the tendency of the legal system is to accept and therefore protect existing inequalities. Indeed, the law is one of the major instruments by which those enjoying privilege and power maintain their position.

As it was with the legal system, specifically, so it was with society generally. Lewis felt that Trudeau’s Just Society assumed that the inequalities in income in our present society must remain, and the low wage and salary earners must be satisfied to make no more relative progress than the high wage and salary earners. I suggest that anyone who articulates this crass philosophy, and at the same time talks about the Just Society, suffers either from self-delusion or from heartless cynicism.

Lewis thus felt that Trudeau upheld a system that “places competition and conflict ahead of human cooperation.” What was required instead was socially-productive spending: less on “luxury amenities for a relatively small group” and more on the schools, parks, recreation centres, hospitals, and universities the just society needed. Lewis was offering a

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19 Lewis Fonds, Vol. 52, file 2, “The Just Society is Impossible Outside a socialist Society.”
view of justice, one more alert to capitalism and its contradictions, and very different from that of Trudeau.\(^\text{20}\)

Tommy Douglas proclaimed that Trudeau had won power with promises of a Just Society but then did doing nothing to bring them into being. The Trudeauvian conception of justice, despite having a “nice ring,” failed to address inequality, foreign dominance, and labour rights. In Douglas’s assessment, Trudeau’s society would be neither just nor compassionate. His was a “party that has fooled us for fifty years with a slogan that has been nothing more than a slogan.” For Alan Whitehorn, Trudeau’s Just Society would “become yet another broken Liberal promise.” Walter Stewart wrote that under Trudeau, “we are more than ever distant from anything that could be called a Just Society.” In the end, Trudeau’s desires to create within capitalism a just society was for Claude Savoie a “rêve utopique.”\(^\text{21}\)

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For many observers, a litmus rest of the Just Society was whether it entailed a demonstrable reduction in levels of poverty. This section will focus on the Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI), which in basic terms is a program that provides, regardless of employment, a minimum income to each citizen.\(^\text{22}\) Both the NDP and labour supported a


GAI system, and critiqued Trudeau’s failure to implement one. Interestingly, during the early and mid-1970s, the GAI was a concept popular within the Liberal Party. It was then abandoned due to costs and a fear of eroding work ethic.23 Penny Bryden, a historian of Liberal doctrines of planning during the 1950s and 60s, notes that while some Liberals saw CCF-NDP social policies as compatible with theirs, and thus not a real threat, others saw them as products of an opposing political philosophy.24 One person key to this debate was Tom Kent, who in the early 1960s would champion increased social security programs that not only protected for the most vulnerable, but challenged unequal opportunity. Such bold suggestions were controversial in the party. Many business-oriented Liberals opposed them. Still, some felt that Kent had mounted a deft attack on the left, strangling—in Walter Gordon’s phrase—“the New Party before it’s born.” Nevertheless, by the time Trudeau joined and led the party, the Liberals were becoming more averse to social reform. Trudeau’s leadership indicated a backing-off from the long-term aspirations of Liberal planners like Kent.25

George Radwanski discerned that Trudeau, not being personally invested in social reform, was unwilling to spend political capital on it. Indeed, Trudeau was more apt to argue that the age of universal welfare should end. Prominent journalist Andrew Coyne observed that Trudeau’s social spending was modest, his commitment to reform spurious,

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23 In 1970, the Liberal Party membership had endorsed a GAI and committed itself to “eradicate poverty in all its forms” by the end of the 1970s. PET Fonds, 011, Vol. 36, file 13, “Memorandum to Political Cabinet: Liberal Party Convention 1970: Resume and Follow-up.”
and his view of a GAI dismissive. Anthony Westell noted that Trudeau’s anti-poverty efforts were half-hearted and subordinated to the whims of the upper and middle class. English, as well as McCall and Clarkson, felt Trudeau had an interest in the GAI, but potent opposition from the Finance Department, along with budgetary concerns, scuttled it.26 Yet others suggest that the failure to challenge poverty was due to conservative elements in his cabinet, harsh financial realities, and societal outlooks. Few would argue that poverty elimination was a core Trudeauvian objective.

While never his focus, poverty did figure into Trudeau’s thought. In 1968, he said that no one could praise “this country’s greatness as long as 20 out of 100 families continue to exist on incomes below the generally accepted poverty line.” The solution, however, could be found in liberalism and not egalitarianism. Trudeau thought the poor were intrinsically at risk of extremism. Only liberals could provide the reasoned moderation to lead them away from such a fate. Poverty caused instability and inopportunity, meaning people would “cease to respect the values which our society projects.” Trudeau’s worry was, in the 1970s as in the 1950s, that revolution from the masses (domestic and international) would be inevitable should they lose their faith in liberal capitalism. As Trudeau said before he became an MP, without a thriving capitalist economy, concepts of social welfare were little more than theories. In his commitment to profitability first, one

has a measure of the distance separating the mature Trudeau from the CCF—or even his former advisor Harold Laski.27

Whatever his progressive image, Trudeau would characterize social programs, especially universal ones, as “a disincentive to our society.” He would tell Canadians that government was not a “Santa Claus,” that they should expect less, and that he had “had enough of this free stuff.” Selective programs were needed, but these “free” things did nothing to “put a damper on this revolution of rising expectations.”28 He felt Canadians “must not be afraid of this bogey man, the means test.”29 With respect to welfare, “we must be more selective.” Such comments seemingly foreshadowed a return to the old ways of selective charity. Means tests were historically associated with sharp distinctions between provider and recipient.30 They historically empowered state, religious, and charitable groups with a capacity to police morality. This pro-means test position would persist in Liberal circles well into the 1970s. Maurice Lamontagne, a long-time Liberal MP and Senator, would argue that while universal programs might be justifiable under conditions of generalized poverty, affluence meant that efficiencies in universality were outstripped by superfluous transfers to those who no longer needed them. Social programs should

emphasize, and be tailored to, those with exceptional needs. Despite these classically liberal apprehensions, Trudeau’s government spoke fairly extensively about the GAI.

Trudeau would look back to the GAI as timely in the 1970s because it enjoyed broad ideological support. He also saw in it the potential to spur efficiency by merging aid programs: “Everyone who was somewhat progressive at the time wanted the guaranteed annual income, so imagine creating [a] system to integrate all of this.” Trudeau as prime minister would note that Canada was “well along the road to a guaranteed income plan” and “that the concept of income maintenance has been accepted in Canada.” For some Liberals like Trudeau staffer Michael Pitfield, the GAI could undergird the venerable liberal “concept of equality of opportunity. Its objective is to ensure to every citizen a minimum income” above “some sort of poverty line.” If set at a moderate level, a GAI could virtually abolish poverty, all without placing too high a burden on the wealthy, whose “managerial and entrepreneurial leadership” must continue to be rewarded.

Of all the contributions to the early 1970s debates on poverty, the Report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, the White Paper on Income Security for Canadians, and the Working Paper on Social Security in Canada were the most significant. The Senate

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33 Trudeau quoted in English, *Just Watch Me*, 217.

Report (named the Croll Report after chairman David Croll) called poverty “the great social issue of our time.” The poor, facing “the future with little hope and mounting anger,” might withdraw their “consent to a political, social, and economic system…from which they receive little.” The solution was the GAI, whereby families whose income fell below 70% of a given income level would be assisted. For each dollar such a family earned up to the poverty line, their GAI allocation would be reduced by 70 cents. This system rejected means testing, closed the ‘welfare trap,’ and was compatible with existing tax structures. To those who felt a GAI would support laziness, Croll pointed out that many of the poor either could not work, were already working, or were involuntarily unemployed, with over half of Canada’s poor drawing no welfare and shouldering a larger tax burden than the wealthy. Croll’s views of the ineffectiveness of traditional welfare schemes could be linked to other government reports, including one in 1969 from the Economic Council of Canada that argued that welfare programs often had a perverse effect: they gave inadequate and untimely support, prevented the poor from investing in themselves, and did little to encourage integration into the economy through gainful employment. One must also note the 1971 Real Poverty Report, produced by Croll report staffers displeased with the final edition of the official Senate document. Even this dissenting statement, while

taking a more systemic view on poverty, was in agreement with the general philosophy of a GAI pegged below the poverty line with built-in work incentives.\textsuperscript{37}

The Croll Report, deemed by some to be a “Magna Carta” for the poor, received a lukewarm reception from Trudeau and cabinet. John Munro, then Minister of National Health and Welfare, felt it undermined “the incentive to work among Canadians.”\textsuperscript{38} Trudeau agreed. Munro himself released a report on income security, which emphasized a social security strategy targeted at the poor. Specifically, family allowances would be increased for the poor, and would diminish as incomes rose. On the GAI, Munro felt that payments above poverty lines would encourage idleness, while those beneath left people poor. Resentment could grow amongst low-wage workers as they watched the idle gain ground on them. In short, Munro felt the GAI was an affront to the work ethic, and in some fashion, a burden upon taxpayer obliged to subsidize low-wage industries via income maintenance.\textsuperscript{39}

Munro’s successor, Marc Lalonde,\textsuperscript{40} produced yet another report on income security.\textsuperscript{41} It was important, Lalonde urged, that assistance not distort “prevailing social


\textsuperscript{40} Marc Lalonde was one the most important figures in Trudeau’s political life. He would work with Trudeau before politics, would be his principal secretary until 1972 when he was elected to Parliament, and would hold various cabinet roles thereafter. He is also the executor of Trudeau’s literary estate.

and individual values,” but work “in harmony with, and not in opposition to the motive forces of the economy.” Aid must not redistribute wealth on a grand scale. It must not rise relative to productivity. And it must not hinder the pursuit of wealth. Similar tones can be heard in the 1973 Speech from the Throne, which supported social assistance for the needy, but rejected the principle of the GAI for the able-bodied.42

But Lalonde’s report underplayed his own personal support for a GAI, which was scuttled by cabinet strife, budgetary matters, and public sentiment. In cabinet, Lalonde was challenged by Finance Minister John Turner, who would only back a GAI if it marginalized nearly all other social spending. When it became clear that Lalonde’s proposals would maintain some programs, Turner challenged their cost and underlying philosophy.43 While Lalonde was close to Trudeau, Turner was a popular minister in a powerful portfolio, and Trudeau came down against Lalonde’s GAI. Radwanski notes that while Trudeau appreciated Lalonde’s proposal, its timing was off. In an effort to preserve the status quo and keep Turner happy, Trudeau suffocated the GAI.44

At about this time, Turner also, with Trudeau’s support, indexed tax brackets to inflation, starving the government of revenue. Although Turner denied he had been motivated by such a Machiavellian strategy of state reduction, his deputy minister Simon Reisman said otherwise. Changing the tax structure was how the Liberals quelled social

spending, he reported, especially a GAI Reisman saw as incompatible with a preservation of the work ethic. As McCall and Clarkson note, indexation was a clear victory for the right-wing forces in the cabinet. Further, Albert Breton in a memo to Trudeau called indexing a “historical” policy that “will help make possible the...control of government expenditures.” The NDP for its part was critical of this indexing, not only as a measure that cut public spending but also as one that offered the wealthiest Canadians a tax break.

One can also look to a 1975 letter from Trudeau to Lalonde, in which he aired his reservations about the GAI. Instead, Trudeau suggested considering a wage subsidy to low-income workers to be clawed back as pay rose, which would preserve the work ethic and discourage the “expectation that poverty is going to be fully and immediately eradicated.” A 1975 report by Lalonde to his provincial counterparts echoed this Trudeauvian emphasis on the work ethic. Lalonde aimed to solve poverty by getting individuals into the job market, providing aid only to those unable to work, and setting aid levels low enough to ensure the work ethic flourished. Looking back in 1992, Trudeau would argue that while he could accept the theory of a GAI, he felt Turner had been right to question its costs. In the end, Trudeau felt “Marc got the prize for progressive liberal thinking and Turner got the prize for keeping the lid on spending.”

It is likely that Trudeau’s opposition to the GAI was influenced by public sentiment. Despite a belief on the part of some that the GAI “was an idea whose time had come,”

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many others had come to regard the eradication of poverty as a false objective. Conservatives in both the U.S. and Canada were mobilizing.\textsuperscript{48} Trudeau’s communications coordinator, Joyce Fairbairn, noticed a “welfare backlash” arising from a middle class distraught by the fast-changing postwar world. Having grown up before unemployment insurance, Opportunities for Youth, and the Local Initiatives Program,\textsuperscript{49} such middle-aged and middle-class Canadians blamed Trudeau for destroying the work ethic of the poor and young. In her mind, what such middle-class citizens wanted was recognition of their hard work. Trudeau acknowledged the force of this backlash. As he told the CLC’s leaders in 1975:

You know the kind of criticism the government has received for implementing its social programs, and that you have received for advocating...them. We’ve been accused of stealing from industrious, responsible Canadians in order to give a free ride to welfare bums who should be paying their own way. We’ve been accused of pushing businesses to the brink of bankruptcy by raising the minimum wage. We’ve been accused of taxing the middle class to death in order to provide an easy life for the lazy people who don’t want to work.\textsuperscript{50}

Trudeau was too loose with taxpayer dollars, many argued. It certainly seemed that the public in 1973 did not support a GAI. In emphasizing the minimum wage and family allowances as a \textit{de facto} GAI for the employable, Trudeau was in the mainstream. His polling numbers indicated that the GAI was viewed unfavourably by income group and party, including 72\% and 58\% of low income earners and NDP supporters respectively. A focus group felt that comprehensive aid would be unfair to those working wage-earners


\textsuperscript{49} The OFY and LIP targeted underemployed people and regions, offering grants for doing community work. The OFY gave students a sense of social conscience and skills, without competing with workers for summer jobs, while the LIP aimed to provide socially productive work in such fields as the arts.

\textsuperscript{50} PET Fonds, 014, Vol. 1, “Notes for the Prime Minister’s Remarks at a Meeting with Officers of the Canadian Labour Congress,” 30 October 1975.
and remove the incentive to work for many others. They blamed Trudeau for his leniency towards moochers in a country with perceived job vacancies. \(51\) Trudeau followed Fairbairn’s advice and often argued that most Canadians worked hard, but that at the margin of society were people who were lacking in this virtue. Indeed, this preoccupation with the undeserving poor would be key throughout his government’s aforementioned papers. In them one finds a desire to enforce class distinctions, particularly between the working poor and the unemployed.

Liberals were flummoxed by the GAI proposal. It seemingly represented equality, but it also posed an apparent challenge to the capitalist organization of the labour market and hence to property. As a 1972 memo to Trudeau stated, high benefits might well encourage the work-shy to avoid employment, but at least as pertinent was the increased meaninglessness of work, and the deepening awareness of said meaninglessness. Social attitudes to menial jobs were changing, and many Canadians were questioning the virtues of work for work’s sake. “Increasing numbers of blue-collar workers find their jobs totally meaningless,” as the memo put it. \(52\) Yet, in the end, making work more meaningful was a goal that ceded place to forcing people without other options into boring and sometimes dangerous labour.

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\(52\) PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 30, file 9, C.L. Gill to Trudeau, 16 October 1972. A recent New York Times piece has argued that the 1970s signaled a transition from a mindset of discipline and uniformity to one of self-expression. While this was a fairly smooth transition for the middle class, working-class occupations have maintained a rigid structure anathema to individualism, meaning that workers became disillusioned with work and their lots in life. Thomas Edsall, “Have Democrats Failed the White Working Class?” The New York Times, 10 December 2014.
Yet despite all this Liberal opposition and confusion, the GAI did come into existence as a local experimental program known as MINCOME from 1974-1979, via cooperation with the Manitoba NDP government. MINCOME was likely influenced by the Croll Report. It entailed a Negative Income Tax (NIT), a GAI at 60% of the low income cut-off, and to provide work incentive, a provision to only claw back 50 cents of the benefit from every additional dollar earned. The project was promising, but budgetary concerns and the GAI’s unpopularity meant that its data went unanalyzed by contemporary researchers. Recent analyses, however, have shown that MINCOME correlated with an 8.5% drop in hospitalization rates, and while work rates fell, they did so not among primary breadwinners. Rather, women stayed home with young children before returning to work and teens remained in school longer. In essence, studies have shown MINCOME, and the GAI experiments more generally, were effective in terms of cost and outcome. They had a negligible effect on the work ethic.

While Trudeau was deterred from the GAI by widespread opposition, he was also predisposed to suspect all new social programs on classical liberal grounds. Was the GAI possible in Canada during Trudeau’s era? Quite possibly, even if large segments of the population opposed it. Using his parliamentary majority or his quasi-coalition with the

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53 Sid Gilbert, “Poverty, Policy, and Politics: The Evolution of a Guaranteed Annual Income Experiment in Canada,” in Structured Inequality, 444-58. There were about a dozen technical reports on MINCOME. See for example Derek P.J Hum, Michael E. Laub, and Brian J. Powell, The Objectives and Design of the Manitoba Basic Annual Income Experiment (Winnipeg: Mincome Manitoba, 1979).


NDP, Trudeau could have pushed it through and persuaded doubters. Even fears of the GAI’s erosion of the work ethic were made questionable by analyses of MINCOME.

In sum, Trudeau’s Just Society did not encompass a far-reaching change in the classical liberal understanding of poverty. Rather, it perpetuated Depression-era relief structures that were themselves the legacy of Victorian doctrines that discriminated between the deserving and the underserving poor. Doctrines of less eligibility, which stigmatized the poor and unemployed in order to safeguard property relations, were strengthened in his “Just Society.”

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The labour-NDP response to the GAI highlighted stark differences between Trudeau’s liberal philosophy and contemporary social democratic thought. The NDP would often speak of the GAI, although hardly a total panacea for poverty and social injustice, as integral to an actual Just Society. Differing from Liberal and Croll Report proposals, an NDP GAI would be set at least at the poverty line. The party would also create new programs to address poverty’s cultural dimensions. This multi-pronged approach was essential to what social democrats deemed a socialism of the seventies. In their minds, access to an adequate standard of living was the right of all citizens. Douglas offered a direct critique of the Liberals’ suggestion to de-universalize programs rather than

56 For just a sample of pieces which contextualize the moralized nature of aid and associated programs under the umbrella of less eligibility as it pertained to Canadian workers, see James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); David Thompson, “Working-Class Anguish and Revolutionary Indignation: The Making of Radical and Socialist Unemployment Movements in Canada, 1875-1928” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Queen’s University, 2014); Bryan D. Palmer and Gaetan Heroux, “Cracking the Stone: The Long History of Capitalist Crisis and Toronto’s Dispossessed,” Labour/Le Travail 69 (Spring 2012): 9-62.

implement a GAI. In Douglas’s mind, Trudeau, instead of enacting a bold policy, had lost his “nerve” and opted for the status quo—or something worse.58

Based on party philosophy and the perceived implications of technological unemployment, the NDP held that dignity must not be tied to having a job. Minimum wage legislation specified rates that fell below poverty lines and did not address inadequate hours. Thus, internal reports urged the NDP to advocate the GAI as a preparation for a world with more automation. The GAI could even, as Giles Endicott argued, be a harbinger of a socialist future:

The major intent is to bring about the economic basis which supports a spirit of socialism...It is difficult to speak of such things as brotherhood, cooperation and the abolition of class without an apologetic nod towards the “realists” in the party. But it remains the party’s aim to make some social as well as administrative changes. Wage labour, the master-servant relationship, class differences, income disparities and a market-based value system must all go in the long run. And the long run in practice is a series of short runs.

The GAI was a precursor of socialism that nevertheless held stock with moderates.59 The GAI on this reading could be a force for liberty, freeing people from what amounted to coerced labour.

Invoking the Regina Manifesto, Ed Broadbent insisted that Canada transcend the welfare state. A major step towards a better future would be the GAI, “the single most

59 CCF-NDP Fonds, Vol. 437, file 19, Giles Endicott, “Income from Earnings and Transfer Payments; Negative Income Tax; A Guaranteed Minimum.” Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright, for instance, has defended a GAI because, despite its reformism, it improves the lives of the impoverished, reignites the principles of de-commodifying labour, creates more space for social economics, and empowers workers vis-à-vis capital. It is a method through which to introduce the ostensibly unpopular ideology of socialism. See Erik Olin Wright, “Basic Income as a Socialist Project,” March 2005 <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Basic%20Income%20as%20Socialist%20Project.pdf> (Accessed 17 July 2014).
effective and efficient means of attacking...both material and spiritual poverty.”

He rejected the fear that people would leach off their community. Most shared a desire to contribute to humanity’s betterment as equal citizens, not charity cases. Unlike Trudeau, Broadbent and the NDP defended universality because it engendered social solidarity and fostered the belief that programs were worth paying for. If the middle classes lost access to a program, it detached them from the welfare state, and reinforced the idea that social programs were forms of charity. As Desmond Morton put it, universal social programs were to be treasured because, above and beyond their effectiveness, they fostered belief in solidaristic universal rights.

Labour voiced numerous concerns with Trudeau’s approach to poverty. As Rodney Haddow observed, labour before the 1970s did not push for extended social programs as much as it championed employment-based initiatives. Even as labour made contributions to the Croll Report, it would admit that it had often failed to defend poor Canadians. But despite Haddow’s claims of labour inaction, and a tendency to emphasize other issues, Canada’s major unions would repeatedly demand a GAI.

In 1974, the CLC asked Trudeau for a GAI that would not eat into existing social insurance schemes because, although unionization was paramount in fighting poverty and inequality, Canada also needed a GAI indexed to cost-of-living and productivity increases.

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A NIT to bolster the bargaining power of the poor would also be part of a general incomes policy. CLC spokespeople noted that while they would resist cuts to social insurance programs, they would entertain the rationalization of welfare under a GAI. The answer to poverty, from the CLC perspective, could be found in social transformations, “not just a few program adjustments.”

The *Canadian Railwayman* promoted the GAI as an effective measure because it would, as a right, give Canadians an income upon which to live independently and with dignity. *Transport* would also champion the GAI, intertwining it with the declaration in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family.” It would also confront Trudeau’s reluctance to address poverty, as evidenced in his railing against “free stuff” that aligned him with social and economic “reactionaries.” Liberal proposals like Munro’s white paper were a “reflection of the innate conservatism...that permeates the Trudeau administration.” *Transport* even called upon Christian teachings to emphasize its support for the GAI. Not only did the publication highlight the United Church’s call for a GAI, it also argued that Christ would never stand for rampant poverty in the midst of plenty. Through the GAI, “poverty can be eradicated if we have the will to eradicate it.”

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The UAW articulated a support for the GAI, and a disgruntlement with Trudeau, often in a strongly pro-NDP idiom. It too highlighted Trudeau’s dismissal of “free stuff,” his support of the means test, and Broadbent’s and Stephen Lewis’s critique of his position. The UAW saw the GAI as a move away from social insecurity to social rights. Support for the GAI via an NIT was called, in some UAW publications, the “best anti-poverty weapon.” The USW underlined labour’s interest in social security, and would note that the “witch-hunt” against benefit-seekers was orchestrated by those who held no experience of poverty. A GAI would excise cruel and moralistic misconceptions about the poor, like those aimed at single mothers. USW also confronted Trudeau’s attack on “free stuff” as an indication of his conservatism, insensitivity, and ignorance. The vast majority of social transfer payments were funded via broad-based social contributions. They were no more free than home insurance. Trudeau was trying to shame the poor under the guise of preserving their “incentive.”\footnote{“Quote of the Month,” \textit{The Aircrafter}, July 1968; “Guaranteed Minimum Income,” \textit{Oshaworker}, 7 May 1970; “Thelma Cartwright, “The Guaranteed Annual Income,” \textit{Oshaworker}, 15 April 1971; “P.A.C. Report,” \textit{The Aircrafter}, December 1973; “Party Positions on Guaranteed Income Policy,” \textit{Oshaworker}, 20 November 1960; Marc Wyman, “The Negative Income Tax—Best Anti-Poverty Weapon,” \textit{Oshaworker}, 15 January 1970; A Guaranteed Annual Income,” \textit{Steel Labour Canada}, February 1970; “What ‘Free Stuff’?” \textit{Steel Labor Canada}, February 1970.}

CUPW and the UE would hone in on universal benefits and their social importance. The best system, they argued, was one that afforded benefits by default and rectified
anomalies via the tax system. Means tests were inefficient, antiquated, arbitrary, and stigmatizing. For the UE, Trudeau’s misgivings about the means test and attempts to “scuttle” the GAI harked back to the methods used “by the authorities in the...depression years.”

Labour would find an ally on the GAI in Reuben Baetz, director of the Canadian Welfare Council, a body created by Trudeau in 1969. In Transport, Baetz argued that “Canada both can and should provide, as a matter of right, sufficient income to support an adequate standard of physical and social wellbeing for all its people.” Rather than stand for social justice, Trudeau was accused of “encouraging prejudice” against the poor and unemployed with his distrustful emphasis on the work ethic. For Baetz, Trudeau perpetuated a “bigoted view about the unemployed.” He had resorted to the “hackneyed and outdated clichés about pioneer spirit, fierce individualism, and every man for himself.”

So what do these responses reveal? There was widespread labour support for a GAI at least as comprehensive as that outlined in the Croll Report. Labour opposed Trudeau’s nineteenth-century understanding of the poor, their morality, and their motivations. Still, most held that the GAI could not replace labour militancy and full employment. In the end,

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it seems Rodney Haddow’s claim that labour and NDP responded weakly to the GAI is overstated.\textsuperscript{70}

Liberals themselves often understood that between their own vision of social security and that of socialists was a chasm so fundamental as to not be traversable. Penny Bryden noted that while some Liberals were oblivious to the point of principle at stake, others understood that the CCF-NDP saw social security, not as contingency, but as “a responsibility of government to provide social benefits as a universal right.”\textsuperscript{71}

Some in the movement even imagined the GAI to be an early manifestation of a more substantial egalitarian transformation. They tended to overlook the extent to which the proposed GAI would leave existing capitalist social relations unchallenged. Earlier L/Liberal planners like Tom Kent\textsuperscript{72} had noted that social security planning, like that found in GAI schemes, was not ultimately socialist, falling under the umbrella of liberalism. Socialism ultimately concerned itself with how wealth was created and owned. A focus on social welfare for Kent was at least in part a signal that “even among so-called socialist parties there is increasing recognition that over-centralization of the state is dangerous to freedom and that it fails to release the creative energies on which human progress depends.”\textsuperscript{73}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[70] For a critique of Haddow’s claims, see Alvin Finkel “The State of Writing on the Canadian Welfare State: What’s Class got to do with it?” Labour/Le Travail 54 (Fall 2004): 172-3.
\item[71] P.E Bryden, 24.
\item[72] Tom Kent’s ideological identity is a matter of discussion. For much of his life he identified as a L/Liberal. In later years of his life, however, he began to identify with social democracy, even though his ideas remained rather consistent. This likely indicates a person discontented with the rightward shift of Canadian political discourse. In fact, Ed Broadbent would note that whatever his party affiliations, Kent was ultimately a social democrat. See Tom Kent, “The Social Democracy of Canadian Federalism,” \texttt{<http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/sites/default/files/documents/social-democracy-canadian-federalism.pdf> (Accessed 31 March 2014).}
\item[73] Tom Kent quoted in P.E Bryden, 24, 38.
\end{footnotes}
These subtleties were to a large degree lost in the debate. Still, the left’s GAI differed from liberal varieties, which attacked the welfare state by offering a sum of money below the poverty line to slash labour standards. (This argument was central to the *Real Poverty Report* which, while ultimately supporting the GAI, critiqued Croll’s neglect of bargaining rights, tax policy, and market regulations in his scheme to eliminate poverty.)

While it seemed that in either case, the GAI would not confront the core questions of capitalism, it still signified a fundamental demarcation between Trudeauvian liberalism and the social democratic tradition, the former seeing the GAI as defensible only as a rationalization of the welfare system and as a mechanism for enforcing the work ethic, the latter envisioning it as a guarantee against poverty, a tool to further the goals of the working class, and in some cases, the first step on the long march towards a socialist Canada.

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Before Trudeau became prime minister, Pearson had formed a royal commission to examine tax reform, which produced the Carter Report, named after accountant Kenneth Carter. Released in 1968, the Report would send ripples across the country. Equally important was the response from Trudeau’s government through the Benson White Paper, which labour and the NDP deemed a dilution of the egalitarian Carter Report. It later seemed to both labour and leftists that Trudeau, because of business pressure, had reneged even on Benson’s watered-down tax reforms, and distanced himself yet further from the Just Society.

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If we hark back to Trudeau in *Cité libre*, we hear from him a call for Quebec to embrace liberal economic ideology and thus become increasingly integrated with the global capitalist system. Functionalism acknowledged that such an immersion in the market might generate negative social side effects. Redistribution of wealth via taxation recommended itself as a strategy that both preserved capitalist ownership and corrected market injustices. But, as we will see, Trudeau was never deeply committed to tax reform, especially when facing opposition. As a result, one half of the *Citélibriste* prescription—immersion in the market—was filled; the other half, an egalitarian tax system, was not.

Westell, Guest, Radwanski, English, McCall and Clarkson all say that, on taxes, Trudeau drew the full fire of the right. Yet despite declaring that he would not “be bullied or blackmailed by hysterical charges or threats,” Trudeau did bow to such critics, stopping “far short” of the recommendations of the Carter Report. Linda McQuaig remarked that “in Trudeau we had a prime minister with a refreshing degree of independence from Bay Street, but little inclination to use that independence to champion the economic interests of ordinary Canadians.”

The Carter Report itself was based on two simple concepts: the idea that “a buck is buck,” meaning that all income types should be taxed equally, and the idea that ability to pay is paramount. Carter would argue that because most Canadians saw tax collection as

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mechanical, individualized, and value-neutral, they failed to see the social and economic outcomes that grew out of it. Such outcomes affected social services and the distribution of income. By reforming tax policy, the state could, without interfering directly in production through public ownership, nonetheless create a more stable and just society with increased prosperity, equitable distribution, individual rights, and a stronger Confederation. The following sums up the report’s philosophy:

The government must seek to impose progressive marginal tax rates on all additions to personal economic power, without regard to the source of the increments in power. Wages, salaries, business profits, gifts and capital gains all increase the economic power of the recipients and should be treated on exactly the same basis for tax purposes.  

The tax code, said Carter, was rife with inconsistencies and contradictions that inspired distrust, especially among low-income people. When factoring in sales taxes, they paid higher proportional taxes than the wealthy who made money off untaxed capital gains. The solution lay in a taxation of capital gains as identical to employment income. (Marginal tax rates for the top earners were to fall from above 80% to no higher than 50%). The goal was to provide incentives and fairness for all classes. All in all, the report claimed that these changes would result in the wealthiest paying 20% more in taxes, and many average people paying less.  

The Trudeau government’s response came via the 1969 White Paper on taxation by Finance Minister Edgar Benson. Benson complained that the Carter Report pushed its ideas to “extremes.” Yet, he agreed that “many of the wealthy in our society have benefited  

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unduly.” His Report thus contended that while ability to pay should be considered, so should respect be accorded to the wealth creators. In this way, more low income people would be exempted from the tax rolls, but a capital gains tax would, to protect investment, only be introduced at half the rate of income taxes, and would be in part offset by a tax cut for the upper income brackets.79

While Trudeau personally would admit that the Carter Report had exposed tax inequities, he questioned capital gains taxes because they would “enlèverait le désir d’investir” and hit unintended targets like the causal investor “comme vous et moi, qui, de temps en temps, placent un ou deux mille dollars.”80 Although most every other industrialized nation had a capital gains tax, Canada was in “un stade de développement actuellement où [notre] tâche [est] d’encourager les Canadiens à investir, et les étrangers d’investir dans nos ressources.”81 Trudeau thus implied that Canada could not afford tax justice because it was bad for business. Equally interesting were Trudeau’s comments during the 1968 leaders’ debate, when he argued that the existence of capital gains taxes was not a moral question, but a technical one about incentive: “There is nothing moral or immoral about the absence or the presence of a capital gains [tax]; it is a matter of knowing whether you will raise enough money to make it worthwhile killing the incentives which are created through the absence of a capital gains [tax].”82

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80 One might question the inherited millionaire Trudeau’s assertion that he was a casual investor like any other. It was also unlikely that most regular Joes were able to plop down a couple thousand dollars from time to time.
Equally important was the advice Trudeau received. While his cabinet wanted to spare business and the wealthy from steep increases, they also acknowledged that this reluctance might be “giving undue weight to the views of big business and the higher income groups.” Some ministers thought that the top marginal tax rate should be lowered to neutralize the capital gains concessions. Perhaps most interesting was a cabinet report on the implications of tax reform. It argued that due to the sensitivity of the matter, Trudeau could hope for “grudging support” at best. He was encouraged to balance the ambitions of the Carter Report with the essentials of reform, excising recommendations that would foster both stagnation and indignation. Trudeau was advised to worry more about the pitfalls than the promises of tax reform. His memos are loud with worries about capital flight, brain drains, and accusations of class favouritism.  

In short, Trudeau, the herald of the Just Society, opposed just taxation. His proposals were already timid compared to Carter’s. Yet even they would be defended only weakly. Walter Stewart is right to challenge Trudeau’s claim that the White Paper debates were a process of democratic engagement. The voices on tax reform came disproportionately from business. What of the left, asked Stewart? They were set on Carter’s recommendations; Benson’s were rejected outright. And so, while viciously attacked from the right, the White Paper received no support from the left. The result was that the idea of “a buck is a buck” was abandoned by Trudeau, who seemed happy to maintain the various exemptions that protected earnings of those in the highest brackets,  

many of whom would in the end avoid the promised tax increases. The *status quo* largely prevailed in the field of taxation.\(^84\)

So what exactly was the NDP and labour response to this series of events? Their impression was that the White Paper was a sorry substitute for Carter. In the NDP’s view, Trudeau had rejected “the general philosophy of the Carter Commission on taxation ‘that the first and most essential purpose of taxation is to share the burden of the state fairly among individuals and families.’”\(^85\) NDPers urged that the Carter Report’s recommendations—a full capital gains tax, removal of special benefits for segments of private industry, and a tax structure based on ability to pay—be accepted. The government’s approach, on the other hand, was that of a reverse Robin Hood. As Tommy Douglas observed, Canada would “never have a ‘just society’ until we have a just system of taxation.” Carter had set out “for the first time in our history…a fair way to tax everyone on the basis that a buck is a buck, no matter how it’s acquired.”\(^86\)

For Desmond Morton, Carter was significant because the mainstream accountant had revealed the perverse nature of Canadian taxation, whereby those who had more paid less relative to their ability to pay. “For once,” Morton explained, “the tax experts were really telling it like it is.” In the end, Morton felt the Carter formula constituted a step that

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would allow socialists to better collect the taxes they needed to expand social development and create equality.\textsuperscript{87}

The NDP federal caucus presented a comprehensive critique of the Benson White Paper, arguing that its conclusions “will mean that Canada’s tax system will remain inequitable and regressive. Injustice and special privileges will remain.” The party also felt that the recommended minimum income exemptions were too low. They would mean taxing Canadians without the ability to pay them. Further, the proposed exemption system benefited the rich because they made dollars at top marginal rates. The NDP argued that it was against the principles of tax reform and fiscal responsibility to give the already under-taxed breaks of hundreds of dollars, whilst working people received much more meagre concessions. The NDP also rejected the reduction in the marginal tax rate, which the party claimed was detached from the reality surrounding the wealthy’s ability to pay. The White Paper represented acquiescence “to the pressure of corporate and industrial interests.”

Little had been done to end tax processes which targeted wage earners, and supporters of the half-hearted tax reforms refused to uphold their stated goals, especially regarding the ability to pay. Rather, the NDP felt tax reforms were most concerned with ensuring fairness—for the wealthy.\textsuperscript{88} Trudeau himself would acknowledge—with no apparent desire to change it—that the White Paper discussants were unrepresentative: “it’s likely we heard more from the vested interests than we did from the little taxpayer who didn’t have…the high-paid lawyers to speak for him…I suppose in participatory democracy there


will always be some whose voice is louder than others.” The result was that most Carter Report recommendations were shelved except, the NDP argued, those articles that lowered high bracket rates to account for a full capital gains tax that never materialized.  

David Lewis would intertwine tax reform with his concept of the corporate rip-off, which would term the capitalist class “corporate welfare bums” and “welfare cheats” who attacked social programs while protecting their tax exemptions. In Lewis’s mind, the tax system was designed to aid those who profited off the labour of others. Instead of jobs, regular Canadians’ generosity to capital was repaid with higher unemployment and personal taxes to perpetuate the “free enterprise merry-go-round.” Lewis penned a book on corporate welfare in 1972, which chronicled Trudeau’s dismissal of Carter. He juxtaposed the prime minister’s claims that a just society would “strike at the root of economic disparity” with his support for a tax system designed to strengthen those very roots. Lewis claimed mere equal opportunity would not suffice: he wanted “equality of condition” to become a reality. Carter-style tax reform was a first step towards it.  

Tommy Douglas attacked Trudeau on taxes during the 1968 election debate. One “cannot talk about a just society until he first of all is prepared to commit himself to establishing a just tax structure in this country,” he argued. For Douglas, Trudeau, through rejecting the Carter Report, was guilty of a “tax reform in reverse.” As it was for Douglas,

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tax reform for Broadbent was a litmus test showing that Trudeau rejected equality and justice, while preserving at all costs “the present distribution of wealth in Canada.” Thus was revealed “the moral bankruptcy of the Liberal Party.” In Broadbent’s view, Trudeau had “done less for the average or poor Canadian than any Prime Minister since the Second World War.”

One of the more extensive critiques of Trudeau’s tax policy came his cabinet colleague Eric Kierans, who would leave the Liberals because their tax policies were too easy on large foreign corporations. Specifically, he felt that the Carter philosophy that a buck was a buck was being flouted by the government and civil service in their effort to preserve write-offs. This was, for Kierans, emblematic of Trudeau’s departure from a Just Society. John McDougall’s analysis of Kierans notes his dismay at Trudeau’s indifference to the principles of fair taxation.

The fight for fair taxation was one of the most pivotal for labour in the Trudeau years. The CLC, for instance, supported the Carter Report, but was cool towards the resulting White Paper. Internally, CLC leaders like Bill Dodge would concede that however weak, the White Paper signaled “a beginning, however small, in the direction of tax reform.” Turning to the capital gains tax in Benson’s White Paper, the CLC took a


nuanced approach, acknowledging the “indispensable” and historical proposal, whilst still holding it unacceptable that Benson recommended only a partial taxation.  

CUPE argued that the “tax system is an economic instrument created and used by the federal government to promote, protect, and strengthen the interests of corporations and the upper income group at the expense of working people.” Taxes were thus inherently political. Labour had to show that Trudeau’s reforms were nothing compared to Carter’s. Based on his actions, CUPE felt genuine reform would never come from Trudeau; it would come only from a government that acts “on behalf of workers and their interests.” The USW would stand for Carter against the White Paper. The latter perceived a system in which a steelworker was taxed on all he earned whilst stockholders or landlords paid little to nothing. The OFL would praise the Carter Report for advancing the idea that taxation must have equality as a central pillar. In essence, Trudeau and Benson’s failure to usher in just taxation was a foil for Carter’s admirable efforts.

Transport held that tax reform was Canada’s “most critical” issue. Yet discussion of this issue was dominated by the richest five percent of Canadians and buttressed by the


97 Rick Deaton, “Benson’s Non Tax Reform & Corporate Power,” CUPE Journal, September 1971. This piece would reference John Porter’s 1965 study, The Vertical Mosaic, which showed how the elite created public and private institutions to maintain intergenerational power. See The Vertical Mosaic Revisited, eds. Rick Helmes-Hayes and Clarence Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Rick Helmes-Hayes, Measuring the Mosaic: An Intellectual Biography of John Porter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

“two big business parties” with their trickle-down theories. Taxation reform required a philosophy centred on equality, redistribution, and fairness, rather than the Trudeau Liberals’ special treatment, confusion, and distrust. *Transport* would heartily commend both Carter and Lewis for exposing the extent to which average Canadians subsidized the corporate welfare bums so that they could reap record profits.99 *Transport* felt that this whole debate had made a mockery out of Trudeau’s early promises. As the NDP was fighting for transformation of social and economic structures, Trudeau and his “cronies” were content with emitting misleading rhetoric about a just society:

> [Tax reform] is an essential part of any scheme to achieve an equitable, or if you prefer, a just society. The government claims that the [white paper] proposals represent a major move in that direction. We are therefore forced to conclude that the government’s idea of a just society is one in which power rests with the corporate elite.100

For the UAW, Trudeau’s perverse “Just society” was one in which the workers paid more proportionally in taxes than did corporations. Carter’s recommendations were jettisoned in the interest of millionaires.101 Finally, the UE would argue that labour must speak louder to match the “howling” from the wealthy. It must defend the Carter Report from their well-funded propaganda campaigns. Regarding the White Paper, the UE said

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that despite all its problems, it was significant in that it put the question of tax reform on the table. Organized labour must seize the opportunity.102

One key element of Trudeau’s early tax regime was a 2% social development tax hated by many within organized labour and the NDP. The tax was deemed unfair because as a flat tax, it ignored ability to pay. Further, the maximum one could be taxed for “development” was 120 dollars, meaning that a certain point, one’s tax rate began to fall: a person making fifty thousand dollars per year, for instance, would pay proportionally much less than a poor worker. For Transport, this policy could not be anything but “specifically designed to hit the low wage and salary earners.” Sarcastically, they would claim that this was “the just society, Trudeau style.” The packinghouse workers would quote top NDP and CLC officials, citing the 2% tax as emblematic of Trudeauvian injustice. It let the wealthy and corporations off the hook. The UAW would describe it as the reality of “the just society that Trudeau was talking about.” The CSN would take a similar tone, arguing that while Trudeau’s rejection of the Carter Report was bad enough, this specific surtax’s regressive nature was deplorable.103

Even so, as had been the case with debate over the GAI, labour and the NDP often fell within the commonsense parameters of liberal democratic opinion during these debates. The focus on taxation of income and investments not only obscured questions

about the nature of and responsibilities attached to property ownership, but it also ignored intergenerational wealth. Douglas in a 1970 interview was asked if he supported a “capital levy of some type” because “if you are serious about redistributing wealth,” one needed a tax “on the existing wealth of individuals.” Douglas sidestepped the question by affirming that the focus was redistributing income from this point forward. This position was different than that of the authors of *The Real Poverty Report*, who felt that wealth taxation must be a component of a just tax system. They argued that such a wealth tax would not impoverish the supposedly beleaguered wealthy, that provisions could be made to exempt middle-class retirees for the most part, and that the process had already been implemented in Sweden, West Germany, and the Netherlands. In their mind, wealth, like income indicated economic power. And, as Croll himself had indicated, should one not tax all such power equally?104

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These tax debates magnified a growing split between Trudeau and the labour left. He emerged from them relatively unscathed. Many still cherish Trudeau as a compassionate reformer, even as the assault on the “free stuff” he despised so deeply continues to this day, with the poor facing hardships and shame more acutely than at any time in recent history. A revamped GAI proposal that rarely invokes an anti-capitalist ethos today, is instead proposed to shrink government, slash labour standards, and take a shot at unionized public sector workers. Even the contemporary NDP leader Tom Mulcair argues that wealthy Canadians are being taxed at confiscatory levels. A buck is not yet a buck,

and given the imposition and expansion of a Tax Free Savings Account policy, which effectively allows the sheltering of capital gains, this state of affairs is unlikely to change in the near future. Once-promising possibilities in the 1970s for a radically redefined tax system were blocked, not least by Trudeau himself, with all-too-evident consequences in today’s world.
Chapter 7

Foreign Investment Review Agency, the National Energy Program, and the

Question of Economic Democracy

Who should own Canada’s resources? To what extent does foreign ownership impinge upon sovereignty? Does private ownership stifle democracy? During Trudeau’s era, the NDP and most industrial and public sector unions felt private and American ownership was detrimental to autonomy and democracy. Trudeau, while occasionally acknowledging a need to intervene in the economy, welcomed capital, and preferred empowering Canadian capitalists and regionally redistributing resource wealth rather than socializing the economy. This chapter focuses on how the Trudeau Liberals envisioned and implemented such policies as the National Energy Program (NEP) and the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA). Once more, a liberal/social democratic distinction sometimes difficult to define in theory becomes clearer when one looks at practice.

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Before the advent of Trudeau, Walter Gordon’s 1957 Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects

1 had urged Canadian capital to resist both foreign pressure and socialism:

Despite the tremendous contributions which foreign capital...has made and will continue to make to the development of our country, we do not believe Canadians will cease to be concerned about this matter unless something is done to make Canadian voices more strongly and effectively heard in some

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vitaly important sectors of our economy...To do nothing would be to acquiesce in seeing an increasing measure of control of the Canadian economy pass into the hands of non-residents and to run the risk that...a disregard for Canadian aspirations will create demands for action of an extreme nature [i.e., the nationalization of certain industries.]²

Gordon’s analysis indirectly spurred the Watkins Report, which suggested that the government collect data on the effects of foreign ownership, provide incentives to Canadian investors, and work with them to rationalize and expand the economy in “a new National Policy.”³ Adding urgency to these analyses was the Nixon shock in the early 1970s. This “new Economic Program” was a protectionist effort that threatened the end of Canada’s special trading relationship with the Americans. Some regard “Nixonomics” as a turning point for Trudeau, leading him to consider increased multilateral trading and national/public ownership.⁴

As seen in earlier chapters, Trudeau had dismissed nationalism as a refuge for bigots and incipient totalitarians. It empowered the middle class at the expense of workers. Liberal internationalism, in contrast, offered liberty and prosperity for all. As Prime Minister, he decried Cuba’s revolt against foreign and private industry. He denounced economic nationalists as ignorant of under-developed regions and poorer Canadians.

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Canadians had to weigh how much they were willing to hamper prosperity and liberty to preserve autonomy.\(^5\)

The problem of economic domination is somewhat inevitable... Those are the facts of life, and they don’t worry me... It is obvious, if we keep out capital and keep out technology we won’t be able to develop our resources and we would have to cut our standard of consumption in order to generate the savings to invest ourselves and so on... We can’t have one without the other, and we are willing to take both, but on certain conditions. I’m not an economic nationalist, and I believe that the whole device of nationalism is an impoverishing one—that you should only use it, sparingly, in areas where you can’t defend yourself.\(^6\)

As John Hiemstra notes in his analysis of Trudeau’s thought, liberalism was the ideal form of political philosophy because while it upheld competition and individuality as the driving forces behind progress, it did not necessarily preclude the state’s constructive participation in stabilizing and promoting liberal values. An orthodox liberal could justify a measure of economic intervention to ensure that Canadians maintained their liberty.\(^7\)

McCall and Clarkson argue that Trudeau, despite his disdain for nationalism, in “a classic Liberal manoeuvre” appropriated left nationalism. His tactics, on this reading, approached a Gramscian passive revolution.\(^8\) Trudeau agreed to study foreign ownership and gear Canadian capital towards the industries of the future, in order to protect prevailing capitalist enterprise: “Nous allons…. avoir une politique à nous qui consistera à promouvoir de façon très intensive la recherche, afin que nous dominions, pas... l’économie d’hier,


\(^8\) McCall and Clarkson, Trudeau and Our Times: The Heroic Delusion, 75, 85-7, 104-10.
mais que nous corrions la situation qui pourrait se développer demain.”

Despite all his apprehensions of nationalism, Trudeau recognized, as in the 1950s, that “there is a point where the economic decisions would be taken so much abroad that the country wouldn’t have much control of its economic destinies.”

Building on the work of such scholars as François Perroux, with whom he studied in Paris, Trudeau approached foreign investment as he would a monopolized industry. Private or foreign investment was not inherently troubling, but it had the potential to become so when concentrated within increasingly large American multinationals. Only through monitored and diversified trading patterns could Canada have an economic system compatible with its political and diplomatic autonomy, one in which the Americans could not use their economic clout to “call the shots.” Further, Trudeau was proactive in making distinctions between his FIRA and NEP on the one hand, and nationalism on the other. While the former two were predicated on pragmatic economic goals for all the state’s citizens, the latter amounted to an irrational assertion of pride on the part of a nationally-defined subset of Canadians. So while the nationalist projects of Quebec were based on a lofty rhetoric of grandeur and honour, Trudeau’s programs were tastefully patriotic, emphasizing the betterment of Canada, defined not as an ethnic, linguistic, or religious entity but rather as a social, political, and economic community of individuals.

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Trudeau’s papers indicate that on questions of foreign economic dominance, there was a desire for action in the Liberal Party.\textsuperscript{13} Ian Wahn worried about pervasive foreign investment, while Warren Allmand rejected the “red herring” that made economic nationalism seem inimical to prosperity.\textsuperscript{14} A staff memo to Trudeau also challenged this perspective: “the political and economic reality of this country… make[s] our choice more and more one between a share of foreign controls, rather than between progress and stagnation as some would have us believe.” Intervention would allow entrepreneurship to mature and policy makers to have their intended impact.\textsuperscript{15} Most noteworthy was Eric Kierans, who as noted in last chapter would eventually leave caucus over policies that facilitated the takeover of Canada. Planning, including significant public ownership, was needed to protect Canadian interests, and the Trudeau Liberals were unwilling to provide it. Kierans felt the NDP offered the best positions on the matter, and was the only party “that knows what is talking about when it comes to economics.” Most notably, Kierans would work with the Ed Schreyer’s Manitoba NDP government on the question of national ownership of key resources.\textsuperscript{16}

So despite his distrust of nationalism, Trudeau thought foreign investment should be controlled. His approach was exemplified by the Foreign Investment Review Agency

\textsuperscript{13} PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 73, file 14, M.A Crowe to Trudeau, 23 July 1971. This report surmises that cabinet was mostly supportive of the Gray Report recommendations.

\textsuperscript{14} Wahn would produce recommendations around foreign control as it pertained to defense. See the 1970 Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence Respecting Canada-US Relations.

\textsuperscript{15} PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 73, file 15, Warren Allmand to Herb Gray, 8 May 1972; PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 73, file 13, M.A Crowe to Trudeau, 8 April 1970.

(FIRA) in his 1973 minority (and NDP-supported) government. FIRA’s impetus came from the Gray Report, which was commissioned by Trudeau largely to expand upon Watkins’ findings and to offer a concrete policy position regarding the monitoring of foreign investment.\(^\text{17}\) FIRA was designed to “ensure that new foreign direct investment will be allowed only if it is, or is likely to be, of significant benefit to Canadians.” Such “benefit” was to be assessed on the basis of jobs created, the enhancement of competition and productivity, compatibility with existing industrial policies, use of Canadian inputs, and improvement of the trade balance. Still, FIRA had no retroactive provisions, would not cover indirect takeovers, did not apply to small business, and would not monitor pre-existing foreign businesses making “related” purchases. Foreign firms could keep buying up their Canadian competitors, provided certain conditions were met. They could, for instance, combine to control the supply chains that linked natural resources to refineries to retail gas stations.\(^\text{18}\)

Research on FIRA largely notes that its goals were not achieved, but rather circumvented, through its bureaucratic implementation.\(^\text{19}\) Historian Stephen Azzi argues that FIRA offered only mild nuisances to investors, while legal scholar Jacques Pauwels

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suggests that FIRA was a “regulatory paper tiger” designed to garner nationalist votes whilst maintaining historical reverence to foreign capitalists.\(^{20}\)

The reason an efficient instrument…was not chosen is quite simply that efficient regulation…was unwanted...Even as it was formulating policies which it wanted the nationalist public to support, [the Trudeau government] was determined to allow international investment capital to remain in and continue to enter the country...A complex regulatory scheme thus served to prevent genuine, effective regulation because the government did not believe in the *economic* but only in the *political* need.\(^{21}\)

In Trudeau’s mind, FIRA sought “merely to ensure that Canadians obtain maximum benefits from foreign investment. The policy presents a challenge to Canadians...to undertake more development under Canadian control and thereby reduce the need for foreign direct investment...This approach does not constitute...a protectionist or isolationist stance and does not sacrifice our living standards.”\(^{22}\) Ultimately, Trudeau would also defend limiting FIRA’s focus to takeovers:

> When foreign capital comes here and just sees a prospering Canadian business or even one which is a bit shaky…and takes it over, it is really doing nothing very beneficial to the economy...It is just replacing one Canadian owner by a foreign owner…it’s not creating new jobs, it’s not developing new technologies, it’s just taking over.\(^{23}\)


\(^{21}\) Jacques Pauwels, 141.


Trudeau viewed anything further as unwarranted, and as economist A.E Safarian would suggest to him, his was largely the correct path: “it is one thing to voluntarily surrender some degree of national control...in return for expected benefit...It is quite another to have other nationals use the multinational corporation as a medium for extension of their laws or regulations abroad.” FIRA was crafted so as “to increase the net economic benefit” and “to resist encroachment of our political sovereignty.” On these terms would Trudeau continue to defend FIRA into the 1990s:

We had these savings, Canadians are reputedly high savers, we have this money in the bank...[but Canadian] entrepreneurs couldn’t have access to these savings because they didn’t have the great bankroll behind them to tell a bank well, you can lend me a couple of million...whereas the American companies, the giant ones could come in with their enormous credit rating and borrow Canadian savings in order to buy out a Canadian entreprise. And we said that this is not what we want Canadian savings to be used [for]. And we brought in FIRA to say well, if you’re going to use Canadian savings from Canadian banks to buy out a Canadian entreprise it better well be because you can prove that it is of benefit to Canada.24

In essence, Trudeau felt FIRA both protected Canadian interests and ensured that capital was freed up for all those proposing mutually-beneficial investments. When asked if FIRA hurt the economy by deterring investors, Trudeau argued that lost investors were more than cancelled out by the increased benefits generated by FIRA’s presence.25

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More controversial was the NEP implemented in 1980. It was, like FIRA, a response to political and economic pressures, one that was not overtly hostile to private or foreign industry, but rather sought to re-structure how energy revenues were taxed and shared between provincial and federal governments. Foreign control of energy was becoming problematic because oil, due to OPEC’s push for higher revenues, was subject to supply and price volatility. The mid-1970s crisis shocked those accustomed to cheap and plentiful energy, leading powerful American interests to covet politically-stable Canadian resources. Trudeau would come to hold that Canada required energy autonomy and security in this atmosphere of global volatility, and the NEP would become his eventual policy centrepiece.26

The NEP, with Marc Lalonde as the central minister, was based on three principles. The first was energy security by 1990, which would protect industrial activity. The second was that all Canadians should have the opportunity to benefit from the petroleum industry, which would be 50 percent Canadian-owned by 1990. Finally, fairness was emphasized so that all regions shared the benefits of energy. This would be facilitated via a lower internal oil price, along with increased federal revenues to allow for redistribution. Other initiatives would include exploration, innovation, and subsidizing Canadian energy firms. Much of

this would be facilitated through the crown corporation Petro-Canada.\textsuperscript{27} While some panned the NEP as socialist, Lalonde claimed the very opposite: “The NEP, which some of our critics have described as socialistic, will turn out to be one of the most powerful spurs to Canadian capitalist endeavours in the history of this country.”\textsuperscript{28}

In conformity with Lalonde’s message, the government endeavoured to sell the NEP as business-friendly. Companies found ways to work within its parameters, especially Canadian firms benefiting from its Petroleum Incentives Program. Indeed, initially indignant companies quietly learned that the NEP represented no serious challenge to their profits and predominance. McCall and Clarkson noted that industry rhetoric about looming socialism was “hysterically overstated,” and that “the oilmen’s rage was too powerful, their free-market beliefs too fundamentalist” to “admit something good could come out of government.”\textsuperscript{29}

Others agreed the NEP was controversial because it clashed with rising market fundamentalism. For English, “the NEP must be placed within the context of Trudeau’s understanding of the times, and his belief that a weakened federal government had to reassert itself, particularly amid the economic nostrums proclaimed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.” Trudeau felt the American right had delusively adopted a rigid  

\textsuperscript{29} Canada, Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources, Do Governments take too much? - An Examination of Pre and Post-NEP Fiscal Regimes (Ottawa: Financial and Fiscal Analysis, 1982), 5-6, 21; Doern and Toner, 251-4; John English, Just Watch Me, 488; McCall and Clarkson, The Heroic Delusion, 192.
ideology, and his NEP provided at least a partial alternative to a vision of Canada as a mere supplier of staples. For their part, conservative U.S. politicians and industrialists became invested in replacing Trudeau with political leaders more amenable to unchecked capital and resource flows.30

When Trudeau was interrogated by other First World leaders worried that Canada was implementing socialist protectionism, he responded by noting that outsiders could not fully grasp Canada’s economic predicament. Trudeau mentioned that while leaders like Germany’s Helmut Schmidt disliked German companies being rejected by FIRA, he was perfectly willing to prevent the takeover of Mercedes Benz by foreign interests. From Trudeau’s perspective, Canadian circumstances justified exceptional measures to protect key institutions, industries, and resources. Also from Trudeau’s perspective, FIRA and the NEP were honest expressions of what developed middle powers already did. They protected themselves from an “economic giant.”31

The NEP for some suggested a distinction between social liberalism and neo-conservatism. A Trudeau staff paper held that energy was now too important to leave to unrestricted market forces because “the question of free enterprise versus government intervention is not an issue when we face the danger of our entire economic base collapsing.” English suggests that the NEP was a tool designed to help create “a more

equitable and just society.” To do nothing was to allow, in Lalonde’s words, the “pissing away” of a golden opportunity to prepare Canada for its future as Norway had done. Trudeau himself regarded the NEP and Petro-Canada as expressions of his belief that liberalism embraced the mixed economy. Business activity produced great wealth, but rarely did so in a fashion that promoted equal opportunities.

Still, the NEP did not signal a desire to privilege public enterprise over private capital. Indeed, Trudeau saw the NEP as a pragmatic policy designed to spur business more than anything else. While private enterprise writ large often led to distinct market failures and distortions, interventions could serve the general goal of making markets more effective. In this way, Albert Breton argued, NEP-style intervention into a largely uncompetitive market for a highly strategic commodity could safeguard the general health of Canada’s capitalist order. Even with hindsight in 1992, Trudeau saw the NEP as a vital program for the empowerment of Canada’s capitalists, both economically as players in the energy sector and diplomatically as they struggled with oil multinationals, which in Trudeau’s view “always hid behind the cloak of Washington.”

One cannot ignore the NEP in any assessment of Trudeau and the left. While a full treatment is beyond our scope, it is germane to our purpose to underline Trudeau’s key

argument: the federal government, to ensure Canada-wide cooperation and coordination, must facilitate the country’s unified participation in world trade. In Larry Pratt’s view, the NEP was always about more than energy: it was “a broad, redistributive intervention within the national economy.”³⁶ As Trudeau’s staff and allies would note, regional aspirations were secondary to “the integrity of Canada as a whole.”³⁷ In Trudeau’s words:

> I have no regrets about the National Energy Program...I still hold that we were right to use Canada’s energy self-sufficiency to our country’s advantage...It was natural for a federal government concerned about the development of the whole country and not just of one province to develop a policy that would give advantage not only to our oil producers but to our manufacturers as well. The role of the federal government is to distribute wealth from the affluent to the disadvantaged...We were consistent in our devotion to sharing, and I take pride in that.³⁸

It was not just Conservative animosity towards Trudeau that inflamed the jurisdictional debate. Saskatchewan NDP premier Allan Blakeney argued that Trudeau’s energy policies cost his province a great deal of money and autonomy. Federal NDPers evinced mixed reactions to the NEP. NDPers generally supported a two-price system, but worried about the declining revenues of producing provinces.³⁹ Labour tended to side with Trudeau’s arguments that energy was a federal concern and that a common front against

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multinationals necessitated a more unified federal power. The NEP would ultimately fail because global oil prices failed to rise as predicted. Still, the NEP was a vital component of Trudeau’s final term, engendering fierce debate on public and national ownership. Rather than creating a new consensus about how federalism might work, it solidified the west-east divide we see today.

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An analysis of NDP nationalism cannot ignore Kari Levitt’s 1970 book Silent Surrender, prepared with NDP support, and presenting Canada as a resource colony exploited first by English and French metropoles and now by American multinationals. Many in the party applied Levitt’s analysis, including MP Max Saltsman, who called Canada a “client state,” Kenneth McNaught, who deemed Canada a “permanent colony,” and NDP staffers, who argued that “Canada has much in common with the under-developed world, in that it performs the function...of supplying the raw materials and natural resources to the American industrial plant.”

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Foreign and corporate dominance would be one of the NDP’s largest preoccupations during the Trudeau era. Douglas thought few things were “as important as...the need to establish the kind of national independence which will allow Canada to develop a creative pride, a determination to set our own goals and to work towards them without outside interference.”

For Douglas, such Canadian autonomy would be predicated on public ownership, which was a bulwark against monopoly, a catalyst for planning, a ladder to lift Canada from its semi-colonial state, and a challenge to profiteers. In short, “the nationalization of our energy resource industries” was “vital to our future as an independent nation.” Until Canadians owned, as “public utilities,” these industries, they should not be “entitled to sing, ‘with glowing hearts we see thee rise the true north strong and free.’”

For Douglas, public ownership of natural resources was the next evolutionary step towards democracy, a sign that society was prepared to challenge an order in which the “major economic decisions affecting the lives of ordinary people are not made by Parliament and not even by the government of this country.” The answer to this democratic

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deficit lay in directing capital into socially-constructive avenues and confronting inequality and poverty. More than merely creating disparate crown corporations, democratizing the economy meant moving towards “a new motivation for our society.” In his last speech as federal leader, Douglas harked back to the Second World War, during which he had witnessed the viability of “a planned economy dedicated meeting human needs and responding to human wants:"

If we could mobilize the financial and the material and the human resources of this country, to fight a successful war against Nazi tyranny, we can if we want to, mobilize the same resources to fight a continual war against poverty, unemployment, and social injustice.

David Lewis would also link economic autonomy to socialism, democracy, and public control. He critiqued multinationals for profiting from Canadian resources and labour and then using their subsidy-facilitated profits to perpetuate Canada’s subordination. Why, Lewis asked, should Canadians use their own money to subsidize capitalists, when they could collectively own the resources and the means of production themselves? Lewis also worried about how corporations obstructed the democratic will through their ability to either damage or blackmail communities. Lewis argued that the free market was non-existent in a world in which multinationals were “so omnipresent, so omnipotent that they can threaten the sovereignty and independence of entire nations.” The corporate capitalist hand was a menacing force: “One finger controls selling prices; the second, investment policy; the third employment, and the fourth, production. And the thumb controls… the two traditional parties, ensuring that corporate power is never

opposed.” So while Lewis dismissed totalitarian socialism, he retained his skepticism of capitalism. Democratic socialism meant, for him, a preference for co-operation over private profiteering. Paraphrasing British democratic socialist Aneurin Bevan, Lewis noted that while not all private property was evil, many evils flowed from private property.

Broadbent critiqued Canada in the 1970s as an “industrial autocracy.” The alternative to such autocracy was public and worker ownership of industry. In such an industrial democracy, Canadians would determine “our own goals and [shape] Canada’s future in terms of our priorities and traditions.” Broadbent’s socialism, then, was predicated on confronting private enterprise’s disproportionate input into shaping the attitudes of Canadians. He presented a comprehensive alternative vision:

To be humane, Canada must be democratic, and to be democratic each of our citizens must possess direct or indirect control over all those decisions which seriously affect his day-to-day life. Political democracy is not enough. Social democracy is our goal, and the essential element of social democracy is the liberation of industrial man. We must not take refuge in the rhetoric of modern conservatives who say political democracy is sufficient...We must face all issues of work squarely...remaining firmly committed to the building of that fuller kind of democracy which along can make it possible for the lives of all Canadians to be both just and exciting.

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So while Broadbent did at times question, as Douglas and Lewis would, the bluntness of the existing socialist tools, all three of them remained convinced that the unfettered rule of capitalists menaced Canadian democracy.

Frank Scott also felt autonomy was a vital political goal, requiring more than anything “large doses of democratic socialism” without which Canada “cannot long survive against the pull of American power and interests.”53 Charles Taylor considered multinational corporations to be representatives of an extreme capitalism. They threatened the legitimacy of the nation-state, and engendered fundamental conflicts between democratic socialism and multinational capitalism.54 Nicholas Smith’s analysis of Taylor summarizes his insight that “corporate autonomy is inconsistent with the demands of democracy:”

For Taylor, the answer is obvious: the interest of the vast majority of Canadians lies in reorienting production towards the satisfaction of collective needs...But such a change in priorities is only possible if corporate autonomy is challenged, and government, or other forms of citizen representation, take some democratic control over the organization of the economy.55

Desmond Morton for his part was concerned with how foreign control dulled public policy. Still, he warned that nationalism was at odds with socialism and the working class, and that one should expect few converts to socialism via nationalism. Morton would also argue that while public ownership and control usually had positive outcomes, the democratic left need not support existing bureaucratic systems that, as Trudeau said, benefitted the national elite and middle classes, whilst measuring out scraps for the working

class. Still, public ownership was useful as a means to the goal of avoiding Americanized social ills and ending “the absolute power of directors and shareholders, prerogatives which are no longer defensible in a democratic society.”

Thus, both implicitly and explicitly, many centrally-positioned NDPers argued in the 1970s that foreign multinationals corrupted democracy. While the blueprints of ‘socialisms gone by’ were altered, the desire to transcend capitalist hegemony with public and cooperative alternatives remained. These views did not resemble the milquetoast appeals to the “liberally-minded” the New Party had issued more than a decade earlier. These more radical outlooks contributed to the NDP critique of FIRA and NEP, which were both deemed inadequate in promoting economic democracy and autonomy. As Bill Blaikie would note, public ownership under old-line governments could not be automatically considered a step towards the “means to the end of a new society.” Such governments did not realize that “production for profit cannot serve the human future.”

Douglas, for instance, felt FIRA was “a screen” behind which Trudeau could “hide the fact that nothing has changed and the foreign control of our economy will remain very much as it was.” Lewis agreed that FIRA lacked any real program to reduce foreign control, and wanted a commitment to nationalization and economic democracy, rather than a screening mechanism. Broadbent felt Trudeau used FIRA to quell discontent about porous

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Canadian sovereignty without actually doing anything about it. A contemporaneous NDP research analysis of FIRA supported its ostensible goals, but critiqued its arbitrary parameters and the cabinet secrecy surrounding its deliberations. The clause pertaining to “related businesses” was troubling because multinationals could continue to cast a wide net over Canadian resources and industry. FIRA was thus treating only the symptoms of foreign dominance, and was doing so ineffectively. Finally, Douglas and Broadbent felt that Petro-Canada under Trudeau’s leadership was prevented from offering a counterbalance to capitalists. It was used instead for socializing losses and privatizing profits. In the end, the crown corporation was deemed a corporate subsidizer par excellence.

But on the whole, notwithstanding such objections, the NDP defended Petro-Canada and FIRA. For all their flaws, they represented the achievements of the 1972-4 minority government. Lorne Nystrom asserted that it was the NDP that forged FIRA and Petro-Canada, and Broadbent defended FIRA because, even though Trudeau’s plan was insufficient, the NDP had been meaningfully consulted. Likewise, Lewis and Douglas would hold that FIRA and Petro-Canada constituted NDP victories in the minority parliament. These programs were thus cast as successes for Canadians and concessions

wring from Trudeau.\textsuperscript{62} Petro-Canada, for instance, was advertised by the party as precisely the sort of crown corporation it had long championed, and one the “NDP was instrumental in establishing.”\textsuperscript{63}

While Frank Scott complimented him for wresting concessions from the Liberals, Lewis had felt backed into a political corner. “The more we force out of the Liberals,” he observed, “the more we defuse some of the basic issues.” Saltsman agreed, noting that the NDP was in “a situation of having the Liberals adopt what ostensibly is part our policy, but which is in fact none of it—a situation it would be hard to talk ourselves out of.” The NDP found itself in a classic passive revolutionary situation, as it viewed the Liberals adopt and deradicalize its policies. As one discerning internal document in Broadbent’s files explained:

By Canadian control I don’t mean private enterprise control. I believe that the development and utilization of energy resources must be determined by public need, not private profit. I see little difference in philosophy between a Canadian capitalist and an American capitalist...Canadian control...to be effective in achieving the goals of self-sufficiency and reasonable prices, must mean public control; that is to say, government ownership.\textsuperscript{64}

Broadbent and NDP MP Ian Waddell would produce in 1981 a detailed challenge to private energy firms, whose windfall profits worked against the public interest. If the NEP’s goal was stable pricing to ensure fair proceeds and cheap industrial inputs, it necessitated a

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challenge to business. Private sector pricing reflected not costs, supply, or demand, but speculation. Only a non-capitalist method of selling and planning energy would deliver efficiency, utility, and conservation. Finally, the paper critiqued Trudeau’s desire for public investment and private profit, taking specific aim at the heavy subsidies entailed in the Petroleum Incentives Program (PIP):

Through the grant system (Petroleum Incentives Program) a Canadian firm investing in frontier exploration will be given roughly $4.00 for every $1.00 the firm is able to invest. The after tax cost for the company under the old system for $1.00 exploration was 37¢. Under the new system the after tax, after incentive cost will be 7¢…If the taxpayers are to put up 93% of the costs for a private Canadian company to find oil or gas, why not put up the extra 7% and do it ourselves through a crown company so Canadians as a whole can reap all the benefits of their investment.65

The Alberta NDP demanded that “all energy resources in Canada be brought under public control.”66 Federal caucus researchers argued that only under public ownership would “Canada have an energy policy that truly serves the public’s interest.” These social democratic analysts countered NEP nationalism by arguing that a capitalist was a capitalist, with profit motives that were in direct conflict with any vision of a socialist Canada. The NEP could be placed within the Liberals’ history of using the public purse as a prize for private industry; that it now benefited Canadian elites, instead of Americans, offered little comfort.67

Interestingly, many left nationalists attacked the NDP for not supporting Trudeau’s NEP. They were willing to gloss over the contradiction of a socialist alliance with capital

and defended the NEP as a challenge to the multinationals. James Laxer of Waffle fame argued that with the NEP, Trudeau had “moved to the left.” The NDP was foolish to reject him. Watkins agreed, passionately critiquing the NDP for trying to score political points rather than fighting for Canadian sovereignty.68 The NDP rebuttal was equally ardent:

Why should the NDP have supported the massive giveaways to capital represented by PIP grants under the NEP? In what sense is the NEP left-wing? Because it increases Canadian Ownership? Are we then to believe that Dome Canada is a more progressive entity than Imperial Oil…Or is it left-wing because it represents a major intervention of the state into a foreign-controlled sector? But consider: the purpose of the NEP…has been to transfer benefits from foreign to domestic capital and to transfer tax revenues from provincial to federal hands. Does this make it left-wing? We think not.69

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Canadian labour in the 1970s was undergoing a seismic shift from continentalism to nationalism.70 American multinationals, many trade unionists now argued, hampered Canada’s autonomy and security. National and public control over them would enhance economic and political democracy. Trudeauavian economics was therefore badly flawed. Still, some unions offered qualified support for Trudeau, agreeing to a point with the arguments of the left nationalists. The common conception that international unions were

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soft on multinational capitalism due to their ties with their US parent bodies is not fully accurate. The following examples show that key Canadian and multinational unions all demonstrated to a considerable degree that they were concerned about rising US influence. Canadian nationalism was not solely the preserve of Waffle academics, new leftists, or even the mainstream NDP and Canadian union leadership—it was something broadly supported by much of the Canadian working-class left during the Trudeau era.71

The OCAW noted that Canada’s national “survival” was in doubt due to the heavy American control of energy.72 CUPE argued that Canada’s elite had sold out to the American multinationals, an argument its magazine demonstrated with cartoons depicting a lounging Uncle Sam guiding a Canadian with a carrot on a stick, anthropomorphized oil company logos divvying up a Canadian map, and a casket with a dead-maple-leaf-clad gas pump. CUPW, CEP, and the CLC would all cite the need to protect Canada’s economic and political future with better planning and more autonomy.73 The Machinists also keyed in on the “energy crunch” and criticized governments that refused to stand up to the major corporations. Canada more than any other country faced a turning point, they argued: it could continue kneeling before a neighbor draining it dry, or it could pursue domestic use, public planning, and conservation.74

For the CBRT&GW, at stake was the “very existence of Canada” and the ability “to develop a society different from, and better than, the corrupt and strife-torn ‘American way of life.’”\textsuperscript{75} The UAW warned of Canadians losing their oil and water to a rampaging “Uncle Sam,” whose actions in Vietnam and Latin America spoke loudly. There was little doubt that, if present trends ran their course, “our sovereignty and independence will all disappear...down the American drain.”\textsuperscript{76} Canada would thus “forever be ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water.’”\textsuperscript{77} The United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union spoke frequently of Nixon-inspired American plots to pillage Canada, a mere pawn for American multinationals. Here was a covert war through which the USA was pursuing both wealth and influence.\textsuperscript{78}

The UE, drawing upon its Communist heritage, would illustrate “Yankee Control” as an uncouth Uncle Sam accosting a beautiful and resistant Lady Canada.\textsuperscript{79} It warned of American schemes to siphon off resources, in one case in an article adjacent to a headline warning that the “U.S. has nerve gas to kill 100 billion.” While feeding the “insatiable and ultra-powerful monster,”\textsuperscript{80} Canada would never be “strong or free.”\textsuperscript{81} The UE would also,

\textsuperscript{75} The Maple Leaf—Forever?" \textit{Canadian Transport}, 15 December 1968.
\textsuperscript{79} “Yankee Control Stifles Canadian Development,” \textit{UE News}, 5 October 1970; This cartoon of Uncle Sam and Lady Canada can be found in \textit{UE News}, 19 June 1972.
\textsuperscript{81} George Harris, “Not Strong or Free,” \textit{UE News}, 11 March 1974.
after frequently underlining Canada’s satellite status, mock a famous ginger ale promotion to proclaim, “Nixon Drinks Canada Dry.”

Also prevalent was labour’s analysis of the multinational corporation. The UAW, for example, spoke of wealthy multinationals dwarfing entire nations, as they exercised unprecedented global control over production, markets, and governments. For workers, such corporate power meant trouble. They now bargained with titans possessing transnational mobility and influence. Canada, unique among wealthy nations in its abject dependence, was bereft of meaningful political autonomy. OCAW chastised multinationals for their abuse of democratic governments and institutions. CUPE pointed out how much Trudeau kowtowed to multinationals. Canadians were subsidizing the erosion of their own sovereignty. The Paperworkers felt multinationals, little better than marauding bandits, profited handsomely when they sabotaged entire nations. They failed to deliver promised development and prosperity to the communities they exploited and oppressed.

Citing David Lewis, Canadian Transport argued that multinational capitalism facilitated a passive American conquest. It would also cite Ed Finn’s assertion that multinationals benefitted directly from undermining labour, public institutions, and civilization en masse: “the unchecked rapacity and single-minded profit-seeking of the

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multinationals will doom most of the human race to a life of unemployment and misery.”

For Finn, the labour-NDP-nationalist alliance was promising. He felt the old parties were too dependent on international capital, and could never break their continentalist alliances. Only the NDP could offer a progressive nationalism based not on chauvinism, xenophobia, or racism, but on “the socialist vision of the good society.” Indeed, Finn felt that if the USA were to become a democratic socialist nation, he might be more amenable to continentalism. As things stood, however, he felt that “socialism will cease to be a viable alternative in an American satellite.”

The USW associated the multinational corporation with a snuffing-out of democracy, as demonstrated recently in Chile. Trudeau’s government had maintained that the capitalist coup there had been in Canada’s best interest, while the NDP and USW viewed it as another indication that multinationals needed to be brought to heel under democratic control. USW would sum up its viewpoint with a cartoon showing anthropomorphized multinationals in Roman imperial uniforms, with one of them holding a smoking gun over a corpse named “Chilean Democracy.” The soldier’s message: “Everytime I hear the word ballot I reach for my gun.” The fear of American coups extended into Canada as well, with BC NDP premier Dave Barrett fearing that, in light of Allende’s fate, he too might be killed.

The UE, alluding to Silent Surrender, would hold

88 For more on the Trudeau government’s response to the coup, see “Allende Widow Cries after Talk with Trudeau,” Montreal Gazette, 30 November 1973; Brian Stevenson, Canada, Latin America, and the New
that multinationals were the conduit through which Canada’s subjugation was being orchestrated. Its researchers tracked the flows of capital in a world where business had found it increasingly possible to work on a global level, so as to ensure high prices, cheap labour, and access to scarce resources.\textsuperscript{89}

American and multinational power could be challenged by increased democratic control of the economy. Transcripts from a 1974 UAW meeting on national and corporate control attended by 250 labour leaders from both sides of the border reveal some of the strength of socialist sentiment. Dennis McDermott held that current economic structures prevented democratic energy politics. For him, more powerful than the energy derived from the oil, wind, or nuclear fusion was that of working people demanding fair access to energy, even if that meant taking away “private ownership through nationalization.”\textsuperscript{90}

Another attendee noted that government control was not enough, because anti-worker politicians and businesses would persist:

\begin{quote}
I think it’s not only a question of nationalizing but it’s a question of socializing, because when you talk about socializing and socialism you talk about which class, and it’s the working class, which controls that. The reason this makes a difference is that [energy] would be produced not for profit but for need, and that’s what I think is the solution for what has been created in the energy crisis...If you want to, you can make your own choices in the United States. What we want from you...is to support our right to do that so we don’t have a Chile, or a Vietnam or a Dominican Republic north of the 49\textsuperscript{th} parallel.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}


The UAW advocated public control as a way to end speculative inflation and curb the dominance of multinational capitalism. It pushed for the widespread nationalization of land, which could be leased out when needed. Free enterprise did nothing but create a commodity out of a public utility, and an environment in which “Canadians had no say whatsoever in the direction that their economy is to take.”

Through both public and Canadian ownership it was held that the economy could be geared towards Canadian needs, and, at least in some sectors, production for use instead of profit.

CUPE also emphasized the need to nationalize such monopolistically-inclined enterprises as petrochemical companies, banks, and telecommunications. They sought to challenge the “hoary old chestnut” that capitalist enterprise was more efficient than public ownership.

In a brief to the federal government, CUPE noted that Canada could purchase the entire banking industry for nine billion dollars in 1982, a modest sum compared to the 14 billion given out in corporate subsidies. Banks, like the energy multinationals, were in the business of thwarting “public aims by pursuing private gains.” As did the UAW, CUPE felt the NDP best exemplified its understanding of economic democracy and working-class interests.

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92 “Privatization...The Giveaway Game,” UAW Solidarity Canada, October 1979.
95 Gilbert Levine quoted in “Nationalize Banks: CUPE,” The Public Employee, Fall 1982.
The CLC called for the nationalization of Bell Canada and the expropriation of at least one major oil company and all major pipelines. Monopolistic enterprise, even if Canadian, was inadvisable because it led “to the accumulation of economic power in private hands” in the end “responsible only to itself.” Citing the Alberta Federation of Labour, the CLC held that “nationalization seems to be one of the only effective mechanisms to control” any business interfering with “working people’s decision making powers.”97 As the OCAW pointed out, echoing Galbraith, there was already a planned economy—operating in the interests of the multinationals and wealthy. Labour’s goal, therefore, was to accelerate state planning in sectors too important “to be left in the hands of private industry.” One would find similar points from CUPW, which argued that social and democratic projects, facilitated via nationalized industries and banks, should take precedence over profit.98 Finally, the CBRT&GW endorsed bank nationalization as a means to institute a system of finance that perpetuating “the principles of economic democracy.”99

The UE made frequent connections between national ownership and economic democracy. For them, Canadianization was but a step towards public ownership and the end of the profit motive, because having “public property in private hands” or “wealth being in the hands of a few private owners” was absurd.100 The baseline was public control


in any industry refining natural resources, any corporation approaching monopoly, or any firm receiving substantial public funds. The answer was “to get off the private kick, and take back what always properly belonged to all the people.”

In 1974, the Douglas-Coldwell Foundation sponsored a meeting on socialism and the energy crisis. It manifested a general consensus in favour of public control, but the extent of it was debated. While Ed Schreyer argued that private interests had a role to play, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president Ron Duncan felt capitalism was incompatible with the public interest. He would tolerate private energy, but “not in the long run. We should surround them now and finish them off later.” Many in attendance felt that public control was essential because corporate power was the bane of human freedom; governments were already planning and underwriting capitalist expansion, so why not plan the economy in the public’s interest? In essence, the meeting articulated the belief that “in attacking economic privileges, one attacks political privileges.”

There was thus in the ranks of labour a fairly broadly-based constituency in favour of increased nationalization and Canadianization. Trudeau and his party were, correspondingly, cast as sellouts, kowtowing to corporate and American masters and working against the interests of working-class Canadians. Trudeau, likely off on exotic and swinging dalliances, could not be trusted to stand up to the multinationals. He would be on his knees acting, “not as the leader of an independent country,” but as a “front man typical

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of a banana republic.” The labour press would print many editorial cartoons of Trudeau and cabinet ministers putting up “for sale” signs in front of Parliament, skipping rope for the amusement of Nixon, and in general, carrying on like subservient children.

Most unions supported a FIRA-style system, but offered multiple critiques of Trudeau’s version of it. The CLC’s response was measured. It acknowledged that Trudeau had included some of its recommendations in his historic program. Yet FIRA’s limitations, especially around extraterritoriality, gave the CLC little confidence that Trudeau was “prepared to unleash a vigorous attack against... [foreign] domination over the affairs of this country.” And while the CLC accepted FIRA’s general parameters, it worried about transparency and politically-motivated rulings. It also expressed concern that FIRA in and of itself had a somewhat limited value. Others were even less impressed. The CBRT&GW deemed FIRA a “joke” under Trudeau, a “lapdog for the Americans, instead of a guard dog.” Trudeau’s files also contain telegrams from dissatisfied teachers who because of his failures on the nationalist economic front, intended “to work very hard against you and your party in the next federal election.”

The UE had little faith in FIRA and the Liberals, whose desire to please business was inimical to independence. One member’s letter to Trudeau termed his efforts as a “sop

to broad public concern over decades of economic sellout.” The UE also reviewed the Gray Report, arguing that the “shortcomings of the report are directly the result of reliance upon...Canadian entrepreneurial activity...This, of course, is the liberal way—i.e. subsidize business to do what the government should do directly.”

On the NEP, labour’s views were decidedly mixed, supporting it more than FIRA, but critiquing its limitations and Trudeau’s perceived unwillingness to defend it. The UE felt Trudeau, inspired by his party’s tradition of promising progress and practicing regression, would renege on his commitment to Canadian energy security and autonomy. They also felt the NEP’s half-hearted efforts entailed Canadians bearing the burden of risk for shareholders. More welcoming were the UAW and CLC, who approved of the trend towards more public ownership, and pledged “to back the government the whole way if it gets into a showdown with the oil industry.” In the battle over energy they had common foes in Reagan and the multinationals.

Similarly, many labour leaders were involved the Committee for the Canadianization of the Petroleum Industry (CCPI), headed up by Robert and James...

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109 PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 526, file (0810), United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America to Foreign Investment Review Agency, 12 January 1976. See also PET Fonds, Vol. 73, file 15, George Harris to Trudeau, 5 May 1972; Trudeau to George Harris, 23 May 1972.


113 A collection of CCPI correspondence and policy is found in CUPE Fonds, Vol. 146, file 6. Key members included author Margaret Atwood, Trudeau biographer Stephen Clarkson, OFL president Cliff Pilkey, and such NDPers Douglas and Taylor, (though it seems like they exited in short course). For a similar group, though with less labour involvement, see the Committee for an Independent Canada, whose
Laxer, and numbering among its supporters Watkins, Gordon, Hurtig, CLC president Dennis McDermott, and AFL president Harry Kostiuk. Robert Laxer, who feared that the NEP, FIRA, and Petro-Canada were all at risk, urged support for Trudeau. The group would do just that. CCPI member and CUPE president Grace Hartman would write Trudeau, noting the NEP as “a beacon of hope for Canadians who wish their country to become economically as well as politically independent.” McDermott suggested CLC affiliates encourage public and Canadian ownership by defending the NEP from corporate and American interests. McDermott would also join with Gordon, James Laxer and others to draft a statement to Trudeau, praising the NEP and promising they would support him in this battle. In general, key labour leaders largely bought into supporting the NEP against the prevailing arguments offered by the NDP. It was an interesting scenario in which Trudeau held little credibility in terms of protecting Canadian economic interests, but where large swaths of the labour movement were willing to overlook that detail because he cast himself as the lesser evil in left nationalist terms.

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Trudeau’s motivations in enacting nationalist policies were twofold. He seemed sincerely to believe that, due to changing global economics, Canada needed to better insulate itself from international volatility. Increased domestic control of commodity pricing was vital to maintaining a stable liberal order in which social programs could be sustained, industry could operate competitively, regional disparity would not spiral out of control.

archival collection is in the Queen’s University Archives. CIC works include Getting it Back: A Program for Canadian Independence, eds. Abraham Rotstein and Gary Lax (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1974). 

114 CUPE Fonds, Vol. 146, file 6, Robert Laxer to Kealey Cummings, 30 November 1982; Grace Hartman to Trudeau, 16 August 1983; Robert Laxer to Kealey Cummings, 15 June 1983; Dennis McDermott to Ranking Officers of Affiliated Organizations and Federations of Labour, 27 October and 7 December 1981; draft statement to Trudeau, May 1981.
control, and in which free market fundamentalism would be tempered to save capitalism from its own hubris. Secondly, Trudeau understood his use of FIRA and the NEP as tools to neutralize the left. As he noted in his Memoirs, Trudeau saw the minority parliament as an opportunity to pass left-leaning legislation because he knew he would get Lewis’ support; indeed, he felt that “the social-democratic faction of the Opposition was forced to support” many of his policies, for they were their own. Trudeau also saw his tenure as a tumultuous time, and he feared that unless he acceded to NDP policies, his party would face extinction:115

And our argument was simple then; we said look, we’re not going to be pushed into a conservative position and then see the NDP come up as the Labo[u]r Party came up in Britain, and the Liberals will disappear and there will be a right and a left, as was happening in some provinces…The Liberals were withering away everywhere, and we were determined that it wouldn’t happen to us. And the danger to the Liberal Party as a party of the establishment and an old historic party, was that we would be too right-wing; so we made sure that it was on the left.116

These fears were echoed by Liberals in private correspondence. In 1976, BC Liberal leader Gordon Gibson wrote Trudeau to suggest that Liberals must differentiate themselves from the Conservative and Social Credit parties, because in BC all three were viewed merely as alternatives to the NDP. Liberal strategist Jerry Grafstein felt Trudeau had the chance to create a new Liberal Party that would emphasize partnerships with social justice activists, feminists, academics, environmentalists, and unions. Programs like the NEP were vital for creating these alliances, which would broaden the party base and make inroads against the NDP, which Grafstein felt was unable to “free itself from its vested interests and rigid

115 Trudeau, Memoirs, 164-6.
ideological restraints.” A final example was a 1982 report for cabinet by David Kwavnick. He argued that while the NDP posed a strong hypothetical threat, the Liberals could easily maintain their dominant position by a process of “pre-emption,” whereby they adopted moderate policies put forth by the NDP with the objective of starving them of “its sensible, middle of the road programmes” like Petro-Canada and the NEP. This would leave NDPers with either radical positions unpalatable to the electorate, or slightly altered Liberal initiatives—meaning that there would be little reason to elect them in the first place.

Trudeau would sit down for an interview with Ed Broadbent in 1993. They made specific mention of these policies and the general tone of the minority parliament. In general, both men were happy with the experience, seeing it in retrospect as an example of how the left and centre could come together to forge policy. Broadbent argued that without the NDP, key progressive projects would have never been undertaken because the Liberals’ conservatism would have prevented it. Trudeau agreed. He described how the spectre of the NDP could be used to cajole his caucus:

Well, you have no argument from me. I was not unhappy that I was given a reason, a political reason to do what very often my ideology wanted to do. I was on the left of the Liberal Party and now, I had a good argument, geez, if we don’t get the NDP with us we won’t be the government anymore.

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120 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 24, file 7, “Interview between Trudeau and Ed Broadbent.”
Another interview corroborated this recollection. This time Trudeau remarked that the minority parliament “certainly helped me and my buddies to sell some of the progressive legislation that we perhaps had been holding back on until the party was ready to move with us.”\textsuperscript{122}

Trudeau’s appeal to economic nationalism created an alliance between industrialists and their workers, along with the central Canadian middle class and those leftists who feared American and corporate power more than they supported socialism. Meanwhile, the Liberals, once NDP pressure subsided, proved to be ephemeral apostles of an economically independent Canada. After defeat by Brian Mulroney’s Progressive Conservatives in 1984, the nationalist achievements of the 1970s—FIRA, the NEP, and Petro-Canada—were undone. The Liberals, although sworn foes of the Free Trade Agreement, did nothing either to reverse it or to revive these programs upon returning to power. Left nationalism obscured socialist analysis and creating a question-begging alliance of workers with all but the most powerful Canadian businessmen.\textsuperscript{123} The result was the empowerment of the nationalist middle class at the expense of the workers, a factor Trudeau and Breton themselves had once deemed an inevitability of nationalism. Left nationalists could theoretically differentiate themselves from Trudeau, but in practice their primary goal, i.e. liberating the “Canadian colony,” prioritized the nation over the working

\textsuperscript{122} PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23, file 4, “Interview between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Graham,” 29 April 1992.
class in Canada and emphasized the nationality of the capitalist over the social relationship that he incarnated.

What of the NDP’s left nationalism? On the one hand, the NDP was continuing its right-ward migration from the radical socialism of the CCF, and bought rather easily into neo-colonial characterization of Canada and the resultant belief that all Canadians had a common interest. Sam Gindin in the early 1980s noted that the NDP’s commitment to socialism was waning. Control was still emphasized in the party, but ownership was deemed superfluous when compared to taxation, redistribution, and regulation. Gindin perceptively keyed in on how contemporary social democracy was beginning to accept a liberal economic philosophy. Social democrats increasingly found it sufficient to recommend adjustments of market outcomes, rather than the structural transformation of markets themselves.¹²⁴

But I feel it is also the case that historical perspective adds nuance to Gindin’s claims about NDP socialism. This chapter’s analysis shows that the NDP was much less likely to align with liberal-capitalist elements centred around Trudeau’s projects than was the Waffle-linked nationalist left. Through much of the 1970s, the NDP championed an ideal of economic democracy inseparable from socialism. It characteristically defended the thesis that while US concentration was troubling, capitalism itself posed a more fundamental threat to democracy. Lewis, Broadbent, Douglas, and other NDP intellectuals were not philosophically ready to give up on socialism, to relinquish economic democracy.

or to abandon their belief that a cooperative economic order was more stable and humane than a competitive one. Canadian nationalism for them, then, was a tool to empower Canadians against corporate autocracy.

In re-examining labour, one cannot deny that nearly all of Canada’s major industrial and public unions exhibited a genuine fear of America destroying or further subjugating Canada. They were also, as Steven High has emphasized, shrewd enough to appreciate the solidarity-inducing benefits of emphasizing such arguments. Pictures of domineering Uncle Sams and anthropomorphized U.S. multinationals were circulated to elicit nationalist reactions to the southern scourge and conscript Canadian patriotism for the cause of stopping outsourcing, de-industrialization, and increasing foreign ownership. Although not negating the movement’s anti-capitalist analyses, nationalist sensationalism obscured the more fundamental goals of economic democracy. The result was that while labour analysts often eviscerated Trudeau’s general positions, they were won over by the NEP because it was cast in opposition to the American multinationals, even if it was unabashedly intertwined with a capitalist analysis of productive and distributive methods. This was especially true of the union leaders aligned with liberal and left nationalists at the head of the CCPI.

This chapter also suggests a political left landscape fascinatingly different from that of the early 1960s, when, as we have seen, Trudeau and the New Party enunciated strikingly similar appeals to the “liberally-minded.” By the 1970s, the impact on many New Democrats of ideas stemming from the New Left, a resurgent Marxism, and various radical

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decolonization movements was evident. Even more striking is the extent to which many labour activists, many of them NDPers and others drawn from a panoply of left tendencies, had been drawn to vigorously anti-capitalist frameworks. Conversely, Trudeau, having argued in the early 1960s that the advocacy of liberal conceptions of freedom made liberals more genuine advocates of workers’ rights than self-proclaimed leftists and by the late 1960s also a pronounced critic of the universal welfare state championed by his former heroes Scott and Laski, had differentiated himself clearly and self-consciously from the social democratic left. Yet after 1972 his government depended upon this left for its life. His response to this dilemma was to effect a classic passive revolution, whereby some of the demands of his left opponents, notably those related to Canadian ownership and control of the economy, with particular reference to the energy sector, were seemingly conceded, yet with the all-important caveat that they were also inserted within a liberal framework wherein their system-challenging implications were progressively attenuated and ultimately extinguished. Thanks to this deft maneuver, the ‘victory’ of labour and the left in the years of the minority government of early 1970s was a Pyrrhic one indeed.

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Our next chapter focuses on the topic of large economic questions as they pertained to liberalism, socialism, and the trade union movement, specifically the matter of inflation. Why was this economic phenomenon so important during Trudeau’s tenure? With which issues beyond economic policy did inflation intertwine? Why was it especially abhorrent for a liberal such as Trudeau? What were the mechanisms he used to combat it? And how did the NDP and the labour movement differ in their analyses of this monumental issue?
Chapter 8

Lowered Expectations: Inflation and Wage and Price Controls

One cannot understand Trudeau’s tenure without grappling with the social, economic, and psychological effects of inflation.¹ It provided the context of a long-drawn-out conflict pitting Trudeau against labour and the left. For Trudeau, fighting inflation meant fighting labour. More generally, it meant re-educating Canadians so that their reduced expectations corresponded to the economic realities of a globalizing world. There were many moments in which Trudeau from 1968 to 1984 said things that were difficult to reconcile with the proto-radical positions he had championed from 1949 to 1960. There were underlying factors connecting these two periods. As in the earlier period, when Trudeau had seen a stronger labour union instrumentally as a tool whereby Quebec might attain a more democratic liberalism, so too in this period did he see a weaker labour movement instrumentally as a tool whereby Canadians could be instructed in the new liberal economics and discouraged from placing their hopes in such collectivizing institutions as unions and social democratic parties. In both phases, Trudeau figured as an intellectual and politician for whom the defence of liberal order and capitalist social relations was paramount.

This defence was facilitated from 1968 to 1984 by three distinct programs. First was the Price and Incomes Commission (PIC) from 1969-75, which recommended that unions and corporations keep increases within prescribed guidelines. The second program,

¹ For more on Trudeau’s approach to inflation as discussed in general works on him, see Walter Stewart, Trudeau in Power, chapter five; Anthony Westell, Paradox, 141-51; Claude Savoie, Les crises de Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 163-73; George Radwanski, Trudeau, 247-51; 284; 294-304; Richard Gwyn, The Northern Magus, 177-201; Clarkson and McCall, Trudeau and Our Times: The Heroic Delusion, 91; 128-30; 256-61; John English, Just Watch Me, 289-90; and Bob Plamondon, Truth About Trudeau, 269-79.
mandatory wage and price controls through the Anti-Inflation Board (AIB), ran from 1975 to 1978. Finally, the Six and Five program (6&5) was a round of controls in 1982, applied only to the federal government expenditures, civil servant wages, and social transfers. Our focus, however, is not on the programs themselves, but on how inflation drove larger social and economic questions.²

The Trudeau scholarship, including key works from English, Clarkson/McCall, the Nemnis, and Gwyn and Radwanski, addresses the question of inflation and subsequent controls. Most scholars maintain that while the Trudeau control programs were somewhat slanted in capital’s favour, they were a last resort, and not harshly unfair to workers and their unions, who are often portrayed as irrational, irresponsible, and greedy. Trudeau’s control rationale is defended by many scholars. Similar complaints, both in the scholarship and in the contemporary culture, were levied against corporations, but the rhetoric tends to be not nearly as venomous. As we shall see below, the Trudeauvian systems of controls and interventions into collective bargaining structures kept all eyes on wages, not on prices.

As those studies and many others note, Trudeau’s government, like many in the west, was dealing with crises within the capitalist order. Such crises led to increasing

uncertainty around energy availability and pricing. They also confronted planners and politicians with disquieting evidence that time-tested Keynesian models were now faltering. Canada no longer enjoyed high rates of economic growth with relative price stability. Rather, it faced instead both high inflation and unemployment—stagflation—a combination largely thought to be impossible by the Keynesian consensus. In addition to expanding budgets was the rising militancy of the organized working class, feared primarily because it threatened to lower capital’s aggregate share of income. All of this, as such left scholars as Claus Offe, Sam Gindin, and Leo Panitch have argued, confirmed there were deep contradictions in western liberalism and Keynesianism. Increased state budgets, sharper international competition, volatile energy prices, and decreased profitability were threatening capital’s self-perpetuation.

Similarly, labour historian Bryan Palmer notes that while the 1945-75 period was one of relative labour peace, the aforementioned crises in Keynesianism and western dominance led to a smaller pie to divvy up between capitalists and workers, leading to the return of intensified class conflict. Capitalists struggling to profit under less-than-ideal conditions sought concessions from workers, and aid from governments to obtain them.

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This situation was made all the more tense because, during the twilight years of the postwar boom, public sector unionization grew immensely, both in terms of raw size and as a proportion of the unionized workforce. This made the liberal state, already in crisis, a beleaguered employer, much like the nation’s capitalists.\(^5\) Liberals like Trudeau sought to address this crisis in capitalism with an attack on the working class. Capitalism could only be saved by preventing workers from exercising their right to strike and bargain collectively, and more important, by convincing the Canadian populace that inflation was a *moral* crisis, testifying to workers’ unreasonable expectations, falling productivity and competitiveness, and strike-inducing greed. Liberals like Trudeau, determined to fight stagflation, often sounded like Victorian liberals in their calls for a return to the values of decorum, restraint, and individualism.

The result of these actions on the part of such Liberals as Trudeau was largely the achievement of the economy in which we operate today, in which capitalism has been invigorated by declining wages and living standards across the West, combined with access to vast new labour markers in the East. In this way, Trudeau was like Reagan, Mulroney, and Thatcher: he was instrumental in sparking what has been called “the great decoupling” of wages and productivity/profitability.\(^6\)

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Trudeau believed that expectations drove inflation via a “self-fulfilling prophecy,” whereby labour and capital, fearing eroded gains, caused inflationary increases when they used their power to inflate wages and prices. This “runaway” inflation was based on an intellectual and psychological crisis. Controls promised to end it. Even after rejecting controls as proposed by Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield and paralleled by policies in other countries, Trudeau sustained the notion that controls would “shock” the public “out of their psychology.” As he said in 1982, believing was the biggest step:

People can only bring inflation down by lowering their expectations...because if we all adjust our incomes downward, then inflation will come down. But if we all think inflation is going up, then we all tend to adjust our incomes upwards and inflation will go up.10

For Trudeau, this pattern had daunting consequences: “the economic, social, and psychological damage that accelerating inflation can inflict on a society is apparent, and its continuation could threaten the cultural traditions and institutions on which Canadian society is based.” When he came to defend controls, Trudeau would de-emphasize their coercive nature. He stressed instead the necessity of Canadians adjusting their mindsets to

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8 Trudeau, Memoirs, 191-8; PET Fonds, 014, “Notes for the Prime Minister for a Meeting with the Canadian Labour Congress,” 30 October 1975. For more, see Geoffrey Stevens, Stanfield (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); Richard Clippingdale, Robert Stanfield’s Canada: Perspectives of the Best Prime Minister We Never Had (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008).


the reality controls sought to establish. He saw workers demanding what he felt were ludicrous increases and deemed them evidence of a social malaise, a “we want it all and we want it now...state of mind that can only lead to disaster.”

From Trudeau’s perspective, one could, without knowing much about the forces encouraging global inflation, say with confidence that it had been spawned by such selfish labour expectations. His sociology remained steadfastly liberal and individualistic: a social phenomenon like inflation could ultimately be traced back to the selfish and ill-informed decisions made by individuals, whose re-education at the hands of the state was urgent.

A 1968 interview on the matter of runaway expectations outlines Trudeau’s worries about an increasingly connected and purposeful generation, whose desires and ambitions comprised “the great threat, or the great challenge to organized society.” These desires were rooted in a postwar world where everything—education, sustenance, liberty, employment, social services, and equality—was deemed possible. Trudeau thought these demands imposed an onerous burden on taxpayers. He yearned for the “conventional wisdoms” of the past—that wealth and progress must come from capitalist ingenuity and profit, and that Canada had reached the limit of what was possible in terms of social welfare. Stemming the tide of selfishness would only be possible if the “revolution of rising expectations” was defeated. There would be “no more goodies,” Trudeau declared—“there is a limit and this has to be instilled in the psychology of the people.”

posit that helping the poor, for instance, could only come at steep costs to the middle class. The expectation that life could become better for all Canadians irrespective of increased profitability was absurd. In 1972 Trudeau reiterated his view that inflation was perpetuated via “the political realities of great expectations being created by the very nature of the society we live in:”

People [are] asking for more in every area, whether it be for welfare or for the farmers or for the industrial workers or for the managers or for the entrepreneurs, health, education, people want more…And I think this is a political reality which has overtaken most western societies…I think it came with the advent of television and mass communications…it’s perhaps too much information of what the Jones’ are doing and what we must do to live up to them. And this has caused these great inflationary pushes.

Even in 1975, Trudeau suggested that controls would be ineffective without a reorganization of expectations away from self-centred materialism and towards a mentality of self-restraint: each Canadian must appreciate “these new limits and consider himself bound by them…all Canadians must restrain their rising demands upon the nation’s wealth.” Trudeau was thus aiming for an intellectual revolution: “In this struggle, we must accomplish nothing less than a wrenching adjustment of our expectations—an adjustment of our national lifestyle to our means. This change will not come easily, nor soon… it takes time for people to change their basic attitudes, but change we must.”

Trudeau’s frequent use of the word ‘educate’ in this context reflected his desire, stretching back to his courses for Quebec workers, to promote liberal insights into ‘rational’

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economic actions. Trudeau would note that he ran in 1965 because he viewed politics as teaching on a national scale, and as a 1976 Queen’s Quarterly piece notes, his anti-inflationary rhetoric was about moulding a new social consensus around the ideal of reduced expectations. One could not understand Trudeau, Frederick J. Fletcher urged, without acknowledging that he had “taken the educative role more seriously that most of his predecessors … He has made numerous speeches which had no direct policy orientation, but which were aimed at educating the public regarding the problems facing society.”

Before the adoption of the 6&5 in 1982, Trudeau argued that while inflation remained high, the pattern now stemmed from externalities. Canadian workers had begun to moderate their unreasonable demands:

Well, if you compare…this situation to that which prevailed around 1975 when we went into controls, I can’t say I’m disappointed…I’ve indicated that people have learned from that experience that we must be much more cautious in our expectations. You recall when we brought controls in 1975…wage settlements were something like 14% to 16% in the private sector, they were about 14% in the federal public sector, they were about 22 in the provincial sector and they were 28% in the municipal sector…So, obviously, this is large because the people themselves are behaving more responsibly.

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The Trudeauvian emphasis on public pedagogy could be discerned throughout the government as a whole. A 1973 PMO memo argued that even government reports could fuel inflationary fires by conveying certain issues to the public. When the government

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emphasized external inflation and its inability to address it, it was offering a “message of despair” that made inflation inevitable.\textsuperscript{19} Michael Pitfield suggested that inflationary psychology had become so acute that traditional economic levers had been rendered largely ineffective. Controls might shock the public out of its self-perpetuating cynicism:

There are elements of the “psychology of inflation” that receive far too little consideration as government goes about tinkering with interest rates, money supply, and all its other sophisticated machinery...[government is] totally unable to cope with the thundering impetus of what is now going on...For this purpose what is needed is strong political leadership and shock tactics; something like the declaration of a state of emergency and the imposition of wage and price controls for a stated period of time under POGG.\textsuperscript{20}

Trudeau staffer J.M. Davey echoed the view that inflation was more than a matter for the Bank of Canada; it threatened the work ethic, aspirations, social programs, and national unity. It was nothing less than a “time bomb for this government.”\textsuperscript{21} Another file noted that Canadians were driving inflation via forces of habit entrenched since the 1950s, when growth had been unprecedentedly impressive. Such entrenched behaviours obscured the fact that increases “in real income consistent with historical experience” were “not justified by current facts.” Another piece made the same case: “expectations of rising real incomes have come in conflict with a slow rate of growth of GNP.” This all meant workers should expect less and settle for wages that at best kept up with improvements to productivity. Canadians were shortsightedly bickering over “supposed injustices” that were


\textsuperscript{21} PET Fonds, 011, Vol. 51, file 14, J.M. Davey to Trudeau, 4 December 1969.
viewed as “unattainable luxuries by nine-tenths of the world’s population.” A draft speech for Trudeau in 1975 encapsulates this desire to lower expectations:  

As far as governments are concerned…it is my feeling that the era is over when all the demands of all the people will be met all or most of the time. The public in its demands, and governments in their responses to them, will have to become increasingly selective. 

Although Albert Breton doubted the efficacy of controls, he acknowledged the dangers of inflationary mindsets. The perception that real wages were falling could bring about the labour militancy that drove subsequent inflation. Breton came to share Trudeau’s belief that educating the public in the irrationality of their expectations was imperative: 

Fundamentally, [inflationary psychology] can only be corrected if expectations are not fulfilled and since that phenomenon must create hardships, it is absolutely important…that the process of educating the public to new expectations about prices be done slowly, very slowly.

A 1970 cabinet report was almost philosophical in its musings about the gap between aspiration and performance. Its argument, demonstrated by pseudo-scientific graphs, was that a “revolt of expectations” took place when the gap between the two

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24 For more on Breton, see chapter four. Breton would argue, especially before 1975, that controls were bureaucratic, littered with loopholes, ineffective against foreign goods, and a waste of political capital. PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 18, file 5; PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 36, file 9; PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 30, file 10, Breton to Trudeau, 8 August 1973. 
26 PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 18, file 5, Albert Breton and Joel Bell to Trudeau, 5 May 1975. 
27 The first graph notes that there used to be higher social stability because the ‘aspirational surplus’—a pseudo-scientific term for aspiration minus current fulfillment—was minimal. As time progressed, fulfillment rose more slowly than aspirations, widening the gap. The second added a line for minimum accepted fulfillment, arguing that gap between it and actual fulfillment was the “margin of social stability.” “Breakdown” occurred when this margin was absorbed by aspirations. The third illustrates how dragging down both aspirations and minimum accepted fulfillment offered “increased margin of social stability.”
became too large. This was increasingly the case because “the fulfillment of some aspirations created the hope that developing aspirations also can be fulfilled.” Not only were Canadians demanding more, but their improved standards of living were ushering in complex, expensive, and contradictory aspirations requiring public investment. The first solution was to “slow down the rate of rise of aspirations.” Canadians must be conditioned to abandon their extravagant ways. The second was to “slow down the rate of rise and possibly reduce the minimum level of acceptable fulfillment,” meaning that the poor must accept increased poverty. The third was to increase the “rate of fulfillment of the realistic aspirations,” predicated on clear discourse (from the political, business and academic sectors) with the people of Canada so as to avoid creating unrealistic expectation, to correct inaccurate or misleading encouragement to greater aspirations which might have been generated by others, to modify time perceptions for the fulfillment of aspirations, and finally to create a public understanding and consensus on complex issues so that there will be a basis for accepting apparent short-term losses or difficulties.28

A similar memo would illustrate that “if the gap between existing lifestyles and expectations widens beyond a certain critical point, social, economic, political, and industrial unrest can be expected to increase.” Such a “gap” had supposedly surfaced in the 1960s, with such consequences as labour strife, a declining work ethic, and unrealistic lifestyles. Similarly, Davey in 1971 held that society was in flux: drugs, music, television, and new causes were changing mindsets and movements, and uncertainty was increasingly commonplace. He thus made the case for stability in terms of economic demands, which were driven less by survival and more by desires. Government was being asked to do

contradictory and expensive things. This was a recipe for crisis. Just as the material deficits of the 1930s had caused strife, so too might the psychic disenchantments of the 1970s prove calamitous.29

This rhetoric was often couched in Malthusian30 and environmentalist tones. It echoes the then fashionable theories of the Club of Rome,31 which argued that human society could not sustain current patterns of growth without catastrophe.32 The solution was for people to live with less and do more. A 1976 speech by Liberal Senator Maurice Lamontagne to the Club stressed that Trudeau, far from being a socialist, was in fact preoccupied with reducing expectations. The idea was to approach the future with courage and solidarity. Planning within capitalism would be used to ensure society’s various components could not parlay their social psychoses into unfair advantages. Trudeau minister Bryce Mackasey echoed the belief that “we’ve reached the end of an historic drive for material benefits. Our parents’ dream of the good life has largely been realized.” Canadians’ ignorance of this fact was leading them, via untenable economic expectations, to a strife-torn future.33

Forsey echoed Trudeau’s argument that controls were vital in changing the national mindset before more stringent—and permanent—restrictions became unavoidable. If society would not adjust to “new virtues of self-discipline and self-restraint,” it should expect to be forced into them. Given the environmental pressures and inefficiencies facing the planet, working people—the very same people he had represented for decades as CCL-CLC research director—should expect less:

the realities are even starker than the Prime Minister painted them. Energy and raw materials alike are getting scarcer…The owners of energy and raw materials, notably the farmers in our own country and the OPEC nations abroad, are insisting…on getting better paid…The “third world” is demanding, and rightly, a larger share of the total pool. The time may be close upon us when the comfortably off in all western nations—and this certainly includes a considerable proportion of Canadian workers by hand and brain—will not be able to count on getting an increase every year.34

Forsey argued that while Trudeau could have simply addressed the metrics of inflation as others had, the Prime Minister’s objectives stretched beyond mere electoral considerations and encompassed teaching Canadians a better way to think and live.35

In all of this, Trudeau Liberals were wrestling with the intellectual tensions within liberalism, pitting capitalist self-interest against individual self-development. A 1982 Trudeau question-and-answer session addressed this concern. One crowd member stated that Canada was built on expectations. Millions of immigrants did not arrive in order to “tighten their belts” in the “land of opportunity.” Memos to Trudeau would also intimate that the rhetoric of liberalism seemed ill-suited to his struggle to subdue expectations: “there is a certain ambiguity in a Liberal view of rising expectations,” one memo from the

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early 1980s argued, because while expectations were once the “fuel to the engine of reform,” they were now a “destructive force to the social fabric.” Although a modern liberal democracy could never have been forged without revolutionary expectations, current expectations endangered liberalism itself.36

This position was echoed in Robert and James Laxer’s 1977 analysis of Trudeau and liberalism. Even as L/liberal politicians formed key alliances with capitalist elites, their populist appeal to mass beliefs in liberty and mobility was integral to their success. Trudeau had campaigned in 1968 on optimism; his anti-inflation campaign was intensely pessimistic. For the Laxers, this about-face was symptomatic of Canadian liberalism. Appeals to a bright future would win votes, but such promises thereafter proved impossible to fulfill. While liberalism had ostensibly rested its faith in the people, it was Trudeau’s assertion that the people’s aspirations now constituted the primary challenge to the stability and even survival of a liberal Canada. The Laxers discerningly described the Liberals’ dilemma:

…a change in intellectual liberalism…has brought its realist face so much to the fore that utopian optimism and belief in the inevitability of progress have been completely shadowed…If the desires of ordinary people for the satisfaction of their wants is a dangerous force, it follows that those with the greatest capacity for long-term planning must act to restrain the passions of their fellow men. ‘Killing expectations’ becomes the social goal of a liberalism in which individual ambition threatens social stability.37

Forsey’s support for Trudeau’s “process of education” was bolstered by his assertion that liberalism is not incompatible with—but rather complementary to—controls.

He argued that liberalism was an evolving organism, originally designed to free the capitalist class, but eventually entailing the expansion of civil, economic, and social liberties. Echoing Trudeauvian maxims, Forsey described liberalism as pragmatic, wedded to nothing beyond the individual. It would embrace free enterprise, but was not afraid of social programs and ventures in cases of market failure. So while controls conflicted with the generally-accepted ethos of liberalism, they were appropriate because they endeavoured to ensure economic stability, rationality, and cooperation, all ideals Forsey attributed to Trudeauvian liberalism. Controls were needed because they would work to shock society out of its illiberal psychosis. As Trudeau told his supporters in October 1975, a successful controls program would signal that Liberals had been able to modify relationships and change expectations, doing more “than any other group for freedom and democracy.”

This perception that controls were crucial to preserving liberal democracy was corroborated by contemporary American sociologist Daniel Bell, whose analysis of deepening revolutionary expectations Trudeau held in his files. Bell argued that increasing demands for social entitlements, predicated on the belief that people needed to be made “more equal,” was a symptom and cause of unreasonable expectations. While hopes and aspirations were part and parcel of liberalism, Bell felt modern expectations were not like those of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Rather, in the 1970s one found “caricatured” liberal expectations combined with a “hedonistic” selfishness that rejected

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increased individual opportunity and liberty in the clamouring for more (in Trudeau’s words) “goodies” Bell mused that such an embattled liberalism owed its problems to a Marxist assault on capitalist society. Over time, government obligations would be made untenable, causing a collapse of social order and faith in the state. The stakes were high: either liberals addressed the childish irrationalities of the masses or they risked witnessing the death of their venerable ideology.  

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Another key argument levied against inflationary demands centred on the matter of productivity and competitiveness, the former being a measurement, at both a firm and state level, of how much value is produced per unit, with the objective to produce goods and services at a higher quantity given a static level of labour, capital, and resource inputs. Related to it is the concept of competitiveness, the extent to which a firm or nation can produce and sell its goods at a profitable price relative to others. In both productivity and competitiveness, factors like automation, taxation, and regulation play a major role, as do labour flexibility and costs. In essence, a liberal analysis here argues that competitiveness and productivity are accompanied by low wages, precarious work, inequality, low taxes, and deregulation, all of which will entice capitalists to invest and innovate. Competitive economies were productive economies, producing high levels of wealth which could be used to spur job growth and social spending without increases in taxation. This required, however, sacrifices from the working class in the short and medium run, because the wealth would need time to trickle down.

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On this liberal reading, held by Trudeau among many others, inflation is both an indicator and cause of rising prices and wages. Along with burgeoning social services, inflation made Canada weaker on the international stage, and signaled that Canadians were pulling more out of the economy than they putting in. In other words, inflation was both an indicator and cause of lower competitiveness and productivity. It had to be fought by bringing “into equilibrium what we have and what we are demanding.” Wherever inflation lurked, it was a scourge to a productive and competitive capitalist economy, as were those workers and leftists demanding strong unions, good wages, and more social services.

Trudeau asserted that wages and social spending, when rising faster than productivity, made Canada uncompetitive and burdened the taxpayer. His 1968 Throne Speech claimed that “just as incomes cannot increase faster than productivity if price increases are to be restrained, so government spending…cannot increase faster than productivity if we wish to restrain the increase in levels of taxation.” Journalist George Bain argued that these assertions amounted to a Trudeauvian argument that workers should never expect real wage increases—that is to say, increases above productivity—because receiving them would mean simply moving money around, creating debt, hurting profits, and spiking inflation.

Keeping wages down, either through controls or mechanisms that increased unemployment, was necessary to slow inflationary increases and build a stable economy

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and currency. The alternative was unthinkable: “If we don’t fight inflation…we’ll lose our foreign markets, if we lose our foreign markets, we’ll have an exchange crisis, if we have an exchange crisis, we’ll have to devalue the dollar. You know, we’d be upsetting the whole economy and we just don’t have a choice.”43 Even into the 1980s, Trudeau often argued that when one faced stagflation, stimulus was foolhardy, as it endangered the long-term fiscal and economic security of the state. If Canadians could only contain their impulses, they would realize that low wages and high productivity would bring prosperity for all. Likewise, Trudeau argued that helping the poor was a challenging proposition during anti-inflationary efforts. In his view, the top priority was “d’essayer de convaincre les gens que nous devons coopérer et réduire l’inflation.”44 Only then could one discuss sharing riches. Wage and price controls, then, were invoked as a middle ground. With controls, austerity need not be as harsh as might otherwise be the case. It entailed, not merely slashed budgets, but lowered expectations.45 Targeting controls on key economic actors was said to keep inflation low without starving the public coffers.46

On questions of competitiveness, Trudeau reiterated the view that Canadians were unreasonable in their desire for higher wages:

A…source of inflationary pressure is declining productivity accompanied by rising income expectations. Our potential for growth will likely be lower in the future…because of a slower growing labour force, a shift of employment

to the service sector, and a consequent decline in the rate at which productivity continues to advance. Reconciling the amount of new wealth we can create with Canadians’ expectations of higher levels of real consumption and income, and with our investment needs, will be difficult.47

In a 1969 interview, Trudeau defended Canada’s lower wage levels relative to those in the USA because national productivity was lower. If Canadian workers were to get more without raising productivity, the shortfall would have to be made up in either a devaluation of the currency or a redistribution of wealth. Trudeau accepted neither option. This argument was also carried into his rationalization of budget cuts. As the public sector grew relative to the private sector, it signaled a drain on national productivity and a trend away from market systems that he could not support practically or ideologically. Trudeau feared ballooning public expenditures, new burdens for taxpayers, and strengthened inflationary pressures.48

If Canadians wanted increased services and wage parity with Americans, they needed to become more productive. In the 1980s, when American workers were beginning to accept concessions, Trudeau suggested that Canadians were falling “out of step with what should be done now”: lowering “public spending, increasing investor confidence, and ensuring that expectations are in check relative to Canada’s largest trading partner.”49 A Canadian worker getting a larger increase than an American was a sign that the latter’s


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nation had won. Demands for equal standards of living, with productivity 20% lower than those of the Americans, would mean little progress on this front.\textsuperscript{50}

Productivity at 20 per cent less than the American rate means that if we want to even keep up to our relative disadvantage with the Americans, we have to save more, and we have to do more and better things, and not spend more, and not have higher wages but lower wages.\textsuperscript{51}

Aiming to share these facts with the public, Trudeau in October 1982 defended his 6&5 program as Canada’s needed, if painful, chastisement. Canadians had been living in a dreamland when compared to American moderation. A leaner and meaner Canada was both technically necessary and in the common social interest. If workers wanted to save their jobs and standards of living, they needed to sacrifice themselves: “if Canadians continue to expect prices and wages to go up… 10 or 11 percent every year we will price ourselves out of world markets when they start to recover. The inflation psychology has to be broken before world recovery begins.”\textsuperscript{52}

In celebrating his successes in the fight against inflation, Trudeau argued that the corner would only turned when Canadians “restreignent leurs demandes parce qu’ils savent que collectivement ils ne peuvent retirer de l’économie plus que ce qu’ils y apportent. Nous commençons enfin à détruire le virus de l’inflation.” The 6&5 succeeded because it sparked a low-expectation mindset and excellent conditions for job creators: “Now, reduced


inflation and lower interest rates are improving the prospects for job creation. Companies whose costs are under control can produce and sell more products at more competitive prices. These are the conditions in which jobs are created.”

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From both government and party came similar arguments that low inflation made the mobilization of capital, labour, and entrepreneurial resources easier. What would this economic regime require from Canadians? That they accept that “individuals should contribute to societal wealth without expecting absolutely proportional or immediate return.”

Cabinet briefs regarding a meeting with the CLC stated that unions needed to accept wages determined by levels of productivity. When the CLC leadership argued that labour’s share of income had fallen in recent years, the government asked them to “bear in mind that government has responded to the need to create jobs by offering [profitable] opportunities to industry…It would seem inconsistent for the Congress to decry this shift in income if it has resulted in greater employment.”

Workers must trust that increased profits would translate into increased productivity and hence public benefit: “Employees must become more aware that continued employment opportunities depend upon continuing viability and profitability of the enterprise. Over the longer term sustained increases in real labour income can be supported only by advances in productivity.”

These points would be reiterated in the defence of the AIB. The Liberal caucus argued that because Canadian wages were rising “at twice the U.S. rate in 1974-1975,”

55 PET Fonds, 017, Vol. 8, file 6, “Briefing Notes: Canadian Labour Congress Annual Submission to be Presented to the Prime Minister and Cabinet Members,” 24 March 1975.
controls were needed to preserve markets and purchasing power. Workers had to realize that exorbitant demands subverted the natural manner in which wages respond to productivity. As one Liberal paper noted, inflation “is a relationship between wage increases and changes in productivity, as well as a relationship between wages and the purchasing power of consumers.”

Trudeau staffers would emphasize that Canada could not maintain a high-wage course:

> it appears increasingly clear that the past half dozen years have seen the remarkable transformation of Canada from an economy functioning at approximately 80% of average U.S. productivity and commensurate wages rates to one in which, with little or no average productivity improvement, wage rates…exceed American levels.

This was a recipe for “increasing competitive difficulties,” ones that needed to be confronted with cuts and lowered expectations:

> Canada cannot insulate itself from the world economy and cannot sustain a unit cost differential from that of its trading partners. Productivity must increase or incomes must be moderated or prices differences will affect trade significantly. If Canadians do not make these adjustments for themselves, the international market will force the adjustment upon us.

One 1982 analysis explored the causes of stagflation, labour market interventions key among them. Due to unions, minimum wages, unemployment insurance, and old-age security provisions, nominal wages almost never fell. Income floors were thus so high that entrepreneurs turned to mechanization. Many workers were rendered unemployable. Minimum wages and other social provisions were not “nécessairement mauvaises,” but they did make inflationary expectations chronic. All such programs needed to become

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more market-oriented. Wages must reflect downturns in the economy. In essence, there was a consensus in government that a fight against inflation was the fight for market rationality against the workers’ stupidity, narrowness, and greed.\textsuperscript{60}

The most candid expression of this perception came from cabinet minister Bryce Mackasey, who despite past ties to labour,\textsuperscript{61} now argued that unions had achieved most of their goals. In the past, they had respected the public interest. He praised past unionists who did not want something for nothing, honoured market realities, and crafted demands based on fairness to employers. The current movement, regrettably, demanded more without working to deserve it. Mackasey felt controls were a godsend for labour, because they gave unions an opportunity to cooperate with employers, understand their profit margins, and so learn anew their proper role in a liberal order. All of this was required, he argued, to ensure labour’s credibility and Canada’s economic competitiveness. Through its opposition to controls, labour demonstrated its weakness on wider social and economic issues.\textsuperscript{62}

In sum, inflation was inseparable from the issues of public spending and labour’s increasingly extravagant demands. Profit-seeking businessmen could hardly flourish in such a Canada. Workers must tighten their belts. They were promised rewards for their

\textsuperscript{60} PET Fonds, 019, Vol. 43, file 6, Jean-Pierre Dandurand, “Un programme anti-stagflation,” 19 April 1982.


sacrifice, but they were contingent upon the success of controls, capitalists’ goodwill, and the government’s ability to reprogram a recalcitrant and obtuse public.

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One of the loudest notes in the crusade against inflation, rather surprisingly given Trudeau’s past positions, were those that sounded the themes of patriotism, social justice, and class collaboration. Inflation was caused by anti-social behaviour, and was damaging to the national economy, to those without economic power, and to the trust between classes. (The reader will recall that Trudeau had railed against the menace of class conflict as early as Asbestos in 1949.) Inflation caused disunity. It even rivalled “the alienation within our country which results from our diversity of regions and languages.”63 Inflation was largely driven by selfish and powerful economic institutions that had used “great power in such a way as to impose an unfair economic burden on the rest of society.” This amounted to a “regressive form of taxation on those people who can’t defend themselves…no-one is entitled to take advantage of his fellow citizen; we say that inflation must be attacked with determination by all Canadians for the good of all Canadians.”64

As Justice Minister, Trudeau deemed inflation to be Canada’s first challenge, especially when “those who can least afford it are the ones most hurt.” The PIC was imperative, because it would not only create space through which big economic players

could discuss inflation, but also imposed a system whereby those who abused power would be held accountable.\footnote{PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 21, file 4, “Notes for a Speech by the Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau,” 29 March 1968.} A 1969 interview articulated Trudeau’s battle for the “little person:”

It’s the duty of the government to talk for all these little people…with no bargaining power. The two-thirds…of workers who are not unionized. And of course the many, many people, whether they be housewives, or crippled or pensioners or the aged who just can’t bargain with anybody and increase their revenues…And I want the public to realize this—that the government…and many of the provincial governments are doing their part of the job to combat inflation…It’s the private sector of the economy, and in this I include the big unions who aren’t doing their share. They’re trying to get a big slice of the cake and pass on the results of their greed to the little people.\footnote{PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 12, file 37, “Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Remarks,” 2 November 1969.}

In 1970, Trudeau argued that inflation wreaked havoc on the social fabric. The answer rested in rejecting “selfishness” and embracing “real sacrifice.” Anti-inflationary altruism was a test for “Canadians which we must not, and which will not, fail.”\footnote{PET Fonds, 011, Vol. 64, file 3, “Résumé of Speech on Inflation.”} Trudeau was thus pleading for a civil society that accepted his conflation of economic restraint, democratic viability, and social stability. Fighting inflation was vital because it was the only way to preserve liberty and equal opportunity, and to “bring an end to this insidious condition…which pits one part of the community against another.” If successful, Trudeau proclaimed that “we’ll be better Canadians…because we worked together and succeeded in eliminating this pirate inflation from our community.” To those who declared this fight unfair to segments of the community, Trudeau asserted that “temporary unfairness” was tolerable in a “war on the cause of unfairness, on inflation itself.”\footnote{PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 18, file 6, Ivan Head to Trudeau, 8 December 1975. See also PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 14, file 5, “Transcript of Prime Minister’s Interview with James Beston,” 21 December 1971; PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 33, file 4, “Text of the Prime Minister’s Address,” 13 October 1975; PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 33, file 4, The Way Ahead: A Framework for Discussion.}
Trudeau thus set up inflation as a test of national character, one in which Canadians could show their propensity for sacrifice, sharing, mutual trust, and delayed gratification. As Canadians had risen above harsh climates, wars, and epidemics, so too would they defeat the webs of inflationary distrust. In 1983, the 6&5 program was seen to be a part of this crusade, because while it was compulsory for some, the majority would be given the chance to act in the national interest.69

Trudeau saw the labour movement of the 1970s and 1980s as the greatly diminished inheritor, almost the antithesis, of the movement he had once supported. Once “a lot of people with generous, intellectual dispositions” had fought for labour’s causes. It was now a powerful and self-centred movement indifferent to individuals.70 Now, labour fought against the public interest, order, and the very stability of liberal democracy:71

I think organized labour has built itself up into a quasi-monopolistic power and I think people because of that say well…there is no reason why I should be any more sympathetic to labour monopoly than I am to business monopoly. And I think that is a pretty sane reaction.72

Trudeau often argued that labour, despite sincere outreach on his end, had failed to participate in the anti-inflationary crusade. Labour could be an important player in the fight against inflation and the maintenance of social cohesiveness, but unlike business, it had declined to partner with the government. How could unions, Trudeau asked, complain

about a program of controls if they, unlike unions in other countries, offered no constructive alternatives? Labour hypocritically called for price controls, yet rejected control over the price of their labour. As Trudeau would note in relation to the 6&5, labour needed to shoulder its share of the sacrifices required to defeat inflation. With reference to anti-AIB and 6&5 protestors, Trudeau roundly dismissed them because they offered no alternative to his program, instead choosing to yell slogans rather than engaged in a democratic debate; in fact, he felt their rabble-rousing was, if anything, damaging to democratic discourse.\(^{73}\)

Trudeau would note that when labour took more, small businesses and other workers either took less, or inflation rose: “If you guys get 20 percent out of an economy that is only growing at five percent, somebody is going to get screwed—and it’s not going to be you guys…It’s going to be old people on pensions, it’s going to be poor people who are unorganized. It’s going to be guys without jobs.”\(^{74}\) In the end, Trudeau would appeal to rank-and-file union members by arguing that polling showed a majority of union households supported controls. So while the NDP supported “big unions…tens of thousands of union members and people across the land are supporting the program.”\(^{75}\) Trudeau thus drove a rift between labour-left institutions and their members, the latter of

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whom were praised, even as their leaders failed them, for helping Trudeau to fight off social disorder and anti-democratic confusion.76

Within the Liberal Party, inflation was seen in even starker terms. One memo described it as a “voracious moral corruption eating out the heart of society: it sets group against group, and makes self-interest the guiding principle of life. One of the hateful things about inflation is that it punishes those with a social conscience and plays straight into the hands of the selfish and unscrupulous.”77 For this problem, unions and corporations were largely to blame. They bargained and set prices with little regard to consequences. Such selfishness had become habitual. This was why Michael Pitfield felt the state needed to ensure that such selfish Canadians did not use inflation to their own benefit. Such anti-social behaviour caused “anguish for pensioners, wage earners with weak bargaining powers, the unemployed, persons on welfare and others who are unable to increase their incomes.”78 It was thus the government’s conviction that “powerful corporations and trade unions scrambling for a larger share of the pie at the expense of the rest of the community is no longer tolerable: such ‘beggar-my-neighbor’ tactics directly reduce real incomes of those who are not powerful.”79

In part harkening back to concerns around expectations, Trudeau staffers would note in 1971 that Canadians were losing faith in economic, political, and legal structures. They feared many factors—“union militancy over economic share,” “working conditions,” “mafia business,” “generalized claim for socialization of services,” “general separatism,” and the “Women’s Lib movement/Abortion movement.”

John Munro, now the Minister of Labour, urged that the “chaos and havoc resulting from injurious leapfrogging” resulted from a bargaining system based on acts of “pure might” which “have little or no reference to any reasonable rules of relativity.” Though controls constituted tough medicine, labour’s best interests lay in joining in a “patriotic” struggle to defend “the social economic well-being of the country we all cherish.” So while Munro accepted labour leaders’ right to critique the AIB, he also felt they ultimately had to support it. If they did not, Canadians “could all go down the economic drain together.” The issue went beyond “self-interest” and “base politics.” He demanded that Canadians put the “good of the nation” above all other considerations. Mackasey painted current labour leaders as greedy, irresponsible, and unpatriotic. Now, when unions struck, they did so against the broader national interest:

No doubt each union sees itself as fighting against an employer. The plain truth is that they’re fighting against society. The union claim for higher wages is no longer a claim against an employer…it’s a claim against the public for a higher place in the pecking order. The union member today is fighting the ordinary citizen, he’s fighting the nation to which he owes allegiance. It’s no longer a labour-management conflict…it’s a labour-nation conflict with the public interest at stake.

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82 For the 1975 Mackasey speech, see PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 28, file 15.
In this light, Mackasey hoped labour leaders would use the control period to re-tool their movement by de-emphasizing greed and prioritizing the solidarity they had once prized:

Unionists are social democrats. Their goals—at least, until now—have been worker welfare and social justice. Their tradition calls them to battle for population control, pollution control, a fair share of the world’s food for the world’s poor, research to solve our material shortages, better allocation of resources, and the problem of human rights in the workplace...Their stake in freedom is as big, or bigger, than anyone’s. If social democracy dies, unions are dead. Their own survival...should impel them out of the dead-end of power and back onto the main road of social justice.83

In Albert Breton’s analysis, inflation’s progenitors rarely bore its consequences. Large companies raising prices rarely lost sales, and union members rarely saw significantly lower levels of employment after winning inflationary settlements. On Breton’s analysis, unions would continue to grow, even if their demands worked to the disadvantage of their members. Similarly, industrial relations professor John Crispo would implore the government to create some sort of counterbalance against those who distorted markets and ultimately posed “a threat to our democratic system of government.” While Crispo saw controls as ineffective and unequal, he was inclined towards a system in which governments, unions, and corporations would have their bargaining power reduced relative to smaller and more market-driven forces in society.84

Trudeau’s politics reflected, however weakly, some of these “progressive” critiques of organized labour. AIB guidelines included exemptions for the poor, who while not guaranteed wage increases, would have not have their increases subjected to controls. On

83 Bryce Mackasey quoted in Joe Morris, “‘Trudeau’s True Purpose is to Centralize Power,’” Globe and Mail, 10 January 1976; PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 28, file 15.

the other hand, the 6&5 controlled social transfers vital to those poor Canadians whom Trudeau had earlier singled out as the victims of union-driven inflation. Indeed, Trudeau would always note that this fight against inflation was not about inequality. While Trudeau was correct that inflationary pains hit the economically insecure most of all, cabinet ministers worried that low-income Canadians might actually take advantage of the exemptions they technically enjoyed under the AIB program. One report noted, seemingly in a relieved tone, that because poor workers rarely bargained, the government need not expect many of them to benefit from the exemptions.85

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In this climate of economic uncertainty, the NDP, CLC, and major unions all believed that the Trudeau government, in scapegoating unions, was engaged in a campaign to shift the parameters of Canadian politics. Our focus is not on stagflation and the inflation-employment trade-off,86 the question of price increases,87 or labour’s highly-orchestrated protests, including a national October 1976 one-day strike in which more than one million workers expressed their opposition to controls.88 Rather, we seek to demonstrate how the labour left saw controls as scapegoating trade unionists and creating the conditions under which employers and governments, even more than before, shared an


86 It was often labour-leftists’ assertion that Trudeau manufactured a recession to stifle inflation and wage levels. Their desire was to de-emphasize inflation, and prioritize employment. Deflationary cuts and controls were critiqued in favour of targeted stimulus spending.


88 For an excellent study of the 1976 day of protest, see George Vair, The Struggle against Wage Controls: The Saint John Story, 1975-1976 (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2006).
interest in reduced wages. When linked with the themes described above—psychology, productivity, and nationalism—the issue of diminishing union power appeared to be less an epiphenomena of anti-inflation, and more a concerted attempt to restore capital’s pre-eminence in the political order.

Generally, the NDP interpreted controls as an assault on Canadian standards of living under the guise of cooperative restraint. Casting controls as one part of a crusade for egalitarianism was a tactic that obscured the fact that while wages would be easy to monitor and control, prices were far more nebulous. Further, the party felt that guidelines around inflation, designed to increase public consciousness around prices and wages, were biased in favour of capital. Price hikes spread over millions of products were difficult to track, let alone explain. Labour, on the other hand, had its wages controlled via employers already, and had to bargain collectively within large groups and defined windows—the result being that their increases were immediate, well-publicized, and often controversial.

On the questions of inflationary psychology and expectations, the party seemed torn. While NDPers disagreed with Trudeau over psychology’s role in driving inflation, they did concede that controls aimed at workers could lower their expectations in a manner desired by the elite. NDP researcher Marion Bryden would examine the concept of

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89 Perhaps the most notorious exemption with respect to price control was the Ziggy’s Decision, in which a Loblaw’s grocery store changed its name to Ziggy’s and raised prices substantially. The AIB upheld the move as part of an “on-going marketing strategy.” For discussion on this case, see Broadbent Fonds, Vol. 59, file 17 and PET Fonds, 019, Vol. 12, file 14; “The Dangerous Mess of AIB,” Globe and Mail, 20 January 1976; Ian Ross Robertson, “Ruling on Ziggy’s Viewed as New Low for Inflation Board,” Globe and Mail, 22 January 1976.

inflationary psychology. She re-conceptualized it as a political phenomenon constructed by the elite:

A great deal of [inflationary psychosis] is deliberately fostered by a combination of businessmen and…the newspapers and politicians of the old parties, in order to stop workers from obtaining their fair share of the growth in the economy…In other words the inflation psychosis is part of the power struggle to obtain a bigger share of the pie for the owners of industry.\(^91\)

Likewise, MPs John Burton and Max Saltsman argued in 1970 that Trudeau’s emphasis on inflationary psychology was a tactic designed to push controls, lower standards of living, and install austerity. Reports on the 6&5 argued it was designed to change “public attitudes and expectations,” to control public servants, and to spark a decline in real wages. Trudeau, by “scaring the hell” out of Canadians, would be able to extract concessions and help employers do the same.\(^92\)

The NDP’s most elaborate critiques examined controls as a project of the state/capital alliance. A 1975 legal analysis of the AIB argued that the program was designed to give “obvious strategic advantages…to management” in the collective bargaining process. Referring to the 6&5 in 1982, NDP researchers argued that its ostensible goal of fighting inflation obscured its empowerment of capital.\(^93\) Business leaders, according to the report, largely supported the 6&5’s mandate to create the conditions under which Canadians would accept lower wage increases as a way to

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\(^93\) Party files asserted that the AIB increased profitability for corporations by 2%. This was because wages were effectively controlled while profits and prices were not.
compensate for declining profit rates. Such restraint was operating in tandem with formal controls on public workers. As Judy Giroux argued in 1983,

Federal government programs have made cutbacks acceptable...thus allowing companies to effect cost savings while forcing workers to accept salary cuts. The choice for the worker is easy – less pay or no pay, but the case in effect is made: workers are engaged in making concessions which amount to back door wage controls.

Douglas would make similar points: that bargaining already acted as a control and that workers were being forced to make sacrifices that would benefit the wealthy with little in return. Trudeau was seen to be misleading the public on wages and inflation. He had declared only a token war on prices to avoid charges of hypocrisy.

In a 1970 speech, Douglas characterized the PIC, not as a good faith purveyor of information about inflation, but as “a patsy.” In his view, “the government is using the Prices and Incomes Commission to say things it has not the courage to say itself.” The PIC seemed to offer impartial opinions while, in reality, demonizing unions. While some capitalists aired concerns about infringement on property and markets, Douglas felt they gave conditional support to controls because they understood the net benefits they might bring them. The PIC was attempting “to get the workers across this country to sign collective agreements that will have the effect of virtually fixing their incomes by a

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95 Broadbent fonds, Vol. 59, file 17, Judy Giroux to NDP Caucus Members, 12 July and 22 June 1982.
document that is binding in law, while at the same time the business and financial tycoons of this country have nothing more binding on them than a voluntary commitment which they can break.”97 Such biased mechanisms would control only the working class; they were “thinly disguised wage controls” that worked to “make organized labour the villain of the present economic recession.”

As noted earlier, Douglas believed that the contradictions of capitalism created inflation. In his view, only a planned economy could “provide price stability and full employment.”98 In such an economy, workers would not be asked to bear the entire burden. The answer to such contradiction was in part to put money in the pockets of those in need, but also to address the irrationality of capitalist resource allocation manifested in the pervasive tendency to put profits before people. The message was clear: wage and price controls missed the mark because they were built upon an economy that was inherently unjust, irrational, and undemocratic. As a 1973 Commonwealth piece noted, macroeconomic programs failed to address the core dangers of inflation, which developed from profit motives and economic authoritarianism:

There is no reason…that the NDP should be afraid to advocate establishment of a public corporation to compete with private enterprise in the processing and distribution of food, or widespread public involvement in developing our natural resources, or massive landbanking and housing projects funded by the government to break the backs of land speculators…We do not say massive nationalization is a cure-all to society’s ills. But we really must ask ourselves how much any government can do to slow inflation where monopoly capitalism maintains a stranglehold.99

Lewis for his part acknowledged that while controls could have positive outcomes, Trudeau’s programs were never intended to be fair to workers. Speaking after his retirement, Lewis noted that when Broadbent confronted Trudeau over high profits, he celebrated them because profits were a sign of economic virility. High wages, on the other hand, were an indication of weakness.\footnote{Lewis Fonds, Vol. 95, “David Lewis Interviewed by Bruce Philips, Finlay MacDonald, Charles Lynch, and Douglas Fisher,” 15 June 1973; Lewis Fonds, Vol. 97, “Strikes – In Defence of Labour,” 21 March 1975; Lewis Fonds, Vol. 102, “‘The Trudeau Years have been wasted Years;’ David Lewis Says Canadians’ Hopes of 1967 not Realized,” \textit{London Free Press}, 11 February 1972; Lewis, “The Dishonesty of the ‘Union Power’ Myth,” \textit{The Miners’ Voice}, December 1976.}

This was just two or three days after [Trudeau] had said that he thought the settlements by labour for workers…were too high, that they were threatening to kindle inflation again. The high profits, fine—we’re glad they’re there, but a more decent settlement for bank workers who are among the lowest paid in the country, that’s too high. The percentage will kindle inflation.\footnote{Lewis Fonds, Vol. 128, “David Lewis Speech to Ontario Federation of Labour Political Education Conference,” 31 May 1979.}

Lewis suggested that inflationary scaremongering was essential to Trudeau’s anti-labour crusade. Greed was good when it emanated from the right social class; when it came from workers, greed was transubstantiated into a force of disunity. Controls, Lewis argued, were primarily about controlling the public’s desires and hopes, restraining union militancy, and encouraging capitalists to profit while others stagnated.\footnote{Lewis, “Unemployment—Economically Unnecessary, Morally Indefensible, Socially Disastrous,” \textit{CUPE Journal}, March 1971.}

Broadbent criticized Trudeau for casting his AIB in terms of living within our means when it was “ordinary Canadian families…manning the front lines, alone, in the government’s great battle of inflation.”\footnote{Douglas Fonds, Vol. 121, Broadbent, “Are the Price and Income Controls of the Trudeau Government Fair?” 16 October 1976.} Trudeau chastised supposedly greedy workers to hide his own failures and inadequacies: “There is clear apprehension that we have…the
Prime Minister who is not only uncaring but is also incompetent, a man who mistakes undergraduate platitudes for philosophy, and whose government’s actions flatly contradict whatever substance you can find [in] his moral lectures to the people of Canada.”

For Broadbent, the timing of the AIB’s coming could not have been more blatant as a sign of an anti-labour campaign. After high profits in 1973 and early 1974, wages were beginning to rise, which ignited the interest in inflationary psychology as a social restraint:

The corporate share of income always rises when times are good. The subsequent round of wage bargaining naturally reflects increases in profits...So when the good times are all gone…it makes perfect propagandistic sense for the corporate sector to blame increasing unemployment and inflation on someone else.

This was the key element in Broadbent’s opposition to controls: that their only effective component was the oppression of labour. When he tackled the 6&5, Broadbent classified it as “a cynical public relations exercise of...the kind that first makes scapegoats of employees in the public sector and then sets up as future scapegoats every working person in the country.”

Broadbent sensed, in the mid-to-late 1970s, that the western world was at a crossroads. Conservative values were rebounding. Social spending, workers’ rights, social equality and equal opportunity—all were now at risk. Narrow materialism, greed, an emphasis on profits and productivity—all were evidence that nineteenth-century liberalism had re-emerged. Broadbent thus decried “the nakedly capitalist doctrine that only a

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tougher, more competitive, less compassionate society can survive in the present international economic climate: mankind’s existence must be worse in order to be better!”

He tied his general observations to the specific experience of controls and expectations:

These new aggressive conservatives at home and abroad, in the Liberal Party and in the Conservative Party, attempt to persuade Canadians in general and workers in particular, to make concessions to match those made elsewhere. The business-oriented Canadian media is constantly reporting the efforts of those in other countries to cut costs, to hold down wages, and to curtail social programs. The goal is to create an atmosphere in which it has been made to appear that it is unrealistic for working people to insist on higher incomes, on secure employment, on decent social programs, and on greater control over their economic environment.108

Desmond Morton drew out the links between Broadbent’s observations and middle-class versions of environmentalism. While the socialism and trade unionism of the immediate postwar period had envisaged “the fairer sharing of an expanding cake,” subsequent interpretations of the environment from an anti-growth perspective encouraged inequality as a virtue:

Automobiles really only crowd our cities and foul our air because millions of ordinary people can afford them. The answer is to get the people—ordinary people—back into busses and streetcars. Tourism becomes a polluting menace only because ordinary people, in their millions, can now afford to travel. Northern lakes and streams are ruined because working people now want what their betters have had for generations…All of these situations are true and real but why did they only matter at the moment when working people seemed to be coming into their own?109

In the end, Morton argued that class conflict as a reality under capitalism was returning because while deprivation had been minimized, environmental constraints re-ignited clashes over resources. Even though Morton felt “socialism was born as a functioning

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political philosophy because the limits on production had apparently been broken in the
nineteenth century,” limits to growth did not spell the end of socialism as a mechanism
for equality.110

Labour historian Greg Kealey argued in 1970 that Trudeau’s campaign against
inflation was in reality an attack on trade unions. By creating an alliance of capitalists and
the middle class, Trudeau was able to use the PIC to hold back wages under the
supposition that he was striving for equality, fiscal responsibility, and compassion.
Similarly, Leo Panitch and Cy Gonick argued that controls had become necessary for
capital because empowered workers were able to secure demands that menaced profits,
economic authoritarianism, and liberal concepts of property. As had been the case with
the PIC, government sought intervention to “stabilize the economy” because the trend of
profits rising faster than wages was being challenged by unions. To stave off a crisis in
capitalism, controls were designed to ensure that lowered wages allowed profitability to
persist without sharp price increases.111

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Labour journalists for their part made similar arguments. Most critiques were short
and punchy, following a formula in which controls and austerity constituted an unequal
assault on labour’s rights and bargaining position. Few rejected the idea of controls

111 Gregory Kealey, “Pierre Trudeau’s Inhuman Campaign to Halt Inflation,” Toronto Star, 12 January
1970; Leo Panitch, Workers, Wages, and Controls: The Anti-Inflation Programme and its Implications for
Canadian Workers (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976); Cy Gonick and Leo Panitch, “Wage Control,”
Canadian Dimension, Vol. 11, no. 2, 33-44. See also Cy Gonick, Inflation or Depression: The Continuing
Crisis of the Canadian Economy (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1975); Cy Gonick, Inflation and Wage Control
(Toronto: Canadian Dimension Publications, 1976); Leo Panitch, Social Democracy and Industrial
Militancy: The Labour Party, Trade Unions, and Incomes Policy, 1945-74 (Cambridge: Cambridge
outright—price inflation was a legitimate worry—but the programs in question made it clear that Trudeau, dubbed “Pierre Elliott Nixon” by some, was “in search of a scapegoat” for the nation’s economic difficulties, even as—to switch metaphors—he “stacked the deck” in capital’s favour.

But beyond these denunciations emerged deft critiques of controls and what they meant. CLC staff and leadership would argue, for instance, that the emphasis on productivity and international competitiveness in setting wages exemplified a strategic effort by Trudeau to solidify the status quo, end labour’s rationale for striking, and ensure that the ability to set wages rested in the employers’ hands. This was all made possible by controls being coiffed by the government and framed by business to paint labour as reluctant to fight inflation. While the PIC would entail very public scrutiny on wage bargaining, its review of prices would be done behind closed doors. The PIC would inevitably pit the public against unionized workers. The CLC felt the 6&5 epitomized Trudeau’s desire to scapegoat workers, whose wages had fallen in real terms since 1975. The programs were thus about restructuring the economy towards greater inequality and precarity, under the assumption that prosperity could only return through the masses’ poverty.

Joe Morris, who was CLC president during the AIB, viewed controls as a part of a rising right-wing effort to dismantle all that the left had built. Controls constituted a secondary form of compulsory arbitration whereby the state and business colluded to repress wages. Business opposition to controls was at times vocal but ultimately superficial because they were harder on their employees than anyone else. Morris, citing Mackasey’s assertion that strikes attacked the public interest, remarked that such a position amounted to an ominous amalgamation of “the national will and corporate will.”\(^{116}\) CLC VP Shirley Carr suggested that the success of controls was predicated on a strong alliance between governments and employers to lower wages. Via the AIB, businesses had become an “unpaid part of the federal bureaucracy,”\(^ {117}\) and capital now had the state’s moral and legal authority in bargaining.\(^ {118}\)

The USW would charge that controls were part of an anti-labour and pro-austerity climate detrimental for all but the wealthiest Canadians. National Director William Mahoney would reiterate how the PIC regime demanded more from labour than from capital: “we pointed out that if the Labor Movement were to accept the 6% guideline this could well result in being bound by contractual relations to this freeze on wages. In return we would have only a vague assurance that something might be done on prices. In our view this is a preposterous thing for the Commission to ask.”\(^ {119}\) Dennis McDermott, in his

\(^{119}\) William Mahoney quoted in “6% Wage Guideline Proposal is Preposterous”—CLC. See also “Obsessed with Clobbering Labor,” \textit{Steel Labor Canada}, July 1970; Romeo Malone, “Can Inflation be
capacity as UAW president before his rise to the top of the CLC, rejected controls. For him, the AIB constituted

the worst act of political immorality in Canadian history, condemned by labor and many others in society as the most cynical piece of political economic chicanery ever attempted by a political party. Unprecedented in its gall, blatantly discriminatory, brutally inequitable and, in the end result, economically stupid. A political hoax, motivated by pure, political expediency with the careful selection of that old, convenient, tried and tested scapegoat, organized labour.120

A UAW post-mortem of the AIB argued, as had Panitch and Gonick, that the successes of labour had engendered a crisis in capitalism. Controls were about restoring, as Trudeau had noted, competitiveness, productivity, and entrepreneurial incentive. Controls were needed to guarantee worker immiseration in exchange for profitability, namely by ensuring that as unions lost the ability to improve members’ wages, they lost their purpose under a capitalist order. Workers would become increasingly disorganized and wages further depressed.121

The CBRT&GW held that Trudeau was equipping the PIC to craft “publicity stunts designed to put the wage earner on the hot seat, while industry tycoons watch the show from the balcony with golden halos above their collective heads.” One article quoted a PIC officer declaring that “workers must be educated to see that belt-tightening is in their own self-interest.”122 CUPE would emphasize how controls forged a Reaganomic alliance of the elites against workers. Even though the government had provided no empirical


evidence linking wages and inflation, it forged on with controls, convincing most provinces and companies to join in solidarity against workers. This strategy directed popular ire towards public servants, because when cuts and controls made bargaining more contentious, workers were typified as greedy and opposed to the public good.\textsuperscript{123} CUPW President Jean Claude Parrott said calls to slash social services, directly control federal public servants, and indirectly control others meant that the 6&5’s “co-ordinated attack on the whole of the working class” was based on the idea that they, but not the elite, lived too richly. If trade unions swallowed Trudeau’s package, they would be transformed into organizations whose primary function would be the disciplining and corolling of working-class militancy.\textsuperscript{124} More surprising were the responses from other public sector unions like the PSAC and especially PIPSC, who until this point had been largely apolitical. Yet even the then mild-mannered PSAC deemed the 6&5 a program that would harm its members and undermine public services in order to help private businesses keep wages low.\textsuperscript{125}

For its part, the traditionally left-wing UE advanced a radical structural critique of the meaning of controls. While its President C.S. Jackson\textsuperscript{126} expressed concerns that controls were stacked against his members, he also developed the thesis of a capitalist

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\textsuperscript{126} Jackson was a long-time communist leader of the UE in Canada, putting him and his union at odds with the mainstream labour-left in Canada for decades. See Doug Smith, \textit{Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers} (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1997).
\end{flushright}
system in crisis. The system’s expansion was historically based on finding new lands and peoples to exploit. Contemporary profitability was harder to come by, and thus capitalists needed to eat the workers’ share. This is why Trudeau used controls to chastise wage increases as unpatriotic, while defending profits as integral to democracy. Jackson therefore encouraged unionists to fight concessions as a way to expose the contradiction that arise in capitalism once it loses easy avenues of expansion. They needed to resist the use of state power to save capitalism on the backs of workers.127

Similarly, the CSN argued the obsession with productivity not only ignored other factors in setting labour value, but locked in current divisions of wealth and power. When the government recommended wages pegged to productivity, it established them as a maximum. It thus ensured that while powerful employers could hold wages down in bargaining, the state would give them a ceiling.128 The FTQ for its part painted the “Trudeau-Bourassa” controls as a larger “attaque de la classe capitaliste contre les travailleurs.” As president Louis LaBerge would say, the AIB was purposely designed to provide rigidity for workers and flexibility for capitalists:129

Il est encore plus évident…que le programme fédéral anti-inflationniste n’a qu’un but: faire porter aux travailleurs seuls le fardeau de l’inflation et laisser la marge de manoeuvre la plus grande possible aux compagnies. La mollesse du gouvernement fédéral devant le chantage du milieu des affaires nous convainc encore…l’urgence de faire sauter ces mesures injustes.130

130 CUPE Fonds, Vol. 34, file 11, Laberge quoted in “Communiqué de presse: contrôle des prix et des profits,” 8 September 1976. For more on Laberge see Louis Fournier, Louis Laberge: le syndicalisme c’est...
Finally, the Centrale des enseignants du Québec (CEQ) attacked the AIB in 1975 because it sought to bolster private profitability by ensuring cheap labour. The state and capital needed to ramp up their alliance because “les économies de pays occidentaux traversent leur pire crise depuis les années ’30.” The CEQ honed in on how controls were triggered by the increasing realization that workers had begun to recover their losses in the early 1970s and were threatening profit margins. The solution for Trudeau was to make certain “l’accumulation des profits,” by making workers pay “le prix de la crise.” Indeed, the ordeal of controls during the Trudeau era significant on its own terms for labour, came to be seen as an epochal clash over power in Canadian society as a whole. When workers fought controls, they were in essence fighting a state-capital alliance stronger than at any point since the two world wars—and one oddly reminiscent of that which Trudeau had fought in Duplessis’ Quebec.

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Not all labour activists and NDPers opposed controls. As CBRT&GW President Donald Secord would argue in 1976, the greed of many unionists had rendered them unable to realize that they, just as Trudeau said, were pulling more from the economy than they were putting in. Unions were brazenly disregarding the public’s substantive support for Trudeau’s AIB. Likewise, some letters to NDP leaders like Douglas claimed that opposition to controls meant siding with the “thieves,” “crooks,” and “gangsters” that


132 “This Union Leader Makes Sense,” Toronto Star, 6 October 1976.
constituted labour, abandoning farmers, pensioners, the poor, and westerners in the process.\textsuperscript{133}

Of monumental significance in understanding the NDP on the controls issues was the Saskatchewan and Manitoba NDP’s ultimate acceptance, however critically, of the AIB.\textsuperscript{134} Premier Ed Schreyer of Manitoba declared that controls were flawed, unfair, but ultimately necessary. Although labour had been targeted, capital empowered, and many price-gougers ignored, Schreyer suggested that Trudeau deserved the benefit of the doubt: unions and the NDP had to support controls because “we have a duty as Canadians to try to make this program work. Anything less is to invite a full-scale economic disaster.” In his view, left opposition to controls was based not on good faith disagreement, but upon a desire on the part of some to see capitalism collapse:

There are those who would say that we should let the present economic system fail, and that by allowing inflation to run unchecked we will hasten the day that a New Democratic Party government is in power in Ottawa. But I don’t think that we are Marxists…We are social democrats in the European tradition, and we are committed to making our political system work for us, not to tearing it down. With its price and wage guidelines, the Government of Canada has presented another alternative...Something has to be done to bring inflation under control, and even though the program may be imperfect, it is better than…doing nothing.\textsuperscript{135}

Allan Blakeney critiqued controls as unequal and ineffective, often questioned the lack of price restraints, and offered some counter-proposals, such as a form of rent and commodity control not included within the AIB. Still, he ultimately accepted controls against the wishes of labour activists key to his electoral success in Saskatchewan. He, like

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\footnote{133} Douglas Fonds, Vol. 49, H.J. Ronne to NDP Policy Committee, 12 July 1975; Mrs. W. Sudom to Douglas, 9 May 1975.
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Schreyer, saw controls as a popular choice, and even if unfair to labour, perhaps efficacious in changing Canadians’ economic psychology. Ultimately, both premiers argued that they were not beholden to workers, and would pursue controls as prudent policy. Telling was a 1976 exchange between Broadbent and R.D. Weese, a Saskatchewan civil servant. When Broadbent deemed the AIB anathema to NDP philosophy, Weese replied that the labour and federal NDP critique was unfair. Saskatchewan had little constitutional room in which to manoeuvre, and the government’s critics needed to remember its actual responsibility to govern, and not merely oppose.136

Desmond Morton could see both sides of the debate. He argued on the one hand that the NDP’s multipolar position on controls, suggestive of internal divisions, had cost the party seats in the 1974 federal election. On the other hand, only out-of-power NDP and labour leaders stuck to their anti-control principles, owing to the fact that they could speak without consequences. Morton suspected the anti-controls campaigners were motivated by narrowly economic issues, not by egalitarian ideals. He even questioned collective bargaining because it fostered a liberal ethos in which each worker envisioned him or herself as a self-interested capitalist.137 Indeed, Morton would argue that “free collective bargaining is as incompatible with socialism as an unfettered free market.”138

A former Communist and now prominent Canadian nationalist, Robert Laxer advised Trudeau about his political approach to labour. He argued that unions, like the NDP, were trapped in an unworkable economic paradigm. The answer was largely an economic nationalist model that incorporated Trudeau’s desire for lowered wages and expectations. In Laxer’s view, the government by emphasizing job creation and productivity would force unions to cooperate, compelling them to accept that a strong economy grew out of productivity and profits, not spending. The goal was to put labour leaders in the hot seat—to make them choose between a strong economy and good wages, and between the public interest and collective bargaining. In 1982, ex-Waffler James Laxer agreed with this line of thinking. Workers and socialists must embrace supply-side productivity, sacrifice and competition, lest Canada become further indebted and economically dependent. Workers must take less, and must embrace technological unemployment, precarity, and wage cuts. This view would not go unchallenged, even by fellow Waffler Mel Watkins, who argued that Laxer

preaches to the unions…they should come out fully on the side of technological change (you mustn’t stand in the way of progress, even if it kills you); the labour movement “will have to abandon its historical reliance on the adversarial system” (what in God’s name does that mean?). At a time when the labour movement is already sufficiently beleaguered by the real ravages of unemployment, wage rollbacks and membership losses, Laxer has risked playing into anti-union sentiment within and without the NDP.139

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In closing, one need only read Trudeau and his colleagues’ statements to see the inequities and flaws of wage and price controls. In the run-up to the 1974 election, Trudeau showcased how controls were both ineffective and unfair to the working man and woman:

Mr. Stanfield’s proposal is a conservative one in a small c sense. It is unfair for the little guy. The freeze of wages is…not easy to apply on the white collar person that you can reclassify as opposed to the blue collar one. It is not as stringent on the professional end, the landlord and so on…it’s not easy for the plumber whose salary is frozen at $4 an hour…to sort of say, well, I’m no longer a plumber, I’m a foreman.  

Conservatives wanted controls because they helped their corporate allies, and the only way to prevent injustice was to vote for him. In 1974, Trudeau famously explained that “you can’t freeze executive salaries and dividends because there are too many loopholes to squeeze through.” Trudeau would then ask “so what’s [Stanfield] going to freeze?” “Your wages. He’s going to freeze your wages.” More substantively:

They don’t talk about the social injustice that goes with it. Because controls are easy to put on the blue-collared worker. All you've got to do is say, okay, the plumber working in industry will be frozen at $3.25 or $4.25 an hour. That's it, frozen…But what about the executive, you know, who can put another hat on? — he'll reclassify his position. He's earning perhaps $30,000 or $40,000 and he's called the second vice president in charge of management. Well, he wants to get $50,000. When they think it's good to unfreeze him, they'll call him the first vice-president in charge of management and he gets a nice increase…It's a good system — good for the big guy, good for the person who reclassifies his job or his position. That's why a Liberal government will wait until…a great crisis is on before even thinking of a system like this, which is unjust for the little man.

Another ‘defense of the little guy’ surfaced at a June 1974 rally. Trudeau emphasized that loopholes on prices would leave “the working man’s wages” the only thing controlled:

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Now you can see why a Bay Street Tory might want to freeze high prices and low wages... But a Liberal government is not going to fight inflation on the back of the working man. A Liberal government is not going to accept the social costs of controls—their lack of equity—the way they widen gaps between rich and poor. That may be okay with a Tory government, but a Liberal government will not do it. The Tory slogan is: “The Price is Right—Now Let’s Freeze the Wages.” That’s not ours.143

Although Trudeau never closes the door on controls in these remarks, he does repeatedly note how unjustly they privileged the rich at the expense of workers. It thus seems patently clear that Trudeau’s controls were adopted in full knowledge of their inequity.

At a 1982 Liberal policy convention, Trudeau would be commended by a negotiator now working for Westinghouse Canada and appalled by unions’ outrageous demands. Now this negotiator felt able to stick to the 6&5 guidelines because Trudeau had played “hardball” with workers. Trudeau accepted the compliment. He praised the negotiator without whose efforts in reducing workers’ standards of living, the 6&5 would surely fail.144 As Trudeau noted the following year, one of the 6&5’s greatest successes was bringing together governments and capital to work “in a spirit of cooperation for the national interest.”145 In more direct language, the “national interest” meant making most Canadians poorer.

A 1974 letter from Breton had taken a cabinet document to task when it asked unions, and not any other group, to fight inflation. Not only did Breton feel this to be a naïve request, but he echoed the labour-left’s broad assertion that bargaining demands, while high in nominal numbers, were “not a cause of inflation, but a result of it.” He also

144 PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 52, “Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Question and Answer Session,” 6 November 1982.
145 PET Fonds, 019, Vol. 4, file 7, “The Success of Six and Five.”
deemed controls a conservative force, which would come to encompass “a tax on labour income” and a “subsidy to profits.” Breton thus felt that “labour unions will resist [controls] and they should.”

This greater ease of policing incomes control at the blue collar worker level than prices controls at the product level and salary controls at the white collar and professional worker levels is the reason why labour unions have and will continue to oppose controls; it is also the reason why controls have much more often been implemented by conservative rather than by liberal governments.

But if the actual goal was the restraint of wages, Breton suggested it was imperative to strike at labour’s ability to bargain effectively. Further, he felt that controls would discourage union activity, militancy and organization because “workers will join unions only if it is profitable for them to do so.” In the end, then, Breton saw controls as flawed from his perspective as an academic economist, but politically beneficial in weakening unions.

Trudeau’s government would admit, usually behind the scenes, that not only was their opposition to controls key to their 1974 majority win, but that labour’s claims of unfairness were largely valid. Charles Caccia argued that the 1974 election was about wage-earning urban voters, who perceived the unfairness of controls. Caccia thus felt that the election could be won from the left, with a strident Liberal opposition to controls in the name of defending the working man. Both the NDP and PC could be felled if Trudeau made the campaign against controls about “equity,” which would make him the locus of

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146 PET Fonds, 011, Vol. 4, file 27, Breton to Trudeau 11 October 1974.
148 PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 36, file 10, Breton to Trudeau, 12 September 1971. See also PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 18, file 5, Albert Breton and Joel Bell to Trudeau, 5 May 1975; Breton to Trudeau, 5 September 1975.
Anything But (Progressive) Conservative voters. The NDP would thereby be starved by strategic voting, as had happened before, and often since.149

But one of the most telling documents came in the run-up to the 6&5, which noted that attacks on labour should be seen for what they were: a wage depression program. This leaked document approached numerous options for stemming inflation, arguing that while the AIB held wages down, with settlements falling from 20% in 1975 to 7% in 1978, prices were not restrained, meaning that “the rate of inflation has remained disappointingly high.” The worry was that workers, realizing real wages since the AIB had fallen, were going to try catching up: “In spite of the acceleration in negotiated wage settlements…real wages have declined significantly over the past three or four years.” Also against Liberal convention, the report noted that public sector wages were actually rising more slowly than inflation and private sector wages. The worry again was that private sector workers, trying to recapture the ground they had lost since 1975, would push up wage demands in the public sector. In turn, the worry was that “high federal settlements, even though justified…would provide a demonstration effect on private sector wage trends.” In the end, the desire was for governments and employers to show solidarity in bargaining. Even though the piece noted that unions were blameless for post-AIB inflation, “an essential

component of any credible policy to counter inflation is an effective policy governing the
determination of public compensation.”

Trudeau would thus be encouraged to use binding arbitration and private-sector
comparability to ensure public sector wages rose at a slower rate. Wage controls imposed
by the government on its own employees would educate civil society in the virtues of
restraint. The 1981 report recommended a manipulation of collective bargaining, whereby
the government would use state coercion and private employer solidarity to hold down
powerful public unions, while maintaining the image of free collective bargaining with the
units it could defeat at the table. Even though the unions were right to think that “controls
restrain wages and not prices,” and run the risk of depressing wages “to an even greater
extent than they would be otherwise by market forces,” they and the public needed to be
taught a lesson. As Trudeau’s opinion pollsters would note: “There is a desire to see some
measure of punishment of the civil service… a feeling that it is some sort of elite
group…that has insulated itself from the hard economic realities of the day.”

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Ultimately, there are two stories of this period. The Liberal perspective argues that
controls were an emergency measure, carried out with the best of intentions for all classes
to protect the poor especially from inflation and economic collapse. The labour-left deemed
the period to be one in which Trudeau misled the public on his intentions to implement
controls, the functions of said controls, and perhaps most importantly, how controls—

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151 Ibid. See also “Secret Plan Calls for Wage Controls,” The Commonwealth, 22 April 1981; Broadbent
presented in a rhetoric of restraint, sacrifice, solidarity, and rationality—actually amounted to a fundamental attack on workers and public services. When one reads the speeches and writings emanating from Trudeau and his government, it becomes clear that they worried less about inflation than about a powerful working-class challenge to the liberal order.

Tellingly in 2000, John Crispo, who would first critique and then reluctantly support controls during Trudeau’s tenure, remembered controls as integral to the contemporary precarity and poverty of Canadian workers. Of the 1970s, he would say that Trudeau’s controls were a “con job, a fraud, and a political ploy” obscuring the fact that “the present economic system is a trickle-down system in which the privileged provide some leftovers for the masses—some crumbs off the table.” The long term consequence was that

The average worker hasn’t had a real wage increase in more than two decades. It began with the wage and price controls imposed by Trudeau’s government, which hit workers, but no one else. If you were a professional or a corporation, there were ways around them. Since then, except for a few groups…there have been no real wage increases.

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But one might ask—quite fairly—what Trudeau could have done differently in regards to inflation and the wider crisis in Keynesian economics. The reality is that, without approaching some form of socialist economics, where one would seek to mitigate inflationary effects by breaking down to a large extent market and profit systems, the only option was to make capitalism function at its optimal level given the circumstances.

Trudeau, like most western leaders, did just that: he used state levers to cut wages, weaken unions, lower social expenditures, and empower capitalists, all with a view to protecting the currency, raising exports, lowering unit labour costs, and ultimately preserving profitability. In this sense, and in a departure for both left and right critiques of Trudeau, one could say that he rather effectively guided Canada through a devastating crisis in capitalism, even if that effectiveness worked to the detriment of the vast majority of Canadians, especially unionized workers. He acted in accordance with his liberal philosophy, and in conformity with the actions of similar governments across the developed world.

Our next chapter flows out of many of these debates. Controls as manifested through the AIB set off many discussions about the future of Canadian capitalism and about industrial relations. Liberal, socialist, and labour debates on the question of the right to strike, tripartism, and the viability of free markets were a direct result of the implementations of controls in 1975, and in all of them Trudeau figured as a central topic of debate.
Chapter 9

The New Society, Tripartism, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

If our previous chapter dealt with how the politics and philosophy of inflation related to Trudeau’s general assault on labour, this chapter demonstrates how anti-inflationary policy, especially that which concerned industrial relations, bled into larger conceptions of a crisis of the liberal order. We will examine how Trudeau and his government endeavoured to create a new system of industrial relations, how they spoke of a New Society, the context of such policies in a Canada influenced by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the response of labour and the left to such initiatives.

The concept of the New Society was articulated by Trudeau in late 1975 when he mused that given inflation, unemployment, and labour strife, the free market might be failing. Trudeau was, in the company of many contemporary liberals, deeply concerned about how geopolitical instability, along with the failure of Keynesian models, spelt danger for the political tradition he loved. While the right deemed this suggestion socialist, labour and the NDP saw in it a call for corporatism and wage controls from a regime with well-established anti-labour credentials. The outlines of this New Society were often predicated on a cooperative relationship between capital, labour, and government, otherwise known as tripartism, a system of industrial relations whereby these three sectors cooperate to set uniform standards, conduct bargaining, increase national productivity, and decrease labour stoppages. Trudeau would advocate a form of tri- or multi-partism as part of a post-controls regime in which unions would be made cognizant of their shared interests with capital. But Trudeau and his cabinet would largely reject the more traditionally-conceived models of tripartism prevalent in parts of Europe including Germany and Scandinavia, because he
wanted less a national system of power-sharing with the organized working class over vital workplace and economic issues, and more a conduit through which he could influence labour leaders. As pedagogue-in-chief, Trudeau did not envisage a shared authority when it came to such questions as keeping inflation low, productivity and competitiveness high, and muting the labour militancy so influential in the 1960s to the mid-1970s. Trudeau wanted tripartism for its passive-revolutionary potential to limit working-class radicalism. He was never willing to treat labour as a partner.

Labour and the NDP were divided by tripartism. The CLC put forward their own version of it, which resembled more closely the European model that included substantive national planning and power-sharing with labour. Nevertheless, many CLC affiliates were skeptical of both the CLC and Trudeauvian models. They feared being co-opted, wasting valuable resources better used on grassroots organizing, and abandoning their ties to the NDP, which was also down on tripartism for many of the same reasons.

Discussions around the New Society and tripartism tied into the larger question of labour’s right to strike and bargain collectively. Trudeau often faced calls to ban or restrict such rights. In response, he would argue that banning strikes would never work and constituted an illiberal step. Still, his actions, growing out of his conceptions of the New Society and tripartism, foreshadowed the exclusion of labour and social rights from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which elicited a puzzlingly muted response from his critics from the left and labour.

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In December 1975, Trudeau announced that there needed to be a New Society, one in which Canadians values were upheld and the government’s legitimacy strengthened. Society was in crisis, and Canadians needed a re-established leadership:

I think there is a great deal of unease in society. People are wondering who is in charge of the society, and they’re concerned. They’re worried, and they have cause to be, and it’s my job as a politician to try and not only see where we’ve been and where we’re at, but where we’re going, and I’m telling you that...we’ll have to take new directions.

This re-orientations included controls, which were about much more than fighting inflation:

Many people still see those controls...as a bit of strong medicine we’ll have to take in order to get inflation down, but it’s really more than that. It’s a massive intervention into the decision-making power of the economic groups, and it’s telling Canadians we haven’t been able to make it work, the free market system...We can’t go back to what was before with the same habits, the same behaviour, and the same institutions.

This was part of a wider Trudeauvian defense of liberalism, which balanced new economic practices with the preservation of individual liberties:

Liberalism is a way of thinking, a way of approaching problems to make sure that the individual gets the maximum amount of respect and, hopefully, as great an amount of equality of opportunity in Canada, in the world, as possible without being doctrinaire about it.¹

Trudeauvian controls were justified as a tactic adopted by an enlightened state struggling to wrest control from bigger forces and vest it in individuals and small businesses whose liberty was menaced in the corporate age. The state was to shore up the individual whose freedom in the marketplace was in jeopardy.

Behind these proclamations one discerns the influence of American (but Canadian-born) economist John Kenneth Galbraith. Galbraith argued that while parts of the economy

¹ Trudeau quoted in English, *Just Watch Me*, 290-3.
operated according to the textbook market logic, the most powerful forces—unions, professions, corporations, and governments—formed a planned sector which affected supply, demand, production, and regulation. Ultimately, Galbraith felt controls were needed on a permanent basis to counterbalance this sector’s power. While Trudeau was more optimistic about the post-controls era, he largely agreed:

I’m not as wise or as experienced as Galbraith, but there’s no doubt that his thinking has permeated my thought…If it’s obvious at the end of three years that the planned sector of the economy as opposed to the market sector is going back to its old ways, then we’ll have to keep controls on in one way or another.

In general, then, the broad strokes were set out by Galbraith for the New Society. Liberal capitalism still offered the key to Canada’s future, but free market nostalgia needed to be shelved when referring to the planned sector. Controls were therefore a test run for a “new social contract.”

The economist imagined an economic order in which corporations and unions were regulated by stringent and permanent state frameworks. Galbraith was a godsend to many left liberals. He offered a model that, without drifting into either socialism or libertarianism, presented a credible modification of the now-embattled Keynesian system.


The New Society’s goal was thus more than anything a re-emphasis of traditions within liberal capitalism, as Trudeau candidly advised one correspondent:  

Remarks by me have, unfortunately, been taken out of context in a manner that would suggest that the government is planning to “impose new values” on Canadians. Let me assure you that this is not the case. Government neither can nor should attempt to impose values on individuals. However, I do believe that if we, as a society, are to attain the goals we all desire[,] a new sharing of social responsibility is necessary. The principles which we have set out to guide government behaviour in the post-controls period—principles of fiscal responsibility, less direct intervention and increased reliance on the market economy…—will allow the legitimate aspirations of all Canadians to be achieved in ways that permit less bureaucracy and less spending by government…I am not talking about new values, but rather a reaffirmation of traditional values such as sharing, compassion, tolerance and responsibility for others…If we as a nation truly want governments to do less for us and to us, we as individuals and in our private institutions will have to do more for each other.  

To achieve such an ideal, Canadians would need to work together, sharing diverse ideals, but within a unifying framework. They would need to accept that the system hasn’t been working perfectly, that all of us have to share some part of the blame, big governments of course, big corporations, big unions, all those who have a strong lever on economic decisions have to bear their part of the blame. For that reason, I think we should all work together to see what kind of a society we want to emerge into after the controls are lifted.  

In a September 1992 interview with Galbraith, Trudeau told the eminent economist of how strongly his writing had affected his outlook, particularly with reference to the thesis that controls offered the only way to address inflation without increasing unemployment. Galbraith praised Trudeau’s application of the AIB and 6&5 as technically sound and socially just.  

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4 Trudeau, Memoirs, 197-8; English, Just Watch Me, 296-8.  
7 The Trudeau-Galbraith interview can be found in PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 24, file 8.
It is thus no exaggeration to see Galbraith as a co-author of the New Society. It meant, not a rejection of capitalism, but a call for the improvement (never the marginalization) of markets. As Trudeau explained in another interview,

When I said the free market isn’t working, I’m quite sure I was referring to a specific set of events. That was the introduction of price and wage controls… I sort of said, you see, we’ve been trying to use the market and the free agents in the economy to arrive at a less rapid rate of inflation. And it hasn’t worked… So I said at the end of the year, we brought in price and wage controls and it proves that the free market isn’t working. Now that was expanded to say I was turning my back on the free market… It doesn’t mean I loved controls.  

Trudeau as ever was trying to square an ideological circle. If the free market was not working in the context of the 1970s, it justified the very wage-and-price controls he had critiqued in his contest with Stanfield. Yet he backed away from any overt critical analysis of the free market in general, since that would have propelled him into the very currents that, since the early 1960s, he had so fiercely opposed.

Forsey again defended Trudeau as a liberal realist, keenly aware of the market-distorting power of the “big unions and multinationals,” represented by Forsey as forces of equivalent power. If, he proclaimed, “we can’t destroy big unions and the multinationals, and as even the degree of freedom they had been enjoying produces high inflation and high unemployment, we must control them. That conclusion seems to me inescapable.” Equally inescapable was Trudeau’s belief that controls preserved liberty and offered both sides a test period for a New Society. Perhaps most controversial given his many years as a labour staffer was Forsey’s defense of Trudeau’s intention to overhaul bargaining:

The Prime Minister was suggesting that if we understood the realities of the present and future there would be fewer strikes ‘because we will agree more in advance on what a reasonable share of the pie is.’ Specifically, in the public

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sector...we might have to work out some method other than strikes to settle salaries, wages, and working conditions ‘in vital services, health and so on, or education...index the wages of teachers and postmen’ by the industrial wage of the rest of society.’ Is that so very unreasonable or dangerous?9

Maurice Lamontagne commended the New Society for sparking a “conversion intellectuelle et morale au bien commun.” It would not constitute a “dictatorship of the intelligentsia,” but a liberal society updated. One such update was to bring oppositional forces, hitherto interacting only under conditions of crisis, together in consensual consultations. A New Society would ensure that major players would cooperate through government-facilitated channels to ensure that disputes were proactively resolved and socially beneficial results obtained. This model would—in a tripartite manner—harness big forces without resorting to statism:

Parliamentary institutions were originally designed as the focus of collective decisions and were assigned the relatively simple task of maintaining the rules of the random game in horizontal and atomistic societies. The rise of factionalism involving the multiplication of monopolistic and other pressure groups has seriously distorted the random game and created important new centres of collective decisions in the private sector. These new centers were and are designed to serve their own vested interests and...tend to fight with each other...They have created a new jungle game which our parliamentary institutions were not designed to rule alone...If we cannot establish new parallel institutions...to complement and re-inforce parliamentary institutions and to reduce the areas of dissent and conflict, governments and parliaments will continue to try to fill the vacuum but in the process, they will become more over-burdened, more bureaucratic, more inefficient, and will not be able to prevent chaos and anarchy.10

Marc Lalonde was in the 1970s one of the most eloquent exponents of a Trudeauvian liberalism that confronted the supposedly equally dangerous powers of corporations and unions. He praised Trudeau as a visionary who withstood the vulgar attacks of irrationalists

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and partisans to defend a vision of a better Canada. This Canada would be one with few strikes, closely regulated bargaining practices, and a rational readjustment of the salaries of private- and public-sector employees in conformity with the wider interests of the country as a whole. After reassuring Canadians that Trudeau believed that the “strengthening of the free market sector of our economy is absolutely central to the Liberal view of the Canada for the future,” Lalonde expressed his confidence that the New Society would exhibit an industrial relations system featuring cooperation between capital, labour and government. It would culminate in an “incomes policy…setting out the general parameters of relative shares of the various economic groupings within the Canadian community.” Again, this outcome would be facilitated through tripartism.\(^\text{11}\)

Michael Pitfield agreed. He outlined, in similarly Galbraithian terms, how controls would address the increasing power of the planned sector, one beginning to resemble government in terms of its function and powers. The solution was not only regulations for wages (and “if only for largely political reasons—to a lesser, looser extent on prices”), but was the “urgent and unavoidable task of the Canadian government,” i.e., the development and promotion of a “new economic order.” This would require a

new social contract between labour, management, and government with regard to the roles of each, the distribution of profits, allocation of resources, working conditions and so forth. To keep this understanding up to date there will also have to be agreement on the process for doing so.\(^\text{12}\)

For Pitfield, the New Society exemplified a liberalism attuned to twentieth-century realities. Within it individuals would enjoy equality of opportunity. It was obviously the


\(^{12}\) PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 18, file 5, Pitfield to Trudeau, 7 October 1975.
case that all any government could do was “provide the general conditions whereby all citizens have a minimum level of opportunity.” The market mechanism was in this version of the New Society not a mere detail but the instantiation of a libertarian political principle: “the right to do what you want to do unless it is explicitly forbidden by law.” The New Society must defend this market principle. And when markets failed, government must intervene not to suppress or replace market mechanisms, but to return them to their proper functioning. Advocates of the New Society should restate their support of capitalism—the best system in human history for advancing the individual. A New Society assumption must be that capitalist forms of ownership, production, and distribution are best for all people, rich and poor, owners and non-owners alike.

Pitfield’s was very much the technocratic interpretation of the New Society. It meant a state that would elaborate rules that prevented labour negotiations from becoming labour confrontations. It meant the government, the embodiment of the public interest, must intervene energetically to secure labour peace. He specified the particular, seemingly value-neutral measures by which it might do so: low-tension meetings focused on details, formula-driven wage settlements linked strictly to measures of inflation and productivity, and the creation of data systems so that bargaining would increasingly rely on ‘objective’ metrics. Pitfield cast the New Society as a move towards “corporatism” regarding labour relations, wherein collective bargaining would no longer entail conflict, dominated as it was to be by capitalist metrics of measuring growth, productivity, and appropriate wage increases.13

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Also vital was a 1976 government report titled *The Way Ahead*, which argued that the imposition of controls had exposed the need for frank discussions and a three-year breathing space to help prepare for a New Society. While the document declared “the collective bargaining system as the fairest…method of determining wages and working conditions,” it also expressed concerns about the “hardships on the general public” inflicted by strikes. The solution rested in “new directions in which labour-management relations can continue to evolve through the post-control period, becoming more cooperative and less adversarial.”

Trudeau and company had made it clear that while capitalism would prevail, Galbraith had shown them that it also required restructuring. They aimed to make its most powerful players work together in a post-controls society towards profitability, stability, and productivity. Unions would retain a presence, but their role was secondary to that of capital. Moreover, their push for wage increases, unlike the corporations’ push for higher profits, was in opposition to the new values being proposed and to the old values being reasserted. It smacked of the narrowness that the New Society vowed to transcend.

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The labour left for its part was largely skeptical of Trudeau’s New Society, seeing it as a move towards corporatism. As USW 4728 president Ken Neumann remarked, the “New Society” represented a post-democratic order “in which working people will be forced to accept lower living standards while big business will be given unrestricted rights to profiteer.” IAM president Mike Rygus agreed. He argued that while Trudeau was correct

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in his assertion that the market economy had failed, he was not the one to fix it, “nor the
one to lecture Canadians about a New Society.” UAW President McDermott did “not
believe that Trudeau has any…serious intention of changing the status quo.”

Joe Morris as CLC President would portray the New Society as a centralization of
state power under a corporatist model. In a 1976 booklet titled *Towards a Corporatist State*,
Morris declared that “the final piece in the grand scheme has been revealed. There is no
further need for speculation about the government’s true purpose. The stated policy…is to
centralize political power in Ottawa. The vehicle by which this will be effectively
accomplished is the anti-inflation control programme.” But what of capital? Morris felt
that whatever their rhetoric, businessmen were content with this intervention, because it
would bolster their profit margins:

> It has become abundantly clear that the legislation will make the corporate
community and the individual employer the fulcrum upon which the control
mechanisms will operate. Even now employers…are applying the guidelines
in their negotiations and in their individual contractual relationships where no
trade union exists. They have…become an extension of the policy of the
state…a tool of the state in exerting its control over another institution—the
free trade union movement.

Here, said Morris, was a conflation of the national and corporate will. It was a pattern
typified by Bryce Mackasey’s claim that labour’s pursuit of higher wages constituted an
attack on fellow citizens. Mackasey had made it all the clearer that the New Society was a
“direct attack on the interests of working people.” Labour was in essence being asked to

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15 PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 571, file 2303, Ken Neumann to Trudeau, 30 January 1976; Rygus cited in Wilfrid
List, “Right About Economy, PM not to be Trusted for Solution: Unionist,” *Globe and Mail*, 4 March
January 1976. See also Broadbent Fonds, Vol. 117, Grant Notley to Tony Penikett, 6 January 1976.
16 Morris, *Towards the Corporatist State* (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 1976). See also CLC Fonds,
Gwyn,” 10 January 1976.
approve its own subjugation. Organized workers could not accept the New Society because they could hardly be “convinced that the Liberal Government shares our goals of economic planning and social justice.”\textsuperscript{17}

The CLC’s \textit{Labour’s Manifesto for Canada} of 1976 also addressed corporatism and the New Society. Trudeau’s imagined future, it claimed, would resemble contemporary wage controls more than social democracy. While some might have felt Trudeau’s New Society constituted a rediscovery of “his youthful social conscience,” his past history and present party connections made such a radical revival very unlikely. Also unlikely was a return to the pre-controls world. In essence, the CLC felt Trudeau’s program could be more clearly understood as a question: “how do we move out of the control period in such a way as to ensure that organized labour is not able to recover the losses incurred in the control period?” The answer was a “liberal corporatism”

in which organized labour cooperates with the state and business to establish guidelines for our respective demands on the economic system and to determine our respective shares. It may include a small dose of economic planning but is unlikely to involve more than systematizing the present substantial but fragmented assistance provided to industry by government.

In essence, the New Society would empower the state to “permanently intervene to reduce the rights and incomes of working people.” This would mean “that the institutions of organized labour would function to ensure the acquiescence of workers to decisions taken by new institutions in which their representatives have no real power.”\textsuperscript{18}

Such critical diagnoses fill many a CUPE file. The ‘New Society’ was mis-named. It constituted a plan for liberal capitalism that combined “a traditional understanding of the

\textsuperscript{17} This Morris speech is located in PET Fonds, 019, Vol. 12, file 14.
\textsuperscript{18} CUPE Fonds, Vol. 150, file 4, Executive Council Policy Statement, \textit{Labour’s Manifesto for Canada}. 297
market” with an updated strategy to disempower labour. In short, CUPE’s analysis was that the Trudeau government’s goal was to defend private property even as it critiqued markets:

It should be noted that the economic order defended by the government and the classical concept of the market share one absolutely central characteristic—buying and selling based on an exchange of private property rights and, as a necessary condition thereof, private property rights in production facilities. While this characteristic of a market system has never been sufficient to provide the system with its required legitimacy, it is sufficient to determine the basic economic and social structural characteristics of the system. In other words, there should be no doubt that the government is defending a market system even if it…lacks many of the characteristics from which those systems derive their legitimacy.19

This lengthy critique captures much of what labour discerned in the “New Society”: that whatever its rhetoric, it was nothing new at all. It entailed a capitalist approach to economics and a liberal approach to politics. The only change it envisioned was an intensification of the state and capital’s alliance in their fight against workers.

The NDP for its part was no more convinced by the scheme. Douglas would critique The Way Ahead because it manifested no desire to challenge the economic status quo. Like the Just Society, the New Society misled the public by saying that Canada’s best economic future resided in free markets. Douglas noted that a planned economy was the only way towards any form of a New Society that transcended the market failures that afflicted all but the most powerful.

It should be remembered that built into the price which consumers pay for every product they buy, there is a surplus sufficient to provide the corporate sector with…new capital. The public provides much of this investment capital but the decision as to where and for what purpose it will be invested lies with the corporations. Left to the market forces, priorities for investment will undoubtedly be based on profitability which may not…be in accordance

with national priorities…What is needed is a national instrument capable of influencing investment timing and priorities in the public interest. 20

Both Trudeau and Douglas seemingly argued that the state had the duty to defend the public good by intervening in the economy. Yet it was obvious they had very different visions than Trudeau of the contents of such intervention. Building on Galbraith and on four decades of theorizing labour problems from a liberal perspective, Trudeau wanted to repair a marketplace menaced by overly-powerful unions and corporations. Douglas more critically aimed to reduce the role of profit, and in some instances, remove entire sectors from the workings of the market. The two of them thus epitomized the still clear distinction in the 1970s between social democrats and liberals.

Broadbent laid out an even clearer line of demarcation between liberals and social democrats. He argued that Trudeau’s New Society made no commitment to transformative national planning. Rather, such Liberal policies constituted a desperate attempt to preserve the old society and its capitalistic irrationality by insulating business from having to deal fairly with unionized workers. 21

Interestingly, Broadbent also referenced Galbraith’s work. Yet the conclusions he derived from the economist were quite different from those of Trudeau. Galbraith’s Economics and the Public Purpose was, in Broadbent’s eyes, a “Fabian song,” a polemic against inequality and a call to go beyond an “application of Mackenzie King liberalism” to attain a “genuinely egalitarian society.” Broadbent largely shared Trudeau and Pitfield’s

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understanding of Galbraith’s planned sector. Yet he underlined how the economist had failed to articulate the

moral and philosophical case for an egalitarian society. Throughout one notes that the moral legitimacy of his case depends on assuming a logically prior commitment to some aspect of equality…My fear about the book is…that that country’s liberals will not see, precisely because Galbraith does not bluntly face it, the real issue of American Reform.22

Leo Panitch offered a more stringent critique. In 1979, he attacked Trudeau’s New Society as a framework traceable back to both King and (more pointedly) Duplessis. The New Society was hardly new. It was, in many respects, a re-run of Quebec’s interwar Catholic corporatism. On the basis of papal encyclicals and the experiments of Franco, Salazar and Mussolini, Quebec’s intellectuals and politicians had advocated a “third way” between capitalism and socialism. Panitch also drew links between the New Society and Mackenzie King’s 1918 Industry and Humanity. Panitch noted that while Trudeau had risen to prominence opposing Quebec corporatism, as Prime Minister he seemed to find in corporatism a response to too-powerful unions and a crisis-ridden economy:

It was clear by late 1967 that the accepted Keynesian tools of demand management were not producing quick results. Here you had it – a more strongly organized working class, conditions which the government considered to be ‘full employment,’ inflationary pressures, a squeeze on private capital accumulation…all the ingredients which had earlier led to corporatist developments in Western Europe.

Trudeau, in response to such contradictions, tried to entice labour and capital towards collaboration. Labour’s victories in bargaining, along with the expectations of Canadians, necessitated in 1975 the application of controls. Interestingly, Panitch argued that such

controls actually made corporatism obsolete. They promised to so weaken labour that it would no longer be a necessary partner of government and business.\textsuperscript{23}

For Reg Whitaker, who wrote a penetrating critique of Canadian liberal corporatism, Trudeau like his predecessors—above all Mackenzie King—was in quest of an alternative to labour militancy:

Taken in conjunction with his legislative imprint on Canadian industrial relations with its central role for the "community", King's corporatist vision indeed has some concrete manifestation in the real world of the 1970s...What is interesting about King's intellectual odyssey toward corporatism is what it reveals of the basis of this currently fashionable concept. Corporatism was not inimical to liberalism, but instead grew out of a crisis of liberal capitalist democracy and offered an apparent solution to that crisis which would not challenge the basic structures of the capitalist political economy but would instead consolidate them. Corporatism would freeze existing class inequalities by institutionalizing them and incorporating them into the structures of the state.\textsuperscript{24}

Trudeau’s New Society was thus little more than Mackenzie King’s old vision of an ‘industry’ harmonized with ‘humanity.’

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It follows from these arguments that Trudeau’s seemingly radical reflections on market failure were actually arguments for a revised corporatism—or, in the parlance of the late 1970s, “tripartism.” In this section we examine more closely the debates surrounding tripartism. Our basic argument is that Trudeau’s government did not desire tripartism to the extent that it would give labour space in the state’s decision-making mechanisms. Panitch and Whitaker remark that the underlying purpose of tripartism was


the co-optation of socialists. Behind the front of consultation and power-sharing loomed corporate dominance and class collaboration. Still, the government explored quasi-tripartite schemes to move beyond confrontational systems of industrial relations, all of which involved more consultation and pre-emptive mediation, along with mechanisms to restrict strikes, all without the real power-sharing of European tripartism. Trudeau would emphasize in 1976 that “it would be most encouraging if there were to be a wider realization, both that community of interest does exist between those that have traditionally been viewed as management and labour, and that there are more advantageous ways of resolving differences than strike and lockout.”\(^{25}\) It was in this context that Trudeau would defend modified tripartism:

> Traditionally, management and labour have sat down, each bargaining…to get greater advantage for their members…but very rarely have you seen at the table, except when government-appointed arbitrators intervene…some body say ‘well, okay, that may be good for management and labour but will it really be good for Canada in the medium and longer term…that is that is the kind of reflection that I am trying to make to provoke at this point.’\(^{26}\)

In the New Society, bargaining was to be designed by the state in order to achieve its wider educational goals, giving both employers and employees access to the same data, and ensuring that “the public” had a seat at the bargaining table, since (as Trudeau explained) it was “the public” against whom, “in a real sense,” strikes were mounted.\(^{27}\) In a New Society, one might generate a “more cooperative relationship between employers and

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\(^{25}\) PET Fonds, 07, Vol. 571, file 230101, Trudeau to J.J. Borrows, 6 December 1976.
workers…It is essential to the success of efforts to construct an effective system of economic consultation.”

This tripartism was never about sharing power with labour leaders. Trudeau was only interested in a tripartism focused on keeping wages and inflation down because public unions, based on their level of organization and in the government’s ability to incur deficits, were winning increases that supposedly held the public to ransom. Unless a comparability formula designed under tripartite negotiations was adopted, unjust wages would entrench themselves, as would a supposedly perverse situation of the public sector leading industrial wage trends. Trudeau’s arguments here closely paralleled those advanced in the business press.

In 1977 the Liberal government brought out the Agenda for Cooperation, a discussion paper that set out in some detail the outlines of a post-control economy with low inflation, restrained government, and minimal class conflict. It suggested a purely consultative structure made up of multi-partite forums of economic constituencies, comprised of between thirty and fifty members based on sectorial, jurisdictional, and regional representation. Such a structure would allow for these seemingly disparate groups, including governments, unions, capitalists, primary producers, members of cooperatives, and professionals, to “gain a clearer perception of the interrelationships among their actions

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and of the implications for economic performance of alternative courses of policies and decisions throughout the private economy.”

On labour relations, the Agenda emphasized that desperate times cried out for new collective bargaining measures, including education for labour leaders, mechanisms to create larger bargaining units, crack-downs on illegal strikes and lockouts, and improvements to methods of conciliation and arbitration. It was hoped that clearer communication would replace divisive conflict, ushering Canada into an age of record productivity and international competitiveness. Turning to the public sector, the Agenda noted that it “was difficult for governments to resist settlements that might be unwarranted” and left taxpayers on the hook. It suggested a turn towards “total compensation” bargaining, which would ensure that public sector compensation would be kept in check. It was assumed throughout this document that capitalists rightly determined compensation trends. Thus, not unsurprisingly, the Agenda noted an exception might be needed when private settlements appeared “to be unjustified.” Comparability—based on careful study and communication—would lead to fair wages and a maintenance of bargaining, if only in a qualified sense:

One key concern likely to be raised is the degree to which collective bargaining remains meaningful in the context of a total compensation policy…The government believes that this policy will not unduly restrict the rights that public employees now have to engage in responsible collective bargaining. Collective bargaining will continue to play a dominant and meaningful role in…establishing the appropriate mix of total compensation and in finding solutions to the problems raises above and others as they arise.\(^\text{30}\)

In short, the government would bargain as long as unions accepted an officially mandated comparability system and limitations on their rights. This tripartite system would, John Munro argued, be centred on finding the “ways and means of eliminating some of the worst adversary elements of collective bargaining, and devise a more co-operative and civilized approach to income sharing.” It might lead Canada towards a comprehensive incomes policy.31

Michael Pitfield felt a peaceful and productive labour regime rested on the belief that “the identity of interest between labour and management can be advanced by government through the formation of management-labour councils and...better defined structures for representing labour and management opinions in the governmental process.” Pitfield was especially drawn to the U.S. Taft-Hartley Bill of 1947, 32 which on his reading promoted industrial peace by mandating a compulsory cooling-off period before strikes. Similarly, Maurice Lamontagne argued that while a rigid tripartism was undesirable, a malleable form could quell class conflict and worker disaffection because a “better integration of the worker into the entreprise” would bring about “a closer relationship between wages, productivity, profits and prices, and therefore greater industrial peace.”33 Lamontagne envisioned a system in which unions existed as facilitators linking workers with Canada’s industrial goals:

Production effort is organized on the basis of a partnership between labour, capital, and management. However, the distribution of the results of that effort between factors of production is determined by a struggle...The appearance of outside labour negotiators has alienated the worker from the

32 Taft-Hartley, formally the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947, was a U.S. bill that attacked labour’s increasing power and militancy following the Second World War. It would intensify the intra-labour red scare, limit the ability to strike, and introduced Right-to-Work provisions.
enterprise, reduced his interest in productivity, which is not related…in the
short run to his contractual income, and is a fundamental cause of labour-
management problems…The labour movement, while remaining an agent for
social improvement, should help the workers to achieve this partnership and
participation.34

Such a transformation in the function of unions would be brought about through
educational programs via the Department of Labour. They would permit fact-filled labour
leaders to bargain responsibly. It was also imperative to end “the almost total lack of shared
economic and social experience between labour and management.” With such programs,
it was hoped that the “existing adversary concepts governing employer-employee
relations”35 would give way to a peaceful era. As was noted in 1975, the government’s
goal was to transform “collective bargaining from the present emphasis on adversary
relationships to one of collaboration amongst partners.”36 The adversarial system, argued
Deputy Labour Minister T.M. Eberlee, was unhealthy because such strife engendered
“detrimental, even crippling, effects on the general economic wellbeing of the country.”
Eberlee therefore emphasized a “mutuality of interests” in labour relations, imagining a
future in which strikes “would become totally obsolete.”37

Finally, a 1976 report to cabinet outlined the Department of Labour’s vision of how
labour relations could become more peaceful. This included a multipartite consultative
forum focused on major social and economic matters. Excluded at the outset was any form
of tripartism—along the lines of the CLC’s proposals, for example—that would entail any
actual power-sharing with labour. The data needed to smooth out bargaining were to come

35 PET Fonds, 020, Vol. 37, file 7, Torrance J. Wylie to Trudeau, 30 January 1975. See also PET Fonds,
36 PET Fonds, 017, Vol. 1, file 3, “Memorandum to the Cabinet: The government’s Priorities,” 22 July
1975.
from a new “collective bargaining information centre,” which would provide a single source for both management and labour, illuminating the consequences and rationality of their demands, and improving “the attitudes of both parties towards what the economic system can bear.” This would remove bargaining guesswork, and operate from a presumption that competitiveness, productivity, and low inflation must all be the determinants of wage increases.

The proposal articulated the need for labour education predicated on fostering amongst labour leaders a “greater sense of responsibility…to the public interest.” In other words, there was a “need both to increase the knowledge and skills required by union members for effective participation in the labour movement, and to encourage more responsible participation by unions and the labour movement in society.”  

Additionally, a 1976 cabinet discussion demonstrates that while Trudeau wanted a consultative relationship with the CLC, “completely unacceptable” were its suggestions of a national planning council that would determine economic and investment policy, largely because such a council would infringe on the rights of cabinet, parliament, the provinces, and individuals, leading to a “full government control of the economy.”

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While the government wanted tripartite systems, sharing real power with unions was deemed radical, undemocratic, and unconstitutional. But what did the CLC want, and how did the rest of labour respond both to its ideas and to those of Trudeau? The CLC’s

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approach is best understood via its *Labour’s Manifesto for Canada* (1976), which argued that tripartism, as an alternative to both the control and pre-control regimes, could allow labour to stand as capital’s equal.\(^{40}\) In other words, the CLC would accept tripartism, but only on the non-negotiable condition that “national planning must include more than an incomes policy in which only wages and salaries are restrained.”

A prerequisite of tri-partism must be that management gives up its unilateral right to determine investment and pricing policies. Labour must not willingly enter into any arrangement where only...wages [are] to be determined…To enter into a tri-partite agreement under such adverse circumstances would indeed be using the union organization as an arm of both business and government to restrain the workers.\(^{41}\)

Shared control was, in the CLC’s words, “the price industry and government must pay” for labour’s cooperation. As Trudeau was taking steps via his AIB to centralize power, it was necessary for labour, through the CLC, collectively to bargain the conditions that would mark Trudeau’s New Society. The *Manifesto* noted that the CLC, “as an organization that has historically promoted democratic socialism” and placed “social and economic planning at the centre of its philosophy.” CLC-style tripartism would include a right to a living wage as a “cornerstone,” a system of controls that actually affected prices, and a new political order “which recognizes that private investment decisions must serve the interests of ordinary Canadians.”\(^{42}\)


Discussing this approach, CLC president Joe Morris would assure Canadians that although his federation wanted significant input into policy, it would not infringe upon the prerogative of Parliament. Rather, he sought a European-style tripartism in which industrial strategy both ensured “continuity when governments come and go” and a measure of relative autonomy from the routine squalls of party politics. This was to be a “planning system” which, while ultimately accountable to parliament, was to complement the “functions now performed mainly by senior civil servants.” When critics charged that he was leading unions towards co-optation, Morris responded that he was demanding a full and equal partnership, and that “no one co-opts me.” Ultimately, Morris would paint the Manifesto as a philosophical alternative to Trudeau: “This is where the debate centres now—between the liberal corporate society of The Way Ahead or the social democratic society of our Manifesto.”

Similarly, in a 1976 presentation to cabinet, the CLC assured Trudeau that its proposed system, while historic in its comprehensiveness, would not be alien to the federal government, which already had boards and committees that delegated authority without undermining parliament. It would be comprised of more than one board, with a primary group examining the broadest economic issues, and secondary boards studying specifics. This top committee, “the Council for Social and Economic Planning,” would be tasked with reviewing draft legislation and proposing amendments to laws, as well as initiating new programs for potential implementation. In general, it would ensure that economic policy and investment were tailored to the democratic needs of all Canadians. A brief

43 Ibid.
elaboration on these boards and their objectives was presented in a letter to Morris from CLC VP Shirley Carr:

My Understanding from the discussions with the Prime Minister was as follows:
1. Top Level—We want full participation in the planning process of preparing all legislation.
2. Second Level—We want full participation in the administration and decision making of the legislation if it is passed, and a direct involvement where regulations and amendments are concerned [with regard] to the legislation.45

CLC-style tripartism would thus have entailed a significant change in power relations in Canada. The CLC was convinced that “the achievement of an equitable distribution of income is not possible without planned incomes and that this would not be possible outside the context of general social and economic planning.” While the CLC wanted to see AIB controls end before the negotiations on tripartism began, it would accept a general incomes policy as part of a planned economy.46

The Manifesto’s overarching point was that by “fundamentally reforming Canadian society and its institutions, the Canadian worker will be able to expect a fuller life.” Canadian unions might find in tripartism a basis of unity they hitherto lacked. The CLC claimed that it should be the one body speaking for Canadian labour, because it represented 75% of organized workers across the nation. (CLC-affiliated unions were thus imaged to be loyal executors of the federation’s policies). Finally, the CLC argued that its ties to the NDP would not be hurt by tripartism and that the CLC, regardless of those in power, needed to participate in national planning for the benefit of its membership and the

public. Given the pro-AIB NDP governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the CLC put the *Manifesto* forward not as a rejection of the NDP, but an indication that its support for the party not be taken for granted.\(^{47}\)

In comparing its *Manifesto* to Trudeau’s *Agenda*, the CLC would deem the latter an underwhelming counter-proposal to the former. The *Agenda* defended the belief that wages must fall for the good of the economy, that comparability formulas could largely replace bargaining, and that weak multipartite structures were better than powerful tripartite ones. The CLC countered by arguing that comparability would always be biased against workers, that existing controls were antithetical to cooperation, and that multipartism would only serve to weaken labour’s voice. The CLC could foresee a future in which unions, disregarded as serious planners, would nonetheless be expected to corral members in the interest of corporate Canada. In the end, Trudeau’s *Agenda* was deemed to be “diametrically opposed” to the *Manifesto*, because while the former championed capitalism, the *Manifesto*’s measures were predicated upon “a departure from the market system.”\(^{48}\)

In general, much of labour, including some CLC-affiliated provincial federations, deemed Trudeauvian tripartism a ploy to entrap workers in a system in which they would be tag-teamed by the state and capital. The CLC’s *Manifesto* fared little better among them.\(^{49}\) It was called a “fake solution” by the FTQ. CUPW President Joe Davidson argued


in 1977 that tripartism was a defeatist proposal, one that impeded organizing the unorganized and building a grassroots movement. Both he and his successor Jean-Claude Parrot argued that given the nature of capital, and Trudeau’s anti-labour profile, tripartism was not an option. Even the CLC’s model gave much more than it took.50

The UAW worried about what tripartism spelt for the philosophy and organization of trade unions. It risked diverting unions from the rank and file’s education and mobilization. This meant that “even if we don’t ‘lose’ anything at these meetings, our enemies win because labour’s institutions have been neutralized (labour is demobilized rather than ‘integrated or ‘co-opted.’)” The UAW also suggested that the image of “big labour” would be substantiated should union leaders cozy up with capitalists and cabinets, reinforcing “cynicism amongst our constituencies vis-à-vis leadership.” Even if tripartism had merits, they would only be manifested if labour were placed in a stronger bargaining position:

   Until we can really back up our demands we can’t win in negotiations with the government...so we end up with virtually no concrete gains for our members and provide no expression for their anger/frustration while unemployment, falling real wages, and cutbacks continue...The task isn’t to convince government; it’s to develop and mobilize members and trade union organizations.51

On the matter of tripartism, UAW staffer Sam Gindin remarked that there was deep skepticism: “Yes...workers are suspicious. And further analysis shows that they are damn right!” Gindin noted that tripartism was really about “the real price that labour will be paying for being allowed into the halls of power.” Whatever the particulars, Gindin was

certain that under tripartism property rights would be maintained, the “capitalist economy will prevail,” and labour would continue in its “subordinate position within society.” Because profits and private property were to go unquestioned, no promises could be made to labour. Everything was to be predicated on profitability, reliant in its turn on decreasing working-class standards of living. Stable employment, safer workplaces, more equity—none could be guaranteed under Trudeauvian tripartism. The tensions under capitalism would force labour leaders into making concessions, making them less working-class leaders and more the “representatives of capital.” This would confuse and demobilize workers, and was even in 1977 distracting militants from defeating the AIB. 52

CUPE for its part argued that while the Manifesto presented an acute diagnosis of wage controls as a system of capital accumulation, and constituted labour’s “first real attempt… [to] inject itself into broad economic and political policy planning,” it still represented an abandonment of the NDP and democratic socialism. Not only would tripartism entrench capitalism, but it would mean “the end of the NDP as it is today.” The party would either fold or become yet another voice for the middle classes. CUPE also felt the Manifesto was built on the false assumption that liberal democratic governments were neutral entities. Under even the CLC’s tripartism, labour would relinquish its ability to protest the actions of the state and employers, who would likely stay their current course:

Corporatism is an attempt to co-opt and use the labour movement to sustain the dominant power of corporations…It seeks to legitimate the domination of Big Business in the eyes of workers by linking their objectives to government planning processes in which labour leaders participate. But corporations remain privately owned and controlled by their owners. They still operate competitively in an international economy in pursuit of profit. Labour is still subordinate, with virtually no control over what is produced, investment

priorities, prices, employment, and income distribution. Labour in Canada in 1976 is not powerful enough to change that.\textsuperscript{53}

John “Lofty” MacMillan,\textsuperscript{54} long-time New Brunswick labour activist and then CUPE’s Director of Organization, argued in 1977 that the Manifesto’s authors “must be held responsible for attempting to dupe the workers of this country.” They were wrong to imagine that tripartism would change the fact that capitalism was “government and big businesses teamed up to make profits.” Tripartism could only work when “a federal socialist government supported by the workers of Canada comes to power.” Ultimately, CUPE dismissed the Agenda as an “Agenda for Co-option through Cooperation.” It demanded that workers “bear the brunt of the continuing economic crisis by accepting the continued erosion of their standard of living.” What became clear was that tripartism in the government’s mind was nothing like the Manifesto’s imagined future. Rather, it was a one-stop-shop to obtain nation-wide labour concessions, chief among them public sector comparability formulas. It constructed a ‘de-politicized’ system of collective bargaining that was inherently political, sapped agency from the rank-and-file, and transformed unions into the supine dependants of the state and its ‘experts.’ Because comparability was a vital portion of the Agenda, CUPE concluded that “organized labour and public sector unions” were called upon to resist “formula bargaining by refusing to participate in such programs” and thus retain “independence vis-à-vis the State.”\textsuperscript{55}

Building on this belief that comparability formulas were the lynchpin of Trudeauvian tripartism—and that the rest of the Agenda was merely “fluff”—were analyses from CUPE, PSAC, and others. CUPE researcher Gilbert Levine explored the Average Comparability of Total Compensation (ACTC), which would add together upwards of 13 factors to arrive at a single figure which would then permit the comparison of public wages to private ones.\textsuperscript{56} In bargaining and arbitration, only the distribution between these 13 factors could be modified, not the overall ACTC number. Levine distrusted the objectivity of ACTC, because the government would select the statistics, parameters and private sector comparators, meaning that it would one-sidedly engineer collective bargaining. The ACTC would be a boon to Canada’s capitalists. They stood to benefit from a system designed to allow them, rather than the state, to dictate wage levels. They could also use their ACTC scores to manipulate the government and public opinion.\textsuperscript{57}

Although the Agenda had presented ACTC-style legislation as amenable to collective bargaining, PSAC countered that, because only a few ACTC factors were malleable, and the overall pie’s size was pre-determined, the Trudeauvians were presenting labour with a mirage. As Levine noted, the government had too much power over the design of the ACTC, and its complexities would do little to make bargaining less contentious.\textsuperscript{58} In the end, the ACTC foreshadowed less a cooperative industrial system than a conduit through which government dictated to workers:

> The concept…will replace collective bargaining by formula or computerized bargaining. Some bureaucrats would develop data on total compensation and

TELL the employees what they are entitled to according to the total
compensation comparability formula. No system of collective bargaining can
survive under these circumstances.\textsuperscript{59}

A booklet by unions including PSAC, CUPE, CBRT&GW, CUPW, and NUPGE took on
the ACTC as a direct outgrowth of Trudeau’s \textit{Agenda}. It denounced the scheme as unfair
to public workers, a gift to private business, a harbinger for what Trudeau had planned for
all workers, and the death of collective bargaining.\textsuperscript{60}

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The NDP position on tripartism is interesting because in the 1960s and 1970s,
economic democracy (as expressed through both direct worker input and consultative
forums) was becoming increasingly popular among social democrats. Douglas felt a case
could be made for either workplace or national-level tripartism. He felt that Canadians
might be wise to investigate the Swedish model, wherein industrial relations were managed
by strong unions and respectful managements, rendering large strikes a rarity. If the
government and capital wanted industrial peace, said Douglas, they needed to embrace
industrial democracy.\textsuperscript{61}

Broadbent suggested that ending industrial strife was only possible if unions
exercised power in more than a reactive sense. Adversarial approaches—while not without
merit—should be accompanied by workers’ control, an expansive project of the
democratization of industry.\textsuperscript{62} Simply pushing for wages and benefits was not enough.

\textsuperscript{59} CLC Fonds, Vol. 655, file 3, “Policy Position: Public Service Alliance of Canada, with Respect to Total
\textsuperscript{60} CLC Fonds, Vol. 655, file 3, Canadian Labour Congress \textit{et al.}, \textit{Fair Deal for Public Employees}.
\textsuperscript{61} Douglas Fonds, Vol. 49, Douglas to Vincent J. MacLean, 22 December 1975; Douglas Fonds, Vol. 148,
Broadbent, “Industrial Democracy: Where do we Go from Here.”
Socialism must be won in a two-front battle, whereby labour pushed for increasing power over capitalists in the workplace and the NDP pushed for laws that undermined the anti-democratic rights of property. The result would be the supersession of liberal democracy, leading to “the eventual passing of a law which will remove all rights of control from those who own companies or who own shares in companies.”63 This radical position on workers’ control and democratization was hardly the same as tripartism as put forward by Trudeau or even by the CLC.

Speaking of the CLC’s Manifesto, David Lewis questioned its strategy. Although he acknowledged the CLC’s refusal to wait for the election of an NDP government, he distrusted the machinations of Trudeau (whom he dubbed “Mr. Machiavelli”):

So Joe [Morris] has to say “sure, I am going to try to do my damnedest to see if I can influence Trudeau.” Well I can tell him, I did that, you know, between ’72 and ’74, and…at the end we got screwed. When you are trying to influence Trudeau, you have to remember that possibility.

While Lewis praised the Manifesto for not “talking about tinkering” but “about transforming the economic and political institutions of this country,” he suggested that its goals, like the NDP’s broader mission, “cannot be achieved…through political instruments of the corporate powers of this country.”64

A September 1976 research memo to Broadbent from Marc Eliesen noted that while the Manifesto seemed to constitute what Desmond Morton termed a Gompersian “abandonment of the NDP in favour of dealing with the people who always have power

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and always would,” it was too fantastical to ever become the conceptual basis of an actual economic framework:

To argue that there should be a tripartite forum in which labour would have “an equal share in the formulation of all policy,” with such broad powers that “it would be extremely difficult for the government to follow a policy which would significantly deviate from the Council's position,” is blatantly so silly that it’s not worth discussing. The abuses and fun that we have heard the CLC receive from Trudeau at their meetings was surely well-justified… (“Joe, we want you to choose our minister of Labour and run him in a safe seat”; “Do you want labour represented by one third of the seats in the Senate?; Or do you want one half of the Cabinet?”).65

All the CLC would get from Trudeau, Eliesen wagered, was a process of co-optation whereby the Prime Minister would tweak labour relations only to the extent of providing powerless consultative avenues. Eliesen felt the NDP must distance itself from the Manifesto for its impracticality and its disregard of parliament.66

Desmond Morton was outspoken in his critique of the Manifesto. Here, he argued, was less an “assault on the citadels of power” and more a “retreat to the old era of cap-in-hand attempts at consultation and compromise.” Like Reg Whitaker, Morton felt the Manifesto summoned the liberal corporatism of King, wherein power would be shared with “reasonable” and “responsible” unions.67 Ultimately, Morton was confused by the CLC approach. Its begging for power reeked of desperation, it ignored concerns that its scheme assaulted Parliament, and its very act of adopting the new approach, taken without consultation and showing little respect for its allies and affiliates, meant that this “social

65 Broadbent Fonds, Vol. 30, file 15, Marc Eliesen to Broadbent, 17 September 1976. It is unclear if these were actually quotes from Trudeau, or Eliesen’s imagination of what Trudeau may have said. In either case, the statement provides rich insight into both the Liberal and NDP dismissals of the CLC tripartite proposals.
compact” with Trudeau would divide the left and labour movements. A formalized tripartism represented a last resort for an embattled government, not a cordial offer to a labour movement that “is a lot smaller…than either its friends or enemies like to pretend.”

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It was in the context of these labyrinthine and confusing plans for a new regime of labour relations that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came to prominence. Its relative silence on labour rights crystallized both the Trudeauvian stance vis-à-vis labour and a broader public skepticism about the movement.

Trudeau, ever the contrarian, emitted confusing signals about labour rights in the 1970s. While assaulting labour’s right to strike and to bargain, he often defended such rights rhetorically. Channeling to a point his stances of the early 1950s, he argued throughout the 1970s that one factor setting liberal democracies apart from totalitarian states was the presence of labour militancy, whether exercised legally or not. Trudeau suggested that while some strikes should be illegal, actually preventing them required “that workers in all sectors of the economy are justly treated.” The alternative to justice would be drawn-out wildcat militancy and disenchantment, something that was increasingly troublesome to politicians, capitalists, and labour leaders. In Trudeau’s words, the

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problem was less strikes than it was a combative industrial relations system. This could be reformed by including workers. There was no need to return to a model “more fitted to the darkest days of the industrial revolution.” As long as unions refrained from acting irresponsibly, strikes had value because they encouraged the continuation of meaningful negotiations in which parties balanced desires against realities. Trudeau (in this rhetorical mode) would not ban or place time-limits on strikes, because, as in all forms of conflict, the point was to let the struggle play out so as to not limit freedoms as in the Soviet bloc.

Back-to-work and essential services legislation had to be rare, because while strikes inflicted economic pain on society, ultimately “we [must] balance this against the right to strike and the right of association in a free society, and our belief that free collective bargaining is still the best way to arrive at a good solution.” This was especially true since most contracts in the public sector—98% by Trudeau’s estimation—were resolved without stoppages. Until more cooperative models came into being, it was still “part of the right of association” for labour “to withhold their labour just in the same way as capital…can withhold its investment.” In the end, Trudeau believed that the right to strike, although not universal, needed to be respected, rooted as it was in the premises of classical liberal democracy. Liberal democracy itself owed its emergence in history to workers: “freedom

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of the individual was a myth…Liberation came, in many instances, with the rise of free trade unionism.”75 One might then conclude, however incorrectly with hindsight, that Trudeau would have insisted on enshrining labour rights in his Charter.

When it came to Trudeau selling his Charter, he would speak of it as a manifestation of what a society agreed were rights regarded so highly that even Parliament could never amend them without substantial controversy.76 In this sense, the Charter was emblematic of a recognition that politics should not be played with basic individual rights:

The Charter of Rights to me was fundamental…because if we cannot accept that certain values are held in common by us, then indeed we have not done much as a nation to identify the essence of that nationhood, this sense of achievement that leaders must, I think, try to draw out of the people.77

Whereas pre-Charter law binding Canadians together had been reactive, post-Charter law would be a proactive force for liberty. It would be much more than a backward-looking “set of rules which regulates our activities” or “a body of statutes and judicial decisions.” Canadians had to transcend a pattern whereby “the law…is static; rather than serving us…it controls us.” How could Canadians render their law more amenable both to protecting traditions and pursuing ideals? The answer was by “asserting the human freedoms to which we believe people in this country are entitled as of right.”78 All this would not only set the stage for a newly united Canada, but would allow for the nation to grow because its basic

77 PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 17, “Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Interview with Barbara Frum,” 16 April 1982.
questions would have been answered. Quoting Thomas Jefferson, Trudeau would argue that “nothing then is unchangeable but the inherent rights of man.”

A 1980 speech to the premiers emphasized that while rights might be amended over time, such would happen rarely under the Charter. For Charter rights, Trudeau declared, would not be readily politicized, because “rights are the common heritage of all Canadians” and there were no “second class citizens in Canada.” Trudeau would also imply that the Charter, like Confederation, was a social contract that made Canada possible. Likewise, Trudeau in 1978 characterized a bill of rights as a renewal, amalgamation, and codification of the shared and venerable values of Canadians. It would ensure that Canadians and the state held those values “more consistently and more faithfully [than] in the past.” In contrast to the BNA Act, which lacked an educational message about what Canada was and aspired to become, the Charter would constitute a potent pedagogical tool and an “enlightened basis for patriotism.”

The basic goals of the Charter were to consolidate a largely Liberal understanding of human rights and freedoms, creating a patriotism centred not on language, race, class, or creed, but on individualism and the Charter itself. What rights were to be included? Charter articles offer court-room protections of the right to religion, speech, association, and assembly, protections from mistreatment based on membership in an identified group,

79 Trudeau, Federalism and the French Canadians, 52-60.
along with protections for linguistic rights. It was thus a hybrid of collective and individual rights, articulating a liberal understanding of society, one that was cognizant of sexism, racism, and linguistic and cultural discrimination. It also entailed the recognition that affirmative action to rectify past injustices did not necessarily violate the equality rights of others. The most glaring absence—surprisingly, given Trudeau’s own labour-centred account of the actual history of liberty—was that of social and economic rights, including both the right to strike and bargain collectively, along with ‘positive’ liberties entitling one to housing, food, education, healthcare, and employment.83

Trudeau hardly needed to be a socialist in order to entertain notions that social and economic rights were indispensable preconditions of individual rights. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had demanded, in his envisaged “Second Bill of Rights,” the codification of social and economic rights:

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights…They were our rights to life and liberty…As our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness. We have come to a clear realization…that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. Necessitous men are not free men.


People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.\textsuperscript{84}

In the Trudeau fonds, one finds little such support for economic rights and freedoms. Even though Trudeau (as we have seen) verbally agreed with Roosevelt’s understanding of the promises and limitations of nineteenth-century liberalism, his liberalism was in practice markedly un-Rooseveltian. Trudeau and company were much more likely to defend the right to property than they were labour or economic rights.

In 1968, Trudeau would outline four categories of rights. The first were political rights of religion, expression, and association; the second were legal rights like the presumption of innocence and the right to “life, liberty, and property”; the third were egalitarian rights protecting one from discrimination based on “race, national origin, colour, religion, or sex”; the fourth were linguistic rights for speakers of both official languages. There was absolutely no mention of material standards constituting a right, nor was freedom of association implied to include labour rights. Although a 1979 bill of rights draft would mention in a preamble a need to “strive always to eliminate poverty from our land,” it was not enshrined in law alongside “the right to and the enjoyment of property, individually or in association with others.”\textsuperscript{85} A memorandum in Trudeau’s files on the preparation of a bill of rights would list off economic rights like those put forward by FDR, but, seemingly drawing upon the thought of Isaiah Berlin, it ultimately rejected them as an affront to individual liberty:

\begin{quote}
Because economic rights do not simply restrain others in order to protect the individual in the exercise of his freedoms, but instead seek to impose
\end{quote}


obligations on the state or others for the positive benefit of the individual, many civil libertarians do not consider that they properly belong in a bill of rights. In addition, it would be very difficult to make such rights enforceable so that at best they would remain only as a statement of ideals. This would tend to lessen the prestige and effect of the whole bill. It is therefore suggested that economic rights not be included in the constitutional bill of rights.\textsuperscript{86}

Perhaps most telling were the minutes of an August 1967 meeting with Trudeau and his close advisors. While the minutes of the meeting discussed a whole series of potential Charter provisions, they end curtly with the following: “economic rights—no general guarantees.”\textsuperscript{87}

A couple of documents that bucked the anti-social-rights trend were forwarded by Gérard Pelletier to Trudeau in 1973. These pieces, by an unknown author, urged Trudeau to take a bold approach to rights. The author started by saying that by 1972, many of the wise men’s progressive goals had been shelved to appease non-progressive interests inside and outside the Liberal Party. But there was still time for Trudeau to take a “cautious, liberal, centrist, route that might, in the long run, take us to a qualitatively different society than others.” After all, the author suggested, the worst that could happen is that “should the route be rejected by Canadians, then at least you will have tried to change the world a little—in its interest—and not simply tried to stabilize a situation that perpetuates little more than the party in power.” One could make revolutionary change over time if it was expressed in conservative language—proposing social and economic rights, not as socialism, but “security.” (The echoes of FDR were audible.) The author felt this would provide what Trudeau wanted from a constitution—a universalizing force that forged a

national identity on grounds other than those of race or religion. This form of security and national pride could be founded upon a conviction to effectively guarantee to all Canadians:

1. a basic food basket,
2. a basic income,
3. a basic house,
4. a clean environment, etc.,
5. a basic protection of civil rights and liberties.  

But on the whole, it was clear that FDR’s proposals—and in part some of those Trudeau himself had explored in his 1961 McGill Law Journal piece titled “economic rights”—were not to be found in any Trudeauvian charter. As Trudeau would note in 1968, while in the distant future Canadians might expect some sort of enforced material standards, it could “take considerable time to reach agreement on the rights to be guaranteed.” It was “advisable not to attempt to include economic rights in the constitutional bill of rights at this time.” That Trudeau’s goals of national unity, liberal patriotism, and stable confederation could co-exist with a basic guarantee of a minimum standard of living was never considered seriously in the drafting of the Charter.

This omission was all the more telling because of Trudeau’s argument that the rights enshrined in the Charter should transcend political debate. The right of a Canadian in 1982 to food and shelter evidently did not come into this category. More important for Trudeau was the right to property—a force barring such egalitarian economic rights—which all his proposed charters contained in some form. Property rights were ultimately omitted, but only against Trudeau’s personal wishes.

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89 For my analysis of this piece, see chapter two.
If you go back to June, 1980—when we proposed a Charter of rights—you will remember...there was a guarantee of property applicable at the federal and provincial levels. It is in the course of the summer debate...that, in order to please the provinces, we had to delete property rights.\footnote{PET Fonds, 013, Vol. 29, file 9, “Transcript of the Prime Minister’s News Conference,” 2 April 1982.}

According to political scientist Alexander Alvaro, the provinces, many of which had passed specific forms of legislation that modified property rights, were fearful that their inclusion in a federal charter would preclude the flourishing of provincial crown corporations or the forbidding of absentee land ownership. Beyond such concerns, Alvaro argues that the provinces, regardless of ideological complexion, disliked Trudeau’s proposed inclusion of property rights because it challenged provincial jurisdiction. Property rights were already entrenched—fairly definitively—as a right under provincial jurisdiction in the BNA Act. However much Trudeau “personally would have liked to see [property rights] in the constitution,” it was not to be.\footnote{Alexander Alvaro, “Why Property Rights were excluded from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,” \textit{Canadian Journal of Political Science} 24 (June 1991): 203-29. Ultimately, Alvaro explains that while Trudeau was confident that his approach to property rights did not risk repeating the pattern in the United States, where a similar constitutionalization of them had stymied social programs, there could be no certainty of how the courts would interpret the right.}

So in essence, we see an approach from Trudeau that rejected the inclusion of economic rights based on considerations of feasibility and on ideals of protecting property. He was utterly silent on labour rights — or the lack thereof. This silence may seem surprising if we take his own accounts of the history of liberty seriously. It is less surprising if we remember how instrumentally Trudeau had always regarded the labour movement and, if we recall, his various attacks on labour rights while in power. Either through direct coercion and legal restrictions, or through an attempt to create a quasi-tripartite system
wherein labour ceded its rights, Trudeau had been long engaged in a campaign to reduce labour’s influence.

Labour’s response to the emergence of this narrowly individualistic Charter reflected its underlying weaknesses. From labour would come some calls for a bill of rights that would defend, among other things, the right to strike, but for the most part, labour leaders ignored the Charter debates. One relatively rare exception can be found in a 1982 presentation of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, which lamented that in the proposed charter

nowhere does one find reference to a general right to employment, the right to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work, the right to form trade unions, the right to social security, the right to protection of the family, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, or a general right to education. It is our opinion that the failure of the Charter to make provision for this category of rights is its single most important shortcoming.93

But more common was the approach of the CBRT&GW. This union argued that Trudeau had used the constitution to obscure economic crises, and that “words alone will never persuade the old-line party governments at either level that the need to bring our economy home is much more crucial to the nation’s future than the patriation of the constitution.” Similarly, OFL leader and former ONDP MPP Cliff Pilkey would argue that Trudeau used repatriation to avert the public’s eyes from “economic chaos” and that labour must ignore constitutional quagmires.94 Desmond Morton’s 1984 history of the Canadian working class

followed suit in arguing that esoteric constitutional politics were far removed from the fight for economic justice, and it was a preoccupation which organized labour, like most Canadians, refused to share. The radical possibilities of entrenching the right to a job in the Charter of Rights…seems scarcely to have occurred to unions or central bodies. Instead, with growing passion and justification, union leaders pleaded with Ottawa and the provinces to look again at the economy.\(^9^5\)

As Larry Savage’s path-breaking research reveals, the CLC was reluctant to pursue constitutional questions because of the FTQ’s resistance to the Trudeauvian package. So while some under the CLC umbrella wanted the inclusion of labour and social rights on the grounds that “the Charter of Rights may come up in the next few months which could inevitably threaten bargaining rights,” for most the issue was a non-starter. UAW Canadian director Bob White in 1981 supported the patriation of the constitution during an NDP discussion on the matter. Yet he ignored the Charter’s social limitations because the working people of Canada supported the Charter, because he saw in it a repudiation of rising neo-conservatism, and because it was time to bury constitutional emphaera and focus on the economy.\(^9^6\)

Labour only really responded to the Charter after it proved useless in the struggle to stop laws such as C-124, which ushered in the 6&5. For the CLC, this bill “eliminated” and “abolished” the right to strike and bargain, and it did so a scant few months “after the proclamation of Trudeau’s charter of ‘Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.’” For both the CLC and the Civil Liberties Association, C-124 was a flagrant violation of labour rights.

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from a government that had reassured them such rights would be included under freedom of association. CBRT&GW, despite its ambivalence on constitutional politics, was adamant that bargaining rights were being “trampled upon by the 6&5.”

This failure to respond with any kind of consistent and concerted position with respect to the Charter has been deemed a mistake by scholars. Thomas McIntosh argues that labour had “ignored the entire process of Charter-building,” and wondered “what the final price organized labour will pay for this act of omission.” NUPGE staffer Derek Fudge in 2005 argues that unions simply assumed their rights were secured under the term “association,” leaving labour rights vague and paving the way for the “labour trilogy” of court decisions which in the late 1980s effectively read labour out of the Charter. Savage argues that the CLC’s presence on the sidelines prevented labour from setting any tone to the debate, giving the NDP no reason to push for labour and social rights. "I think we

97 Some labour experts expressed agreement with the NDP on this matter. Broadbent Fonds Vol. 61, file 9 contains a March 1981 report from the Department of Justice on the question of whether the Charter’s association clause contained labour rights. While not mentioning the right to strike, and citing American jurisprudence (1976 Abood vs. Detroit Board of Education), the report held the inclusion of the right to organize, to compulsory dues check-off, to a closed shop, and at least a partial right to spend union dues politically were all implied by the right to association.


99 Thomas A. McIntosh, Labouring under the Charter: Trade Unions and the Recovery of the Canadian Labour Regime (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen’s University, 1989), 1-2; Derek Fudge with John Brewin, Collective Bargaining in Canada: Human Right or Canadian Illusion? (Nepean: National Union of Public and General Employees, 2005), 68-70.

100 This trilogy examined three anti-strike and bargaining laws to test the Charter’s parameters around association. The Court’s ruling was that while associating freely was a fundamental human right, bargaining and striking were not. These rulings, at least as far as bargaining was concerned, were overturned in 2007. See Judy Fudge, “The Supreme Court of Canada and the Right to Bargain Collectively: The Implications of the Health Services and Support Case in Canada and Beyond,” Industrial Law Journal 37 (2008): 25-48. The ruling itself is found at http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/2366/index.do> The 2015 ruling granting the right to strike is found at <http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14610/index.do>
goofed as a labour movement,” remembered one labour leader, “we should probably have paid a lot more attention to the Charter than we did.”  

Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz concurred:

Despite the repeated attacks on the right to strike, the CLC, virtually alone among large interest groups in Canada, remained aloof…Although the practical effects of such declarations may not be great, inclusion of such rights at least helps to legitimate union struggles around these issues. Even an unsuccessful campaign…would have put the issue before their members and the broader public.

Panitch and Swartz argued that, with hindsight, the CLC would have acted differently:

Would the CLC have been less complacent about the constitution if it had known that but two months after [the Charter’s] proclamation, the right to strike would be "temporarily" removed from federal employees as well? To be sure, the defence of the right to strike does not ultimately lie in representations to parliamentary committees on constitutional rights. But is it any less evident that the Canadian labour movement neither at the top nor the bottom is capable of undertaking a sustained coordinated defence…of the right to strike?

Panitch and Swartz suggest that labour’s silence could be understood in the context of a rightward, individualistic drift in Canadian liberalism:

It is one of the greater ironies of our time that as the Canadian state finally moved to formally guarantee liberal democratic freedoms in an indigenous constitution…it simultaneously moved towards restricting those elements of liberal democracy that specifically pertain to workers’ freedoms.

Roch Denis agreed, arguing that the labour movement failed in its duties:

En 1981-1982, [the CLC] ne soulevèrent aucune objection systématique contre l'adoption de la Charte des droits et libertés qui, reconnaissant le droit d'association, restait muette sur le droit à la libre négociation et sur le droit de grève. Or, deux mois après la promulgation de la loi constitutionnelle du Canada, en avril 1982, le gouvernement Trudeau décrétait, sous l'empire de cette nouvelle Charte des droits et libertés, son programme de contrôles des 6 et 5%. Il a été établi depuis par la Cour suprême du Canada que le droit

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d'association reconnu par la Charte n'inclut pas la reconnaissance du droit à la négociation collective et du droit de grève.\textsuperscript{103}

In a 1981 letter to Bob White, Sam Gindin underlined the gravity of the left’s failures. “The constitutional input of the NDP—very wide-ranging—totally ignored labour and trade union rights. (Although the CLC is primarily responsible for initiating this omission, the NDP was wrong not to challenge the CLC on this—perhaps some NDPers were relieved not to have raised such rights.)”\textsuperscript{104}

Before the Charter debates yet still within the Trudeau era, many NDP statements had linked human rights with socialist principles. NDPers commenting on the Just Society and the GAI had inserted these proposals into a socialist framework. They insisted that basic human rights required state guarantees of material standards of living. Douglas had argued in 1970, for instance, that labour’s ability to bargain and withdraw its labour was “the \textit{sine qua non} of a free society.”\textsuperscript{105} This was consistent with a 1969 statement in which Douglas argued that

\begin{quote}
freedom means more than the absence of restraint. It means the freedom to enjoy life to the full and to join with our fellow men in building a world free from the curse of war, fear, disease, and poverty... If we succeed, we shall be worthy successors to those who laid the foundations of democratic socialism in Canada.\textsuperscript{106}
\end{quote}

In 1972, Lewis argued that the traditional conceptions of rights were too centred on the privileges of traditional property. Not only was a new property right needed, like “the employee’s right in his job,” but also a “concept of right must be built into the

\textsuperscript{103} Roch Denis, “État Fédéral et syndicalisme,” in \textit{L’ère des libéraux}, 293.
\textsuperscript{104} UAW-CAW Fonds, Vol. 320, file 8, Sam Gindin to Bob White, 24 August 1981.
administration of justice with respect to benefits which society has made available to the poor, the ill, the old, and the weak generally.” Then Lewis became more specific:

The person entitled to welfare and other benefits must have his entitlement recognized as a legal right and the fullest opportunity to enforce that right against arbitrary actions of insensitive, bureaucratic robots. The same is true for a whole host of rights which are developing in society and which must be built into our legal system.107

In 1969, Broadbent argued that beyond classical liberal freedoms were needed the building blocks of a “socialist citizenship,” including the right to strike, bargain, and workplace consultation. All workplaces above a certain size should be automatically unionized as a “fundamental right of workers’ citizenship:”

Just as a native in a modern nation is not required to decide whether or not to become a citizen of a country so too in a place of work, men should not be required to show cause for the formation of a union. It should be an automatic right, i.e., no stipulated minimum support should be required before a union local can be formed. Unions should exist where working people exist, just as citizens exist where nations exist.108

Even early in the 1980s, Broadbent insisted that only New Democrats could emphasize that economic and social equality comprised the missing constitutional piece. Without them, there could be no progress beyond “fine legalisms and intellectual debating points.” Broadbent’s proposed ‘charter for the 1980s’ would include “the rights to interesting and stable work and to a better sharing of the economic benefits of Canada.”109

All of these views were steeped in the long tradition of Canadian democratic socialism. The 1933 Regina Manifesto had declared that

workers must be guaranteed the undisputed right to freedom of association, and should be encouraged and assisted by the state to organize themselves in

trade unions. By means of collective agreements and participation in works councils, the workers can achieve fair working rules and share in the control of industry and profession; and their organizations will be indispensable elements in a system of genuine industrial democracy.110

Yet over time the NDP’s position had changed. NDP leaders were more apt to defend Trudeau’s liberal Charter rather than critique its social limitations. They tended to forget Broadbent’s socialist citizenship, or Douglas’ doctrine of the sine qua non of free societies—the right to strike and bargain collectively.111

True, there were dissenting voices within the party. In a party debate on the constitution in July 1981, John Paul Harney, an MP from 1972-4, argued that the Charter was fatally silent on the right to organize, strike, and bargain. Margaret Fern, who would run provincially in Saskatchewan in 1982 and 1986, said the “Trudeau charter” came from a “millionaire playboy” without any real concern for the plight of the poor. Long-time MP Lorne Nystrom argued that the Charter was a barrier to a cooperative federation in which the NDP could “build a socialist Canada and not a Liberal…Canada.” John Rodriguez, who was a Sudbury MP for much of the 1970s and 80s, also argued that the Charter was a Trudeauvian liberal project, one from which the NDP would win no historical glory for championing or tweaking.112 Such voices, however, were in the minority, and were generally voiced after the Charter’s ratification.

111 The Party would in 1981 suggest a Charter amendment adding to the document “the freedom to organize and bargain collectively.” It would also muse about including “lack of means” as an invalid grounds for discrimination, and suggested that a commitment be made to implement the UN Covenant on economic, social, and cultural rights. Not only did the party drop these ideas quickly, but they often revealingly omitted the right to strike. See Broadbent Fonds, Vol. 62, file 1 and Vol. 64, file 2.
As Bill Blaikie observed in the wake of its proclamation, the Charter’s doctrine of freedoms was a very limited one. The Charter even made it more difficult to imagine the “freedom of communities and society in general” or the freedom “from capitalist values.” As he concluded, the NDP “implicitly acknowledged this distinction when we did not seriously advocate that any social rights be included in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.” An October 1982 draft of NDP policy and philosophy, made mention of the right to strike, and the right “to a job, income security and the necessities of life.” It never became a dedicated part of party policy. 113

Like labour, the NDP flat-footedly reacted to Bill C-124, which it argued violated the freedom of association. When the NDP argued that the 6&5 rendered the Charter into “just another piece scrap paper,” Trudeau would respond by arguing that with respect to the right to strike, it was not included because “the right to strike is a right which is given in special circumstances.” 114

Such failures by NDPers to better establish what association meant before the Charter’s enshrinement led to them belatedly demanding in 1983 that rather than leave workers prey to the vagaries of economic downturns which have robbed them of rights to free and fair collective bargaining in the past 8 years, an NDP government would seek to ensure that workers’ rights were protected through an amendment to the Constitution to provide protection of economic rights in the Charter against arbitrary shutdowns and layoffs, against curtailment of collective bargaining, denial of the right to strike and against income loss in the event of bankruptcy. 115

Broadbent himself, one of Trudeau’s biggest constitutional cheerleaders, advocated in March 1983 the very principles of socialist citizenship he had not demanded from the Charter: the right to a job, the right to a decent income, the right to adequate social services, and the right to free collective bargaining.\(^{116}\) It is likely Trudeau would have rejected the inclusion of all such rights. Broadbent was still capable of enunciating a version of social democracy markedly unlike Trudeauvian liberalism:

> Whatever happens, we must retain our socialist faith and use this to inspire the creation of a better Canada. We believe in equality not because it’s popular. We believe in liberty not because it’s a winner. We believe in social ownership not because of the polls. We believe in these because they are right, we must never forget it.\(^{117}\)

Yet, despite such retroactive calls for rights they had ignored months before, NDPers publicly argued that the party had “won in the constitutional debate,” because it had wrested “significant concessions” from Trudeau on provincial, women’s and native rights. NDPers, it was proudly affirmed, had not played “partisan politics…on something as important as the constitution.” From February 1982 would come a similar report, which after quoting the Regina Manifesto, would imply that the Charter was more the NDP’s achievement than anyone else’s.\(^{118}\) Douglas himself considered the Charter acceptable, because it protected speech, religion, assembly, mobility, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. In other words, basic material standards of living, in 1981, were not deemed essential human rights by the NDP-celebrated Father of Medicare. Nor would he demand


that his much cherished single-payer health system be protected from politics—a system he one year later feared was suffering from a “subtle strangulation.”

It no longer seemed to be the case, then, that *Democracy Needs Socialism* (as an LSR book from 1938 had put it.) Speaking of the LSR, Frank Scott would, while a lifelong socialist, reject the constitutional recognition of social and economic rights. He would argue that what labour needed from a bill of rights was merely freedom of association, because such a provision would hypothetically (though rarely in practice) prevent the anti-union actions of Duplessis, Smallwood, and in the future, Trudeau. He required no specific demarcation of labour rights. Likewise, he felt that “where social and economic rights are involved…someone has to pay for them. This is a reason for leaving such rights out of a Bill of Rights. There is no use writing into a constitution, ‘Everyone shall have a decent standard of living.’” All these points coexisted, somehow, with his general position that if “a Bill of Rights is confined to the political rights…I do not see how it will make a significant difference in labour’s fight for better wages of in labour’s defense of the right to strike or to picket…It would not increase educational opportunities…nor would it strengthen the right to collectively bargain.” Scott shared Trudeau’s traditional understanding of constitutions, which were more, in legal scholar Eric M. Adams view, “a shield for defence” again overbearing governments than they were a “sword for attack” that would strike for social and economic democracy. This was largely compatible with early CCF attempts to enshrine human rights constitutionally, including the Saskatchewan CCF’s bill of rights, which excluded social and economic rights because, in the words of

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feminist labour historian Carmela Patrias, “Canadian social democrats believed that incorporating such rights in a bill of rights would be unenforceable. Separate...legislation would be far more effective in guaranteeing social and economic welfare.”

In the end, Broadbent supported the Trudeauvian Charter because it fulfilled a historical goal of the party. Now that the NDP had fixed glaring omissions concerning the provinces, women, and first nations, he could ask: “Can any person who takes human liberty as a fundamental value oppose what is probably the best Charter of Rights in the World?” Here was a cause, he proclaimed, that transcended partisan politics. While he in no way explained how, Broadbent argued that the new constitution would allow the NDP to “pursue our role in building a socialist Canada” during this “ère nouvelle pour notre pays.”

Broadbent in a December 1980 interview was asked to address the lack of socialist principles within the Charter. He argued—in a language uncannily similar to that deployed by Trudeau in Duplessis-era Quebec—that it was more important to entrench liberalism so that leftists had political freedom to mobilize towards socialism. The NDP’s steadfast aim was “to provide a very decent civil framework with a Charter of Rights for Canadians.” From within our own constitution, Canadians could “work as part of the labour movement

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or as a democratic socialist movement to implement our goals.”¹²⁴ Broadbent in 2013 would argue that social democracy at its core demanded that basic social and economic conditions be guaranteed as rights equal to their civil and legal cousins, a conception he declined to champion at the height of his political career.¹²⁵ As he would say to the CBC in 1981, referencing his happiness in provisions for women, first nations, Francophones, and ethnic minorities: “that, to me, a hundred years from now, will be seen as a real contribution by the New Democratic Party of Canada to our history, and short-run, intra-party bickering is peanuts by comparison.”¹²⁶

Svend Robinson advanced one of the NDP’s few largely critical views—he was implicitly guilty of Broadbent’s aforementioned peanut-valued bickering—of the Charter’s liberal limitations. Sitting on the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada, he was in a good position to do so. There he would fight, without success, for the right to bargain collectively, protection based on sexual orientation, the right to a clean environment and a healthy and safe workplace. Though he would eventually be one of the few MPs to record himself against the Charter because of his concerns with the notwithstanding clause, Quebec’s exclusion, and aboriginal rights, his earlier opinions of it were more favourable. His view was that the goals of the Charter were those of the CCF-NDP. Should New Democrats support Trudeau, “we as a party and we as a caucus when

the pages of history of this country are written, will be seen to have played a major role in shaping a Charter of Rights and Freedoms.” He urged the party to listen to Canada’s minority populations and consider how much support they gave the Charter. He thought a “democratic socialist country” could be shaped in part by the Charter. While he readily regretted the omission of “fundamental economic and social rights—the right to a job, a clean environment, housing, and health care,” throwing the baby out with the bathwater would “betray” all those who might find protection in a bill of rights.¹²⁷

Even on the question of property rights, NDPers were ambivalent. Truelove in his Robinson biography notes that although the NDP and provinces largely opposed the Charter recognition of property rights in 1981-2, they were less opposed in 1983 when Trudeau reintroduced them. With more provinces willing to accept the idea, Trudeau suggested that if all parties were willing to keep debate to a day, he would introduce a Charter amendment. In the midst of a parliamentary standoff, Broadbent said he would accept sending a property amendment to committee for study before adoption. But because of the sequence of events in the House that day, Broadbent’s motion required unanimous support, as did a motion to suspend debate. While most of the NDP accepted this proposal, Svend Robinson, with the support of Ian Waddell, in effect blocked the constitutionalization of property rights. For this act of insolence, Robinson was made persona non grata by BCNDP leader Dave Barrett and punished by an “apoplectic”

Broadbent. Robinson later reflected that his resistance to Trudeau’s crusade for property rights “may have had a more significant impact than almost anything else I did.”

In short, it seems that despite pockets of dissent, the labour-left was either ambivalent on the Charter, willing to accept its liberal assumptions, and even appropriated them as their own. Perhaps political scientist Reg Whitaker puts it best, when he argues that at the very time that a new constitutional order was being proposed, and in the midst of the Trudeauvian campaign for a New Society, neither labour nor the NDP was willing to articulate a new form of politics—one that recognized labour and social rights as human rights:

One might also ask some questions about the result of the discussion over rights. While clearly identifiable groups—women, native people, handicapped persons, cultural minorities—are given various forms of recognition, the Charter is quite deficient in what might be termed social rights...These social rights are notably absent from the text and even from the discussions and debates, within Parliament and without. That the Charter should reflect an image of liberal rather than social democracy is not particularly surprising given the structure of Canadian society, and the philosophical make-up of the governing party. What is rather more surprising is that the New Democratic Party...failed to force, or even to demand, any such concessions from their allies...The NDP did win a negative concession when the entrenchment of property rights was withdrawn...on the whole, however, and even to the NDP and the CLC, democracy in Canada seems pretty well defined by liberal limits.

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In the end, we can look back to one of Trudeau’s more famous quotations to shed light on this whole debate about the Charter, tripartism, and corporatism:

It is the possibility of the strike which enables workers to negotiate with their employers on terms of approximate equality. If the right to strike is suppressed, or seriously limited, the trade union movement becomes nothing

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128 Graeme Truelove, 84-8.
more than one institution among many in the service of capitalism - a convenient organization for disciplining the workers, occupying their leisure time, and ensuring their profitability for business.\textsuperscript{130}

One wonders, however, if rather than this being a Trudeauvian rallying cry for the rights and freedoms of the working class, it would better be viewed as his blueprint for dismantling the labour movement or at least neutralizing it. After all, his programs around comparability, tripartism, wage controls, and the omissions from the Charter indicated that he was, in his own words, suppressing or severely limiting the right to strike. One must ask that what Trudeau’s actual respect for democracy amounted to, if he exhibited such hostility to the organized working class—a class he once held to be essential to the expansion and maintenance of liberal freedoms?

\textsuperscript{130} Trudeau, \textit{Asbestos Strike}, 335.
Chapter 10

Conclusion: Life After Politics

Trudeau lived an interesting, eventful, and consequential life, making a deep impact on those he met. He was often an integral part of political, cultural social, and intellectual events in Quebec and Canada. He was, however, no different from any other intellectual in that he was undoubtedly influenced by other thinkers and ideological currents. This thesis has shown that Trudeau’s liberalism was largely shaped and defined by his relationships with the democratic left and trade union movement. It also shows that this relationship was often an antagonistic one, marked by a consistent tendency on the part of Trudeau to use the values, energies, and institutions of the left as instruments to accomplish more narrowly liberal objectives. He viewed himself, while aligned with labour and the left before 1960, as an outsider to those movements. He examined these forces externally, and would continue to do so while in office, though now with noticeable hostility. While in the 1940s and 1950s Trudeau aligned with labour and the left in his desire to see the blossoming of liberal democracy in Quebec, after his move to 24 Sussex Drive, those same former allies became obstacles to the expansion and preservation of liberalism. As Robert Wright notes in his study on Trudeau, although “he would occasionally write as a democratic socialist, Pierre Trudeau’s deepest political convictions would remain resolutely those of a near-classic liberal.”

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Trudeau’s post-Prime Ministerial speeches, writings, and interviews offer us precious insights into his own conclusions about his life and times. They reveal a man whose deeply-held liberal values led him to question—if only to a point—the paradigm of politics in which he worked. Trudeau remained a liberal, but asked tough questions of his ideological brethren about liberalism’s dependence upon capitalist social relations.

After retirement, Trudeau re-emerged as a public contrarian, particularly interested by the rise of the new right, a force already evident during his time as Prime Minister. In a 1986 event as part of the InterAction Council, Trudeau asserted that the American government had no right to prevent sovereign nations from choosing political and economic systems, even if they chose anti-capitalism: “because we don’t like Marxism, or in some cases democratic socialism, does that give us the right to intervene with armed forces in another country?...How does breaking international law—which is how unilateral intervention might be interpreted—educate a country… in the ways of democracy?” After insinuating that US policy was not about democracy, but about the repression of socialism, he would reiterate that “capitalism is a dirty word in some countries. They find capitalism has not solved the problem of abject poverty.”

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2 Much of his focus during his post-political life was dedicated to the questions of separatism and constitutional reform. This chapter largely leaves those questions aside because other Trudeau scholars have addressed them, and they are largely disconnected from his musings about socialism, liberalism, and capitalism in this period. For an excellent collection of primary documents relating to constitutional and Quebec issues, see André Burelle, ed., Pierre Elliott Trudeau: intellectuel et le politique (Montreal: Fides, 2005). See also Guy Laforest, Trudeau and the End of a Canadian Dream, trans. Paul Leduc Browne and Michelle Weinroth (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995).

3 The InterAction Council was founded in 1983 to bring together former world leaders to discuss issues of world peace, economic development, human rights, and the environment. Trudeau was a member until his passing. Other members include Jean Chrétien, Bill Clinton, and Helmut Schmidt. For more, see http://www.interactioncouncil.org/.

4 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 3, file 4, Trudeau quoted in “Trudeau Backs Contadora Solution, Critical of U.S. In Central America,” untitled newspaper, 19 November 1986. For arguments that Trudeau empathized with developing nations attempting to follow a socialist path to democracy given capitalism’s failures in their eyes, see Robert A. Wright, Three Nights in Havana, 220.
At a 1990 InterAction event, Trudeau questioned the underlying assumptions of the neo-liberal consensus. Political sovereignty, he argued, had been eroded by multinational corporations, now “on the verge of imposing not only a different kind of sovereignty, but a different kind of political system [on] the countries where they are moving.” Trudeau pondered the possibilities open to new capitalist nations. Specifically, Trudeau worried about the emergent movement to privatize state properties, in the interests of either foreign multinationals or “black marketeers,” rather than those of the average citizen. He even questioned globalization, because the erosion of national trade barriers also threatened to erode social programs and labour protections. Such liberalization “could very well result in being a bonanza for the transnational corporations… and being a terrible thing for the basic rights of workers, unemployed, and trade unions. If security nets are eroded in order that transnationals can look for lower wages…and move capital there, you will have a competition…which will lower the standards of social justice rather than raising them.”

This extended to Canada’s Free Trade Agreement with the United States:

The commendable goal of promoting freer trade has led to a monstrous swindle, under which the Canadian government has ceded to the United States of America a large slice of the country’s sovereignty over its economy and natural resources in exchange for advantages we already had, or were going to obtain in a few years…through the normal operation of the GATT.

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6 Trudeau, “The Values of a Just Society,” 385. Trudeau’s files contain a fairly comprehensive report by Deborah Coyne on the FTA. According to her, it weakened Canada’s ability to exert its own national priorities and harmed national unity. Coyne was a young lawyer at the time, but was also Trudeau’s partner and mother of his youngest child, Sarah Coyne. PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 7, file 19, Deborah Coyne, “The Impact of the Bilateral Trade Deal on the Canadian Federation: Disintegration and Absorption,” January 1988.
Similar points were made in a 1997 interview by Trudeau in the second run of *Cité libre*, where he again noted how neo-liberal globalization was a troubling force for democracy and progress because capital could move in ways not open to individuals. In such a case, free trade was about the free movement of capital to enable the impoverishment of workers. The solution was not isolation, but multi-state alliances wherein countries at similar levels of social and economic development would unite in adopting not only reduced trade barriers, but uniform wages, social programs, and taxation levels. Capital would thus be impeded in its attempts to pit nations and regions against one another.

Had the evangelists of neo-liberalism not undermined Canada’s interests? Trudeau worried that the new currents of neo-liberalism highlighted liberal democracy’s limitations:

In the USA we see that in the last...elections 50% of the American people abstained from voting. They disenfranchised themselves. Why? Presumably because they didn’t think they would be well-represented by either of the Presidents. The danger of liberal democracies is to permit and almost encourage the existence of under-classes...When the standard of living can fall during two successive terms of a President and when we see cartels really planning much of the economy, in spite of our nice words about the market, it is not free. Let’s not fool ourselves. If the Eastern Europeans go to a market system they have to realize that the market is a very useful tool for...decision making in the economy but it is not a tool for obtaining more justice, a cleaner environment, or better health services...I don’t think we should fool ourselves into thinking that democracy will guarantee that greater justice will prevail.

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7 The second run of *Cité libre* ran from 1991-2000, edited by Max and Monique Nemni and Pelletier’s daughter, Anne-Marie Bourdhouse. Trudeau was only a rare contributor, but would be interviewed and studied for his legacies, and philosophies.
9 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 10, file 5, Trudeau quoted in InterAction Council, “High Level Meeting on Global Interdependence and National Security,” 9-11 March 1990. This viewpoint was not a necessarily socialist one. Liberal billionaire activist George Soros noted, in a 1997 piece Trudeau held in his files, that capitalist fundamentalism and social Darwinism threatened democracy, liberty, social justice, cooperation, and compassion. He also pointed out that capitalism had failed to live up to its promises in the developing world, leading some countries back towards dictatorship. PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 15, file 11, George Soros, “The Capitalist Threat,” *The Atlantic*, February 1997.
A 1990 speech Trudeau gave in Seoul discussed social revolutions from liberal varieties in the eighteenth century to the collapse of communism in 1989. Rather than gloating over the supposed victory of liberalism, Trudeau seemed to be making the case that both the French Revolution of 1789 and twentieth-century communist revolutions shared a general democratizing thrust:

We have to remind ourselves that the revolution of two centuries ago against the absolutism of the Ancien Régime, made in the name of liberté, égalité, fraternité, was many years in coming to fruition. As a matter of fact, when it was celebrated in July 14 of last year…some of the members of the Economic Seven gathered in Paris to celebrate…the burial of the revolution, rather than its success.

Without a democratic civil society, Trudeau warned—obviously echoing his decades-old analyses of the Quiet Revolution—formal liberal proclamations of rights and freedoms would not transform the outlook of the people. Any liberal political order in Latin America and Soviet Bloc presupposed a democratic civil society supporting it. Modern transitions to capitalism would be painful. Market idolatry would lead to inequality and empower foreign and criminal interests. In essence, Trudeau felt the west had exported capital to the developing world, but not capitalism—by which he meant a free spirit of entrepreneurship. He recalled for his audience that the rise of nineteenth-century capitalism had entailed a body count “not very different from the millions of people destroyed by Stalin in his effort to bring a backward country into the modern ages.” Hopes for a conflict-free transition to a new world order should be tempered. After critiquing the Munroe doctrine and naïve liberal anticommunism, Trudeau ended with this ringing conclusion:

Let us not forget too that the industrial revolution which brought so much misery also brought a man called Karl Marx. Some countries have Fabianism or social democracy and they were able to correct the abuses of the industrial revolution and to introduce a welfare state. But Marxism I think has never been tried…When it was tried by the socialist parties in the early part of the
century—in France, Germany, or Italy—it was crushed by the force of arm[s]...so, if we are not careful the chaos which may come from some of these liberations are...the dictatorships and fascisms which come as a result of their failure...The market system isn’t equipped to distribute justice. For that, we need social contracts, we need distributive mechanisms and we need governments which stand for the poor and the weak against the strong and the rich...Let us beware that this great enthusiasm for the free market not be used to oppress the masses.10

Trudeau would return to these themes in an interview with Ed Broadbent as they discussed the legacy of Marx and the future of socialism. Trudeau asked Broadbent what he felt about Marx. He answered that given the fall of Stalinism, he was hopeful that Marx would be re-examined for his analyses of alienation in capitalist society. Marx “like many theorists...was pretty good at diagnosing problems, and not so good maybe at prescribing solutions.” Trudeau agreed. He argued almost in a regretful tone that Stalinism had made Marxism and even moderate social democracy unpopular. He reasserted his view that this development was even more unfortunate because communism as prescribed by its founding theorists remained untested.11

Trudeau thus expressed some nostalgia for the Marxist dream and many misgivings about an emergent global neoliberalism. He suggested that in the move towards markets, larger businesses be kept public in the national interest, lest oligarchs predominate and quash nascent small businesses. Even in cases in which large corporations were privatized via public stock options, Trudeau raised worries: might not the process entail undemocratic patterns of ownership, as those with capital consolidated their power?12

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11 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 24, file 7. This interview was conducted as part of a series from 26–8 August 1992.
Most interesting of all, however, was a speech in 1990 that encapsulated Trudeau’s unease about the world’s direction, even as many liberals celebrated the ideological victory to end all victories. He would begin by noting rampant western—read U.S.—hypocrisy on everything from economic systems, debt structures, democracy, and sovereignty. Americans were overthrowing democratically-elected governments, killing in the name of capitalistic liberty, holding developing nations to standards they flouted, and boasting about a democratic society half of whose citizens did not bother to vote. Trudeau argued that not only did the NATO obsession with defeating communism lead to such unsavoury acts, but it obscured the reality that the threat to western pre-eminence mainly originated in capitalism’s tendency to sideline issues of social justice. Western leaders had gathered in Paris to celebrate the French Revolution, but at the same time they disregarded its most inspiring messages. After noting again that Stalin’s atrocities recalled those of the Industrial Revolution, Trudeau would speak of how democracy’s achievements depended on liberal and socialist reformers. Free-market idolatry, selfishness, a disregard of planning and cooperation—all these menaced the west much more than any supposed communist enemy:

The excesses wrought in western societies by economic Darwinism and the indiscriminate reliance on “the invisible hand” eventually led to T.H. Green’s liberalism, to Fabianism, and to social democracy, just as some hundred years later the excesses of totalitarian central planning would lead to Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms and to Gorbachev’s perestroika. But of course, the two cycles were out of sync. In the 1980s, the so-called socialist countries were rising against totalitarianism and centrally planned economies, whereas...the capitalist countries were reacting against welfare-statism’s attempt to ensure a fairer distribution of the fruits of progress...Consequently, in both East and West, the accent was on more liberty and less equality and fraternity. In reality, the world of 1989 appeared to be celebrating 1794, the

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Thermidorian triumph\textsuperscript{14} of the Bourgeoisie over the people. It was trying to bury not only the French Revolution of 1789, but also the Russian and Chinese revolutions of 1917 and 1949.

Trudeau noted that while he celebrated nations freeing “themselves from the dead hand of central planning,” he reminded listeners that so-called free markets were rarely free, did not promote justice, did not always offer choice, and were not designed to ensure even partial equality or minimal standards of living. In Trudeau’s view, the market was vital to liberty, but was illiberal on its own. He noted for instance that while the west produced more than ever, “it is estimated that over the past 15 years leisure time for the average American family has fallen by 30 per cent.”\textsuperscript{15}

So, while planned economies had failed, capitalist systems had also failed. They habitually “produced more misery for the underclasses, more health hazards for the community, more drugs and crime for the cities, more carbon dioxide for the greenhouse effect, more depletion of the ozone layer, more destruction of rain forests and genetic varieties.” Distancing himself from Francis Fukuyama, Trudeau proclaimed that the “end of history”—the supposed triumph of liberal democracy—was a mirage:

I strongly disagree that we are witnessing the end of history in the form of the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. Even though I claim to be a liberal in the twentieth-century meaning of the word, it will be obvious from my earlier remarks that I believe that liberal democracies have a long way to go before they can claim to be victorious in many crucial areas, from arms control to controlling carbon-dioxide emissions.

\textsuperscript{14} Thermidorian refers to the counter-revolutionary efforts within the French Revolution, which turned on the radical Robespierre and installed forces more interested in the entrenchment of a capitalist elite. The term has been used in other contexts, with Trotsky calling Stalin’s corruption of the Soviet revolution Thermidorian. Leon Trotsky, \textit{The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and where is it going?} (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1937).

\textsuperscript{15} Trudeau, “On the Eve of the Third Millennium,” in \textit{Against the Current}, 325-40.
Not only was Trudeau unconvinced that illiberal ideals of nationalism and tribalism had been decisively bested, he also argued that the environment would ask of humanity fundamental questions about how economies are structured and ruled:

Market economies have yet to make a choice between: (a) untrammelled economic growth of the kind that has prevailed until now; (b) sustainable growth… or (c) rejection of the entire growth mystique…If our democracies are enlightened enough to go for choice B or C, the art of government will entail a different kind of planning than that currently practiced on the people’s behalf by the international corporations. And it will certainly necessitate a return to a more regulated economy, where the public would have priority over private profits. Thus, true equality of opportunity for all, regardless of the condition of their birth or the size of their bank account, may some day become the goal in civilized societies.

In Trudeau’s view, liberal democracies would not all follow the same individualistic path. Some democracies would strive “to preserve the egalitarian aspirations of collectivism, reconciling the virtues of a free market with the form of democratic planning.”

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But what do all of these statements, fascinating as they are as reflections on neoliberalism, mean for any considered evaluation of Trudeau and his legacy? Trudeau pointed out in these post-career interviews that while he viewed himself as a centrist, he felt that when in doubt, he would take a leftist position:

There was a slogan that some of my French friends and teachers had taught me when I was in France as a student: “Il faut tomber à gauche”; if you’re going to fall, fall on the left. That is my position, and obviously I was viewed as a dangerous left-winger by some of the people, and [as] an archconservative by the people not on the real left but…that was my position…I used to describe it as the radical center, but if there’s a choice, fall left rather than fall right.

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17 PET Fonds, 03, Vol. 23 file 4.
Trudeau saw himself as a man of the centre-left, one who could claim membership in a wider progressive community. He remembered even early into his life that leftism had often offered the morally correct answer to many a problem, even if not always politically viable one. So Trudeau has come to be remembered by his many admirers as a man who allowed liberals to benefit from all the good things in the socialist tradition. (The mirror-image of this idea of him is to be found in many right-wing denunciations). He was, on his own reading, a pragmatic leftist who embraced liberalism because of its functionality and real-world efficacy. Trudeau the socialist grew up and became Trudeau the liberal, a practitioner of the art of the possible. Max Nemni would note, in a 2000 memorial article shortly after Trudeau’s passing, that the former prime minister must be understood as a man of the left, whose quest for pragmatic solutions, and disdain for society-shaping ideological crusades, distanced him from socialism:

Certains politiciens et intellectuels considèrent que la recherche de justice sociale de Trudeau font de lui un rêveur, sinon un “socialiste.” Je pense que cette étiquette réductrice déforme carrément sa pensée. En fait, sa recherche d’une “société juste” n’est que le point d'aboutissement de son modèle philosophique fondé sur les notions de dignité humaine, de liberté individuelle, de citoyenneté et de contrat social. Dans son modèle, ainsi que dans ses applications dans le domaine politique, Trudeau inclut un devoir de tolérance et de solidarité entre tous les citoyens. Trudeau est réformateur plutôt que révolutionnaire. La révolution des vieux partis de gauche, pas plus que la construction abstraite “d’un projet de société” - qui exaltent, par exemple, les partisans du NPD ou du PQ - n’occupent la moindre place dans sa pensée.\(^{18}\)

I too understand Trudeau not as a socialist, but as a liberal, combining a rather traditional nineteenth-century liberal individualism with the reformist liberal impulses of the twentieth century. In Duplessis’ xenophobic, corporatist, but ultimately liberal Quebec,

Trudeau’s only real allies in ushering in a modernized liberalism lay not with Liberals, but with the trade unionists and socialists found in the CTCC, the FUIQ-FTQ, the CCL-CLC, and the CCF-PSD.

As Prime Minister, Trudeau moved to bolster a capitalist system in crisis. He mounted an attack on the historical gains made by his erstwhile socialist and labour allies. He echoed the old corporatist models he had once disparaged. He created a Charter that ignored the implementation of basic social and economic rights designed to care for the poor he often pretended to champion.

These late-in-life reflections of Trudeau are fascinating because they say, in essence, that the liberalism he defended so ardently contained serious aporia that risked undermining the very freedoms it claimed to represent. Neo-liberalism was now overwhelming all the counter-balances Trudeau so respected in his theorizing of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet it is striking how unreflexive Trudeau was in attributing all these problems to forces and people far removed from himself. Many of the tendencies he denounced can be traced back to the Trudeau years themselves. The politician who proclaimed both a Just and a New Society was also one who squelched labour rights, a Guaranteed Annual Income, an egalitarian revision of the tax system, and the inclusion in the Charter of socio-economic rights and freedoms. The world Trudeau maligned in the 1990s was one he had played a substantial role in creating.

Trudeau makes for an excellent dissertation focal point; he is a man of significance and of intellect, one connected to numerous social movements and social changes, and one with a detailed official and personal historical record attached to these various movements and timeframes. But this study was not a biography in the strictest sense, and is modeled,
more than anything, on David Frank’s concept of the social biography, which recognizes the importance and influence of an individual historical figure without shunting aside the times in which that person lived.\textsuperscript{19} In other words, it acknowledges great influences without succumbing to ‘a great man of history’ narrative, a pattern that some Trudeau works slip into from time to time. Indeed, a social biographical approach has allowed us to gather a couple of key themes surrounding Trudeau’s office and life. First, despite his numerous writings, speeches, activities, and a near generation in the leadership of a G7 nation—during much of which he ruled with a majority—Trudeau was not omnipotent; he was but a man working towards goals and causes much bigger than him. This is not to say that he had no effect, but that he was pulled along with other individuals, be they world leaders, trade unionists, or individual citizens. While it is true that he was instrumental in bringing to fruition some of the right-wing realities of our time, those factors were driven by complex and interconnected macroeconomic crises in capitalism that Trudeau had no role in creating, nor ability to stop. As we noted near the end of chapter eight, outside a move towards socialism, Trudeau could have done little differently than attacking social programs, workers, and their unions to jump start capitalist profitability while maintaining the currency. He was caught in a vise he shared with countless other confused late twentieth-century liberals.

Secondly, Trudeau as a social biographical topic is invaluable especially because he offers us a nearly unrivalled focal entry-point for a discussion of actually-existing postwar liberalism and socialism in Canada. He was, for all his self-perception as a logical

\textsuperscript{19} For Frank’s application of social biography, see David Frank, \textit{J.B. McLachlan, A Biography: The Story of a Legendary Labour Leader and the Cape Breton Coal Miners} (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1999).
man removed from political passion, immersed in the debates between these two ideological formations. He often wrote about the differences between socialism and liberalism, but he did not interrogate his own positions critically. Trudeau, as seen in many cases above, saw himself as a man of the left, even though his positions more often aligned with right-wing causes and motivations. His case suggests strongly that, in Canada, liberalism was not and is not a moderated version of social democracy or democratic socialism: it comes from a different ideological family altogether.

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But what does the Trudeauvian legacy mean for Canadians and their political leaders in the here and now? On the positive side, his modernization of the criminal code regarding sexual politics, especially those around abortion and homosexuality, have made Canada a better place. Stephen Harper will take no formal Parliamentary position against gay marriage or a woman’s right to choose, issues that were once central to right-wing liberalism. Trudeau’s Charter, for all its limitations on social and economic rights, has allowed for a progressive interpretation of liberal rights and freedoms.

But on the crucial question of economic democracy and social equality, Trudeau’s legacy is a conservative one. In today’s political climate, all major federal parties embrace capitalism as a force of efficacy and justice. Canadian conservatives utilize with increasing gusto the rhetoric of American-style Republicanism. Trudeau’s own Liberal Party champions a pro-austerity agenda that places Liberals as firmly on the political right as the Conservatives themselves. The nascent Green Party, whatever its appeal among young Canadians, does little beyond greening capitalism, if such is even possible. As was foreshadowed by its handling of the Charter in 1982, the NDP has now become a party,
both in practice and in its constitution, that embraces market dynamics. While Trudeau would rebuff those who declared an end of history in 1990, we are in Canada more entrenched in classical liberal conceptions of social and political reality than any time since the First World War.

Conservative politicians, commentators, and historians might bristle at the thought of being intellectually related to Trudeau, but the man they so demonize was in reality a key ally against the working class, against democratic socialism, against social programs, against unions, and against rising expectations for all but the wealthy. While particular programmes like the NEP drew conservative fire, Trudeau on the whole was one of their own. Likewise, today’s Liberals cannot even claim Trudeau’s legacy of intellectual inquiry, big ideas, and rhetorical social progress. Perhaps the most significant inheritor of Trudeauvian liberalism is the NDP, which despite its slogan of “Liberal, Tory, same old story,” has failed to maintain even a semblance of its old critique of capitalism. Its new constitutional preamble removes prior commitments to social ownership, to non-capitalist forms of production, and even to the abolition of poverty. Given the rightward shift of Canadian politics, a reborn Trudeau would find himself, provided he could handle the party’s position on Quebec, within the ideological boundaries of the NDP.

Trudeau is still a romantic figure for some Canadians who identify themselves as being ‘on the left.’ He might have been a key cog in the path towards our right-wing present, but his irreverence, his frankness, and his ties to socialists at home and abroad

offer a man who did not hide his views. He made people think about big issues, even as he himself often shied away from drawing logical conclusions about them. To revisit his era is to rediscover a time when it was still possible to imagine real-world alternatives to capitalism—alternatives that, for all his originality and irreverence, Trudeau did his utmost to marginalize.
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