



COMMENT

By JOSEPH CLARK

On the night of June 18, Canada became aware of the Social Credit political party. Most Canadians consider the party — and specifically its volatile "co-leader" Real Caouette — as more curious than significant.

It would pay to crack through the curtain of popular amusement at Social Credit, and look seriously at this starting political party.

The sustaining theory of Social Credit is too complex and obscure to permit examination here. In essence, it contends that there is not enough purchasing power, not enough money, circulating in Canada. The theory itself is really immaterial. What matters is the application and the appeal of that theory in the hands of the demagogues.

In practise, Social Credit offers a dividend — a direct cash payment, justified as "extra purchasing power" — to every voter. Its theory is sufficiently obscure and sufficiently plausible that people already confused by terms like "Gross National Product" and "balance of payment" will believe "You don't have to understand Social Credit to vote for it." It provides a simple, one-factor answer to poverty, disappointment and the other problems of men.

The Social Credit store of demagogues is startling. Each invasion into a new territory has been led by a man of extraordinary dominance. Aberhart conquered Alberta by sheer force of his evangelism. Bennett took the back door to British Columbia, but stays there with tricks becoming to a Huey Long. And now Caouette. Three of them in 27 years, a period which saw not one leader of their demagogic excesses in any other political party.

They are entrenched in Alberta and British Columbia and control a good part of the province of Quebec. Caouette won one-third of Quebec's federal seats by espousing the national and the economic interests of the "little people." Lodged in the eye and safe in the irresponsibility of Opposition, he will certainly blend the themes of Quebec nationalism and salvationist economics into a war-song Quebec's other parties will find difficult, perhaps impossible, to counter.

Social Credit has considerable strength in as many provinces as the Liberals now govern, and with at least as many people and square miles as are under Conservative provincial government. They hold dynamic British Columbia and static rural Quebec. They are as strong in the Catholic cathedral as in the pentecostal tabernacles.

They are national, as never before. Their spread from the West is perhaps the most alarming new aspect of Canadian Social Credit today. But it is not surprising.

The birth of Social Credit could perhaps not have happened elsewhere but in the West. The extreme suffering the Depression brought Alberta, the prairie tradition of political non-conformity, and perhaps a Western weakness for salvationist evangelism, created conditions uniquely favourable to the assault of 1935. But, with birth accomplished, there is nothing inherently Western about Social Credit.

In the party's own words, their supporters are people with "nothing to lose." How many Canadian voters are dissatisfied enough that, with eloquent exhortation, they might believe they have "nothing to lose" by voting in untraditional fashion? In how many Maritime constituencies might there be enough such voters to elect an MP? In how many ridings in the nation? It is worth remembering that confident observers in 1935 thought Aberhart would fall in Alberta, in 1952 gave Bennett no more than four seats in B.C., and this year predicted Caouette would elect few more than himself.

Since the establishment of self-government, Canada has been served by politicians of generally high personal principles, and by parties guided by a broad political philosophy and by a genuine concern for the nation's interest. There are some persons of high principal within Social Credit, Manning and Thompson are two notable, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which their principles command the party.

It is not possible to detect a consistent philosophy guiding any Social Credit government. An Alberta government, held as the sober hallmark of Social Credit success, governs only expediently and from day-to-day. This could be ascribed to age. But it is more likely due to the absence of a Social Credit philosophy deserving of that name. The Aberhart men were zealots, drawn to office as missionaries to the heathen. After the war, and oil, zealots gave way to mechanics who run the government as an engine, without concern for the future or regard for the past. In British Columbia, Social Credit is an engine amok. Mr. Bennett is coming to be regarded as one of the most thoroughly expedient men ever to enter Canadian Public Life.

The "National interest" demands of Canadian politicians a capacity to co-operate and compromise. The dominant theme of our growth as a nation has been the welding together of various parts. Social Credit has followed an exactly opposite path. Aberhart fulminated against "Fifty Big Shots" and "the East" and the "International conspiracy;" he generated a class war, and its difficult consequences persist. Bennett was elected to "best Socialism," and he has constantly built up labour unions, the federal government and other "enemies" as straw dummies for "the people" trampled down by the "financiers," and trampled down by "the English."

Social Credit is the least responsible of the three splinter parties to achieve importance in Canadian federal politics, and is currently in a position of rising political strength. It is now strong enough to deserve more than scornful or mere curious attention.

FUNNY MONEY?

By GLAUCON

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I address myself primarily to those on the political right. There is danger in that they may move outside the traditional framework of the two party system. The possibility of either splinter party assuming power is remote. Hence incorporating rightist thinking into the policy of a party that can implement it, shows more promise than the possibilities of success through a rightist party itself.

There is no impression more dear to the Social Creditor than that he is a true free enterpriser. His economic theory calls for a move away from government ownership, away from direction of business and for a return to a fair free enterprise economy; thus to encourage individual effort and initiative.

They are ready with the language of free enterprise and by corollary supposedly opposed to socialism and the welfare state. Unfortunately, this reasoning is far from true — as far in fact as Sacred reasoning is from logic. Encouragement for free enterprise, in its most ideal form, demands low taxes, minimized government intervention, and reduced government spending. But Sacred policy allows for neither lowering of taxes nor reduction of expenditure. They call for social welfare on such a scale as has seldom been imagined. From Focus on July, 1962:

"Away from an order where only those who can sell their labour and their wealth have an income, to one where every citizen is assured a basic dividend of the rich resources of the community."

One can only quake at the thought of the sum they propose to thus spend. Later they speak of a "guaranteed basic income," "a shareholder state" — still more odious thoughts. Equally expensive will be the technical and educational assistance that they promise to other nations, and the confused theory that sufficient credit must be available to somehow aid Canadians out of private debt.

Consider another field of Sacred thought; their appraisal of the present Canadian financial dilemma. For most of the thinking electorate, the only solution to overspending is thrift. Mismanagement demands austerity. We have overspent we have lost world confidence in Canada, and the only solution is the austerity we are in small ways now experiencing. We are incapable of understanding the proposed Sacred "solution", and again we quote:

"It should be obvious that "tight money" and high interest rates are not conducive to reviving business and overcoming unemployment. But the use of the Bank of Canada, through the chartered banks, to stimulate industrial development; progressively reduce the National debt; and enable a reduction in retail prices without loss to the producers will give a vital spark necessary for revival. Such a policy would increase the buying power of all incomes, increase the value of all savings and provide the required stimulus for all business and investments."

Analysing this pseudotechnical garbage one is struck by a number of contradictions.

1. One of Canada's financial problems is the just now decreasing removal of foreign investment from Canada which necessitated in part devaluation of the dollar. Encouragement to invest depends on the percentage return available.

We cannot hope that investments will yield 7 per cent when bank loans are sold at 5 or 4 per cent. And it is just this lowering of the bank rate that Sacred propose.

2. The bank of Canada cannot

PROSE and CON

By PAUL McISAAC

Brian Moore's new novel, *An Answer from Limbo*, is the study of a consuming selfishness. As in his earlier works — *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, *The Feast of Lupercal*, and *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* — Moore has brought his gifts of lacerating honesty and lucid perception to bear on the problems faced by an individual — in this case, Brendan Tierney — in satisfying his obligations not only to his fellow-man but to himself.

Tierney is an Irish writer living in New York. He has long since put aside the novel on which he had been working to take a good-paying job to satisfy his wife, Jane. The news that a friend is to have a novel published startles Brendan into taking up work again on his own novel. The writing of his book becomes the focus of his life. He devotes all of his time to the project masterpiece, sending his wife out to work, and bringing his mother from Ireland to look after the children and the housekeeping. The mother, a Catholic, is shocked to find that her grandchildren are being raised without religious training — in one powerful scene she baptizes them in the bathroom — and cannot get along with Brendan's part-Jewish wife.

Brendan neglects wife, mother, and family in devoting his life to his novel. Jane drifts into a brutal affair with a Greenwich Village bum called Vito Italiano, and, exasperated by Mother Tierney's action, throws the old woman out. Brendan takes not a single step to plead the mother's case, being, by now, virtually obsessed with his manuscript. The mother, alone in an apartment, breaks her hip and dies an agonizingly slow — and descriptively macabre — death, accompanied by a requiem of television inanity. In sacrificing everyone for his novel, Brendan, in the end, has sacrificed himself, and seems to consider the sacrifice worthwhile.

The novel is not as impressive as Moore's earlier books. Moore was absolute master in describing the quiet desperation of Judith Hearne the relentless misfortune of Ginger Coffey, but in *An Answer from Limbo* the control is lacking. Moore frequently slips into a rather declamatory method of delineating motive and character so that his novel often seems a bizarre piece of rhetoric than unified work which seeks to confer some meaning on the lives of its characters. Individual parts have the old Moore touch: The death of Mrs. Tierney is fully as powerful as Judith Hearne's breakdown or Ginger Coffey's downfall, and the brutality of Jane's affair with Vito is quite convincingly harrowing. But the whole is not the sum of its brilliant parts. In his previous novels, Moore's theme was the loss of faith, in God (*The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*), in man (*The Feast of Lupercal*), and in oneself (*The Luck of Ginger Coffey*.) The blind self-interest of an individual, in the tradition of the bastard-in-the-rat-race school of the novel is not Brian Moore's forte.

Theatre Arts Guild has first play

by Jeff Sack

We went last week to see the Theatre Arts Guild production of William Inge's *Dark At The Top Of The Stairs*. We are very interested in the promotion of culture in Halifax and were delighted to see that many others are too.

We were a receptive audience, lend what it has not. More money is obtainable by printing, but this will lower foreign confidence still further. Increased industrial loans are recommended in their platform regardless.

3. How they propose to lower the nation indebtedness is incomprehensible to us. Possibly they will attempt to borrow us out of debt but more likely they will further devalue by printing.

4. To enable a reduction in retail prices without loss to the producers, they must subsidize industry. Either by reduced taxes or grants which mean they must spend more and print more.

5. Such a policy would hardly increase the buying power, but rather so inflate our dollars that quarters would have more base value than monetary and savings would be ruined.

There is nothing funny about "Funny Money". The Sacred would be, under this policy, doing what any government committed to these imbecile pledges would have to do. Print -- Inflation -- Devastate our economy.

in a mood to be regaled, eager to applaud. But, somehow, the show never quite got off the ground. And we wondered why.

Was it the fault of the play itself? Partially woven around a comparison of two women and their attitudes to marriage, the play never once gets beyond banality, never once rises above an all-persuasive crudity.

Housewife A constantly quarrels with her husband, but loves him dearly and defers to him in things both serious and sexual. Housewife B, the domineering sister of Housewife A, reduces her husband to the status of a timid house-pet and wonders why she can derive no pleasure from the sex act.

What is dramatic about that? Very little. True, the husband of Housewife A leaves the house in a huff, and the forlorn wife appeals to her defeminized sister for solace and succour, but, the truant husband returns to the hearth at the end of Act III, begging forgiveness and bearing his pacificatory wife to bed.

There is, in fact, no dramatic development. And the "revelation" of fissures in the domestic fabric is unexciting, and, what is worse, predictable.

The director attempted unsuccessfully to treat the play as a comedy. The confession of inadequacy on the part of Housewife B seems but to add one last touch to the portrait of a buffoon; and the message brought home to Housewife B that she should always defer to her boor of a husband for the voluptuous delight of simian love is a counsel of despair.

Certainly, there are quips, good ones, too.

And mildly interesting social imbroglios. There is even a very promising neophyte actress, who plays the girl next door. But what sort of tragic exhilaration can one derive from a drama, whose climactic moment occurs when a husband slaps his wife on the face (off stage)? And what poignant emotion can one be expected to experience at the sight of two middle-class housewives swapping stories of their erotic experiences?

