

## The C. C. F. — A Third Political Party

By F. R. Scott

It is a happy sign of the development of progressive political thinking in Canada that the only political club at McGill is the Labour Club, and that at the moment when it ventures to produce a paper of its own there has come into existence a new political party professing the ideas which the Club has been proclaiming for the past six years. Formerly the undergraduate who belonged to the Labour Club learnt to face social and political realities, but there was little prospect of a political career for him unless he threw overboard his principles and joined blindly in the Liberal-Conservative merry-go-round. Today the same member, if he is interested in public life, has a chance of entering a party devoted to the welfare of the mass of the people instead of to the "interests", and pledged to set up a democratic co-operative state in Canada in lieu of the present thinly-veiled plutocracy. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation has arrived.

The new party was created at a conference of the delegates of western labour and farmer parties, held at Calgary on August 1st, 1932. At that meeting the organisations represented agreed to a programme for united political action and decided to federate themselves into a single party which all farmer, labour and socialist bodies in Canada would be asked to join. The name Co-operative Commonwealth Federation — usually abbreviated to the initials C.C.F.—was adopted, and Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, M.P., the man who more than any other has given post-war Canada a political philosophy, was chosen as President. An energetic campaign was immediately launched, and after only six months activity the C.C.F. has obtained the affiliation of the United Farmers of Alberta, of Saskatchewan and of Ontario, and the Labour parties in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Toronto and Montreal. In addition, the Party is busy organising what are called "C.C.F. Clubs", to take in individuals who are not members of farmer or labour groups. For the first time in the history of Canada farmers, industrial labourers and the dispossessed and dissatisfied of the white-collar class have united for independent political action on a nation-wide scale. In more Marxian terms, the class-struggle has sharpened.

The explanation of the growth of the C.C.F. movement is to be found in the educative effects of the world-crisis, and in the tradition of third-party action in Canadian politics. The world crisis has convinced many people, including those not normally given to radical thinking, that our present difficulties are due to structural defects in the system rather than to er-

rors of management. It does not require much insight or excessive morality to see that capitalism fails to measure up to reasonable standards either of ethics or of practical efficiency. Examples of its ethical defects are its emphasis on personal ambition and success, almost invariably measured in terms of acquisition of property; its callousness to human welfare; the gross injustice of its inevitable maldistribution of wealth; its preference for the motive of private profit rather than public service. Amongst its practical defects are its enormous wastage of human effort and productive capacity through lack of co-ordination and planning; its tendency to exploit natural resources for quick profit rather than to develop and conserve them; its over-diversion of money into investment, and under-diversion into channels of consumption, with all the consequent economic dislocations; its wave-like progress from boom to depression. Capitalism as a way of life is inferior, and as a system for supplying human needs is unfair and unreliable. It will have to be changed out of all recognition if a decent social order and permanent economic improvement are to be achieved.

To effect this change without violence will involve an intelligent audacity in political action. Where may this be found? In the Conservative or Liberal Parties? The notion is absurd for two reasons: first because the political creeds of both these parties assume the continued existence of the very bases of capitalism which must be eradicated, such as the profit motive and private ownership of industry — both parties being, on any thorough class analysis essentially representative of the same interests in society and only being divided for the purpose of running what is humorously called the "two-party system"; secondly because since both live upon it, hence obey the wealthy companies and groups who will be most seriously affected by the necessary changes, neither is fit to follow a policy of social reconstruction, even if it were desirous of doing so. A different sort of party — different that in philosophy, in personnel, and in industry occurs, a class from which it derives farmer regain- is absolutely essential.

A transition to a new order about it? First The crisis, then, he retrench. His pur- mental things about stores at the present clear. A new poli half as great as dur- be built for the neosperity; he is consum- that existing left of what he does con- ignored? It would beed on the farm itself. they are so strongly last summer I found in agreement on pr been grown at home viously composed on in some cases of

classes, as are the various farmer and labour parties in different parts of Canada. The wiser, indeed the only possible course for the C.C.F. was to unite them on a common programme, allowing them to retain their identity and organisation. This was the policy actually followed at Calgary; and the new party is, as its name implies, a Federation of local groups. It does not destroy what it absorbs, but gives its constituent parts a machinery for effective co-operation. At some future time, as policies harden and the need for discipline grows, it may be desirable to disband the affiliated bodies, but the moment is not yet opportune. The present structure of the C.C.F. incorporates in the party the very considerable, if chequered, tradition of third-party action, which has done so much to introduce a note of realism into Canadian politics in the past 15 years. What is more, it gives the C.C.F. at the outset an extensive organisation; for the machinery of the parts is now at the disposal of the whole party. The rapid growth of the movement would have been impossible if the ground had not been largely prepared by the work which these independent groups had done.

The programme of the party has not yet been worked out in more than general terms. Its fundamental aim, however, is one which definitely marks it as a party of the capitalist system — a license; or establishment in Bennett buggy" by taking five engine and hitching horses to it. The tractor has been discarded because of the high price of gasoline and Dobbin has once more come into his own as chief propellor of farm implements.

The farmer's straitened circumstances have forced him to take a step backward both materially and culturally. He is not at the starvation level, however, nor even near it in most cases; as compared with the urban industrial worker, and particularly with the urban unemployed, he lives well. Wherein, then, does the "agricultural problem" consist? Why these groans of distress and these radical shouts from the West? The answer can be summarised in a word—"debt" is the theme song in the "farmer's chorus".

How did the farmer get in debt? In the first place, unless he obtained his farm in the early homesteading period of free land, he probably purchased it on credit from a land company, oftentimes at an inflated value which would take many years to repay. Or he may have borrowed money from a mortgage company in order to make improvements on the farm, giving the farm itself as security. Then along came

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