

A NOTE ON ROD PREECE AND RED TORIES

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Although I am naturally delighted to see my name linked so closely with those of George Grant and Gad Horowitz, both modesty and honesty (not to mention prudence) require me to request that my case be tried separately. Perhaps it might be better to hang together rather than hang separately, but since it was central to the argument in *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* that Colin Campbell and I had departed significantly from the Horowitz thesis, I find it strange and embarrassing to have Gad Horowitz's brilliant insights attributed to me.

What novelty there is in Professor Preece's article, lies in the rediscovery of old misunderstandings and old methods. Ten years ago, few would have even considered it a striking observation that there were no ideological differences between Liberals and Progressive Conservatives. This was an article of faith, and the brokerage theory reigned supreme. Nor indeed, would anyone find it controversial, either a decade ago or indeed even today, to be told, as Professor Preece tells us at such length in his paper, that all leading English political figures of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries accepted the achievements of the Glorious Revolution and the Revolution Settlement. England had by universal account in the eighteenth century the finest system of government in the world, and Locke was the acknowledged theorist of the regime. I suspect that it is only certain Americans who would be surprised to discover that Edmund Burke had been associated throughout most of his career with the Marquess of Rockingham and the Duke of Portland in the Whig interest, although the meaning that can be given to these shifting coalitions of parliamentary groups is far from clear.

Now I am far from suggesting that simply because Professor Preece has reaffirmed an older conventional wisdom we should not take his arguments seriously. Novelty, as Aristotle counsels us, is more likely a sign of error than truth in political matters; and on a number of important issues Professor Preece's argument is very close indeed to the one which we advanced, although his enthusiasm for lumping us together with Grant and Horowitz and attacking us as a group appears to prevent him from seeing these similarities.

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Perhaps Colin Campbell and I should have indicated more explicitly that we had broken from Horowitz's argument in several important ways, although our consciousness of the great debt we owed him would have remained none the less. Horowitz had taken a great step in the understanding of the Canadian political community when he modified the Hartz-McRae thesis. McRae had argued that Canada was a liberal fragment, in essence similar to the United States, but with minor (and regrettable) imperfections. Horowitz saw that McRae's imperfections were instead the manifestations of a significant, but minor, tory strain that was to prove of considerable importance in explaining subsequent Canadian ideological development. George Grant had noted the same phenomenon, and he commented with some pride that there had been Canadians whose memories extended to a remembrance of a past before the age of progress.

What kind of people, then, were these tories? Were they romantic Jacobites, toasting the king over the water? Or could there instead have been a covert sub-culture of Filmerian patriarchalists who had kept alive in the oral culture the view that the king ruled over his subjects because God had given an absolute dominion over Adam? Not a bit of it! We summarized and agreed with Horowitz as follows: "Horowitz's point is that although the people in these groups [i.e. United Empire Loyalists and later nineteenth century British immigrants] were by no means unalloyed Tories, they were sufficiently unliberal to produce a different political culture." (p. 23)¹ Can we be at all sure that the Yorkshire Methodists who emigrated to my area of New Brunswick brought Locke and Blackstone with them as cornerstones of a decent farmer's library? No one I know, except Professor Preece, has ever suggested that the Whig triumph was total, even in the United Kingdom. Were Swift, Blake or Coleridge Whigs? Was David Hume tarred with being a Whig historian? But the poets and historians become political romantics for Professor Preece; Burke was the conservative and Burke was a Whig.

This argument, if at all clear, would confound only those who believed Burke to be the authentic source of modern philosophical conservatism, as do some of the American writers whom Professor Preece cites. For those of us whose interest lies in the development of Canadian Conservatism, it is completely beside the point. What fascinated us was that there was an apparently significant difference between Canadian and American Conservatism (and British, for that matter) and we wanted to understand how it could have arisen. Since it is in principle impossible to do retroactive attitudinal surveys in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, we are left with the proposition that must necessarily stand at the level of a supposition, that immigrants to British North America carried with them an ideological mix different from those who settled in the American Colonies.

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It is an inference of the Hartzian thesis about fragment societies that Horowitz picked up, following McRae's lead, that fragments were by definition not miniature replicas of the original society. Consequently different fragment societies could manifest the elements of the original society in different ways. It was Hartz's own curious and unnecessary assumption that fragment societies tended to be, or needed to be, pure. Horowitz, however, went on to accept the fragment theory notion of congealment, that is the assumption that fragment societies reach a point at which they become relatively stable and then act to assimilate new immigrants to the dominant ideology.

We explicitly rejected the necessity of congealment.⁽²⁰⁾ In contrast we presented throughout our work a picture of Canadian ideological development which was analogous to the dynamic model Hartz himself had sketched with reference to Europe. In addition we further modified the Hartzian analysis by taking seriously George Grant's argument that liberalism had, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, become increasingly ascendant. Although we credited Horowitz with a major insight, we thought that he had been too much influenced by the fragment model. The Canada we saw had manifested a European pattern of development, although with a different mix of toryism and liberalism, the former being weaker and the latter stronger than in Europe.

The antithesis between these two ideologies ought, on the Hartzian analysis, to have been able in its own right to generate an indigenous socialism; and we believe that it was capable of doing so. The British immigrants in the late nineteenth century, who had come from a society in which the pace of ideological development had moved more quickly, found that socialist ideals were not totally alien in the new land, especially those that did not rely too heavily upon a Marxist inspiration. This interaction and development, which we called the ideological conversation, never stopped, although liberalism frequently hogged the stage and spoke rather more loudly and more often than politeness might have allowed.

If Professor Preece still finds the coherence of this argument lacking, I would like to suggest that there was another important source of tory-feudal ideals which he (and Horowitz) surprisingly overlook, namely the ideological character of the French Canadian inheritance. French Canada spun off at a time when feudal ideas were relatively stronger in Europe than they were in the eighteenth century, and it would have been strange if the immigrants' stock of feudal notions were not more deeply rooted. The military success of English arms in eighteenth century Canada injected an increasingly potent liberal virus into the French Canadian body politic, which subsequent Anglo-Scottish traders reinforced. Confederation slowed the speed of the penetration, but it also decreased the possibility that French Canada would

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survive as an isolated feudal fragment. The social democratic orientation of the Parti Québécois is a further manifestation of the ideological outcome which the Hartzian thesis of dynamic development would lead us to anticipate.

The Liberal-Conservative Party which Macdonald and Cartier created had its roots in both English and French Canada, and probably drew its original tory-feudal inspiration more from the *bleus* than from Canada West. As we noted with reference to Durham's *Report*: . . . there has long been in Canada an indigenous conservative tradition with strong local roots, more pervasive in French Canada than English Canada, although at the time Durham wrote it was still dominant in English Canada through the political control of the Family Compact. (79) We also drew attention to the fact that the very name of the party indicated that even in its origins it was a coalition rather than a synthesis of ideologies. (eg. 83-84)

None of this amounts to an argument that the Canadian Conservative Party was *ever*, even in its origins, a purely tory party. It was not; and I doubt that any serious scholar, or politician, ever asserted that it was. Macdonald himself explicitly repudiated the idea (80) and it would be an audacious historian of Canadian Conservatism who would take issue with such an authority. What we did suggest, and the balance of evidence still strongly favours this position, is that there were in the original elements out of which Canadian Conservatism was created sufficiently important tory-feudal elements to generate indigenous and continuing ideological development in antithesis to the predominating liberalism both without and within the Conservative Party.

Having misunderstood our argument so far, Professor Preece thinks that he can drive home the victory with a devastating *reductio ad absurdum*:

If early Conservative philosophy was in some measure and manner "corporate-organic-collectivist" then we are forced to the conclusion that modern Conservatives deny their own heritage; they must be seen to be repudiating their own history . . . If Christian and Campbell's view is correct we are constrained to accept the improbable thesis not only that both parties have renounced their own past but that each has taken as its own the position formerly held by the other. (Preece 15-16)

Had we been looking for one enduring essentialist description of Canadian Conservatism, of the kind that Professor Preece seems to seek, we

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might indeed have been embarrassed by this apparent absurdity. Fortunately for us, we treated the historical past as the record of how thinking men had responded to their concrete circumstances. Had Professor Preece read our treatment of Canadian Conservatism with any reasonable care, he could not have failed to notice that we noted explicitly the alteration he finds so ludicrous. "Under Drew, the party continued on in the new paths charted by Bracken, repudiating many of the historic principles which had comprised Canadian Conservatism before that time." (99) Professor Preece might regret the force of the spell worked on Canadian Conservatives by the little grey wizard of the age, Mackenzie King, but it happened; and I think that we fairly chronicle its progress.

As an argument against our analysis we see Arthur Meighen cited as a Conservative leader who expressed a strong individualist bent. Were we then unaware of this aspect of Meighen's political thought? Clearly not. Instead we cite Meighen as an important figure in effecting this change, and, incidentally, the reasons we give mark a further modification of Horowitz's argument:

On the whole Horowitz treats the social and ideological composition of Canada as if it were relatively uniform. Clearly this is not the case. In the Maritimes, the liberal fragments were much weaker, and a more tory attitude was implanted by the predominately loyalist settlement. The settlement in the West was much later and of a much more strongly liberal bent . . . Meighen reflected this disposition. (89)

Although we cite Davie Fulton, John Diefenbaker and Robert Stanfield as leading Conservatives who found much to admire in their party's tory heritage, we were and are in pains to emphasize that Canadian Conservatism has always consisted of a usually inharmonious mix of ideologies. We summed up Robert Stanfield's predicament along with these lines:

Stanfield is in the quandry that all Conservative leaders since Macdonald have faced. Pure toryism commands neither majority support in the country, nor even within the party as Fulton's unsuccessful attempts at the leadership have shown . . . Yet to transform the Conservative Party into a liberal one is to make it redundant in a

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political setting which already has a party which espouses a relatively pure form of liberalism. (111)

“Red tory” was, in Horowitz’s original exposition, a useful description because its paradoxical character was initially striking. It was always an implausible and misleading term. When we sketched the lineaments of ideologies we suggested that toryism’s central values were “collectivism, and hierarchy or privilege” and that socialism shared collectivism with toryism but sought “to replace privilege by equality”. (26) A red tory, therefore, would have to believe in collectivism, and simultaneously, or in quick succession, in privilege and equality. I do not believe that this intellectual conjuring trick was attempted by many. Most Canadian Conservatives found that business liberalism coincided comfortably enough with a defence of privilege, and their collectivism could take the satisfactorily modest form of a faith in the coherence of the social order.

It is, however, clear that Horowitz took the red tory concept more seriously than I ever could; and we had occasion to take substantial exception to part of Horowitz’s analysis. In a discussion of Canadian Conservatism in the 1930’s we wrote: “It is impossible in the light of this analysis to agree with Horowitz that Bennett was a ‘red tory’, a man who might prefer the CCF-NDP to the Liberals. In no way can we accept the argument that the Bennett New Deal was, as Horowitz claims, a manifestation of ‘leftism’ derived from tory democracy.” (94)

I have not belaboured these points to establish a priority of discovery, though I do find it annoying to see my position systematically confused with that of Horowitz, and to find myself attacked for not making points which I did in fact make unambiguously and at some length. Had Professor Preece merely wanted to impugn the limited usefulness of the term ‘red tory’, I would have no objection, although I still would have thought it curious to see myself held up as a proponent of the term.

But Professor Preece wants to go further. He wants to deny that there was *ever* any significant tory element in Canadian Conservatism, that there “are just Lockes, Hobbes, and Burkes and the occasional Charles James Fox.” (Preece, 23) Would perhaps that there were, for these were all great men, although none was exactly a model of political success. It is perhaps refreshing, if not very helpful, to see Canadian Conservatism described as other than a choice between Senators Goldwater, Percy and Javits. However too much is ignored and too many questions are left unanswered if we turn our backs on our own past, and seek enlightenment in the history of other political traditions. I had hoped that if our book were to have any effect it would turn attention away from the attempt to find the answers to Cana-

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dian questions elsewhere than in Canada. It had been the regrettable tendency in the past for writers on Canadian ideologies to turn first to European or American ideologies with similar names, and then assume that the Canadian counterparts were copies which the lack of imagination of Canadian politicians, combined with their notorious penchant for compromise, had corrupted.

In *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* we treated Canadian ideologies as ideas which had European origins, but which became securely rooted in the British North American political tradition. As a consequence they had acquired a history which could be written and an identity which could be explored through their history. We were not very interested in affinities, which are relatively uninteresting phenomena in the history of ideas. On the other hand, we were interested, where relevant, in influences, such as how Roosevelt's New Deal had been mediated to Bennett through Herridge. As historians and philosophers, these were our legitimate concerns.

We also thought it unprofitable to set ourselves up as judges of doctrinal purity and we were content to accept the opinion of the Liberal-Conservative Party, or the Union Government or the Progressive Conservative Party that its leaders and senior party spokesmen represented something called Canadian Conservatism upon which they, by their position, were singularly qualified to pronounce. Canadian Conservatism is as Canadian Conservatism says. Indeed, in Canada, the Whig is a myth, and a not very persuasive one at that.

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Notes

1. Page references are to W. Christian and C. Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada*, (Scarborough: 1974). Those to Preece's original article [*Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring, Summer 1977).] are indicated Preece.