

The Catholic Church and the CCF

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Some twenty years ago I had the privilege of playing a part in the decision of the Canadian Bishops to allow to their diocesans the same freedom to vote for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation as for any other regular Canadian political party. The thoughts, feelings, and actions of that time are beginning to take their place in history. In order that these events may be seen in true perspective, I propose to tell the story insofar as I had direct knowledge of it. I have deposited in the Redpath Library at McGill all the documents from which I quote.

When the CCF was founded in 1932, the reaction of Canada's Catholics was mixed.

The principles of the Church lead to a strong criticism of the existing social structure and to an urgent desire to bring about remedies and improvements. During the Depression the need for reforms was particularly evident. The *raison d'être* of the CCF was reform, and, although it started from premises other than the Catholic, the new Party produced a programme containing practical proposals many of which harmonized with or could be made to harmonize with Christian principles.

As the late Henri Bourassa said in the House of Commons on the 30th of January, 1934, "When you make use of the Pope's encyclical to denounce the CCF, why do you not read that part of it which denounces the system that has been built up, maintained, and protected by the two great historic parties since confederation? If you do, you will find in the Pope's encyclical as much against our social and economic system as there is against communism and socialism. Let us admit that there is much good in the programme of the CCF ..."

On the other hand the CCF proclaimed itself to be "socialist," its programme could be read as evincing a materialistic philosophy, and there was some doubt in its early days as to whether or not it could free itself from the Communists who were attempting to penetrate it. Certain speeches of CCF adherents, particularly in the West, gave weight to these fears.

All this was complicated by two factors. The first was that the Canadian economy was still profoundly depressed, and many people feared for the very foundations of social life as they had known it. The second was that the French-Canadian mind has always tended to reason more formally and to use words more carefully than the English-Canadian mind. The English mentality is not bothered by seeming contradictions such as combining democracy and monarchy, by using the same word to connote shifting or

even altered conceptions, or by feeling its way intuitively and pragmatically to a programme and then seeking to provide a rational basis for it afterwards. Thus an English-speaking party which calls itself “socialist” does not necessarily adhere to a strictly socialist philosophy. This method of behaviour is not familiar to the French.

ARCHBISHOP GAUTHIER’S PASTORAL LETTER

Matters came to a head early in 1934 when the late Archbishop Gauthier issued a pastoral letter in which he condemned the programme of the CCF on the triple grounds that it denied man’s fundamental right to possess private property, incited to class war, and was inevitably materialistic in philosophy. Much the same views were subsequently expressed by the late Cardinal Villeneuve in a speech before the Montreal Canadian Club. Other Bishops also were critical of the new Party.

Strictly speaking, Archbishop Gauthier’s letter applied only to his diocesans, and, still more strictly speaking, it has been described as a “mise en garde” rather than an outright order. But Catholics are quite properly accustomed to following the counsels of their Bishops without minute scrutiny as to the extent to which they are bound in conscience to do so. From that day on, Catholics in the rest of Canada were on the defensive if they supported the CCF, while Catholics in the Archdiocese of Montreal found it almost impossible to do so. On February 26, 1934, for example, the late Joseph Wall, a Montreal Catholic who was a well-known labour leader and member of the CCF, wrote to Msgr. Gauthier and asked whether the Pastoral Letter meant that it was forbidden for Montreal Catholics:

1. To be workers for the CCF Party?
2. To be candidates?
3. To vote for CCF candidates?

Mr. Wall also asked whether the Archbishop’s guidance was “absolute” or “advisory.” He asked finally what should be the attitudes of Montreal Catholics who moved to other dioceses? Archbishop Gauthier’s reply was brief. His Grace merely referred Mr. Wall once again to his pastoral letter, and added “A Catholic in your position and of your calibre knows very well wherein his duty lies.”

So matters rested for quite a few years. Catholics were uneasy in their minds about the CCF, and it was generally believed among them that the Party had been condemned by the Church. This attitude was particularly prevalent among French-speaking Canadians. Meanwhile, despite the fact that it had little support from Catholics, the CCF had managed to fight back the Communist attempt to take it over and had shown considerable evidence

that the majority of its members were opposed to Communism.

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

Although I had never been a supporter of the CCF, this situation left me feeling profoundly uneasy both as a Catholic and as a Canadian. It is an exceedingly grave matter for the Church to condemn a political party, particularly in our largely anglo-saxon world. Such condemnations often run a grave risk of doing more harm than good. They expose the Church to criticism and misunderstanding, and, by arousing hostility and depriving the condemned organization of Catholic influence, they sometimes tend to produce the result they warn against.

For some time my feeling had been that the existing situation gave the Church the worst of both worlds. She was suffering all the hostility that a clear and binding condemnation would have cost her, without achieving the good that might have been expected had such a condemnation been found necessary and issued. In justice to the CCF, and for the sake of the Church herself, I felt that the situation should be clarified and made uniform throughout the Country. Either the CCF merited the grave step of condemnation or it did not. In either case both party members and church members had a right to know where they stood.

My feeling came to a head in 1942 when a CCF member defeated the Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen in his attempt to re-enter the House of Commons, and when tests of public opinion showed greater support for the CCF than for the Conservative Party. Clearly it was time for the Church to take a stand one way or the other on this important point. On learning that the Archbishop of Toronto, Msgr. (now Cardinal) McGuigan, was thinking along the same lines, and that he was considering appointing a committee in his own diocese to study the question, I wrote to the late Dr. Egbert Munzer, then informal political adviser to His Grace, to say that I thought such a committee should be formed in Montreal since it was in that City that the original "condemnation" had been launched. Dr. Munzer informed me that Archbishop McGuigan had received my suggestion favourably, and it was at that point that – on Oct. 26, 1942 – I wrote my first letter on this subject to my own Archbishop, Msgr. Joseph Charbonneau, who had succeeded to the See on the death of Msgr. Gauthier.

In this first letter I told Archbishop Charbonneau that a quick survey of the programme and publications of the Party had led me to the following conclusions:

1. That the *practical proposals* of the CCF Party as they now stand are generally acceptable to Catholics. Many of them, indeed, are more consistent with Catholic teaching than the policies of the traditional

parties. Such reservations as a Catholic might wish to make concern degree rather than principle, e.g. the degree to which socialization of services should be carried.

2. That the *philosophy*, generally unformulated, which has led to these practical policies is fundamentally materialistic and humanitarian.

3. That the *criticisms formulated* in Msgr. Gauthier's Pastoral Letter are no longer wholly applicable.

I then added the comment that we need not be dismayed by the conclusion that the underlying and generally unrealized philosophy of the CCF Party is "fundamentally humanitarian and materialistic," since this "is a criticism which could be made equally forcefully of all existing major political parties."

I then continued by saying: "Today the 'socialist' CCF Party is perhaps even capable of being made our strongest defense against Communism. For nothing more strongly fosters Communism than intransigent and reactionary opposition to it. Status quo is no alternative to messianic promises. We can, I suggest, best avert Communism by ending the abuses and scandals which are its breeding ground, and by offering our youth, our intellectuals, and our working-men, all and more of those things in the Communist programme which are good. If we do not, many of our youth, intellectuals and workers will join subversive movements through a mistaken but understandable feeling of 'faute de mieux'.

"In logic, Msgr. Gauthier's deductions and conclusions may be inescapable. But men are seldom perfectly logical. Few, if any, of the CCF leaders are philosophers. Their assumptions are implicit not explicit: they are, I believe, susceptible of modification. There have been great and unpredictable changes in political and economic practice since the date of Msgr. Gauthier's letter. Doctrinaire socialism, formerly rampant among CCF leaders, has to some extent been abated by experience. The dangers of totalitarianism, whether of the right or the left, have become more evident. The exigencies of war have served to discredit both laissez-faire liberalism and the omnipotent state. New concepts and new practices are forming. The question which poses itself is whether or not the Church can reconcile to itself and harness the forces of the future. In practice, and political practice is always pragmatic, I do not think we need fear the CCF Party. We do not need to fear the Party, that is to say, unless we drive it away from us and into opposition to us."

My conclusion was that "it is opportune, and indeed urgently necessary, to seek the appointment of a committee of experts to reconsider the programme and principles of the CCF Party from the point of view of faith and morals. It is this proposal which I respectfully suggest to Your Grace."

Archbishop Charbonneau thereupon asked a few of us to establish such a committee. I was the only English-speaking member. The first meeting

quickly reached an impasse when it became apparent that at least some of those present were convinced that the spirit and programme of the CCF was incompatible with French-Canadian “survivance.” To my mind such an observation was irrelevant, since we had been called together to consider the compatibility of the Party with Catholic doctrine not with cultural survival. It was evident that the others would not admit this distinction except very theoretically.

It later developed that these men knew of the plans then under way to launch the Bloc Populaire, and that they were not interested in anything else. Probably they felt that for the hierarchy to “clear” the CCF at that time would merely injure the chances of the new party on which they were building such hopes.

In any event the committee met a second time without me, and dissolved itself in order that it might be reconstituted as the nucleus of an Institute for Social and Economic Research. This might have been a laudable work, but it obviously had nothing to do with the purpose for which our committee had been called into being by the Archbishop.

When these developments became clear to me, and after I had discussed them with the proposed secretary of the new Institute, I wrote a second letter to Archbishop Charbonneau on Sept. 18, 1943.

The substance of this second letter is as follows:

The preservation of “the French Canadian way of life” is obviously a matter of great importance. To the Canadian of French descent, it is a question of retaining his personality, of retaining his ability to develop according to his traditional character. To the Catholic, it is a question of safeguarding a culture deeply rooted in Christianity and possessing great potentialities for “restoring all things”. , To all Canadians, it is a question of preserving that rich and fruitful concept of “unity in diversity” which could and should make of our Country an exemplar to a world tormented by excessive racism, nationalism, and “social conformism.”

But I am strongly of the opinion that this question lies in the plane of politics and not in the sphere of faith and morals. If a man thought as the Montreal Committee thinks, then he would have good reason to vote against the CCF Party and to oppose it by all legitimate political means. But I do not see that he would have any right to expect the Church as such to enter the battle on his behalf. In short, this opinion of the Montreal committee, although valuable, seems to me to be both contingent and temporal.

In an endeavour to understand how the committee had arrived at a conclusion so seemingly irrelevant, I consulted a competent observer. To him I put it that one must distinguish between Catholicism and national ways of life, and that the French way of life – although a matter of grave importance – was not a question of faith and morals. To this he replied that one must so distinguish, certainly, but in theory and not in practice. He said that in actual practice Catholicism and the French Canadian way of

life were now so intertwined that it was no longer possible to treat them separately.

Here we have an opinion of primary importance and of incalculable import. Clearly there is much truth in what this man said. Yet I suggest that it is too subjective a motive to govern the issuance of episcopal directives on matters of national importance, particularly in a country of diversified races, tongues, and creeds. It is clear that a spiritual director must consider carefully the inner dispositions of a penitent and be guided by subjective as well as objective considerations. It is clear, also, that a Bishop of a homogeneous diocese must consider subjective values before issuing advice on such matters as occasions of sin. But it is one thing to say that something is wrong for an individual, and another thing to say that it is wrong in itself.

In any event, even if one could visualize a Canadian political party which would be an occasion of heresy for one group and not for another, there would still remain the weighty question of expediency. To issue local directives on a national matter, to give the appearance that Catholics are divided or that Catholicism varies as one crosses boundaries, to base important policy on the shifting sands of subjectivism instead of on the immutable rock of objective principle, would be to adopt a course possibly justified by events but – I submit – most dangerous in its potentialities. The statement made by Msgr. Gauthier in 1934 was based on doctrinal considerations and I suggest that no lesser considerations should guide those who are re-studying the subject.

Totalitarian Tendencies. The second opinion reached by the committee is that a danger exists that the policies of the CCF tend toward loss of liberty and possible totalitarianism. Members of the CCF would be horrified at such a thought, but I nevertheless agree with the verdict of the committee. I would even go much farther, and say that the ultimate, logical, political, alternatives before the world are Christianity or totalitarianism. But is this fundamental world-wide danger a reason by itself to ban a particular political party, or to warn against it, or to leave it under a cloud? If we condemn on this ground, then to be consistent we should condemn widely and we should form a “Catholic” party of our own. There is a natural polarity in human nature by which if we form a “Catholic” party we will be faced by an anti-Catholic party. The law of action and reaction applies to social as well as to physical bodies. If, for fear of totalitarian tendencies, we separate ourselves from existing parties, we push those parties toward that which we fear. Such a course would exaggerate differences, promote extremes, intensify antipathies, and tend to bring about exactly what we seek to avoid. Surely, after the record elsewhere, we do not want to form a “Catholic” political party, or to become identified with the political forces of the “Right.”

Our Apostolic Responsibility. The future, according to Jacques Maritain, will bring “pluralist” states. There will be no more so-called “Catholic” countries. If that be true, then is not our task to work as a leaven, to permeate, to influence, rather than to segregate ourselves? Should we not be apostolic rather than encapsulated? By all means let us

have Catholic institutions for “Social and Economic Research.”

In the pluralist state they will be more than ever necessary. But from such power-houses of truth and knowledge we should send streams to all men of good will, rather than harness the universal Faith to a unique political apparatus.

We have been told much of the dangers of co-operation with non-Catholics even for temporal purposes. But there is also a danger in segregation, for it fosters what psychologists call the “we-they” attitude. This is an attribute which sees the world in terms of “we” who are altogether right and justified at all times, and “they” who are evil, nasty, and our enemies. This attitude is uncharitable. It is a sign of immaturity and fear of responsibility. In truth, as Dostoevsky said, “all are responsible for all.” If our brothers go astray, are we not to blame? We should preach and exemplify the truth to all men, and, if others err, we should not so much berate their error as expiate it. We cannot wash our hands of responsibility for the views and destiny of 7,000,000 fellow Canadians.

Political Justice. To descend now from the general to the particular, may I draw Your Grace’s attention to item (b) of the conclusions reached by the committee : i.e. that the CCF, *like the other parties*, is heading toward totalitarianism. This overlooks the fact that the CCF, *unlike the other parties*, is popularly supposed to be viewed with grave suspicion by the Church. This situation (granting item “b”) is palpably unjust. If then, since then, all three parties are equally tainted, surely all should be treated alike. Otherwise, apart from the injustice, the Church will appear to be meddling in politics. [...]

Under these circumstances, I can do no more than re-iterate the recommendations of my first report on this subject: namely, that I believe conditions to have changed materially since the *mise-en-garde* issued by Msgr. Gauthier : that I think it is extremely dangerous, and possibly unjust, to leave the CCF Party under a cloud: and therefore that I respectfully recommend that the Party should – if at all possible – be declared, or clearly shown, to be indifferent from the point of view of faith and morals.

RENEWED EFFORTS

After the failure of the Montreal Committee, things went ahead almost of their own momentum. I was at this time corresponding with quite a few people about the CCF. Among them were the late Dr. Percy Robert of the Catholic University at Washington who was then on leave of absence to work for the Federal Government as liaison with the Province of Quebec; Dr. Munzer; and the late Henry Somerville who was my opposite number in Toronto being an Editor of “The Canadian Register” and the confidential servant and adviser of Archbishop McGuigan. It became clear from this correspondence that quite a few of the Bishops, especially in the Prairies, felt that the CCF was no worse than the older parties and should be placed on a

footing of equality with them. The question was coming to a head despite the failure of the Montreal committee.

Archbishop Charbonneau had been impressed by what he had read of the CCF leader, Mr. M. J. Coldwell. Shortly after he had received my second letter on the subject, the Archbishop asked me to arrange a meeting between himself and Mr. Coldwell. This took place at my house, when the Archbishop, Mr. Coldwell, and Professor Scott lunched with me. Several hours were spent in amicable discussion. No notes were kept as the discussion was informal, but on both sides the talk was frank and friendly. No major point of disagreement was found. It seemed clear that, insofar as the Leader and the National Chairman of the Party were concerned, Catholic participation in the CCF would be welcomed and there was nothing fundamentally irreconcilable in the two points of view.

A plenary meeting of the Bishops of Canada was scheduled to be held at Quebec in October of that year, and it was hoped that a declaration could be passed at that time establishing that the CCF was no longer under suspicion, but was to be regarded as on the same footing as the other parties.

It was generally known at this time that such opposition as there was among the Bishops to clearing the CCF was largely in the Province of Quebec. To some members of the hierarchy, and to the late Cardinal Villeneuve in particular, the word “socialist” was a great difficulty. Their reasoning went as follows:

Socialism is condemned by the Church.
The CCF admits that it is socialist.
Therefore the CCF is condemned by the Church.

This was the same semantic difficulty that had arisen earlier when the Church had had to deal with the Liberal Party and Laurier. After all Liberalism is condemned by the Church too, and there were not wanting Bishops in the 1880's to apply that condemnation to the party bearing the hated name. Laurier's reply was that what had been condemned was the continental philosophy known as “Liberalism,” and not the practical policy of a fundamentally anglo-saxon party known by the same name. He was able to carry his point despite the fact that his party did contain slight elements of true, philosophic Liberalism, and despite the fact that he had made at least one public declaration which I myself would have no hesitation in calling “Liberal” in the condemned sense. It was a happy day for Canada and the Church that Laurier succeeded, and that his interpretation of events was supported by Rome. Had he failed, had the Liberal Party been condemned, the condemning Bishops would have produced by reaction the very thing they feared, namely a convinced and militant anti-clerical even antiCatholic, political party. The result would have been to divide the country, to plunge

the Church into politics, and to destroy the proper functioning of our party system.

It came to be the conviction of many of us that a parallel situation existed with regard to the CCF, and we hoped with all our hearts that the Bishops would see fit to declare the CCF Party to be on the same footing as the others, that is to say “indifferent” from the point of view of faith and morals. We did not seek approval for the Party, which would have been improper. We did not act for political motives, we acted as Catholics seeking the welfare of our Church and our country.

DECLARATION OF BISHOPS

The Plenary Meeting was held on the 13th of October. Immediately after his return to Montreal, Archbishop Charbonneau sent for me and showed me the draft of a statement which he hoped to have released in the name of the Bishops as a whole. He told me that after considerable discussion the Bishops had agreed to declare the CCF to be “indifferent,” and that they had named a sub-committee to prepare and release a declaration to that effect. As I remember, the members of this subcommittee were the Archbishops of Montreal and Toronto, and Bishop Carroll of Calgary.

The draft which Archbishop Charbonneau showed me was substantially the same as the subsequent Declaration. The clauses of this Declaration as published were:

1. The Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic Church in Canada at a Plenary Meeting in Quebec on October 13, 1943, recorded their appeal to the faithful, and to all in authority to promote the urgently needed social and economic reforms such as were advocated in the Joint Pastoral Letter of the Hierarchy of May 31, 1942, and in previous and subsequent ecclesiastical letters covering the same subject.
2. The Bishops have pleasure in commending the admirable examples of Social Action given by many Catholic organizations throughout Canada, notably the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, N.S., and the “Semaines Sociales du Canada” with its recent manifesto “For a better Order”; and also the various co-operative enterprises spreading throughout the country.
3. As the authorized spiritual advisers of the Catholic people the Bishops declare that the faithful are free to support any political party upholding the basic Christian traditions of Canada, and favoring needed reforms in the social and economic order which are demanded with such urgency in pontifical documents.
4. The Bishops reiterate their condemnation of the doctrines of Communism, under whatever name may be used to mislead the good faith of the people, since Communism is that form of Revolutionary Socialism which is materialistic in its philosophy, which denies the right of private

property, and by concentrating all economic as well as political power in the State, sets up a system of Totalitarianism destructive of liberty and degrading to the human person.

My first reaction to this statement was one of disappointment because it did not name the CCF specifically. I expressed my opinion to the Archbishop, saying that the CCF had been condemned by name but that it had not been cleared by name. To this His Grace replied that there could be no doubt of the intention of the Bishops to apply the declaration particularly to the CCF, that the condemnation had only been by one Bishop, but that the clearance was by all, and that the Bishops hesitated to name the CCF lest their views be interpreted as giving not just a clearance but approval.

I did not share the Archbishop's confidence that the Declaration could not be misunderstood, and I asked him to permit us to release it through the semi-official Catholic newspaper "The Canadian Register" of which Mr. Somerville and I were editors, so that we could accompany the text by a clear commentary. His Eminence, Cardinal Villeneuve had originally thought of releasing the Declaration himself; but on October 14th I wrote to M. Eugene L'Heureux, Editor of "L'Action Catholique" in Quebec, saying that "the official statement must of necessity refrain from naming parties. Consequently it will never be so clear but that interested parties will be able to interpret it for their own purposes. If it were released in two "officieux" Catholic papers such as ours, we could accompany it with editorial comment which would make, explicit what is now implicit in the draft, namely, that the CCF has been given a "green light." I went on to say "If the scheme is pleasing to you, may I suggest that you persuade His Eminence of its value. We may then proceed to arrange it."

This scheme was adopted. To these two papers I succeeded in adding "Le Devoir" of Montreal, which was generally regarded as a Catholic organ. As events turned out, it would have been much better had the release been given to all the Catholic papers throughout the country.

The draft of the Declaration was revised slightly by Archbishop McGuigan after consultation with Bishop Carroll, and the final version was submitted to Cardinal Villeneuve and Archbishop Charbonneau.

There now remained only the task of preparing the accompanying comment in the Register to make quite clear that it was the CCF which the Bishops had in mind. This comment, which took the form of an editorial in the Register, was written by Mr. Somerville. As Mr. Somerville wrote to me on the 15th of October, this editorial was "absolutely specific and unqualified about the CCF." It was also arranged between Mr. Somerville and me that he should forewarn the Canadian Press and I the British United Press.

On the morning of Wednesday, October 20, 1943, these three papers, "The Canadian Register," "L'Action Catholique," and "Le Devoir," simultaneously released the Declaration of the Bishops, and all three accompanied the Declaration by comments affirming that henceforth the faithful were to consider themselves as free to support or oppose the CCF as they were free to support or oppose any other legitimate political party. The comment for "Le Devoir" was signed by M. Omer Héroux, that of "L'Action Catholique" (not published until the next day) was signed by M. Eugène L'Heureux.

REACTION TO DECLARATION

Reaction to the Declaration of the Bishops and to the semi-official commentaries was vigorous and immediate. Many members of the older parties were shocked by the timing of the Declaration as well as by its contents. The professional defenders of “capitalism” and “private enterprise” were enraged by what they considered as little less than an act of treason. Even many Catholics, English-speaking as well as French-speaking, were astounded by what seemed to them an unexpected and unexplained reversal of policy. Reports from Quebec and Toronto indicated that both Cardinal Villeneuve and Archbishop McGuigan were visited by important representatives of politics and business who argued that the Bishops had made a disastrous, ill-timed, and naive mistake. It was maintained that the Bishops had in effect given a hand to revolutionary forces at the very moment when the citadel of free enterprise was in danger.

Those who had been so upset by the explanation of the Declaration given by the three semi-official papers soon found crumbs, and more than crumbs, of comfort. Several smaller English-speaking Catholic papers, with whom unwisely we had not shared the scoop, came to the conclusion that declarations of bishops should stand by themselves and that it was not for lay Catholic editors to act as interpreters of what should need no interpretation. Notable among these papers were the “Northwest Review” of Winnipeg and the venerable “The Catholic Record” of London, Ont. The line taken by these papers was that the Declaration was not so much a “clearing” of the CCF, as a statement of principles which the CCF should meet if it wished to show that it merited “clearance.” Instead of being cleared, the CCF was thus put under the necessity of proving that it should be cleared. To this interpretation the Record added these words: — “So far no official interpretation or application of the episcopal statement has been made public by its authors. Until this is done, no interpretation carries more weight than the private opinion of the interpreter.” The same line of argument was adopted by the publications of the Ecole Sociale Populaire, staffed by Jesuits of the French Province. In due course even “L’Action Catholique” adopted this new line of argument. It was reported to me by Henry Somerville at the time that this new interpretation of the Declaration had given much comfort to Mackenzie King.

Our work at this time was made immensely more difficult by the fact that Mr. Harold Winch, then Leader of the provincial CCF in British Columbia, chose this moment to make a series of inflammatory and even revolutionary speeches which were indeed incompatible with the teachings and spirit of the Church. These incidents were capped when the “CCF News” of Vancouver, seemingly a publication of the provincial party, used its issue of the 9th of March to publish what “L’Action Catholique” rightly called an

“Odious Calumny against the Primate of the Canadian Church.”

It had long been recognized that the CCF did harbour a few irreconcilably doctrinaire socialist and anti-clerical members. It was also recognized that this mentality was mainly to be found in the B.C. branch of the CCF. And it was further recognized that Mr. Winch was the spokesman of this group. I was given to understand that the leaders of the federal party had often sought to curb Mr. Winch, and that he had received reprimand after reprimand. But, if he did receive any criticisms on the national level, they were made privately and did nothing to counteract the serious consequences of his acts.

Doubtless the members of the “Ginger Group” were upset at the possibility of real Catholic participation in the Party, and possibly they did their best to make such a participation impossible. By their lights they would be quite justified in their conclusions, because if Catholics were to begin to penetrate the Party it is sure that they would have little sympathy for the “wild men” of the West. There couldn’t be room for both Catholics and doctrinaire socialists in the party counsels.

The possibly calculated indiscretions of Mr. Winch could scarcely be allowed to pass unanswered by the ecclesiastical leaders in his own Province. On the Feast of All Saints, 1943, Archbishop Duke of Vancouver answered Mr. Winch from the pulpit of his Cathedral. After speaking of the hope of the common people for “the better distribution of the wealth now held by monopolies, for the better distribution and control of natural resources,” the Archbishop of Vancouver went on to say: –

All parties at the present time are disposed to make reforms, for which they are to be commended. As worthy of high approval also is to be noted the stand of the CCF against Communism.

It is difficult, however, to make a statement about the policy of the CCF. This is so because it has not sufficiently declared its national platform ... The party has also permitted its minor leaders in various provinces to make divergent statements of policy...

ATTEMPTED CLARIFICATION

Once again we were hearing much of the argument that the Church condemns socialism, but the CCF is socialist, therefore the Church condemns the CCF. Lost was the distinction that in the English-speaking world the word “Socialism” is used to describe many different things, and that not everything that is so described deserves condemnation. In order to clarify this confusion, Archbishop McGuigan issued a statement in December in the name of the Bishops’ Committee for Social Action. In this statement, which was carried by the Canadian Press on December 6, 1943, His Grace noted that Socialism has “different current meanings” but that the Catholic Church

reserved it for “a doctrine or system which she had condemned.”

On learning of this statement by Archbishop McGuigan, I felt that the time had come for The Canadian Register to speak again, and to say things that could not well be said by the Bishops. Therefore I drafted an editorial stating categorically that our interpretation of the Bishops’ Declaration had been official. Because the editorial was so important and touched on such a delicate subject, I thought it wise to submit it to Archbishop McGuigan and to my colleague Somerville for his criticism. He replied in part: –

Your article, I must confess, goes beyond the Declaration and I think it would need the authorization of all the Bishops. It also goes further than editorial should go. The function of a Catholic paper is to protect the Bishops in a matter like this, not to push the Bishops out in front. It matters little if a paper is criticised but the Bishops should stay out of the controversial arena as far as possible. We ought not to make the Bishops responsible for my editorial by telling the world that the Bishops had asked for an interpretation of their own Declaration ... An editorial’s chief beauty is that it is unofficial, ecclesiastically speaking.

To my view, the Bishops did not precisely say the CCF was indifferent, I understood them as saying that there was nothing in the CCF terms of membership or pleas for electoral support which necessarily precluded Catholic acceptance.

Archbishop McGuigan himself wrote to me on the 19th December 1943, saying: “I am grateful for your letter and for the article or editorial which you were good enough to send me. In order to avoid divisions among ourselves, I think we must be a bit cautious for the present.. .”

Consequently the editorial was not published. The situation, however, remained confused, and indeed the confusion deepened as the months passed.

Seeing that our work was liable to be undone or at least made largely ineffective, I returned to the issue in the Spring of 1944. With the approval of my own Archbishop, I prepared an authoritative account of the background and purposes of the Declaration made by the Bishops. This article was printed by a leading American Catholic review (The Commonweal), and then brought to Canadian attention in the form of a news release emanating from New York.

The project of re-printing the article in the Register was then broached. (To have started it there would not have served the purpose). This plan was submitted to Archbishop McGuigan, and on April 4, 1944 Henry Somerville wrote to me, “Archbishop McGuigan, speaks favourably of your article and has no objection to a simple reprinting of it...” It was carried in all editions on April 15, 1944.

With the publication of this article in the United States and its widespread reporting in Canada, I had hoped that my work was finished. The

fundamental question with which we had concerned ourselves was not political. What we saw chiefly at stake was a matter of justice. Either the Bishops considered the policy and programme of the CCF to be fundamentally incompatible with Catholicism and therefore condemnable, or they did not. In either event Catholics and the country had a right to know. It was dangerous that the CCF should remain in an ambiguous position, with Catholics not knowing whether or not they might in conscience give it their support. It was this question to which we had sought an answer. The answer was given.

CONCLUSION

Twenty years have passed since these events took place. As I look back I realize that mistakes were made in the handling of such an important issue. It was a time of great anxiety and of considerable confusion. Words such as “socialism” and “socialization” were deeply suspect. Public opinion within and without the Church was not prepared for the Bishops’ announcement. We acted as though men were purely rational and without emotions. We should have proceeded more slowly and more formally, with every step of the process well worked out and clearly recorded.

On the other hand it is only fair to add that certain doctrinaire elements within the CCF, particularly in British Columbia, did not want strong Catholic participation in the Party, and did their best for some years after 1943 to make it impossible.

Now a new age has come. On the one hand doctrinaire socialism in the condemned sense has diminished, and experience with socialization has shown that it can take many forms and that it is not a universal panacea. On the other hand the social teaching of the Church has further developed. In his Encyclical “Mater et Magistra,” Pope John XXIII has notably enlarged and developed Catholic views of the forms and circumstances in which socialization can be considered not only permissible but desirable.

Let us hope that now, twenty years later and after the CCF has been replaced by the New Democratic Party, all Catholics will feel in the words of the Declaration itself – “free to support any political party upholding the basic Christian traditions of Canada, and favouring needed reforms in the social and economic order which are demanded with such urgency in pontifical documents.”