Prior to 1914, Ukrainian political activity was limited to the municipal and provincial levels. As struggling rural settlers and frontier labourers, Ukrainians were naturally concerned with issues related to everyday life and were thus drawn into local politics. By the early 1920's they controlled a number of rural municipalities, had freed themselves from local party machines, and in Manitoba and Alberta had achieved a legislative presence that reflected a growing independence and maturity. Not until World War I brought the need to protest the suspension of their rights in Canada, and to appeal on behalf of Ukraine's struggle for independence, did they come to appreciate the importance of active participation at the federal level.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC MILIEU

The majority of Ukrainians who emigrated between 1891 and 1914 to western Canada were politically unsophisticated peasants. However, as we have seen in Chapter One, public education in their native land was beginning to reach broader segments of the Ukrainian population through Prosvita societies and a growing network of recreational associations, co-operative stores, credit unions, and agricultural marketing associations. Politically, too, the Radical, Social Democratic, and National Democratic Parties had begun to concern themselves with the plight of the Ukrainian peasant and labourer and had published a number of newspapers which encouraged mass participation in the struggle for social and political reform. Successive waves of strikes during the first decade of the twentieth century demonstrated the growing politicization of Ukrainian peasants and labourers, and it is likely that an influential and articulate (if not very large) minority of the pre-1914 immigrants to Canada did have some practical political experience and fairly definite ideas about the national and class interests of their countrymen.
Those who provided political leadership among Ukrainians in Canada at this time were usually young men born in Galicia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although generally of peasant background, a few had origins in the impoverished lower gentry, which, while economically indistinguishable from the peasant masses, had never been enserfed and continued to cherish “traditions of status, learning and leadership.” A handful of the most prominent came from districts where the radicals, social democrats, and national democrats were influential. Most were literate, a minority having attended secondary schools, a teachers’ or theological seminary, or even university. After learning English in Canada, they acquired considerable political influence as interpreters for government officials, politicians, teachers, and missionaries. They were elected to municipal office, provided with opportunities to improve their education, and gradually acquired a better understanding of Canadian society and politics. Above all, they began to realize that men like themselves could be agents of social change and progress, that they could shape their own destiny.

The desire to ameliorate living and working conditions prompted the politically experienced immigrants to mobilize their countrymen for political activity. During this period the vast majority of Ukrainian immigrants continued to occupy the bottom rung of the social ladder, just as they had in Galicia and Bukovyna. Recruited to satisfy the demand for agricultural settlers and cheap labour, they were isolated from centres of political power and cultural activity, left without basic social services, and were expected to perform the type of menial and unremunerative labour which Canadians of Anglo-Celtic and northern European backgrounds shunned. Surveys during the next decade revealed that many Ukrainian rural settlers led lives that were materially and culturally impoverished.

In view of the inadequate state of social utilities and services in rural areas, this was hardly surprising. Municipalities controlled by established settlers were usually unwilling or unable to provide the newcomers with roads, bridges, and other facilities. In remote pioneer regions the settlers remained destitute and without local administration for years. Medical care was almost impossible to obtain. Had it not been for the Presbyterian and Methodist medical missionaries, many Ukrainian settlements would have been totally without such services. Educational facilities were equally inadequate, largely owing to the unwillingness of municipal councils to approve the construction of new schools, the low level of financial support from provincial governments, and the reluctance of English-speaking teachers to go into “Galician” settlements. The special schools for “foreigners” to train teachers for rural Ukrainian settlements were subject to political expediency. Constantly attacked for impeding “Canadianization,” they were ultimately abolished during the war years.

Well over 20 per cent of the Ukrainian immigrants on the Prairies remained in urban centres, and over 50 per cent of all Ukrainian agricultural settlers spent many years as labourers, drifting in and out of cities and frontier camps before establishing themselves on the land. The number of Ukrainian non-agricultural immigrants rose rapidly between 1907 and 1913, when railroad construction was booming and federal restrictions on Oriental immigration caused Canadian railroad companies to turn to southern and eastern Europe for cheap labour.

The plight of the urban immigrants was even more alarming than that of the farmer-settlers. Working conditions on the railroads and in the mines, the urban ghettos, and the factories were deplorable, and wages, especially on the railroads, were irregular and exploitative. Living conditions in frontier bunkhouses and urban tenements were crowded, with the most basic social amenities practically non-existent. The incidence of tuberculosis in Winnipeg’s immigrant quarter, the North End, was especially high, and the infant mortality rate in 1912 reached the astounding figure of 28.2 per cent.

When the economy went into recession the immigrant was the first to feel its effects. In the summer of 1913, when thousands of unemployed Ukrainians, formerly railroad navvies, began to congregate in western urban centres, some were arrested for loitering and a number were deported. By the war’s outbreak, thousands of unemployed Ukrainian labourers were wandering vainly in search of work, and the war only aggravated their unhappy condition. Large numbers of “enemy aliens,” immigrants from non-Allied countries, were dismissed from their jobs. Only critical manpower shortages caused by the war enabled many to find employment after 1917.

More subtle were the efforts of the dominant Anglo-Celtic group to Canadianize the immigrants. The Protestant church and the public school were viewed as the vehicles with which to forge a homogeneous English-speaking people free of all class and ethnic tensions by moulding all immigrants into loyal English-speaking citizens who would in the process forfeit their culture and language. At first, Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries were the Canadianizing agents, bent on isolating and socializing a loyal immigrant elite with the culture, values, and ideology of the Anglo-Celtic Protestant majority. Anti-clerical sentiments, engendered by radicals from Ukraine hostile toward the Catholic clergy, encouraged the Protestant missionaries and led them to believe that ministers of the Presbyterian-sponsored Independent Greek Church could constitute an intermediary elite. By 1912, however, it was clear that the conversion of Ukrainians to Protestantism and the prospect of Canadianization would not come easily.

Accordingly, the public school became the prime agency of Canadianization and attacks on the bilingual school system in Manitoba and on the provisions for instruction in languages other than English in the
public schools of Saskatchewan and Alberta escalated. Teachers who had graduated from the special training schools were accused of incompetence and their schools were criticized as "hotbeds for the propagation of foreign racial prejudice" that transformed western Canada into another Austria-Hungary - "the home of a dozen races each adhering with desperation to its mother tongue." After the outbreak of war, the training schools were abolished, and the use of languages other than English in the public schools was not only outlawed but reproved by corporal punishment. Objects representative of the Ukrainian heritage were removed and the schools became instruments of cultural domination.

The outbreak of war also made it easier for the government to implement anti-foreign political measures. In May, 1914, the British Nationality, Naturalization and Aliens Act had already made it more difficult to obtain naturalization certificates. In August, 1914, Parliament passed the War Measures Act, which permitted the government to make decisions by Orders-in-Council. Enemy aliens were ordered to report or register monthly with the police. Those who failed to report or who were deemed to be a threat to national security were detained in internment camps. A total of 8,579 individuals were thus affected, among them 5,954 of Austro-Hungarian citizenship, many of whom were unemployed Ukrainian labourers. In July, 1915, a Press Censorship Board was established to monitor the ethnic press in Canada. Finally, in September, 1917, the Wartime Elections Act disfranchised all citizens born in enemy countries and naturalized after 1902.

By 1917, the Canadian economy had suffered heavy manpower losses as a result of the war. Even though they had been deprived of their civil rights, those former enemy aliens were now needed to stem the growing labour shortage, and all above the age of sixteen were registered with the Canadian Registration Board. An "anti-loafing law," enacted in April, 1918, required that all male residents of Canada be "regularly engaged in some useful occupation." In September, 1918, as a result of growing fears that labour unrest among workers was connected with Bolshevism, all foreign-language publications were suppressed and fourteen left-wing organizations were outlawed. A month later the Public Safety Branch was set up to enforce the legislation.

Many Ukrainian immigrants experienced the full weight of these enactments, while the whole community, especially in urban centres, was exposed to outbursts of nativist hostility and intimidation by private individuals and citizens' groups. In Winnipeg, for example, Ukrainians were prevented from participating in the Dominion Day parade in 1915, and three years later Ukrainian and other foreign institutions were vandalized by war veterans who demanded that aliens be dismissed from their jobs and deported. In February, 1919, an Alien Investigation Board was established in Manitoba by the provincial government to determine who among the aliens had been "loyal" and who had to be deported. Later in 1919 growing labour unrest and the presence of unemployed war veterans resulted in more immigrants being laid off and in amendments to the Immigration Act, which brought Canada's "open door" policy to an end.

MUNICIPAL POLITICS

Ukrainians became directly involved in municipal politics shortly after the turn of the century. This was accomplished with difficulty, however, since established settlers monopolized municipal councils and urban property qualifications excluded most Ukrainians. Nevertheless, by 1914 Ukrainians had made such rapid progress, especially in rural areas, that a prominent westerner observed: "one fact stands out with tremendous clearness - the Ruthenians have become a force... throughout the prairies."

Interest in municipal politics developed when Ukrainian immigrants realized that it was incumbent upon them to take the initiative if roads and bridges were to be built and post offices erected. Thus Stefan Shandro (who had been active on his village council in Bukovyna) and his sons established Shandro as a centre in Alberta and provided it with a post office, a road, and a telephone. Likewise, Pavlo Melyk and Wasyl Romaniuk, with experience acquired in Galicia, petitioned for the formation of the Ukraine Local Improvement District and established the post office at Myrnam, Alberta.

Where municipal councils already existed, the awareness that their needs were being neglected pushed Ukrainians into municipal politics. Ukrainian settlers in the municipality of Franklin in Manitoba entered municipal politics in 1902 because their requests for roads, bridges, and schools were being ignored. When the provincial government also failed to support their request for a school, Theodosy Wachna convinced the settlers to break away from Franklin and create the municipality of Stuartburn. Except for the reeve, all members of the new municipality's council were Ukrainians, with Wachna the first Ukrainian municipal secretary-treasurer in Canada. Within a year three schools and a post office were built. In 1908, with the election of Ivan Storoszczuk as reeve, the Stuartburn council became the first all-Ukrainian municipal council in Canada.

The situation in the Interlake region of Manitoba was similar. In Gimli the council was dominated by Icelandic settlers who had been concentrated near Lake Winnipeg since the 1870's. They were not anxious to spend municipal funds for improvements in the interior settled by Ukrainians. In 1913 the Ukrainians, aided by a few German and Icelandic settlers, finally broke away and gained considerable influence in the new municipality of Kreuzberg.

By the early 1920's, rural Ukrainians controlled several municipal
councils: Stuartburn, Ethelbert, Dauphin, Gimli, Kreuzberg, Brokenhead, Chatfield, Rossburn, and Mossy River (in Manitoba); Rosthern, Hafford, and Yorkton (in Saskatchewan); and Vegreville, Myrnam, Mundare, Two Hills, and Smoky Lake (in Alberta). The councils in Ethelbert, Stuartburn, Rossburn, Vegreville, and Hafford were bilingual, corresponding with other levels of government in English while carrying on local business in Ukrainian.  

It was much more difficult for Ukrainians to win election to city councils. Property qualifications enabled commercial elites to control such councils, particularly in Winnipeg, which had the largest urban concentration of Ukrainians in Canada. In 1906 fewer than 8,000 of the city’s 100,000 residents were registered voters, and election to any municipal office required backing from powerful business interests. In practice this meant endorsement by one of the two major parties.

Toma Yastremsky, a veteran Conservative Party worker, was the first to enter Winnipeg city politics. In 1907 he ran unsuccessfully as an independent aldermanic candidate to represent the Ukrainian and German voters of Ward Six. The following year he failed to win one of the four city controller seats on a Conservative ticket.  

In 1910 another prominent Conservative Party member, Theodore Stefanyk, contested the same aldermanic seat. Although supported by the Ukrainian press, he lost by sixty-seven votes. But in 1911 he was elected with support from the Conservative Party and a committee of Ukrainian, Polish, and German voters. In the summer of 1912 he helped Ukrainians employed on water main construction in the North End obtain wage parity with workers employed in other parts of the city. Stefanyk, however, survived in office for only one year. His open association with the unpopular provincial Conservative administration of Rodmond P. Roblin repelled most immigrant voters. It was not until 1926 that a second Ukrainian – William Kolisnyk, a Communist – was elected to the city council in Winnipeg.

PROVINCIAL POLITICS

Success and the experience acquired in municipal politics encouraged Ukrainian participation on the provincial political level on the eve of World War I. Disgusted with the corrupt electoral practices of the Conservative and Liberal Parties, incensed by unfair criticism of bilingual instruction, and frustrated by their inferior socio-economic status and ethnic prejudice, Ukrainians moved to elect their own independent candidates in Manitoba and Alberta.

The first politically active Ukrainians in Manitoba were Cyril Genik, Ivan Bodrug, and Ivan Negrich. All came from the same village in Galicia, where the radicals had been very active. Each had a sound secondary education, had taught in village schools, and had assisted the first groups of peasant immigrants organized by Joseph Oleskiw to settle in 1896 and 1897. Because of their knowledge of German, all at one time or another were employed by the Immigration Branch.

Their radical sympathies inclined them toward the Liberal Party in politics and to the Protestant church in religious matters. Although vaguely socialist in personal convictions, they favoured the Liberals, who had supported large-scale Ukrainian immigration to Canada, distributed the homesteads, and consistently defended the Ukrainian presence during the early years. Conservative spokesmen, on the other hand, had described Ukrainian immigrants as “foreign scum,” and in Manitoba the Conservative government had extended the period of disfranchisement for all East Europeans from three to seven years. Moreover, the Conservatives were seen as the party of the eastern capitalists and their local agents, while the Liberals were reputed to be the champions of the farmer and the little man. Socialist parties, which might have appealed to Genik, Bodrug, and Negrich, had still to become established on the Prairies during the early period (1896-1904).

Protestantism, especially Presbyterianism with its “rational, ethical and intellectual” quality, impressed the three men because of their deep hostility to Catholic clericalism and their desire to base the life of Ukrainian immigrants on what they thought were enlightened and rational foundations. In 1903, with financial assistance from the Liberals, they established the first Ukrainian newspaper in Canada, the weekly Kanadiyskyi farmer, which disseminated their political and religious views. The following year they campaigned for Liberal candidates during the federal election.

The close identification of the Liberals with Galician radicalism and Anglo-Protestantism alienated tradition-oriented peasant immigrants and the more conservative political and social immigrant activists. The Liberals, who controlled Kanadiyskyi farmer, found a new editor in 1905 and instructed him to steer clear of religious polemics, which would suggest that the party was concerned with its image among Ukrainian voters. Nevertheless, by 1904-05, the more traditional Ukrainian elements in Manitoba were beginning to gravitate toward the Conservatives.

The fact that the Conservatives, as the government party, were in a position to provide for the immigrants’ educational needs, including their desire to retain their language, helped to tilt the balance in their favour. As early as August, 1901, Toma Yastremsky was disturbed to see Genik and his associates distributing radical pamphlets and had urged Conservative representatives to organize a special school to train Ukrainian teachers. To this end, he had even built a non-denominational hall in Winnipeg. Early in 1903, anticipating a provincial election, Yastremsky devised a scheme to naturalize 1,500 Ukrainian immigrants in Winnipeg. He approached Conservative organizers and promised to deliver 1,500 votes if the party pledged to establish a teacher-training school for Ukrainians. He then invited the recently naturalized Ukrainians to a meeting in support of Samson Walker, the Conservative candidate in
North Winnipeg. After Walker’s election, Premier Roblin assured Yastremsky that the school would be established. It opened its doors in 1905.

With the Ukrainian population on the increase, in 1904 the Conservatives reversed their discriminatory franchise legislation and began subsidizing a Ukrainian newspaper, *Slovo*. As a result, the party emerged as the benefactor of the Ukrainian community, with the bilingual school system affording an excellent opportunity to consolidate the Conservative hold on Ukrainian voters. The men appointed bilingual school organizers in Ukrainian districts—John Baderski, Michael Rudnicki, Theodore Stefańyk, and Paul Gigeychuk—were loyal party members who spent more time organizing voters than school districts. Prior to elections, they agitated in favour of Conservative candidates, received generous travel subsidies, and distributed bribes. Although there is no evidence that bilingual teachers participated in such activities, a number of campaign for Conservative candidates, especially as political patronage often determined who was admitted to the Ruthenian Training School and who retained his teaching post.

During the ensuing decade, prior to every provincial and federal election, the Conservative machine in Manitoba was set in motion in ridings populated by Ukrainians. Appointees of the Conservative government—school organizers Stefańyk and Gigeychuk, immigration officer Yastremsky, weed inspector Fred Bodnar, and a host of minor personalities—campaigned, agitated, cajoled, and paid Ukrainian immigrants to vote Conservative. Districts that failed to vote Conservative ran the risk of remaining without educational facilities. In rural and urban areas voting lists were falsified, impersonation at the booths was encouraged, money and liquor were distributed, and unsophisticated immigrants were instructed in the fine art of casting the ballot. Road construction crews, sent into Ukrainian districts shortly before an election, were plied with liquor, given the day off, paid overtime, and transported to Liberal rallies which they promptly disrupted.

The Liberals, too, were not above this type of activity. In 1908 the Ruthenian Liberal Club was organized in Winnipeg by Zygmunt Bychynsky, editor of *Kanadziysky farmer* and a minister of the Independent Greek Church. Ukrainians of Protestant sympathies supported the Liberals because Catholic immigrants tended to be in the Conservative camp. Although Liberal campaigns were not as corrupt as Conservative ones, they too demoralized many immigrants and reduced elections to internecine squabbles. A low point was reached in the Gimli by-election in July, 1913, when Stefańyk, Yastremsky, Gigeychuk, Bodnar, and other Conservatives confronted Ostrowsky, Dyma, Shandro, and an assortment of Liberals. A bilingual teacher in the district informed the *Manitoba Free Press* (July 16) that most meetings had been reduced to drunken orgies, while his pupils had been exposed to an endless procession of cars filled with drunken men passing their school.

It is difficult to determine how successful the Conservative machine was among Ukrainians in Manitoba. During the 1907 election it appears that rural Ukrainians supported the Liberal Party quite consistently, although in North Winnipeg Yastremsky’s activity on behalf of the Conservatives helped to elect John Mitchel. The 1910 election, however, saw a definite shift toward the Conservatives. Although Mitchel unexpectedly lost in North Winnipeg, three heavily Ukrainian constituencies—Gimli, Dauphin, and Gilbert Plains—previously Liberal or Independent, all returned Conservatives.

It was not, however, until the by-elections of 1913 that Ukrainian voters lined up squarely behind the Conservatives. Indeed, it was generally conceded that the Roblin regime held on to office because of the Ukrainian vote. The reasons for the new alliance were complex. By 1913, Conservative corruption and support of the bilingual school system had sent most Protestant Anglo-Celtic advocates of Canadianization into the Liberal ranks. Convinced that the bilingual school system impeded the emergence of a homogeneous English-speaking Canadian society, the Liberals launched a determined campaign against bilingualism in the schools. Although abolition was never formally a campaign plank, Liberal criticism, on the heels of a similar campaign in Alberta, increased indignation among Manitoba’s Ukrainians and consolidated their support for the Conservatives. Only *Kanadziysky farmer* and the Presbyterian *Ranok* stood by the Liberals; *Kanada*, the new pro-Conservative weekly, *Kanadyiskyi rusyn*, the Ukrainian Catholic organ, and *Ukrainsky holos*, the Ukrainian bilingual teachers’ publication, all supported the Conservatives in 1914.

*Ukrainsky holos*, established in Winnipeg in 1910 by fairly well-educated and politically sophisticated immigrants, was distressed by the manner in which Ukrainians were manipulated by both missionaries and politicians. As the first Ukrainian paper not affiliated with any political party or religious denomination, it criticized the electoral practices of both parties and challenged the notion that Ukrainians could advance their interests by working for established parties and extracting favours in return. Accordingly, Ukrainians would have to nominate and elect dedicated, selfless Ukrainians, with or without the support of established parties, if their interests were to be taken seriously. The expansion of Ukrainian national awareness and the cultivation of personal self-respect were the foundations for the type of collective political action needed. To the editors, bilingual education was imperative, for it developed a sense of solidarity and helped overcome feelings of inferiority among the immigrants and their children.

The opportunity to put these principles to the test came in 1915 after the fall of the Roblin government following charges of corruption concerning the new Parliament buildings. Taras Ferley, the manager of *Holos* and a Ukrainian teacher at the Ruthenian Training School, decided to run as an Independent Liberal in the election after losing the of-
ficial Liberal nomination to a popular local municipal official. To prevent the Conservative incumbent from winning because of a divided Liberal vote, Ferley’s supporters prevailed upon the Liberal nominee to withdraw. With the support of local bilingual teachers and the Ukrainian press, Ferley won by a margin of more than 600 votes. He had advocated compulsory education and the teaching of English, but he defended the right of all children to learn their mother tongue in the public schools.

The election of the Liberal Party in 1915 virtually assured the abolition of bilingual education early in 1916, and Ferley and the Franco-Manitoban representatives were powerless against an overwhelming Liberal majority. Even so, an important hurdle had been crossed. Political leadership in Manitoba had passed “from the hands of personally motivated agents who manipulated the Ukrainian vote on behalf of a given party to community-oriented leaders.”

Unlike Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta were practically without a two-party system until the interwar years. The Liberals, benefiting from the patronage flowing from their federal counterparts, entrenched themselves in both provinces and retained the sympathy of Ukrainians for many years. Nor were Saskatchewan Ukrainians inclined to assert their independence in provincial politics. Most had received fairly good land, much better than that of the Ukrainians in Manitoba. It was therefore easy to identify with the pro-farmer Liberal Party. The absence of large urban centres and industry meant that there were fewer politically experienced immigrants, so that the leadership vacuum was initially filled by Independent Greek Church ministers with their Liberal sympathies. The Saskatchewan Liberals, too, had learned a lesson from Manitoba’s Conservatives and made concessions to the Ukrainians in matters of education.

From the outset, the Liberals used the Independent Greek Church ministers as intermediaries. Ivan Bodrug and Zygmunt Bychynsky, both ministers of that church and former editors of Kanadiiyskyi farmer, became the first school organizers in Ukrainian districts and acted as staunch Liberal boosters. James A. Calder, the Deputy Minister of Education, was informed that Bychynsky was “highly thought of by our [Liberal] Party friends in Canora during the late Provincial Campaign . . . [he was] quite effective and . . . would have the Party interest in view in all dealings with Galicians.”

For the first few years after 1905, the government allowed both graduates of Manitoba’s Ruthenian Training School and permit teachers to teach in the schools established among the Ukrainian settlers. The cooperation of Manitoba Liberals was also enlisted to find “bright young men . . . to counteract the Tory work” as teachers in Saskatchewan. When it became difficult to find such men, the Saskatchewan government created a school of its own—the Training School for Teachers for Foreign Speaking Communities—on the recommendation of Joseph Megas, the school organizer at Rosthern and a former editor of Kanadiiyskyi farmer.

Megas was helpful to the Liberals on a number of occasions. He established a pro-Liberal newspaper, Novyi krai, through which he sought to influence the Ukrainian vote. Novyi krai, founded as the organ of the Association of Canadian Ruthenian Farmers, promoted bilingual education and rural co-operatives, but its primary function was to endorse the activities of Premier Walter Scott and his close friend, J.A. Calder, the Minister of Education. It urged Ukrainians to support Liberal rather than independent Ukrainian candidates. It was not enthusiastic, therefore, when Mykhailo Gabora was nominated by a group of homesteaders in Canora to run as an Independent in the 1912 provincial election. Even though Gabora’s campaign was poorly organized and he himself lacked leadership qualities, Novyi krai’s excessive praise of the Liberals and its references to the impropriety of independent Ukrainian candidates betrayed its intense Liberal partisanship.

Aside from Gabora’s ill-conceived attempt, however, Ukrainians did not enter provincial elections in Saskatchewan. When bilingual instruction was abolished late in 1918, they were too involved in religious disputes and in promoting the Petro Mohyla Institute to challenge the Liberals.

In Alberta the situation was very different. Alberta’s Ukrainians were initially part of the mighty Liberal machine. Men like Peter Svarich, Paul Rudyk, Dmytro Solianych, and Hryhori Kraykiwsky provided leadership comparable to that of Genik, Bodrug, Ferley, and the Ukrainyskiy holos group in Manitoba. In fact, Svarich and Rudyk were major shareholders in the Ukrainian Publishing Company which published Holos and communicated with the editors on a regular basis. Their cooperation with the provincial Liberals was motivated by a desire to secure educational concessions similar to those in Saskatchewan.

In December, 1909, shortly after Alberta’s second provincial general election, a convention organized by prominent Ukrainian Liberal activists was held in Edmonton. The 200 participants passed several resolutions: that the provincial government fulfill its pre-election promises to appoint school organizers and to establish a training school for Ukrainians; that it appoint only Ukrainian teachers to schools in Ukrainian districts and allow them to teach Ukrainian; that a national council be established consisting of organizers from all Ukrainian settlements; that a student residence be established in Edmonton if the government refused to open a training school for Ukrainian teachers; and that the national council be entrusted with the organization of a democratic political party among Ukrainians in Alberta.

The provincial government finally established a training school, the English School for Foreigners, in 1913. Its inadequacies made it clear that Ukrainians had to be represented in the legislature if their demands
were to be taken seriously. In the election in April, however, the only Ukrainian candidate nominated by the Liberal Party was Andrew Shandro in the Whitford constituency. No Ukrainian candidate managed to win a nomination for the Conservatives, so four prominent Ukrainians entered the elections as Independents: Peter Svarich (Vegreville), Hryhorii Kraykiwsky (Vermilion), Michael Gowda (Victoria), and Paul Rudyk (Whitford). All were defeated.11

Although Shandro captured Whitford and technically became the first Ukrainian MLA in Canada, relations between the Ukrainians and the Liberals steadily deteriorated. Within a month the Alberta government dismissed all Ukrainian permit teachers in Alberta and uncovered a “conspiracy” led by a “definite outside organization . . . determined to break up the educational system of the province.”12 The fact that John R. Boyle, Minister of Education, referred to Ukrainian as a “dialect of Russian” and to Ukrainians as “Little Russians” revealed the Russophile influences within the Alberta Liberal organization and alienated nationally conscious Ukrainians, who would be among those who abandoned the Liberals in subsequent elections.

FEDERAL POLITICS

The First World War brought Ukrainians face to face with the federal government. Disillusioned by the abrogation of civil rights and anxious to support the struggle for Ukrainian national independence in Europe, they became more concerned with being heard at the federal level. Their growing alienation from the two traditional parties, evident before the war at the provincial level, was exacerbated. By 1923, the six Ukrainian MLAs on the Prairies were either Independents or third-party representatives, while none of the Ukrainians who had contested federal seats had run on a Liberal or Conservative ticket.

The war brought socialism, a new political philosophy within the Ukrainian immigrant community, into general prominence.13 Although some of the immigrants with radical sympathies—Genik, Bodrug, Ferley, Svarich—had flirted with socialism, prior to 1905 the social base for such an orientation among Ukrainians was slight. The influx of Ukrainian recruits for frontier labour between 1907 and 1913 provided a base, but socialism remained a marginal movement within the community. The first organized Ukrainian socialist groups, all affiliated with the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), emerged in 1907. The first socialist paper, Chervonyi prapor, appeared only eighteen times in Winnipeg before folding in 1908. Another attempt to mobilize Ukrainian workers was launched in Winnipeg in May, 1909, through Robocyi narod. The response was strong enough to organize a conference of the ten existing Ukrainian socialist groups in Canada, which culminated in the formation of the Federation of Ukrainian Social Democrats in Canada (FUSD).

The men who led the Ukrainian socialist movement through the pre-war years—Paul Crath (Pavlo Krat), Myroslaw Stechishin, Toma Tomashhevsky, Wasyl Holowacky—had all been associated with radical and socialist groups in the old country.14 Although they referred to themselves as social democrats, they were ethical socialists rather than doctrinaire Marxists. In 1910 the FUSD broke its ties with the SPC and participated in the formation of the Social Democratic Party of Canada. Stechishin and other FUSD leaders criticized the SPC for its ultra-radical posturing and its refusal to recognize the FUSD’s autonomy.

Between 1910 and 1914, leadership within the movement passed from its founders to younger, more radical men. The change in leadership reflected changes in the composition of the Ukrainian labour movement. As single males recruited by the railroad companies became more numerous, the movement became more narrowly class-oriented. By 1915, Tomashhevsky, Stechishin, Holowacky, and Crath had left the socialist camp for more moderate Ukrainian circles.15 The new socialist leaders—Matthew Popowich, John Navis (Ivan Navizivsky), and Danylo Lobay—stood closer to the Galician social democrats than to the Galician radicals and were moving leftward on the eve of war.16 They maintained ties with Ukrainian social democrats in Galicia, Bukovyna, Russia, and Europe. The change in leadership was followed by a change of name. In 1914 the FUSD became the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party in Canada (USDPC).

Prior to the war, the founders of the movement had concentrated on developing a sense of class consciousness and international working-class solidarity among Ukrainian immigrant labourers. They urged that workers join unions organized by the International Workers of the World (IWW) and that farmers establish co-operatives. The new leaders tended to be more doctrinaire. They believed that capitalism was an inherently exploitative system of production which could not be reformed. Consequently, they looked forward to the day when all workers, “united under one red banner,” would seize control of the state, socialize the means of production, and establish a just and equitable social order. However, this commitment did not prevent them from organizing dramatic and choral groups or from expressing their support for the principle of bilingual education.17

Deteriorating economic conditions and the outbreak of war made the new leaders impatient with the moderate non-socialist Ukrainian leaders, whom Robocyi narod mocked as “spineless plebsians.” In August, 1917, at the second congress of the USDPC, an amendment to the party’s constitution declared that “no branch of the USDPC may co-operate with any group of people who do not recognize the class struggle and the necessity of abolishing the capitalist order.”18

After the war’s outbreak, Ukrainian social democrats were increasingly drawn into the Bolshevik sphere of influence. Even before the war, their more experienced organizers had tried to organize Ukrainian and Russian workers in Canada and the United States. Matthew Popowich,
for example, had established contacts with the Russian social democratic editors of the increasingly pro-Bolshevik Novyi mir while in New York. After 1914, Alexandra Kollontai, Vladimir Volodarsky, Nikolai Bukharin, and Leon Trotsky were associated with that paper. Thus, by 1917, Robochoyi narod had begun to feature articles by leading Bolsheviks, including Lenin. In April, 1917, Ivan Kulyk, a high-ranking Ukrainian Communist in the 1920's, attempted to join the staff of Robochoyi narod but was kept out of Canada by immigration officials.59

The social democrats' exposure to Bolshevik views coincided with the curtailment of civil liberties in Canada and an unprecedented eruption of nativist hostility toward enemy aliens. As the distinction between conditions in the British Empire and the despotic empires abandoned by the immigrants became increasingly blurred, Bolshevik declarations became more relevant to the immediate experience of some Ukrainians in Canada.

During the war the social democrats were fairly prominent on the radical labour scene in Winnipeg. In April, 1915, they organized a demonstration of unemployed workers in Winnipeg, and in July they campaigned actively in support of R.A. Rigg, an Independent Labour candidate in North Winnipeg. Thereafter, activity subsided as organizers and members left the country or were interned. It resumed in 1917 when economic conditions began to improve. In June the USDP played a prominent role when Winnipeg's unskilled construction workers struck on the issue of collective bargaining. Although arrests and internments ensued, working conditions in the industry improved and the construction workers' union was recognized. Robochoyi narod saw the strike as a major victory.60

Throughout 1917 Narod consistently criticized the federal government and predicted its demise. By late December, its editorials declared that

There can no longer be the slightest doubt that the present bloody carnage . . . will . . . administer the death blow and dig the grave of the present social order. . . . the Russian Revolution is the prologue to the inevitable proletarian revolution which must sweep across the entire world destroying the present intolerable order.

Needless to say, the federal government became alarmed by the socialist activity among European immigrants and by the fact that the IWW was simultaneously trying to reconcile the interests of immigrant and English-speaking workers. As a result, in September, 1918, two Orders-in-Council authorized the suppression of the ethnic press and outlawed a number of socialist and anarchist organizations. Robochoyi narod and the USDP, which had over 2,000 members organized in twenty-six branches concentrated primarily in western Canada, were affected by the coercive measures.

The non-socialist community also became more militant as the war progressed. The suspension of civil liberties, the intimidation by private

...
number of immigrants, including a few Ukrainians, were arrested, interned, and ultimately deported without due process of law. The issue of “alien” participation was magnified out of all proportion by Winnipeg’s powerful business elite, which hoped to mask the real causes of the strike – low wages and high living costs – and was eager to take advantage of the widespread fear of Bolshevism to break the Winnipeg labour movement. As a result of the strike, the widening gap between British and other labourers increased, as the former tried to dissociate themselves from the latter. This only reinforced the Ukrainian social democrats’ drift into the Communist camp.

**THE POST-WAR PERIOD**

With the collapse of the Romanov and Hapsburg Empires and the proclamation of the Ukrainian National Republic (January, 1918) in eastern Ukraine, followed by the Western Ukrainian National Republic (November, 1918) in Galicia and their subsequent unification in January, 1919, non-Communist Ukrainian Canadians became actively involved in aiding and publicizing the cause of independence. Hundreds of telegrams to Allied diplomats were sent, requesting that Ukrainian independence be recognized in accordance with the principle of national self-determination. For the next four years the UCCL and the UNC assumed responsibility for promoting the cause of Ukrainian independence in Canadian government circles.

In the summer of 1918 the UCCL decided to send a Ukrainian-Canadian delegation to the peace conference at Versailles to assist representatives of the Ukrainian National Republic and to act as advisers to the Canadian delegation. Although Ukrainian Canadians were hopeful that their delegates would receive full accreditation from the Canadian government and thus form an integral part of the Canadian mission, they were only provided with letters of introduction and passports to England. The delegates’ expenses were to be financed by a fund-raising campaign, which ran into a snag when the Catholic members of the UCCL disapproved of both delegates – Joseph Megas, an Orthodox sympathizer, and Ivan Petrushevich, the former editor of the Catholic Kanadyjskyy rusyn, who appeared to be moving toward the Ukrainskyi holos group since early 1918.

The achievements of Petrushevich and Megas, like those of the Ukrainian mission generally, were minimal. The Allies refused to recognize the united Ukrainian National Republic, since its representatives in Kiev had concluded a separate peace treaty with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk on February 8, 1918 (almost a month before the government of Soviet Russia). De facto occupation by Polish forces considerably minimized the Western Ukrainian National Republic’s bargaining power. Disputes within the Ukrainian delegation added to the confusion. By the fall of 1919, the Bolsheviks were in control of eastern Ukraine, while the fear that the Bolshevik presence could easily spill over into Europe led the Allies to place Galicia under Polish protection in order to create a buffer zone. The news spurred massive protests by Ukrainians throughout Canada. On November 21, 1919, almost 5,000 packed the Industrial Bureau in Winnipeg in a futile attempt to urge “the Dominion government . . . [to] do everything in its power to secure recognition of the Ukrainian republic by the Allied Powers.”

Subsequent developments provided little cause for rejoicing. For the next three and a half years, until the Council of Ambassadors allowed Poland in March of 1923 to annex Galicia outright, a government-in-exile of the Western Ukrainian National Republic continued to function. Osyp Nazaruk and Ivan Bobersky, its representatives in Canada, managed to collect over $33,000 during that period, while the immigrants sent successive appeals to the government to raise the question of eastern Galicia at the League of Nations. With Canada’s isolationist foreign policy growing, when the issue of eastern Galicia was raised in the Commons on February 26, 1923, Prime Minister King declared he did not wish to involve Canada. Once news of the dissolution of the government-in-exile, based in Vienna, reached Ukrainian Canadians, a profound apathy set in. The fund-raising campaign had accomplished little, and some, thinking they had been betrayed, became indifferent and cynical about overseas Ukrainian causes.

Meanwhile, in domestic politics the mounting rural dissatisfaction with the provincial governments in Manitoba and Alberta also influenced the Ukrainians, who entered the post-war provincial election campaigns with a new display of energy. In Manitoba the Ukrainian press, anticipating the 1920 provincial elections, encouraged its readers to exercise rights, only recently restored. As a result, four Ukrainian candidates were nominated. Taras Ferley and J.W. Arsenych ran as Liberals in Gimli and Fisher, while Dmytro Yakimischak, like Ferley and Arsenych a founder of the UCCL, and Nicholas Hryhorczuk, reeve of Ethelbert since 1916, ran as Independent Farmer candidates in Emerson and Ethelbert. The two Liberal candidates lost tight races to Farmer candidates. Yakimischak and Hryhorczuk, on the other hand, won as a result of determined efforts by the Ukrainian communities in Ethelbert and Sturtburn. Both pressured the minority Liberal government to return control of school districts to Ukrainian trustees. In the Manitoba provincial elections in July, 1922, there were eleven Ukrainian candidates: six Independent Farmer and/or Liberal, two United Farmers of Manitoba (UFM), two Labour, and one Conservative. In addition to Yakimischak (Independent Farmer) and Hryhorczuk (UFM), Michael Roeski (Independent Liberal, Gimli), a former municipal reeve, and Nicholas V. Bachynsky (UFM, Fisher), a teacher and founder of the UCCL, were elected. For the first time two of the Ukrainian members belonged to the governing party – the UFM.

In Alberta, William Fedun (United Farmers of Alberta, Victoria), a
general store owner, and Andrew Shandro (Liberal, Whitford) ran successfully in 1921. However, Shandro, elected by acclamation because his opponent was disqualified on a technicality, was defeated in a by-election on July 10, 1922. In Alberta, as in Manitoba, Ukrainian farmers had joined other farmers to break with the two traditional parties, which had ignored and mishandled their interests.

Only Saskatchewan's Ukrainians remained in the grasp of the Liberal Party. Two Ukrainians, Hryhorii Slipchenko (Pelly) and Wasyl Sawiak (Canora), ran as Independents in the 1921 provincial election and lost. Prior to Sawiak's nomination in Canora, an unsuccessful attempt had been made to obtain the Liberal nomination for Wasyl Baleshta. Sawiak finished last in a field of three, Slipchenko third in a field of four. Ukrainians in Saskatchewan, however, did establish a precedent of sorts. During the 1921 federal election Wasyl Swystun, a member of the Ukrainyi holos group, became the first serious Ukrainian federal candidate. Running as an Independent in Mackenzie, Swystun emphasized economic security and proposed a wheat marketing board, stabilized prices, and easy credit terms at the banks. He finished third in a field of four.

Even so, the election of six Ukrainian MLAs in Manitoba and Alberta marked a major breakthrough. Many peasant immigrants realized for the first time that they could determine their representatives in provincial and federal assemblies. The sense of collective self-respect and confidence, necessary for sustained interest and involvement in politics, had been all but absent before the war. In the interwar period that sense would gradually transform immigrant politics into minority group politics with an ethnic flavour.

NOTES


4. The incidence of tuberculosis in the Point Douglas area was 3.8/1000 and in the North End it was 3/1000. Report on Housing Survey of Certain Selected Areas: May-December 1918 (Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg Health Department, 1919); Manitoba Free Press, 27 May 1913.

5. Ibid., 20 October 1911; 25 September 1912.


7. Formerly the submission of an affidavit to a commissioner, establishing that the immigrant had been domiciled in Canada for three years, was sufficient to obtain a naturalization certificate. The new Act required five years residence in Canada, adequate knowledge of English or French, and acceptance of the application by a superior court judge. In addition, the Secretary of State was empowered to withhold certificates from applicants whom he deemed to be a threat to the “public good.” Statutes of Canada, 4-5 Geo.V, c. 44, s. 2 (1914).


16. In December, 1914, Taras Ferley failed as an Independent candidate,
though supported by a committee of Ukrainian, German, and Polish electors. Matthew Popowich, a Communist, failed in 1924 and in 1925.

17. Genik (1857-1925) was the oldest of the three. In Galicia he had been a close friend of Ivan Franko, one of the most prominent Ukrainian radicals and a major Ukrainian novelist, poet, and literary critic. Bodrug and Negri were about twenty years younger.

18. Individuals who were not British by birth and who had not resided in Canada for seven years were granted the franchise in Manitoba after they had passed a literacy test administered in English, French, German, Icelandic, Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish. This applied whether the individual was naturalized or not. An immigrant who passed the test was enfranchised after three years' residence and naturalization; illiterates and those literate in other languages were enfranchised four years after being naturalized. Melnycky, "Political History," p. 98; M.S. Donnelly, The Government of Manitoba (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 72.

19. For the origins of the Protestant movement among Ukrainians in Canada, see the serialized reminiscences of Ivan Bodrug, "Sposmyny pastora Ivana Bodruga" (Reminiscences of Pastor Ivan Bodrug), Levanhelska pravda, XVIII-XIX (1957-58).


21. Stefanyk resigned his position as school organizer in 1910 after being accused of damaging school property when trustees refused to let him use their school for a Conservative campaign meeting. The accusations were made by a Liberal MLA. See Melnycky, "Political History," pp. 130-1.

22. When Michael Drabinisty, a graduate of the Ruthenian Training School, was reported to have "a library full of Liberal material," Deputy Minister of Education Robert Fletcher dispatched Inspector Fallis to verify the situation and stated, "these teachers have been trained at considerable expense to the Government . . . and it is up to them to return in kind." When it was discovered that the man who had recommended a student to the Training School was working for the Liberals, Fletcher informed Principal J.T. Cressy that as far as the student was concerned, "We may have to declare that he is too weak in English. Kindly say nothing whatsoever of this." On the other hand, a man who spoke no English was given a permit to teach on a school organizer's recommendation because he had worked on behalf of Glen Campbell, the Conservative MP, during the 1908 federal election. When it was discovered that Myrosław Stechishin was a frequent contributor to the socialist press, Fletcher informed Cressy: "If he has been doing much of this we may find it necessary to ask him to settle his account and retire." Public Archives of Manitoba, Robert Fletcher Letter Book, 1905-11, pp. 273, 276, 373-4, 525, 286, 625, 809, 921.


25. Yastremsky, Kanadyanianatsia, p. 95.


27. Ibid., p. 262.


29. Ibid., H.E. Perry to J.A. Calder, 18 January 1911.


31. An editorial in the Ukraïns'kyi holos (7 May 1913) ascribed their defeat to several factors: they had to contend with the corrupt practices of the Liberal and Conservative political machines; Ukrainian Catholic and Russian Orthodox clergy thought they were strongly anti-clerical and opposed their election; the candidates entered the campaign less than two weeks before the election; many English-speaking settlers thought they saw a conspiracy in their initiative; some of the less enlightened Ukrainian settlers were consumed by envy. The Holos itself was encouraged by the fact that over 50 per cent of the Ukrainian vote supported the Independent candidates.

32. Manitoba Free Press, 11, 18, 19, 27 September 1913. During the campaign both Shandro and Rudyk employed irregular tactics. Rudyk flouted a letter from a Liberal official which stated that he should be the Liberal candidate. Shandro retaliated by having Rudyk arrested on charges of false pretenses and he was held in jail for a few days before the election. After Shandro's victory, Rudyk brought court action on two counts against Shandro: the first concerned damages caused by Shandro's allegations about the letter, the second declared the election null and void because of corruption on Shandro's part. Although Rudyk prevailed, Shandro again won the seat in a special by-election on March 15, 1915, and held it until 1921. J.M. Lazarenko, "Ukrainians in Provincial Politics," in The Ukrainian Pioneers in Alberta (Edmonton: Ukrainian Pioneers' Association, 1970), pp. 43-6; J.G. MacGregor, Vilni Zemli (Free Lands): The Ukrainian Settlement of Alberta (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), pp. 240-3; Ukraïns'kyi holos, 28 May 1913; 25 November 1914; 3, 24 February 1915.

34. Crath (1882-1952), unlike the other three, had been born in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine. He came from a wealthy, educated family and arrived in Winnipeg in 1907 after having belonged to the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party and its leftist splinter group, which constituted itself as the Ukrainian Social Democratic Union (Spilka). He had participated in the revolution of 1905 and in student demonstrations at the University of Lviv in 1907 after fleeing from the Russian Empire. See N. Kazyryna, "The Defiant Pavlo Krat and the Early Socialist Movement in Canada," Canadian Ethnic Studies, X (1978), pp. 38-54. Stychishin and Tomashevsky were born in 1883 and 1884 respectively and emigrated to Canada in 1902 and 1900. Holloway, born between 1880 and 1885, like the others, had come into contact with the Radical Party prior to emigrating from Galicia.


36. Popowich, Navis, and Lobay were born around 1890 and had come into contact with Ukrainian social democratic groups. Lobay, unlike the other two, left the Canadian Communist Party and the pro-Communist Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association in 1935.


38. Robochyi narod, 29 August 1917.

39. Kulyk was detained by Canadian immigration officials in Vancouver and prevented from entering Canada. During the 1920's he was a Soviet consul in Canada. Robochyi narod, 13 April 1917.


41. The Ukrainian Canadian Citizens' League (UCCCL) was also known as the Ukrainian Canadian Citizens' Committee (UCCC).

42. Kanadiyskyi farmer, 22 February, 8 March 1918.

43. Marunchak, Ukrainian Canadians, p. 331.

44. Manitoba Free Press, 1, 14, 15 May 1919; Ukrains'kyi holos, 7 May 1919.

45. Melnycky, "Political History," p. 228.


47. Michael Ewanchuk suggests that Popowich and Navis had taken refuge in Gimli at the time of the strike: Spruce, Swamp and Stone, p. 115. Peter Krawchuk, on the other hand, states that both were members of the strike committee and were obliged to flee Winnipeg and hide with Ukrainian farmers in Gimli. H. Potrebenko, No Streets of Gold: A