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Symposium

Oh, Canada (an editorial preface)

Bob Bealer
Penn State University

So huge, so wonderful, so close, so misunderstood (or ignored)!

The referent for the last two characterizations is, of course, the United States and its citizens. Moreover, I suspect that the relatively low levels of information about Canada marking the ordinary person-on-the-street is probably not a bad indicator for the average RSS member as well. Such a person is after all, most likely to be an American (1) and certainly he/she has not been getting much help from the Society in being enlightened about Canada. For example, in the last 14 years, only four articles on Canada have appeared in Rural Sociology. And TRS is little better. In its seven-year history only three substantive essays by Canadian-affiliated authors have been published in this source, none in the last six years. One could hardly know from such figures that Canadians are by far the largest bloc of RSS members next to U.S. nationals (2).

The aim of the symposium section of this issue is to bring Canada into sharper focus for TRS readers. The 11 articles comprising the symposium explicate the society, rurality therein, and the state of rural social studies in Canada from a variety of vantage points and persuasions. I could precis the essays but that would not be fair to the tang or zest provided by each writer. All deserve their own unhurried scrutiny by the reader. The mosaic can be most instructive.

Each of the papers comprising the symposium section came in response to an invitation extended last fall by TRS to every person in the 1985-1986 RSS Directory listed as residing in Canada. The reaction to my inquiry of interest in possibly writing an article to allay ignorance about rural Canada was revealing and may well be a (cherished) unobtrusive measure for an issue that a number of the papers published below hardly want to avoid: specifically, how different or similar are Canada and the U.S.? Based on my experience in trying to set up the symposium, there is only one answer an empiricist can allow from "the data."

Normally TRS is underwhelmed by any pleas for papers. Indifference is usually what one gets in response to trying to make TRS resound with energy and vitality. But "normality"

did not mark the Canadian case. It actually got to a point where I had to discourage people and turn down would-be papers! TRS this month is thick and would have been even more so had not a variety of circumstances conspired to have several good-faith agreements to write a paper eventuate in deadlines being missed. And, even where persons were unable to write for the symposium, generally TRS was given a courteous response, often with encouragement that some other(s) might be able to help. What a startling difference!

In this light, I want to acknowledge my deep appreciation to the RSS members at the University of Guelph, especially Hans Bakker, for endorsing the symposium project and working hard to keep colleagues feet-to-the-fire in seeing manuscripts into reality. Their help has been invaluable.

NOTES

1. The 1985-1986 RSS Membership Directory listed a total of 837 persons in the organization; of these, 759 (86.9%) were residing in the U.S.A.
2. From the same source as noted in note #1, Canada is listed at 29 RSS members. This is a frequency approaching four times that of the next highest grouping, Australia (N=8).

Canadian Political Economy and Rural Sociology: Early History of Rural Studies in Canada

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(1987)

Canadian rural sociology today cannot be understood apart from the political and economic history of the social sciences in Canada. In this brief paper it will not be possible to fully analyze the structural correlates -- past and present -- between economic and political contexts on the one hand and the general pattern of Canadian social thought on the other; but I shall note certain relevant aspects of the relationships and indicate some key parts of the larger body of literature pertinent for understanding Canadian contributions to the study of rural societies and agricultural production. It should also be understood that rural sociology has never been a recognized disciplinary specialization in Canada -- at least not in the way in which it has been in the United States.

Rush, Christensen, and Malcolmson [25:525], having reviewed literature on the social sciences' historical development in Canada, propose the following linkage:

During periods of imperialist advancement and integration, social theory can be expected to reflect upon the impact of the metropole upon the hinterland, the historical course of its development, its present character and its likely future direction. ... During times of structural crisis, dominant ideologies become open to question, with coincident weakening of the ideological ties binding social theory to its role as a legitimating force within society. Thus released, hinterland social science may be expected to polarize towards more critical and holistic approaches to explanation.

Moreover, they tried to test this broad Neo-Marxist hypothesis concerning the sociology of knowledge about metropolitan-hinterland relations by examining four periods of Canadian history, which they named: the "Blood is Thicker than Water" period of British imperial dependency, before WWI; "Political Nationhood," or the time between the Wars; "Continental Dependency -- North Americans All;" and, "Contraction and Crisis," the era since the late 1960s. For Rush et al., the social sciences in Canada are viewed as going through waves of expansion and national survival: British Imperialism; then Canadian Nationalism; American Continentalism; and, finally, reawakened Canadian Nationalism.

I believe the Neo-Marxist formulation about the sociology of sociology in Canada is useful for focusing the relatively small number of rural sociological studies done but that the "Rush Thesis" is also a simplification. It is ideal-typical in projecting the historical change process of social thought in Canada. While it provides a baseline against which we can examine the known facts, it needs qualification. History is never quiet as neat as we want to make it.

There is no question but that Canadian authors have tended to be heavily influenced by British, French, and American writers and researchers. Indeed, some Canadian scholars believe that there is no distinctively Canadian tradition of social science. That is overly harsh.

In Canada, the ways in which sociological (and anthropological) investigations have been undertaken differs somewhat from the theoretical emphases found in many European and American studies. Hence, there may not be a single, unified Canadian tradition in sociology, much less rural sociology. Nonetheless there are a number of distinctive Canadian authors and contributions, particularly in the study of the political economy of primary production. There is not today one unified Canadian "paradigm" in rural sociology, but there are a number of important works that have been produced by Canadians.

EARLY STUDIES

The earliest Canadian contributions to social science were not distinctly discipline oriented. That is particularly true with respect to the study of Canadian society itself. The earliest works of sociological research in Canada were descriptive, "ethnographic" studies of rural areas. Thus, for example, Léon Gérin, who was a student at the Ecole de la Science Sociale in Paris just after the death of its founder, Frederic LePlay (1806-1882), focused on the French Canadian rural family and its structure. As put by Hiller [14:5], "In this book and subsequent monographs, Gérin described how the habitant family became 'the cornerstone of the French regime in Quebec.'" Before the 1920s, however, sociology did not exist anywhere in Canada; therefore, the impact of Gérin's work was not that great among academics.

The earliest transfer of English social philosophy to Anglophone Canada (prior to WWI) involved the evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer and L. T. Hobhouse. After an infatuation with modified Social Darwinism, a split occurred between the two leading centres of academic excellence in English-speaking Canada. Hiller [14:16] writes that, "two competing models of sociology emerged." McGill University -- which was probably the leading English-language university in Canada, either despite or because of its geographic location in Montreal -- developed sociology as an autonomous

discipline, more or less along American lines. However, at the University of Toronto the British-style historical study of economic and political phenomena led to the establishment of a tradition which is often labelled the "Canadian Political Economy Tradition" or "Staples School." The split between McGill and Toronto had import for rural studies.

At McGill there was stress on fieldwork research, after the example of empirical studies done in urban Chicago. Works like Horace Miner's well-known St. Denis: A French Canadian Parish [19] are the application of Robert Park's "living laboratory" approach, albeit to a rural setting! The influence of Everett C. Hughes, who had come from Chicago, was also strong at McGill. Nonetheless, apart from that university (where C. A. Dawson is said [7:136] to have spent "lonely years"), the term "sociology" was not used officially in English-speaking Canada; at least it was not used for institutional purposes within the university. For complex reasons (1), the term sociology had fallen into disrepute in England and English-speaking Canada generally followed this precedent. In a French-Canadian cultural setting, however, the term sociology (the French, "sociologie") was apparently acceptable, even among English-speaking academics.

For many years those persons at the University of Toronto who were interested in sociology were members of the combined Politics and Economics Department. Peculiarly, an "Honour's" program in sociology was developed there even before any faculty appointments had been made in sociology. By Clark's account [7:135] C. W. M. Hart, "an anthropologist trained by Radcliffe-Brown, was brought over from the Department of Anthropology and given a part-time appointment in sociology at Toronto." Soon after that (circa 1925), S. D. Clark himself was appointed at Toronto, as a sociologist. Via C. A. Dawson and E. C. Hughes, he had been introduced to the "Chicago School" and the traditions of Park and Burgess; but, he declares [7:136] that he "could be considered [as having been] faithful to the Toronto tradition of political economy." That is, Clark, one of the first and also one of the leading Canadian sociologists interested in rural society and development, was more influenced by British than by American intellectual traditions. That continued loyalty to British (and, indirectly, German) scholarship lines had an important impact on the one "paradigm" which has claims to being distinctively Canadian.

At Anglophone universities it was felt that "sociology" should be merely part of political economy, standing along with economics, politics and, especially, history. There was little emphasis on fieldwork but a great deal of concern with historical change. In one sense, the English-speaking universities followed more closely to the ideals of German Historicism than to any other major school or approach, but it

was a German Historicism that had been filtered through English writers from Britain (2).

POLITICAL ECONOMY TRADITION: HAROLD INNIS

During the inter-war years (1917-1940) there was a strong sense of national identity among Canadians. The contributions of Canadian scholars to social science were influenced by that nationalistic orientation. The earlier transfer of British economic history and Utilitarian philosophy made possible a new approach to social science which emphasized the unique role of Canada in the British Commonwealth.

The key word in the Canadian model of rural development involves "staples." The emphasis on staples production and "metropolis-hinterland" relations was a significantly new contribution. Canada was viewed as a hinterland region in the British Empire that had gradually become more independent politically and more powerful economically. At a time when no one had yet invented the so-called "dependency school" or "world systems theory," the Canadian Political Economy Tradition was occupying itself with comparative, historical issues relating to economic growth and development, particularly as that manifested itself in staples-producing areas.

Harold Adams Innis is considered the leading contributor to the Canadian Political Economy Tradition. More than any other single scholar/administrator, he is responsible for having made political economy into something other than merely an off-shoot of the British tradition. Innis attempted to create a distinctively Canadian scholarship in the social sciences, and many believe that he succeeded. In Hiller's view [14:15], "probably no other Canadian social scientist has ever had as strong an international reputation as Innis."

As an "economic historian," Innis sketched a staples theory of Canada's economic and political development. He tried to show how economic development was based on the production of staple commodities for a world market. The thrust of the Canadian Political Economy Tradition has been to examine the basic staple that is sold for export by a "colony" or "hinterland." Such staples-based exports can, they argue, provide the basis for capital accumulation and the construction of infrastructure needed to change the economic order. However, there must be a constant or increasing demand for the staple commodity and the inhabitants of the region must be economically and politically powerful enough to benefit to some extent from the profits if change is to occur (3).

Innis' work on the fur trade, the cod fisheries, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the wheat trade has surely influenced many Canadian sociologists. Indeed, it is

sometimes argued that Canadian scholars are in a unique position because they have a theoretical paradigm which has been used to interpret the development of their own society -- and used very fruitfully. That is, the Canadian Political Economy Tradition, while far from universally accepted, has had wide impact. It is based on the analysis of Canada's unique history of economic development -- a movement from colony to modern, national state!

Basically, Innis asked: How it is possible for a poor, rural colony to become urbanized and industrialized? If "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer," then how can the poor ever get rich? How did Canada, despite its colonial status, manage to develop economically and politically, even though it had a dependent status?

The "dependency" approach has rightly been criticized for relying on "cumulative causation" to explain economic and political underdevelopment. But is it necessarily always the case that the "poor get poorer?" A comparative study of two regions in Canada by McCallum [18] has shown that development is possible in regions which had previously been disadvantaged. McCallum is one of many Canadian writers who has built on Innis' work, especially his analysis of the wheat staple.

Somewhat like Thorstein Veblen (4), Innis took a global view of agricultural production and its impact on society as a whole. In his classical article on "The Wheat Economy" [16:273,279] he wrote:

The persistent difficulty of adjusting institutions combining feudalism and modern capitalism, which characterizes the federal governments of the North American continent, in placing, according to feudal principles, control over natural resources and land in the hands of the provinces and the states, and, according to capitalistic demands, control of interstate and foreign trade in the hands of the federal government, involves a drain on economic energies and an inability to direct them effectively.

And he went on to contrast the competing interests of midwestern or Prairie Canada with that of eastern Canada: "In eastern Canada feudalism and physiocratic ideologies stress the importance of return to the land and the spiritual advantages of rural life and a lower standard of living." That is done, he argued, in order to promote a metropolis-hinterland relationship between "eastern Canada" (i.e., Ontario and Quebec) and the Prairies.

McCallum [18] utilized the Innis staples approach to interpret economic development in historic Ontario and

Quebec. He feels that Ontario represents an example of successful economic development albeit "internal."

His data show that Ontario wheat was the staple commodity that drove its development engine. Ontario wheat and flour exports rose dramatically around 1840 and peaked in the 1860s, while Quebec wheat and flour production declined in the same period -- with the decline beginning in the 1830s. The capital accumulated in Ontario provided a basis for relatively backward Ontario to construct a critical infrastructural system. An entrepreneurial bourgeoisie emerged in towns and cities of southern Ontario. For example, the industrial economy of the city of London (Ontario) was firmly established in the 1840s, largely on the basis of the sale of wheat.

As London grew, it attracted men with capital to invest and enriched those who were already there ... By 1850 London had four bank branches, two building societies, several insurance companies, three "extensive" foundaries, one grist and sawmill, three breweries, two distilleries, two tanneries, and three newspapers [18:64-65].

Other towns and cities also prospered; there was no one-sided development of a "primate city."

The wheat economy of Ontario can be considered as a development success story; the wheat staple was the driving force behind growth and prosperity. In Quebec, on the other hand, there was a general decline in agricultural production. Quebec, which had no significant staple product during this period, had to rely on Montreal's entrepot, trading status, and "initial advantage."

The outlines of this historical pattern were already described by Innis [16:108-122] before McCallum refined the analysis. The general argument stands however; a hinterland area does not always suffer "the development of underdevelopment," even in a colonial situation. Innis' approach is a corrective to mechanistic applications of the notion of "cumulative causation" and dependency. McCallum's modified staples approach is useful for the analysis of regional variations in aggregate income and productivity.

An application of the staples approach to a third world setting would involve asking the same kinds of questions that McCallum did concerning development in Ontario: what are the initial endowments; what is the comparative advantage for specific staple commodities; where is population concentrated and how does population distribution reflect staples production; what are the possibilities for local retention of staple-related forward and backward linkages -- what cost advantages does the staples producing region have? In regions having a high degree of local control over the benefits of

fields of Saskatchewan and Alberta. The theoretical thrust of the work was similar to the descriptive work done in Chicago by students of such classic types as "the taxi dance hall," "the gold coast," or "the hobo." Canadian pioneers were studied by Dawson and his students at McGill in much the same manner as ethnic immigrants to Chicago had been studied by Thomas and Znaniecki. Thus, S. D. Clark did not escape American-style sociology's influence; he received it largely through the filter of Dawson and Hughes.

In the 1930s -- in addition to the Carnegie-funded project headed by Dawson -- there was a significant rural development research project which came out of Toronto. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the "Backgrounds to Social Credit in Alberta" project served as the basis for a number of monographs. Nine volumes were contributed to the series, which was edited by S. D. Clark.

During this formative stage of Canadian sociology the Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science (CJEPS) was especially important. CJEPS first appeared in 1935. It served as one of the primary showcases for evidence of scholarly activity in the "sociology-in-political-economy" years [14:17]. CJEPS was read by Innis' students at Toronto; equally, McGill sociologists also read (and published in) the journal.

Clark's collection of essays, entitled The Developing Canadian Community [6], documents the span of his research activity between the 1930s and 1960s. The first part of the book contains Clark's "staples" articles on such subjects as the fur trade, farming in New France, gold in British Columbia, and wheat in the Prairies. The substantive chapters in the rest of the book deal with various aspects of institutionalized structures in Canada, often with implicit or explicit comparisons being made with the U.S. Throughout, there is an emphasis on "social change" and "development," broadly defined. Clark examined change within the system and "change of the system." As a "sociological historian" he offers many insights useful to students of development.

PORTER AT CARLETON

While S. D. Clark at Toronto was for many years the leading sociologist concerned with development, John Porter is generally considered as having been the Canadian sociologist. Porter's work was also focused primarily on Canadian society, and, like Clark, he saw Canada in a development perspective.

Porter was personally concerned with inequalities and the possibility of using educational opportunities to create a more egalitarian distributional system. This is not the place to examine the substance of his famous work The Vertical Mosaic [20], but it must be noted that the book influenced a

generation of Canadian sociologists who have dealt with stratification in their society and the general analyses of social change, often with a Neo-Marxian slant (5).

Despite Porter's tremendous influence on Canadian sociology, however, his work on prestige, education, and occupational mobility is closely akin to conventional, empirical studies also undertaken in the U.S. and other countries after WWII. He was self-critical toward the end of his career and questioned the "overconcern for economic growth as the *raison d'être* of industrialization" and the assumption that "the overall effects of industrialization have been beneficial and progressive" [21:25, cited by 8:586]. Guided social change was definitely an aspect of Porter's work and students of development would benefit from reading his essays [22] because -- although they deal with Canadian society -- they are concerned with questions which are central to the study of development anywhere.

CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Between 1964 and 1984 there were only six articles with rural sociology as their primary focus published in the Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology (CRSA), one of our leading sociology journals. Thus, for example, in the August, 1983, edition there is an article by William Reimer [23] on farm labour in Quebec and an article by Jack Richardson [24] on the Canadian agricultural frontier and ground rent. The two articles tend to reflect the split between McGill and Toronto discussed earlier. There are only a dozen or so sociologists in Canada who specialize in the study of rural sociological issues and most of them are active in the Rural Sociological Society (as well as in strictly Canadian professional organizations).

The Canadian scholarly community is much smaller than the American and that means that work on rural sociology in Canada tends to be a somewhat rarified pursuit, despite the importance of agricultural production and the rural community in Canada today. That gap has been filled somewhat by the publication of occasional papers at the University of Guelph and by the Proceedings summaries of the Canadian Association for Rural Studies meetings. However, those efforts are just getting off the ground. They might have failed entirely except for American contributions and participation. For example, the first Comparative Rural and Regional Studies Occasional Paper is by Frederick H. Buttel [4]. There is no Canadian rural sociology textbook, although there is a useful volume by Fuller [13] which deals with Ontario (6).

There is a certain amount of productive tension between Neo-Marxist and non-Marxist approaches to sociology in

Canada. The CRSA recently carried a special issue on the state of the art and generally those articles agree on the tendency of Canadian intellectual traditions to be re-awakening after an interlude in the 1950s and 1960s when American social science was dominant. In the early 1970s there was a renaissance of Canadian national identity in sociology and there was much research work devoted to issues of foreign ownership, elite networks, class-related phenomena, and feminism.

In 1978 the Neo-Marxist journal Studies in Political Economy (SPE) was founded. SPE has emphasized the important role played by world capitalist development in shaping Canadian life. As the editor of CRSA points out [17:617-618], "One foci [of research in Canada] is the overarching presence of a critical perspective [in English Canadian sociology], no doubt borne by the colonial experience in relation to both the centre/periphery axis and the national/continental axis." In other words, political economy questions still remain significant.

Canadians are part of a capitalist world system and have a unique historical vantage point for studying that system, but few Canadians have applied that perspective to the study of rural sociological topics. With increased interest in the "European world economy" and various types of "world systems" analyses [2, 28, 30], however, the continued relevance of Innis' staples approach is apparent. Any critical rural sociology [e.g., 5] would benefit from consideration of the Innis School, regardless of whether that critical rural sociology takes a Neo-Marxian or a non-Marxist direction. The Innis paradigm can be used to analyze a number of current issues concerning rural development and rural social structure.

The idealized research procedure of the Innis paradigm consists of a number of simple steps, theoretically [1:155].

First, locate the primary staple commodity; then, see who controls the production and distribution of that staple; and finally, ask to what extent the pattern of initial endowments can be broken.

That is, one must first establish what the primary staple is. It may be wheat, corn, fish, livestock, oil, natural gas, whatever. Then, attempt to locate the class relations of those who control and those who do not. Finally, attempt to find historical trends in the pattern of endowments, such as those studied by McCallum [18].

One trend in Canadian agriculture is that agricultural production has become increasingly capital intensive. To the extent that the family farmer is subordinate to capital, he/she is open to exploitation. And to the extent that

farmers are exploited by the structure of the system, the society as a whole -- based on a healthy farm sector -- suffers as well. At a grassroots level, The Canadian Farmers Survival Association [29] has polemicized against the situation, but as yet there has not been a careful study of the present forces of social change imposing themselves on Canadian farmers. But sociologists like Phil Ehrensaft, Peter Sinclair, Pam Smith, and Tony Winson are working on the matter and a better understanding of Canadian agriculture along these lines in the near future seems assured.

CONCLUSION

I find no clear substantiation within Canadian rural studies for the so-called "Rush Thesis" -- or any alternative perspective. At the same time, whatever is unique about Canadian rural sociology obviously has to do with Canada's structural position in the "world system." There seems to have been swings between acceptance of outside influences as a positive contribution and rejection of "outside" control as a threat to Canadian nationalism but the pattern is not simple. The relatively small number of Canadian sociologists actively doing work on rural sociological themes today will undoubtedly be guided both by Canada's intellectual past and, no doubt, carve out entirely new directions in the future, perhaps fitting those new directions into a "modified" staples approach.

The dialectical interplay between Neo-Marxian and non-Marxist intellectual forces in Canada has been productive in the study of class and stratification, corporate networks, and Canada-U.S. relations. Much has been learned but more still needs attention. Some of the issues which I feel rural sociologists in Canada should tackle in the future include: regional disparities in economic development; the decline of the "family farm" as a petty bourgeois form of ownership; the increase in the rural, non-farm population; shifts in the importance of various staples; the decline of small towns as agricultural production changes; employment in agriculture, e.g., "off-shore" and local farm laborers; long-term trends in agricultural investment; and, interrelationships between agriculture and other primary producing sectors.

Such order of problems are very similar to research topics which interest many American rural sociologists. Obviously, then, there is much room for fruitful Canadian and American collaboration, especially in terms of comparative studies and theoretical exchange.