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Cross-Border Ties Among Protest Movements The Great Plains Connection

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This paper examines the connections among political protest movements in twentieth-century western Canada and the United States. Protest movements are social movements and related organizations, including political protest parties, with the objective of deliberately changing government programs and policies. Those changes may also entail altering the composition of the government or even its form. Social movements involve collective efforts to bring about change in ways that avoid or reject established belief systems or organizations. They begin with assessments of what is wrong and propose a blueprint for action to achieve new goals by drawing on committed supporters willing to take risks. Thus I hypothesize that protest movements, free from constraints of institutionalization, can readily cross national boundaries.

Contacts between protest movements in Canada and the United States also stem from similarities between the two countries. Shared geography, a British heritage, democratic practices, and a multi-ethnic population often give rise to similar problems. Similarities in the northern tier of the United States to the adjoining sections of Canada's western provinces are especially prominent. People in this area have all been relatively dependent on resources, either for extraction or initial processing. Consequently, they have strong ties to a world economy and strong reactions to the same kinds of economic problems. They also share an immigrant heritage that ties them to countries beyond the British Isles. With the closing of the US frontier, population movement into Canada, and later, back into the United States, enhanced what Marcus Hansen has called "the mingling of the Canadian and American peoples." All these factors contribute to what some political scientists and geographers believe to be a "borderland"—a geographic area

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straddling two political jurisdictions that displays unique or blended characteristics.\(^4\) Blended or not, there is still evidence that these are areas with distinct regional cultures.\(^5\) One can then expect that common problems will lead to common solutions, regardless of political boundaries.

I concentrate here on the states of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The time frame is virtually all of the twentieth century. Contacts are divided into three substantive areas. The first deals with agriculture and the concerns of farmers. The second focuses on industry and the concerns of workers. The third raises issues of identity relating to race, ethnicity, gender, or more general lifestyle concerns. Although not an exhaustive inventory, it highlights prominent events and contacts. Accounts of contact emphasize chronology and the direction they travel. Because I expect that cross-border contacts among protest movements will be associated with times of shared problems, I do not anticipate that they are any more likely to originate in one country than in the other.

Cross-border ties exist within the context of continuing and far-reaching differences between the two countries, documented in a vigorous literature.\(^6\) Even those who downplay differences by depicting Canada in a largely colonial-type of relationship to the United States must acknowledge that the countries represent two separate sovereignties. Similarly, even those with but a rudimentary understanding of politics must recognize the sharp differences between congressional and parliamentary forms of government. In fact, it is possible to argue that the institutions of government are the most distinctive features setting apart Canada and the United States. As a result, there is an alternate argument to the one already presented. Rather than emphasizing the ease of establishing cross-border ties, it is possible to argue that contacts between political movements confront the constraining effects of national barriers and consequently are weakened by them. The following discussion will evaluate the strength of both the free-flow and constraining arguments.

**Agricultural Concerns**

Uncertainties associated with wheat farming in the Great Plains/Prairies region led farmers, convinced that they were exploited by credit agencies and ignored by government, to find their own solutions. Nineteenth century farmers' movements in the United States moved into Canada shortly after they were founded, with both the Grange and the Patrons of Industry having their greatest success in Ontario. When the Canadian Prairies became the major source of spring wheat, the locale of agrarian movements shifted as well, as farmers in that region formed cooperatives for its purchase and marketing. The first of these was the Territorial Grain Growers' Association (TGGA), founded in 1901-02, soon followed by the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association in 1903. The TGGA was reorganized in 1905 when Alberta and Saskatchewan became separate provinces.\(^7\)

The Society of Equity, a US-based farm group concerned with the cooperative marketing of grain, did spread into Alberta, but its organizational impact was limited. Instead, Canadian cooperatives were of greater interest to American farmers, impressed with the ability of Canadians to get higher grain prices on the Winnipeg market. Support for a state-built grain elevator received majority support in North Dakota in both 1912 and 1914 and the legislature instructed the State Board of Control to look at Canadian experiences in state control.\(^8\) The fledgling Nonpartisan League (NPL) in North Dakota at its inception in 1914 adopted existing Prairie policy of giving tax exemptions for farm improvement as a way to dissuade outsiders from profiting from farm purchases.\(^9\) An ambitious but unsuccessful plan for cooperative grain marketing by the US Grain Grower's Company was modeled on the Alberta Grain Growers Association. Canadian representatives of farm movements were "enthusiastically received" at the 1920 Chicago
convention of the National Board of Farm Organizations, where a resolution was passed recommending the setup of an international committee representing farmers in both countries.10

The rise of the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota changed the nationality of influential movements. In 1916, the year the NPL succeeded in winning its slate for the Republican primary, S. E. Haight, a Saskatchewan farmer, returned from North Dakota and told his neighbors of the exciting new movement that was dedicated to changing the life of farmers. In Saskatchewan, however, the NPL ran up against institutional barriers that made its tactics of entering a major party’s primary races and offering non-partisan alternatives irrelevant. The NPL contested the Saskatchewan provincial election in 1917, but with no success. Yet, moving into Alberta, it did attract enough support in 1918 to elect two candidates pledged to the NPL agenda.11

Even more significant than its own limited success in electoral politics was the influence that the NPL exerted on subsequent Canadian political movements. William Irvine, who helped establish the NPL in Alberta in 1916, and served as editor of The Nutcracker, the NPL newspaper in that province, was one of the founders of the United Farmers of Alberta, a movement that became the governing party from 1921 to 1935.12 The NPL became fully Canadianized by its absorption, both organizationally and with respect to basic principles, into the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA).13 The NPL also recruited J. S. Woodworth, who worked briefly as an organizer for the movement in Saskatchewan in 1917,14 as I shall discuss under the heading of industrial concerns. Extending NPL influence to an industrial connection seems appropriate because Woodworth became a member of parliament representing the Independent Labour Party in Winnipeg and a founder and leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). In some sense, then, the NPL played a role in the founding of the UFA and the CCF. Through its connection with the UFA, the NPL also had formative impact at the local level organization of the Social Credit movement in Alberta.15

The extent to which the principles of the NPL were congenial to Canadian farmers, at least when they were living in the United States, has not gone unquestioned, however. Michael Rogin in an ecological analysis of voting patterns, suggests that Canadians in North Dakota were supporters of the Democrats and opponents of the NPL, but he has no explanation for his findings, and evidence of political leanings is, in any case, difficult to substantiate for the Canadian-born, who were often not distinguished from native-born residents.16

More generally, after the initial enthusiasm for the innovative approaches to farm problems advocated by political movements in the Prairies, the United States seems to have asserted its stronger appeal. This was reflected in the US origins of the leader of the UFA, Henry Wise Wood and the argument that Alberta went Social Credit because of ideas and migrants from south of the border.17 Interest in reformist or utopian ideas originating in the United States seems to have been a widely distributed Prairie phenomenon, not just confined to Alberta. Reform-minded farmers and their associates read and discussed the works of Henry George, William Jennings Bryan, Thorstein Veblen, Lincoln Steffens, Edward Bellamy, and Upton Sinclair.18 As a commentator writing during the 1920s in the progressive periodical The Canadian Forum pointed out, hard economic times and the pull of geography combined to make secession and then annexation to the United States attractive to the Canadian West.19

Separatist sentiments still flourish in western Canada, though talk of joining the United States is not as prominent, partly because national boundaries now coincide with increased differences within the borderland and cross-border contacts among farm movements have declined. The new roles assumed by both federal governments from the Great Depression onward offered nationally distinct solutions to the problems of farmers. International
agreements like NAFTA have accentuated conflicts over trade in farm products. Since the 1930s, the shrinking agricultural economy has made farming the concern of fewer people, now more widely dispersed than then in even the two most comparable areas, Saskatchewan and North Dakota. The political environments have changed as well. North Dakota is a Republican state where its progressive roots in the Nonpartisan League live on in the Democratic-NPL Party. Saskatchewan has had comparable encounters with Conservative governments, yet it stays more loyal to its political heritage and now, once again, is governed by the CCF’s heir, the New Democratic Party (NDP).

**INDUSTRIAL CONCERNS**

The areas discussed in this paper were far from the industrial heartlands of their respective countries, yet, early on, they were tied to industrial developments through their participation in critical extractive industries of mining and lumber. And, just as in farming, searches for innovative ways of dealing with the special combination of physical environment, the nature of work, and political dependence arose within each country and also crossed borders. As I have already noted in discussing agricultural concerns, even the farming focus of the Nonpartisan League would have some resonance with the concerns of workers. J. S. Woodsworth, one of the most important leaders of the CCF, would make use of what he had previously learned working for the NPL to mobilize support for the CCF.20

Outside of the Plains/Prairies, a new labor movement swept the west coast between 1917 and 1919, creating the One Big Union (OBU), more radical than other union movements in advocating direct action and dual unionism.21 The Canadian One Big Union, formed in Calgary in 1919, found its greatest test in trying to build on the Winnipeg General Strike of that year.22 In both countries, the OBU had its roots in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which, along with the Western Federation of Miners, had been around since early in the century when they organized workers in British Columbia and Alberta.23 According to Gad Horowitz, the influence of these workers’ movements was not confined to the workplace. “The strength of the extreme left varieties of socialism in British Columbia can be traced back to the strong influence of American radical unionism—from the Western Federation of Miners to the Industrial Workers of the World—on the British Columbia labour movement.”24

It is relevant in this context that many Canadian historians downplay the ties between the US and Canadian versions of the OBU. Kenneth McNaught and David Bercuson, for example, describe the founders of the Canadian OBU as “overwhelmingly British and Canadian” and the OBU’s ideology as based on Owenite ideals of syndicalism.25 Yet, even without using the concept, they give a detailed description of dual unionism applicable to both countries. The IWW defined this as “industrialism” rather than syndicalism,26 a form of unionization in which all workers would belong to one, highly centralized organization. At the same time, for purposes of bargaining, they could belong to a union based on geography or industry. Industrialism was also characterized by direct action in the workplace and avoidance of political, especially electoral, involvement.27

The historians’ rejection of possible influence from US ties reflects a larger issue of how the forces of nationalism have affected interpretations of the history of the Canadian labor movement. Yet it is difficult to deny that, with few exceptions, mostly in western Canada, early trade unions came under the influence of the American Federation of Labor. The Canadian Trades and Labor Congress (TLC) was quickly made up almost entirely of AFL affiliates. Although the TLC did not fully accept Gompers’s views of socialism or of independent political action,28 it did represent the relatively conservative stance associated with the AFL. Moreover, its leaders remained uncomfortable with nationalist arguments that
did not fully acknowledge the continental position of Canada. The apparent willingness of the TLC to be subservient to the AFL, taken as the absence of an aggressive nationalism, and, later, its related unwillingness to treat the CCF as the political arm of labor, have offended nationalist academics active in the CCF-NDP. Their assessments, however, do not affect the evidence of US influence as its unions moved across the border.

In 1935, trade unionists in the United States, dissatisfied with the AFL's unwillingness to organize workers in mass-production industries, formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Their activities aroused the interest of those Canadian unionists dissatisfied with the TLC. Irving Abella takes the position that, From the beginning, CIO activity in Canada was more the result of the forceful demands and activities of the Canadian workers than of the plans of the CIO hierarchy in the United States. . . . Because they felt no Canadian union was in a position to undertake any large-scale organization, by default, therefore, they opted for the CIO.29

Among the first CIO-affiliated unions in Canada was a local of the United Mine Workers in Alberta.30 Still, Abella does not want to give too much credit to US actions. He rests his argument for the spread of the CIO on the determined organizing efforts of Canadians, particularly those affiliated with the Communist Party.

The Communist Party, in turn, had its cross-border connections.31 The direction of movement seems to have been both ways, encouraged by the legal harassment to which party members were subject and by the party's identity as an international movement.

Other protest parties, even without an international focus, also found sympathetic connections in neighboring areas. Farmer-Labor Party Governor Floyd Olson invited M. J. Coldwell, provincial leader of the Farmer-Labour party in Saskatchewan and one of the founders of the CCF, to address the Minnesota legislature concerning the role of the CCF in 1935, the same year Coldwell began his lengthy tenure as a CCF member of parliament. The CCF executive reciprocated in 1942 by requesting greetings from the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Association on the occasion of Coldwell's election to the national presidency of the CCF.32 During the 1930s, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, as its name suggests, was still struggling to tie together competing coalitions, among which were dedicated socialist trade unionists. It was the socialists who captured the platform committee during the 1934 convention, leaving Governor Olson with a campaign platform that he found difficult to defend. It is Millard Gieske's assessment that the governor used strategies the CCF had learned from their loss of the 1934 Saskatchewan election to soft-pedal socialism as an immediate goal.33 Influence from the CCF was mediated by Vince Day, advisor to Governor Olson.

From the 1930s on, the CCF's expected federal victory remained beyond reach, as didgovernment provincial office outside of Saskatchewan. Meanwhile, the merger of the two main union congresses in 1956 opened the possibility of a unified workers' party.34 After considerable study and negotiation, the CCF was reorganized and renamed the New Democratic Party in 1961.35 During the transition to the new party, resident academic ideologists debated its direction. On the one side, Kenneth McNaught invoked the authority of the late CCF leader, J. S. Woodsworth, to reject the Galbraithian tone of Tommy Douglas's keynote address. In that speech, Douglas, former premier of Saskatchewan who would go on to become parliamentary leader of the NDP, had warned his colleagues not to try to solve the problems of the 1960s by defining them as problems of the 1930s or by proposing the methods of the 1930s. Ramsay Cook responded to McNaught by saying it was wrong not to learn from people like J.K. Galbraith and the lessons they offered about the virtues of a mixed economy.36 Although it is unclear from their
exchange whether Douglas was guilty of being insufficiently socialist or too open to US ideas, we can still evaluate the dispute between McNaught and Cook as further evidence of penetration from the United States.

It appears that, more than farm movements, labor movements have been likely to originate in the United States and to arouse some nationalist opposition in Canada. Nationalism has often been expressed as anti-Americanism, with the result that the importation of ideas and organizations from the United States is now much less likely than it was up until the 1930s. At the same time, as I will go on to show, the relative success of the CCF-NDP has continued to exert some attraction in the United States.

IDENTITY

Identity politics, the concern with issues and values relating to conceptions of individual and group selfhood, has a long history. One could even say that it involves the most primitive basis for the formation of political movements. Paradoxically, the sense that identity is rooted in the most fundamental ways of classifying people had led political theorists to neglect it. Identities based on biological differences were expected to be superseded by social evolutionary developments that would give primacy to the conflicts, inherent in industrial organization, pitting workers against owners and managers. Such theories have been discarded, however, as age, sex, race and ethnicity, language, religion, and geography all continue to play a role in today's political struggles. In addition, a strong argument has been made that the transformations of the contemporary world have made many people newly sensitive to issues that extend beyond the search for financial security to include their quality of life.

All these developments make it difficult to establish simple guidelines for what should be included under identity politics. In addition, there is a special sensitivity to this issue in Canada, where national identity itself continues to be debated. As a consequence, any evidence of US impact on Canada is likely to be viewed with suspicion and, whenever possible, either denied or explained away. For these reasons, the following review of contacts among political movements involving identity is even less complete than the two preceding sections. But what it loses in completeness should be compensated for by its continuing relevance.

Religion and politics provided one of the early links between the two countries through the social gospel movement, originating in the United States. Articles about social gospel were regularly published in the Prairie Grain Growers Guide, which also publicized and sold copies of secular works with reformist messages, including Henry George's Progress and Poverty and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward. The United States was also the source of less benign influences that, while preaching adherence to Christianity, interpreted its principles in destructive ways. The Ku Klux Klan spread group hatred beginning in the 1920s when entering Klansmen moved from Oregon and Washington into British Columbia and from Indiana into Saskatchewan. The Klan, also active in Manitoba and Alberta at around the same time, had its greatest impact in Saskatchewan, where it preached anti-Catholicism.

The Klan found a ready audience among both ordinary residents and opposition politicians, who used the Klan's anti-Catholicism against the governing Liberals. Liberal Premier Jimmy Gardner himself attacked the KKK prior to the 1928 provincial election, linking it with his political opponents. The year before, Gardner had described the KKK as exemplifying another, earlier, US scam, the Nonpartisan League! His denunciation of the KKK carried with it a thinly veiled attack on the Progressive Party, the main opposition, for its US leanings. The Liberals were defeated, in some measure, by the KKK's actions, and prominent members of both the Conservative and Progressive parties were active in the Klan.

The Klan's disappearance was not complete. It resurfaced in British Columbia in the 1980s,
continuing the anti-Asian message, prominent there in the 1920s, with new immigrant targets. In 1980, Klan leader Wolfgang Droege announced that the KKK had merged with the anti-immigrant Nationalist Party of Canada.43

Another kind of identity politics is manifested in the actions of the New Left in the 1960s. Although part of a world-wide movement of young people, the Canadian version was overwhelmingly dominated by developments in the United States, especially those who gravitated to Canadian universities.44 To James Laxer, then a student member of the more traditional left, it was dismaying that “the Canadian New Left derived much of its style and ideology from the United States, and American-centred issues filled its political agenda.” Laxer found the emphasis on “cultural rebellion” especially inappropriate when the enemy was better conceived as “American imperialism.” But once the New Left moved westward to Saskatchewan and British Columbia, he perceived the situation to have improved. Instead of remaining alienated from the old left, particularly from the NDP, the New Left reached out for allies in that party and acquired a more socialist orientation.45

In the United States, meanwhile, the search for a political voice for the New Left led to a number of attempts to form a viable protest party. The most recent manifestation is the eponymous New Party, a national political movement with active members in western states. In Wisconsin, for example, activists include Bruce Colborn of the Milwaukee Central Labor Council and Joel Rogers, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Its affiliate there, Progressive Milwaukee, was successful in electing a state representative in 1992. Lisa Daugaard described an invitation from the NDP to visit Canada and receive training in organizing a progressive party. At the same time that she acknowledged how helpful the NDP could be, she was mindful of its difficulties even at a time when the NDP was at a relative peak and formed the governments of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. Moreover, the NDP’s advantage lay in support from a much stronger labor movement than exists in the United States. While these factors might suggest that there was not much to be learned from exchanges between the New Party and the NDP, the two parties did issue a joint news release that included hopes to establish more permanent relations. The article ended with a note from the editor, requesting volunteers to work for NDP candidates campaigning in the upcoming federal election.46

Some cross-border contact is also present for the Green Party.47 Guests are invited to conventions but the primary line of contact appears to be from mutual commitment to environmentalism. In Canada, the Greens have followed the more traditional political practices of other third parties and entered electoral politics. In the United States, they have more often emphasized moral concerns that remove them from conventional politics.48 If these differences persist, we can expect that national adaptations will effectively limit close association.

Social Credit provides another example of identity politics. Although the Social Credit movement in Canada has suffered sharp setbacks in Alberta, where it was historically strongest, there are still those concerned about its potential influence. Gary North, who describes himself as a Christian economist, recently tried to lay bare the unchristian foundations of Social Credit teachings. Although his principal dispute is with Social Credit’s founder, Major C. H. Douglas, he must also deal with William Aberhart, the original leader of the movement in Alberta. Aberhart was a radio evangelist and, according to North, it was through his version of Social Credit that the damage was done. From the beginning of Aberhart’s preaching, “Christians have adopted Social Credit as an ideal supposedly consistent with Christianity.”49 They were encouraged in this path by the popularity of Aberhart’s radio preaching.
under the auspices of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, carried to listeners in the northern tier states.  

The growth of political consciousness among Native American or First Nations groups is another arena for the politics of identity to cross borders. On the one hand, even the recognition of national boundaries meets considerable resistance from groups whose identity predates their imposition. At the same time, and particularly as some tribes increase their resources, there is growing awareness of the value of helping other Native groups take a political stand. For example, American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier, a fugitive in the United States, found refuge in Canada. There he was adopted by the Kwakewlth people of Vancouver Island and his extradition hearings became an avenue for mobilizing Canada’s Native Peoples. All of North America has the potential for such activity, as evident from the visit of the Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Ovide Mercredi, and other Native Canadian leaders to the Chiapas area shortly after the uprising that coincided with the imposition of NAFTA. But it is also a fact, born of national differences in how governments respond to their indigenous populations, that there are bound to be significantly different adaptations to the formulation of political identity on both sides of the border. For example, policies on criminal justice are now quite different and appear to have different outcomes.

Concerns with identity provide a rationale for political movements that can travel in either direction and continue to find potential adherents. In both regards, they differ from movements based on agricultural and industrial concerns that are more time-bound and more likely to originate in the United States.

**Why Do Ties Form?**

This overview supports the idea that cross-border ties among protest movements flow freely. Critical periods, mainly early in the century until World War I and during the Great Depression, affecting the livelihoods and well-being of farmers and workers, generated protest movements that found adherents on both sides of the Canada-US border. Identity concerns continue to proliferate and, with them, protest movements that can travel between the two countries. Although common problems catalyze contact, excitement generated by the movements themselves attracts the attention of like-minded people across the border.

At the same time, there are also important constraining factors that limit how much contact will take place and how influential it will be. Among the most critical are existing governmental structures, types of government policies, and the anti-American feelings that are part of Canadian nationalism. In essence, these forces place limits on even the non-institutionalized approaches associated with protest movements.

Evidence in support of both expectations about the likelihood of cross-border ties can be reconciled, to a degree, by taking into account the nature and process through which movements spread. In times of shared problems, the promise of a solution has a great appeal, regardless of origin. Solutions are ideas about change and all the political movements have in common a transfer of core ideas that have been able to move, at times, from Canada to the United States as well as, more frequently, in the opposite direction. An early observer of this phenomenon concluded that, “The international boundary is an invisible and intangible thing. Trade may be controlled, but ideas cannot be excluded. Owing to the geographical situation it is almost inevitable that schemes of social reform in the two countries will go hand-in-hand.” Ideas are resources that enrich the political movements that have them and enable those movements to exert influence over other movements and organizations. Ideas are carried by individuals in ways that increase the ideas’ mobility. When individual carriers share the nationality of those they are trying to mobilize, this can override
the disadvantages that imported ideas might otherwise face.\textsuperscript{55}

Movement proselytizers like the Ku Klux Klan can see a ripe field for their message in the neighboring country. The Klan was among the most active sending agents, driven, like all political movements, by conviction about the value of its goals but also by opportunities for profit. Organizing in Saskatchewan was done on a commission basis and, as the legal authorities became interested in the three organizers who had been sent into the province, the latter absconded with all the money they had raised.\textsuperscript{56}

The subsequent history of the Klan’s impact in Saskatchewan then rose and fell with the kinds of organizers despatched to the province. But more important than the senders are those who receive the message. “The Ku Klux Klan did not invent prejudice in Saskatchewan. It was already there in abundance, rooted in groups and processes—economic, social and political—perceived as threatening to the status and power of native, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Saskatchewanians.”\textsuperscript{57}

Similarly, the US content of the Canadian New Left needs to be interpreted in light of what made that movement attractive to Canadians. Conditions giving rise to the movement were not unique to Canada but they did exist in Canada with as much pressing urgency as elsewhere. One factor was demographic—the growth of young people as a proportion of the population. A second was institutional—the growth of post-secondary education through the expansion of existing universities and the founding of new ones. The concentration of young people on campuses where they could be easily mobilized formed the basis for expressing discontent with university procedures, if with nothing else.\textsuperscript{58} Laxer’s interpretation of the New Left goes beyond these local conditions and emphasizes the ways in which influences from the United States continued to detract from an appreciation of Canadian history and circumstances. Yet the New Left could find a fertile setting for mobilizing some young people without becoming relevant to economic and nationalist problems. Laxer predicted that the New Left would “remain on the margin of things”\textsuperscript{59} and, while it did fade from view, it also heralded important life style changes that have had more lasting impact.

The most significant kinds of contacts are those that actively engage the movement’s receivers, like the native son returning to his province who initially exposed the NPL to farmers in the Prairies. Those who argue for the independence of the Canadian labor movement have some basis for their position from similar activity by those receiving the influence of US unions. Abella, for example, documents how Canadian workers, dissatisfied with existing union leadership, began to organize in the style of the CIO and to even label themselves as CIO before there was any initiative from the US-based union.\textsuperscript{60}

Political movements may not have unlimited access across borders yet they have one great advantage that arises from the problems they challenge. Although it is commonly said that the definition of a problem is the first step in finding a solution, problems are much easier to define than are viable solutions. As a result, any movement that provides solutions also demonstrates a powerful attraction to others who feel themselves in the same boat. This offer of solutions gives a rationale for protest movements to cross the border between Canada and the United States when related regions face similar problems. The content of their problems may change but new ones are sure to arise and, with them, the continuing search for ways to solve them. In the process, those alert to the problems will play an active role in selecting and adapting what they see as relevant messages.

NOTES

This paper draws on ongoing research dealing with the organization of protest parties and movements in the middle and far west of Canada and the United States. Research support comes from the Faculty Research Program, Canadian Embassy, 1990-91; the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
of Canada, 1994-97; and a Senior Fellowship Award from the Canadian Embassy, 1996. Research assistance was provided by Csaba Nikolenyi. I make use of data beyond those regions normally included in the Great Plains, including British Columbia and Washington, whenever these are relevant to the core area.


11. Ibid., pp. 77-90, 91-94.


41. Ibid., pp. 63-65.
44. Tim Reid and Julyan Reid, eds., Student Power and the Canadian Campus (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1969).
47. BC Green Party, Green Party News 4-6 (December 1983).
50. For example, in 1935, the local Calgary station estimated that there were more than 100,000 listeners in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Montana. W. E. Mann, Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), p. 22. Although the Reform Party, one
highly visible current heir to Social Credit, is often discussed as American influenced, it cannot be directly linked to a US movement today.


57. Ibid., p. 50. See also Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies* (note 5 above), p. 405.

