E.H. OLIVER: A STUDY OF PROTESTANT PROGRESSIVISM IN SASKATCHEWAN 1909 - 1935.

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E. H. OLIVER: A STUDY OF
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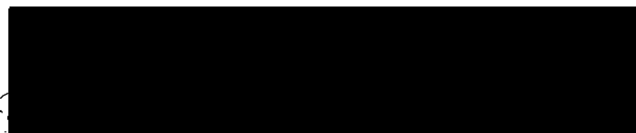
Signature 

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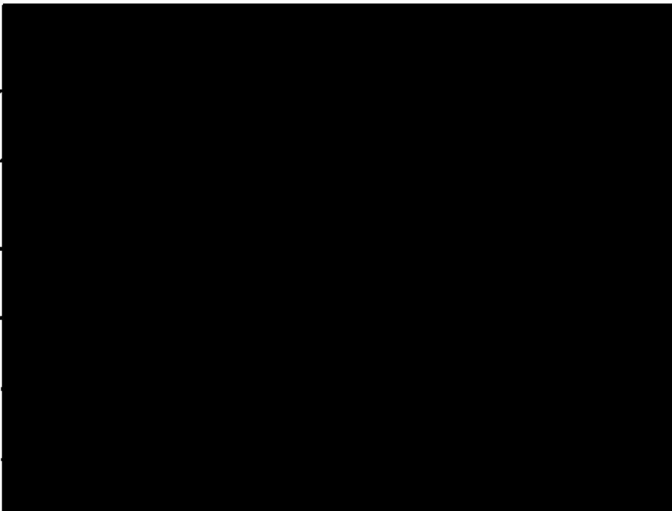

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ABSTRACT

The Presbyterian component of Protestant progressivism on the Prairies, is an area which has, to date, received very little attention in historical research. Although A. R. Allen, W. L. Morton, J. Webster Grant, and John S. Moir have all contributed greatly to Canadian church history and to an examination of the liberal progressive reform movements in the prairie West, there has been little research done on the Presbyterian progressivism in the Prairies. Clarence MacKinnon's 1936 biography of E. H. Oliver briefly traced Oliver's life but further study was needed in order to fully appreciate his contribution to Saskatchewan and Canada and to place him within the reform era of which he was a part. An examination of the life of Edmund Henry Oliver, a liberal progressive Presbyterian in Saskatchewan, is an attempt to look at the early Presbyterian progressivism in the West and more particularly, one representative and leader of that movement. Oliver's life and his involvement in prohibition, agricultural credit, immigration, education and the struggle for church union make him a case study of the reform era in the first few decades of this century.

The most helpful resource material for this thesis was Oliver's own personal letters that he wrote to Rita, his wife, while he was overseas during the First World War.

Oliver wrote a letter nearly every day for three years and in them, he shared with his wife, his social philosophy as he worked with the Canadian troops as a chaplain and teacher. Oliver's books, articles for the Royal Society of Canada, and the many articles for the church magazines and newspapers reveal his interest in history and his vision for the West. W. L. Morton's works on the progressive movement and A. R. Allen's on the social gospel provide a solid backdrop for the analysis of E. H. Oliver's life and career in Saskatchewan. There is very little information available which describes Oliver's early life before he came to Saskatchewan but the effects of his upbringing and homelife can be seen throughout the remainder of his life. The personal correspondence, the commission records, the church newspapers, his books, his articles and his hard work and dedication throughout his life and particularly during his moderatorship gave a fairly clear picture of a man who had a vision for the West, which had its roots in liberal and progressive theology, and who dedicated his life to his church, his West and his country.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"A giant has fallen in his prime in Dr. E. H. Oliver--a giant of a man in capacity, scholarship, qualities of leadership and in conviction--at the early age of 53."[1] The Saskatoon Star Phoenix, like many newspapers in Saskatchewan and throughout Canada, poured forth praise for Dr. Oliver's contributions to his church, his province and his country. Within a span of twenty-five years, Dr. Oliver had become a giant in the minds of many. He joined Dr. Walter Murray at the new University of Saskatchewan in 1909 to teach history and economics and became one of the founders and the first principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon before serving overseas as chaplain in the First World War. Oliver became a well-known historian through his many books, articles and lectures in which he interpreted the West and its early development. At the beginning of the depression, Edmund Henry Oliver was chosen as the Fourth Moderator of the newly formed United Church at a time when the church needed strong leadership.

Clarence MacKinnon, Principal of Pine Hill Divinity

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1. Saskatoon Star Phoenix, July 16, 1935.

Hall, wrote a biography of Dr. E. H. Oliver in 1936, which was a personal tribute to a life long friend and colleague.[2] Even though the book was intended to be a brief and personal biography, it failed to mention many aspects of Dr. Oliver's life such as his work on the Royal Commissions in any detail; his involvement in the language question and it failed to interpret or analyse his writings or his career as a whole in the light of the reform era of which he was a part. MacKinnon's book is not to be faulted though for its omissions because it has served as a useful key which has opened the door to further research and a better understanding of one of Saskatchewan's foremost church leaders. Because of the research by W. L. Morton, Richard Allen, J. E. Rea and Russell B. Nye, to mention only a few scholars, better understanding of social movements such as the progressives and the social gospellers has resulted, which necessitates a re-examination of Oliver's life. An understanding of these social movements will enhance our understanding of Oliver's life and a study of his life, as a case study, will in turn increase our understanding both of the reform era in the early decades of this century and of the interaction of church and society in the West and in the nation.

Before turning to Dr. Oliver, a brief examination of this progressive era itself and the various historical

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2. C. MacKinnon, <u>The Life of Principal Oliver</u>, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1936).

laurentian school argued that the Canadian Pacific Railway, the North West Mounted Police, the early territorial system of government and even the church missionaries were all part of eastern Canadian influences on the settlement and development of the West. The flow of ideas as of transportation and economic development, was East-West rather than North-South.

The Frontier was, for Oliver himself, an experience of paramount importance; and the term had historiographical significance, as the title of his best known book, The Winning of the Frontier, indicates. But while the Turner thesis or the metropolitan historical school of thought are useful in providing a backdrop to Dr. Oliver, neither totally explain his interpretation of Western Canadian history. As will be shown in the following chapters, Dr. Oliver saw the West as an expanding geographical area of need and challenge which sometimes assumed a leadership role within Canada while still relying on its institutions and policies which had been inherited from Eastern Canada and Europe.

There have been other descriptions and interpretations of this period of reform in the first four decades of this century. T. D. Regehr sectioned this time into three basic periods of historiography.[3] He saw the prairie

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3. T. D. Regehr, "Historiography of the Canadian Plains after 1870," A Region of the Mind, edited by Richard Allen, (Regina:Canadian Plains Studies, 1973), p. 88.

historians of the early part of this century, particularly prior to the First World War, as writing with optimism. Laurier believed that the twentieth century was Canada's and the prairie historians knew that the West would be the focal point within the new nation. The historian's work, according to Regehr, not only tells us about a particular period of time in the past but the historian's interpretation itself is affected by his environment as he is writing. The articles and books written within this period are characterized by the number of times the historian used such words as "growth" and "expansion." The post-war period up to the depression in 1929-30, produced a different historical interpretation according to Regehr. It was a time of less optimism, a growth of agrarian revolt and the formation of farm protest groups.

The depression combined with the drought began a new era in the West and a new period of historical interpretation. Regehr saw a common thread in the historical accounts of this period as having an air of pessimism and discouragement. The goals, dreams and bright future for the West were dashed even further with each successive crop failure and the dust storms. This was a time of re-evaluation of the goals and future of the West within Confederation. The West had styled itself as the leader and the land of milk and honey but the milk had soured and the honey combs were filled with dust. The bread basket of the world had,

in a few short years, turned into the dust bowl.
T. D. Regehr's three periods of historiography, as will be shown, are helpful in interpreting Oliver's changing view of prairie history at different periods in his life.

Frontier circumstances, environmental factors, and economic cycles certainly have to be major factors in anyone's view of prairie history but J. E. Rea, by means of the Hartzian or fragment theory, has added a cultural explanation as to why the West was unique and why it became a centre of reform and unrest. According to the Hartzian explanation, the majority of settlers in Manitoba were a fragment of the Ontario culture and society which broke away and was transplanted in the new and unsettled West. Once their religious, cultural and political concepts, which the fragment had brought with them, were removed from the Ontario scene, these concepts became more radical. Since the built-in restraints of Ontario were not present in Manitoba, this fragment attempted to create a new Ontario in Manitoba but became more extreme than the society it had broken away from. The French Catholic question was one example used by Rea where an Anglo-Protestant attitude in Ontario became an anti-French Catholic prejudice in Manitoba. Even the European immigrants, in order to gain acceptance, were forced to fit into the Protestant Anglo-Saxon mould and once the immigrant had adapted, he too became unaccepting of the French language. The new settlements in Manitoba were

patterned on Ontario but were more extreme because of the absence of the built-in restraint of Ontario's society and culture. Edmund Oliver was one of those Ontario fragments, though a late comer, and the Hartzian theory offers another helpful perspective in which to view Oliver's rapid rise as a leading figure in Prairie Protestantism.

Combining the transplanted Ontarians with the rapid influx of European immigrants in a new expanding land with uncertain economic conditions led to a general spirit of revolt and reform which has often been described as the "progressive movement." Western Canada was fertile soil for reform movements, not only for reasons explained by the fragment thesis, but because it was the meeting ground between the growing industrialization in the East and the agricultural economy in the West. Russel Nye's description of the agrarian revolt and progressive politics in the midwestern states shows many parallels to the developments in Canada.[4] Three main problems faced the agrarian West: the railway, credit and the tariff, all of which were controlled by the East. Because the wheat farmer was very dependent on the weather and was usually dependent on one crop without diversification, the wheat belt was hardest hit in depression or drought, thus becoming highly susceptible to reform movements.[5]

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4. Russel B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics, (New York: Harper and Row, 1959).

5. Ibid., p. 12.

Regional unrest, the growth of agrarian protest, the Progressive Party and the progressive reform movement are other backdrops which must be remembered in our examination of Dr. Oliver's ideas and beliefs. As will be shown, his philosophy of cooperation in agricultural credit, provincial finances and his opposition to the tariff and similar eastern policies had their roots in his familiarity with prairie circumstances and his sympathy with the progressive movement. W. L. Morton summed up his definition of progressivism as follows:

> Progressivism was encumbered by no dogma save faith in the virtue of people, and under its banners mustered the doctrines and causes current in the day, single tax, prohibition, cooperation, group government, socialism, pacifism, in short, secular evangelism in all its manifestations.[6]

This period of reform contained many political groups such as the Society of Equity, the People's Political Association of Canada, the Direct Legislation League, and the Nonpartisan League.[7] Agrarian movements such as the Grange, the Patrons of Industry, the Grain Growers Association and the United Farmers Association prepared reform platforms and canvassed the province for new members and funds. Some of these organizations were local and short-lived while

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6. W. L. Morton, "Direct Legislation and the Origins of the Progressive Movement," Canadian Historical Review, 1944, p. 279.

7. D. S. Spafford, "'Independent' Politics in Saskatchewan before the Nonpartisan League," Saskatchewan History, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Winter, 1965.

others, such as the Grain Growers Association and the United Farmers Association had large memberships and wielded great reform pressure. The basic characteristics that these farmer organizations had in common were a faith in democracy, a hatred of corporate wealth, and a distrust of the political system.[8] As in most of the reform movements, the agrarian revolt shared certain ideas and roots with similar movements in Europe and the United States. The Western Canadian reformers along with their American counterparts held two possible solutions to their problems: either the farmers could join together in a united cooperative venture or the Legislature could be pressured into passing legislative corrective action.[9] If the legislators could not be pressured into legislating reform, they would be replaced by someone who could and would produce change.

The Progressive Party, itself, was a diverse group with many different aims and objectives. The party contained some former Liberals who were hoping to reform the Liberal Party through their efforts in the Progressive Party. Many farmers joined the Progressives in order to correct the agricultural and trade problems in the West which they felt, had been created by the East and by the old

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8. W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 15.

9. Russel B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics, pp. 14 and 15.

line parties. Other Progressives disapproved of the political party system generally and preferred group government or a system of direct legislation.

While Oliver was familiar with the congeries of groups and ideas which made up progressive agrarian reform, and sympathized with its broad objectives, he did not equally agree with all the elements identified by Morton in his definition. In order to locate his standpoint within the progressive movement of the time, it is necessary to locate the religious, educational and moral base from which he worked, a task which raises the question of the relation of religion to the larger 'secular' movement of western progressivism. W. L. Morton has summarized this progressive reform spirit and movement as secular evangelism. Richard Allen argues that the social gospel and the progressive movement were bound together and that the progressive movement had its roots in the social religious evangelism known as the social gospel.

> The crest and crisis of the social gospel was intimately bound up with the fortunes of the farmer, labour and social work, as well as of the churches and inter-denominational organizations, just as to a lesser or greater degree the fortunes of these groups were influenced by the adequacy of the concepts of the social gospel.[10]

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10. Richard Allen, Social Passion, (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 347.

What then was the social gospel movement? Richard Allen briefly described this movement as a "striving to embed ultimate human goals in the social, economic and political order...."[11] The social gospel, like the progressive movement, was composed of diverse religious and intellectual ingredients such as:

> The revivalist emphasis on the need and possibility of a radical change in life; an evangelical theology of the immanence of God in the processes of change; a belief that the application of Christian energy could arouse social repentance and the will to new life; the establishment or revitalizing of a host of new religious organizations creating a cradle to grave Protestantism at the very time the churches were adopting a broader culture-building role, developing a sense of national mission and anticipating the coming triumph of evangelicalism; the development of more hopeful views of childhood opening new possibilities for secular social reform; a belief that evolution itself not only affirmed the social graces, but called men to new patterns of co-operative living; the renewal by higher criticism of the prophetic tradition that God required not burnt offerings but justice for his people; and the beginnings of a new appreciation of the positive uses of the state.[12]

Settlement houses, youth groups such as the Epworth League and the YMCA, the Social and Moral Reform Council and the Social Service Council were all part of the social gospel movement which was striving to improve the social and spiritual welfare of mankind, and had all found their place

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11. Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," Canadian Historical Review, 1968, p. 381.

12. Richard Allen, "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada," The Social Gospel in Canada, edited by Richard Allen, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975),p. 33.

in the Ontario of Oliver's youth, and had become established on the prairies by the time of his arrival in 1909. Certainly he came to the prairies schooled in the liberal theology which underlay much of the social gospel, and was convinced that the church had a leading role to play in the continuing development of the modern West in a modern Canada, as it had in other terms and times in the past. How he worked that out would, of course, develop with time and circumstance.

At some point Oliver became familiar with the writings of the foremost exponent of the social gospel movement in North America, Walter Rauschenbusch, whose famous works appeared between 1908 and 1917. It was not until the depression of the 1930s, however, that Oliver gave any suggestion of accepting any of the more radical aspects of Rauschenbusch's Christian socialism.[13] For the most part, Oliver held to the mid-positions of social gospel progressives. He cautioned against both *laissez-faire* or a totalitarian state. In March 1917, when Oliver heard of the Russian Revolution, his first reaction was that it was a "God send."[14] Yet the increasing government involvement in the daily lives of the Russian people soon frightened Oliver and even Rauschenbusch and alerted them to the dangers of the loss of

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13. E. H. Oliver, *Tracts for Difficult Times*, (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1933), p. 200.

14. Oliver to his wife, March 25, 1917, Oliver Papers, University of Saskatchewan Archives, (hereinafter referred to as USA).

individual freedom. The First World War necessitated more government involvement in the Canadian economy with planned industry and production, income tax (conscription on wealth) and in legislative control of the sale of alcohol. The balance between individual initiative and state involvement for the public good was a goal that Oliver was striving for, but was a goal whose substance changed somewhat given external conditions such as war or drought.

The tie between the social gospel and progressive movements as argued by Richard Allen, is bolstered by Stewart Crysdale's claim that social gospel was more radical in Saskatchewan than in the rest of Canada.[15] He argues that Saskatchewan had many of its roots in Great Britain; tended to have more farm organizations; worked as a unit to build schools and hospitals; and required government assistance in the building of transportation facilities for the marketing of their agricultural products. If cooperation and government assistance helped solve these physical and psychological problems in Saskatchewan, why not apply these principles to the social and religious problems confronting them?

Accompanying the church, the farm organizations and the progressive reform movements as agents both of conservation of moral values and social change was the

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15. Stewart Crysdale, "The Sociology of the Social Gospel: Quest for a Modern Ideology," The Social Gospel in Canada, edited by Richard Allen, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), pp. 280 and 281.

university. On April 3, 1907, less than two years after the formation of the province, the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly passed an Act which established the University of Saskatchewan.[16] With Dr. W. C. Murray as the first president, university classes were offered in downtown Saskatoon by September 1909 and construction was started on the new campus buildings on the treeless banks of the South Saskatchewan River. Although the population of Saskatchewan was small, spread over a vast territory and was mainly composed of farm families, few of whom had a university education, it was still important to these people to have a university. It was to be not only a centre of learning and a degree granting institution but was to be a resource and research centre. President Murray, in his 1923 Annual Report, said:

> A single improvement in seed wheat, such as the development of Marquis, or a single remedy against a serious disease among animals or plants, such as wheat rust, may produce or save enough wealth to support and endow not one, but all the colleges in the country.[17]

Even if a farmer in Shaunavon or Yorkton could not enroll in the university, this institution could fulfill a community function in many fields, but particularly in agriculture.

The University of Saskatchewan, as a public institution of education supported by the public tax dollar began at a time when similar concerns about education for everyone were

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16. Carlyle King, _The First Fifty_, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1959), p. 1.

17. _Ibid._, p. 3.

being expressed in the Midwestern United States. John Bascom, President of the University of Wisconsin, believed that politics and economics had to have a moral base and that it was up to the university to see that society placed itself upon this moral base.[18] The university was to establish a liaison between education and social responsibility. Nye attributed the growth of tax supported universities to the belief that democracy depended upon a well educated public.

> Democracy postulated more education for more people, a broadening of the educational base of society, and implied the existence of a close relationship between the university and the life of the state. It did not mean a de-emphasis of the humanities and the less practical sciences, but rather an increased emphasis on the university as a functioning unit in the citizen's daily life.[19]

Walter C. Murray, as first President of the University of Saskatchewan, would not have put it differently, and Edmund H. Oliver certainly believed in the public university and that the role of the university was to be an influence in all of society, improving agricultural techniques, disseminating the cultural heritage, and strengthening the moral basis of life. The university, the theological college, the Agricultural Credit Commission and the struggle for prohibition were all tied together, in Oliver's mind, as being part of the struggle to provide a moral base to all

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18. Russel B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics, p. 150.

19. Ibid., p. 148.

facets of Saskatchewan life. For him, as for Murray, the church, however, was the central resource in this latter task.

The Presbyterian Church, realizing the need in the West for additional ministers, established a theological college in 1913 which was affiliated with the university and subsequently came to reside, symbolically, next to the main entrance to the campus. The theological college, similar to the university, was more than a centre of learning, it was a resource centre and a base of action. Within five years after classes began, the college had produced a total of twenty-eight graduates, supplied services in ten winter mission fields each year and up to forty services every Sunday on summer mission fields.[20] Professor and theology student alike kept many pastoral charges alive when full-time ministers could not be found. That meant a busy schedule, overwork and exhaustion, often, but the moral and spiritual well-being of the new people of a new province was, after all, at stake.

The university, the church, the agricultural reform movements, and the social gospel, each in its own way initially a part of the Ontario fragment in the West not only form part of the backdrop to the life of E. H. Oliver, but become pillars within his life, though the metaphor should not imply that they remained static in form throughout his life.

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20. The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1920.

E. H. Oliver was born in Eberts, Kent County, Ontario on February 8, 1882. Through his home, school, church and rural Ontario community, Oliver would have had close association with the growing evangelism in the churches which viewed the West with a rejuvenated missionary zeal. The Prairie West was a vast new territory with a very sparse and scattered population. A collective and cooperative effort by the church was necessary in order to bring Christianity to these settlers. It was the last frontier--the last chance to form a morally pure society. The Canadian Pacific Railway was not Canada's only "National Dream." It was by no coincidence that Oliver, a young man of twenty-two, spent a summer at Fort Walsh, North West Territories, as a student missionary in the united Presbyterian Church. It was also during Oliver's early life that he became familiar with the growing Ontario nationalism whereby a segment of the Ontario community went west to create a new society which would be as much as possible patterned on the old Ontario they had known. The expanding years following the turn of the century was also a time for an educational élite to move to the new frontier with a goal in mind and a determination to create a new society in the West. These three movements in Ontario were to have a direct influence on Oliver. When he returned to Saskatchewan as part of a select few of the well educated class in 1909, there can be little doubt that he came to teach at the

university and to help build a society which resembled the one he had grown up in, but which, it must also be said, had also been a society whose contours had been changing rapidly since 1882, and was faced with new social challenges.

When he had been offered the position with the University of Saskatchewan, E. H. Oliver replied that he would accept the teaching position with the qualification that he could return to Knox College, Toronto, from Christmas 1909 until Spring 1910 in order to finish his degree in theology.[21] He offered to help organize the University of Saskatchewan in any way he could from his vantage point in Toronto, but the completion of his theology degree was vital to Oliver's coming west even though theology was not to be part of his initial teaching assignment. "It is only fair to say," he commented, "that I regard the completion of my Knox work as of the utmost importance even for my work and influence in the West."[22] He came to the university not only with a teaching goal in mind but with his sights set on playing a role which would foster the intimate union of church and society in the new West. When E. H. Oliver returned to Toronto in January 1910, in order to finish his degree from Knox College, he faced a double class load because he had missed the fall term.

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21. E. H. Oliver to Walter Murray, April 23, 1909, Murray Papers, Archives of Saskatchewan, (hereinafter referred to as AS).

22. <u>Ibid</u>.

Yet he was determined to complete his theological training in preparation for his work in the West. Oliver attended Knox College during the "onset of liberalism" as D. C. Masters described it.[23] The years 1890 through to approximately 1920 was a time of change and challenge in all of the Canadian theological colleges. Darwin's theories on evolution had rocked the conservative churchmen who believed in a literal interpretation of the Bible and particularly the Book of Genesis. Some reacted to Darwin's theories by becoming more firm in their literal interpretation of the Bible. Oliver belonged to the more liberal school of thought which accepted science and Darwin's theories as facts about the physical world but believed that evolution was part of God's plan and that science could not threaten, prove or disprove the existence of God. In his later writings, Oliver tried to demonstrate that Darwin's theories on evolution had a message for the church as well. If man was to improve and evolve to a higher level of life, he had to cooperate and work together to create this better world,--and the Gospel was the "only sure power for social regeneration."[24] Although there are no early books or articles written by Oliver as he was graduating from Knox which outline his theological stance, it can be seen from his upbringing, his theological

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23. D. C. Masters, Protestant Church Colleges in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 133.

24. E. H. Oliver, Tracts for Difficult Times, p. 194.

training during the new liberal era, and his philosophy on social regeneration and moral purity that Edmund H. Oliver belonged to the liberal theological school of thought.

While the fragment theory certainly does help describe Oliver as a young man with Ontario university degrees in economics, history and theology coming west to join the élite of a dominantly Protestant West, his background was very different than that of the vast majority of the population who came to farm the western virgin soil, and there is an obvious irony in the fact that although Oliver came west bearing the trappings of eastern institutions, such as the church and the university, he turned against his beloved Ontario on economic and church matters. Through the Agricultural Credit Commission's report, he would call on the western farmer to cooperate and join together to fight the tariff, low grain prices and high-priced manufactured goods; all three factors were determined in Ontario. Likewise, he would later show a lack of patience with his eastern church colleagues because of failure to develop a meaningful educational policy, raise significant sums for the Missionary and Maintenance Fund and ultimately rebel against the Presbyterians who refused to join the United Church.

Within a few short years, Oliver had been converted into a devoted westerner and a defender and spokesman of western rights and interests. By 1913, he defended western agricultural and rural needs against eastern industrial

urban forces and wrote a very glowing account of the early development of the West and foresaw a very bright future.[25] By 1916, when he was asked to be principal of Queen's, Oliver said he would not leave the West but that after the War, he would return to Saskatchewan where leadership was so much in demand.

Edmund Henry Oliver came to Saskatchewan very much a part of the Anglo-Protestant segment of Ontario and he came not as a farmer nor as a labourer but as part of the handful of educational élite who had a vision for the West and were determined to achieve their goals. E. H. Oliver cherished this open freedom for growth and development but feared the unrestricted space somewhat. He did not want the new immigrants to develop at will for fear that they would "paganize all of society." Oliver brought with him the eastern institutions such as the university, church, school and the concept of representative and responsible British parliamentary government. These institutions would form the structure within which the last frontier could be transformed into a model society. Oliver's early vision of the West was that it could be a land filled with honest hard-working farmers with a family on every half section of

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25. Report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, 1913, and E. H. Oliver, "Saskatchewan and Alberta: General History, 1870-1912," Canada and its Provinces, edited by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, (Toronto: Publishers Association of Canada, 1913), p. 274.

land. These families would be able to speak English whatever second tongue they had, worship in Protestant churches, send their children to public schools and universities and would have a say in their own self-government. The common denominator behind all of Oliver's vision, the cement that held it together, to change metaphors, would be the moral sturdiness of the members of this new society. It is significant that he lived in Saskatoon, formerly the temperance colony which had had the goal of creating an alcohol free settlement. E. H. Oliver's background in rural Ontario helped form his goals for the West but once in the West, his environment too had an influence on his life. He became determined to create a morally pure society even if that concept opposed some of the eastern Canadian interests. His interest in agricultural credit, the family farm, prohibition and church union all had moral purity as an underlying theme. Within four years after arriving in Saskatoon, Oliver was appointed to a Royal Commission on Agricultural Credit. Already he had become part of the western community, and as a representative of the university, was asked to help formulate future agricultural policies for Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURAL CREDIT AND THE MATERIAL FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL SOCIETY

In September 1909, Edmund H. Oliver arrived in the small city of Saskatoon as a professor of history and economics at a university which had not yet enrolled one student, offered one lecture or built one lecture hall. Dr. Oliver had the honour of delivering the first lecture of the University to a night class in the Drinkle building in downtown Saskatoon. The University had a long difficult journey ahead and needed stout hearted leaders who believed in the need for an educational institution of higher learning on the sparsely settled prairies of Saskatchewan. Oliver brought with him not only that stout heart and determination but also an upbringing and academic training which formed a good basis for academic and intellectual leadership in Saskatchewan. His upbringing in home and church had bred in him an Anglo-Protestant belief that the West was the last frontier in which to create the new and ideal society patterned on Ontario; while his education revealed him as a man of keen intellect and extensive training. Upon completion of his secondary education at the Chatham Collegiate, Oliver was awarded the Gold Medal as top student at the collegiate

and won the Edward Blake scholarship for being first in classics and mathematics in the Province of Ontario. He graduated from the University of Toronto in 1902 with an Honours degree; was awarded the McCaul Gold Medal in 1902 for his academic excellence at the University of Toronto; completed his M.A. in 1903 and his Ph.D. in ancient history at Columbia University in 1905; received his degree in theology from Knox College, Toronto in 1910 and did post graduate research in Chicago, U.S.A. and in Halle and Berlin, Germany.

From 1905 to 1909, he taught at McMaster University until joining Dr. Walter Murray at the fledgling University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. In 1913, he became the founder and first principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon and professor of Church History and New Testament.[1] In the course of his career, he was awarded honourary degrees from the Universities of Queen's, Toronto and Saskatchewan and from the theological colleges of Emmanuel in

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1. Memorial to E. H. Oliver, Proceedings and Transcripts of The Royal Society of Canada, (hereafter referred to as TRSC) 1936. There is some conflict in the sources as to the exact date that E. H. Oliver transferred to the theological college. The TRSC account notes that he left the University of Saskatchewan in 1912 while MacKinnon's book, and several newspaper articles state that 1913 was the transfer date. Even though the minutes of the Saskatchewan Synod of the Presbyterian Church record that the theological college was established in 1913, it is safe to assume that he gave his intention to resign from the university in 1912 but the actual transfer was not until 1913-14. This is confirmed by The Phoenix, dated April 25, 1914, which records the official resignation of Dr. Oliver from the University of Saskatchewan.

Toronto and Pine Hill Divinity Hall in Halifax. Although he was born in Ontario, he had adopted Saskatchewan as his new home and with the exception of the three years that he spent overseas during the First World War and the two years that he travelled throughout Canada as moderator of the United Church, he lived in Saskatchewan and devoted his talents and efforts to Saskatchewan and the Canadian West.

What then were Dr. Oliver's goals for this new Canadian West? Coming to Saskatchewan as part of the educational élite and the fragment of Ontario society and culture, his vision for the West was centered on the public school, the Protestant Church, the English language, the family farm and representative responsible parliamentary government. Underlying all of this vision was a desire to create a new society which would be Christian, honest and morally pure. Since the West was so new, it did not yet have the urban slums. It was true that all of the rapidly developing prairie cities had their shack towns attached to them but these could still be seen as signs of development and not incipient poverty. Prostitution and alcoholism had established themselves and called the righteous to battle their evil influence.[2] In 1909, the West could still be viewed as the land of opportunity, and a farm family living comfortably on every half section of land in a society

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2. J. H. Gray, Booze and Red Lights on the Prairies, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1972 and 1971 respectively).

without demon rum were two goals that Oliver set his sights on after arriving in Saskatchewan.

Although he was a newcomer to the Prairies, he soon adopted it as his home and became one of its more prominent spokesmen. His description of the West in 1914 reflects some of the reasons for the contagious affection he developed for the West and the excitement he experienced in being part of it:

> The country west of Hudson Bay has enjoyed a longer continuous connection with Great Britain than any other portion of the Dominion of Canada. Its annals are richer in the romance of the fur trade, more laden with the achievements of explorers and hunters, and more marvellous in the sudden influx of people and growth of railways than are those of any other part of the country. It has also witnessed a greater variety of experiments in government than any other section of the Dominion.[3]

Oliver clearly recognized elements that made the West a region unique in Canada, and became one of its important early chroniclers, preparing the section on the history of Alberta and Saskatchewan 1870-1912, in Shortt and Doughty's large collaborative enterprise, Canada and its Provinces, published in 1914. Characteristic of that generation of historiography, Oliver's optimism over the development of the West was almost unlimited. A police force, a railway and responsible elected government were three cornerstones of the vast western home for the new settlers. The tilled

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3. E. H. Oliver, (editor) The Canadian North-West - Its Early Development and Legislative Records, Vol. I, (Ottawa, 1914), p. 39. Nine examples were given.

acreage and grain production were increasing yearly, towns and villages were instantly appearing on the flat prairie and churches and schools were built, granted not at the same pace as the growth in population, but increasing on a daily basis. He concluded the survey with pride, optimism and confidence:

> With its steady growth of population, its development of rural resources, its continually improving transportation facilities, its better acquaintance with the conditions of prairie agriculture, its aggressive policy in education and public works, its municipal, judicial, and legislative system organized in harmony with its political status, no cloud appears on the economic or social horizon of the Province of Saskatchewan.[4]

The West of course was not without its problems, as Oliver well knew. The sudden growth and development were accompanied by many growing pains. Instead of discouragement, these problems created a confident determination which was exhibited in the belief that solutions would be found through cooperation amongst the church, the school, the government, and the people generally. Some of these problems were soon involving a good deal of Oliver's time. One of these was the need of a developing farming community for agricultural credit.

One of the difficulties facing the Saskatchewan farmer was his inability to secure long term credit at a reasonable interest rate. In good years and in bad, the

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4. E. H. Oliver, "Saskatchewan and Alberta: General History, 1870-1912," Canada and its Provinces, (Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty (ed.), Toronto: Publishers Association of Canada, 1913), p. 274.

problem of credit was a perennial problem of the prairie farmer, partly because of the institutions through which he had to arrange his credit and partly because of a one crop economy.

The Legislative Assembly had been debating the matter of agricultural credit for more than a year before the Scott Government appointed a commission on markets and farm credit in 1913. The debate in the Legislative Assembly over agricultural credit had elicited much comment and various resolutions proposed diverse schemes. Some like D. J. Wylie argued that the matter of farm credit was "the most important question that has ever come before this House."[5] All agreed with H. H. Willway, M.L.A. for Pheasant Hills, who said that: "The farmers--the backbone of the country--should have money as cheaply as possible," and with the opinion that if the government could subsidize railways in the province, surely the farmers should receive some form of assistance.[6]

During a visit to Germany in 1912, Premier Scott took special note of the European credit system. Upon his return, his report on this visit was read by Mr. A. F. Mantle, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, to the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Municipal Law. The <u>Morning</u>

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5. <u>Morning Leader</u>, March 7, 1912.

6. <u>Ibid</u>.

Leader immediately proclaimed "Cheap Money for Farmers" when the report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Municipal Law was Tabled in the Assembly.[7] The paper, however, was premature. During the debate on this report, Premier Scott announced that it was the intention of the government to send two representatives to Europe to study the European credit system. It was intended that these two representatives would join an American Commission, also established in 1913, to investigate "Agricultural Cooperation and Rural Credit in Europe." The American Commission was able to open many diplomatic channels for the Saskatchewan Commission. There is no evidence to prove that the establishment of the Saskatchewan Commission was as a direct result of the appointment of the American Commission but Premier Scott was aware of the agricultural credit situation in Saskatchewan and, as was noted earlier, had viewed the European agricultural credit scheme firsthand. However, the Saskatchewan Commission did schedule its work so as to be able to accompany the American Commission to Europe.

An order-in-council dated January 28, 1913, created the Royal Commission and instructed it to investigate ways and means "for bettering the position of Saskatchewan Grain on the European Markets and...ways and means for establishing Agricultural Credit."[8] Although the two areas of research

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7. Ibid., January 11, 1913.

8. Report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, 1913, p. 7.

were combined in one order-in-council, the membership of the two groups was slightly different. To the Grain Markets Commission, George Langley, John Hesber Haslam and Charles Avery Dunning were appointed. Messrs. Haslam and Dunning were also appointed to the Agricultural Credit Commission as well as Dr. Edmund Henry Oliver. At a meeting of the Joint Commission on March 22, 1913, it was agreed that the inquiry would be split and that only the Commissioners appointed to the specific research areas would sign the final report. Dr. Oliver's contribution was essentially to the Agricultural Credit Commission and it was to that Commission's final report that he signed his name as Commissioner. J. H. Haslam, President of Haslam Land Company, became the chairman of the Agricultural Credit Commission. In the Morning Leader's account of the Commission's final report, Mr. Haslam was noted as "one of Western Canada's most prominent financiers."[9] Charles A. Dunning, according to the paper, was "General Manager of the Saskatchewan Cooperative Elevator Company, who is in charge of the biggest grain business in Western Canada" while Dr. Oliver was described as "Professor of Economics and History at the University of Saskatchewan and a well-known authority on Agricultural Economics," a description which may well have surprised him.[10]

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9. Morning Leader, October 20, 1913.

10. Ibid.

The composition of the Joint Commission and the background of each Commissioner is worth examining. George Langley[11] and Charles Dunning[12] had definite political party affiliations that were in line with the party in power. Political allegiance, however, was not the only reason for their appointments. Dunning had shown his organizational interests and talents in his work with the Saskatchewan Cooperative Elevator Company. George Langley had a farm background and was the Minister of Municipal Affairs. J. H. Haslam was a successful businessman and reputed as a good financier. Dr. Oliver was always described publicly by Premier Scott and the newspapers as a university professor of economics and history. There was never any hint that Dr. Oliver was appointed due to membership in any particular political party, but his appointment does raise the question.

Oliver did not wear his politics on his sleeve, and although he may have been a Liberal, he was no diehard partisan. Later he was quite prepared to vote for Harris Turner, prominent agrarian editor and independent Saskatoon Progressive.[13] At the same time he declared his intention

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11. Liberal M.L.A. for Redberry (1905-1921) and for Cumberland (1921-1922) and Minister of Municipal Affairs (August 1921 - October 1921).

12. Liberal M.L.A. for Kinistino and then Moose Jaw County (1916-1926) and Cabinet Minister (1916-1926) including Premier (1922-1926).

13. Oliver to his wife, October 5, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

in the 1917 federal election to vote for J. R. Wilson, a unionist candidate who later ran in 1921 as a Conservative.[14] But unusual late wartime conditions affected both decisions.

More to the point in Oliver's appointment was Premier Scott's tendency to appoint at least one "expert from the University" to his Royal Commissions. When, for instance, Scott had been searching for candidates for the Elevator Commission of 1910, he had written Dr. Walter Murray asking for the name of a person who was a "thoroughly versed economist."[15] Dr. Murray suggested several names including Dr. Magill who was subsequently appointed to the Commission.[16] It is very possible that Walter Murray had suggested E. H. Oliver in like manner for the Agricultural Credit Commission. It seems almost certain from the evidence available, that Dr. Oliver was appointed to the Commission, not out of political favouritism but because of his interest in agricultural problems; his experience as professor of economics at the University of Saskatchewan;

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14. Ibid., November 29, 1917. J. R. Wilson defeated J. W. Casey, who was endorsed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier (Opposition) and by the Labour Party. J. R. Wilson contested the December 1921 federal election as a Conservative and was defeated.

15. Walter Scott to Walter Murray, December 31, 1909, Scott Papers, AS.

16. Walter Murray to Walter Scott, January 6, 1910, Scott Papers, AS.

and as a representative of the university.

Although there is no documentation to indicate how E. H. Oliver reacted upon learning of his appointment to the Commission, it is safe to surmise that he was pleased to represent the university and to have the opportunity to have some role in affecting government agricultural policy. The agricultural way of life in Saskatchewan was a major portion of Oliver's vision for the last frontier. A morally pure society could not be created without a healthy agricultural economy and stable rural life.

The Commission lost no time in organizing and in seeking information. Dr. Oliver and Chairman Haslam joined the American Commission in Europe while Mr. Dunning and Mr. Mantle studied the British credit system. Mr. Haslam became vice-chairman of the section of the American Commission studying distribution while Dr. Oliver was made a vice-chairman of the section of the American Commission on finance and credit.[17] Since the American Commission helped open many doors for the Canadian Commissioners, they were able to gain valuable first-hand knowledge. In August 1913, the Commissioners, after their return to Canada, immersed themselves in a series of seventeen public hearings throughout Saskatchewan ranging from Weyburn to Prince Albert and from Kindersley to Yorkton. Although the hearings overlapped,

17. Report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, 1913, p. 16.

the seventeen centres were covered in a time span of nineteen days. Approximately forty persons came to each hearing made up of private citizens and representatives of the Grain Growers Association and the Rural Municipalities. Most of the hearings were covered in the Morning Leader (Regina) with some coverage in the local newspapers such as the Swift Current Sun, and The Prairie News in Govan. At the opening of each hearing, once the aims and objectives of the Commission were outlined, Dr. Oliver briefed the audience on the European cooperative credit system. The remainder of the hearing was then devoted to hearing representations from the witnesses and a question-answer period.

Naturally, the main complaint aired at the hearings was the farmer's difficulty in obtaining credit. The Commission noted that the interest rate to farmers often tended to be higher than that to the businessmen.[18] Upon questioning of the witnesses, it was learned that proper counselling for farmers on accounting and credit management was not available and as a result, the farmer often obtained a long-term mortgage for short-term bills. The fine print was sometimes not read and the complex use of the English language and the technical terminology in the contract was misunderstood, especially by many of the new Canadian farmers.

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18. Ibid.

Farmers, who had thus burdened themselves with large long-term debts were able to pay only the interest each year and when the term of the mortgage expired, were forced to renew the mortgages or forfeit their lands. If a farmer wished to clear his mortgage before the prescribed time limit, he was often either prohibited from doing so or was charged an additional bonus by the mortgage company. The farmers did not want more credit but they simply wanted cheaper credit and were in need of some credit management training. If this problem could be solved, many of the other agricultural problems would be alleviated. J. H. Haslam, in an interview in Toronto on his return from his European trip, stated the rural Canadian credit problem as follows: "At present the man on the soil gets no consideration along this line (credit) and he has unconsciously become the victim of a money system which is making a number extremely wealthy, while he is restrained in all his farming operations and Canadian agriculture is severely crippled."[19]

The farmers' concern for the great influence that outside interests had on the province was reflected in the hearings as well as in the report.[20] At the hearings, Oliver not infrequently took the lead in encouraging co-operation in the farming community and a cooperative credit

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19. Morning Leader, August 13, 1913.

20. Report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, 1913, p. 201.

system in particular. The Morning Leader for August 18, 1913, covered the Govan hearing as follows:

> 'To borrow from ones neighbors would seem to be the best,' suggested Dr. Oliver and the response indicated in an unmistakable way that the farmers of the country in the vicinity of Govan would prefer the policy of financial cooperation to any system which leaves them open to exploitation by the big money lending concerns.[21]

The farmers of the Govan area had pooled their money in the past and discovered that the system had worked well. Dr. Oliver stressed to the farmers that if a cooperative financial system was to be successful, it would depend very largely upon the voluntary administrative work of the farmers.[22]

By October 1913, the Commission on Agricultural Credit completed its final report. Within a span of ten months the Commission had reviewed the credit situation in many parts of the world as well as Saskatchewan and had studied the many statistics and documents that were presented to it. The 224-page report contained much factual information on the credit situation abroad and in Saskatchewan, plus twenty recommendations, all in all a mammoth task for three Commissioners and one honourary secretary. The study was carried out without haste but with a careful urgency and with the knowledge that the problems needed solutions.

In most committees or commissions, even if the

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21. Morning Leader, August 18, 1913.

22. Ibid.

final report is the opinions and recommendations of all members, there is usually one person behind the scenes who has prepared a draft report for the commissioners to consider and revise. Although the thoughts expressed are those of the majority, the words and the emphasis are often those of one person. Dr. Oliver was the "pen behind the scenes" in the case of the Agricultural Credit Commission. In the minutes of the Commission, dated September 9, 1913, a notation was made by the secretary that: "Dr. Oliver submitted a suggested outline of the report of the Commission on Agricultural Credits [sic.], which after some discussion was finally approved. He then outlined tentative recommendations which were fully discussed and finally approved."[23]

After the outline and rough recommendations had been considered and accepted by the Commission, Dr. Oliver spent a month preparing a rough draft of the final report. The minutes of the meeting of October 6, 1913, noted that: "A report of the Commission on Agricultural Credit prepared by Dr. Oliver was by him laid before the meeting, having previously been read by the Chairman, and in part by Mr. Dunning."[24] The chapters of the report were read and approved with some amendments in "minor particulars." While

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23. Minutes of the Agricultural Credit Commission, September 9, 1913, AS.

24. Ibid., October 6, 1913.

the Commission's report, therefore, offers some insight into the thinking of Messrs. Dunning and Haslam, it was based mainly upon the thoughts, expressions and priorities of Dr. E. H. Oliver, the professor from Saskatoon.

The final report stressed that credit was not the only area where the western farmer was at the mercy of eastern Canadian influence. The tariff, a favourite topic of western agriculturalists, was mentioned in the report as one of those factors which was out of the hands of the West: "that tariff, as an actual fact, takes slight account of western agriculture; and the tariff will continue to impose its load upon the farmers, not because they desire it, but because our fortunes are determined by those who live outside of our borders."[25] The report went beyond questions of East-West conflict, and easier, safer provision of credit to diversify the farming industry and create a more stable economy. The merits of rural life and the family farm were stressed. Newspapers like the Saskatchewan Farmer pointed up the report's ideal of a resident farmer and his family on every tillable half section in the province.[26]

Comments on better business methods led to the values of cooperation where the remedies "must begin at home,

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25. Report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, 1913, p. 202.

26. Ibid., p. 19.

first in better farming and better business and second in fostering gradually, but surely, financial institutions controlled by and sympathetic to the agriculturalists of this province."[27] The means of correcting the tariff; the pressure from industry; the pull to the urban centres; the low price of farm products and the high costs of production were through cooperation. Only if the farmers of Saskatchewan banded together as a unit could they protect the agricultural industry. The grouping of the manufacturers into an association had shown the farmers the power of cooperation and collective action. The report emphasized the similar need of the farmers to work together for their common good.

> We must at all hazards beget a provincial consciousness. We must promote the cohesiveness of rural life in our midst. We must in greater measure become masters of our own fate and authors of our own policies. To accomplish this we need to cooperate and to apply ourselves to that type of agriculture where cooperation counts most. More diversified farming and better organization for purchasing and distributing will lead us towards the solution we are seeking. To continue selling grain in the lowest market and buying supplies in the highest is only fatal. If the farmers unite, they can accomplish in other spheres what they have achieved in the elevator business--they can to a larger extent regulate the conditions of their own industry; and the result will not be simply economic. The benefits will extend to every department of our moral, social and political life."[28]

The Commission thus supported and praised the merits of rural life and the agricultural industry and all

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27. Ibid., p. 64.

28. Ibid., p. 201. The emphasis is mine.

of the benefits which would result from a western agricultural way of life which merged self-help and cooperation. Although the Commission had been directed to study farm credit, the report flowed with confidence that if the farmers would unite and would cooperate with each other, the total agricultural problem would be corrected. To bring the control of the agricultural industry from the East and put it in the hands of the farmers themselves was the solution. The field of banking and credit was an example of eastern control where only a few small lending institutions were headquartered in the West and western board members in eastern banks were unheard of. The lending institutions were willing to loan money in the West at higher interest rates if money was abundant but once the money supplies started to dwindle, the West was the first to feel the withdrawal symptoms!

Three possible credit systems were presented by Oliver's report: strictly cooperative, strictly governmental, or a cooperative association with government backing.[29] The advantages of the strictly cooperative lending institution would be that it would not infringe on the government and would be completely independent. This alternative would help to promote the cooperative spirit in rural Saskatchewan. In the opinion of the Commission,

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29. Ibid., p. 197.

this alternative was not practical for Saskatchewan because the cooperative societies could have difficulty in obtaining finances either locally or abroad and it could lack needed stability. The advantages of a governmental scheme would be that it could obtain finances quickly on a local or international basis which would offer security. Its disadvantages, however, would be that the government would continually have this obligation and the farm loans could be affected by partisan politics. J. A. Stevenson, after reviewing agricultural credit systems in Europe, wrote in 1913 that a credit system operated directly by the government could be a powerful political tool.

> It places the Government in direct or indirect control of the financial position of a large section of the electorate and if it were introduced into Canada it is not beyond the scope of our imagination to picture good Liberal farmers or good Tory farmers receiving at election time from various candidates, beneficent promises of welcome extensions of time for payment of mortgage charges in return for their loyal support.[30]

Moreover, the governmental scheme would lack the moral and social advantages that would accrue from the cooperative activity. In the upshot, therefore, a combined cooperative and governmental scheme was the one that the Commission favoured, stressing that if an association was established with government backing, independence and political neutrality

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30. J. A. Stevenson, "Agricultural Credit Systems and the West," <u>Proceedings of the Political Science Association</u>, 1913, p. 69.

would be essential.

The Commission recommended that a cooperative mortgage association be established for raising funds and granting loans to farmers with the backing of the provincial government. An essential part of the association was, in the minds of the Commission, the establishment of local associations to assist the central commission and advisory board. Local cooperation and participation were stressed. The advisory board was to be made up from the membership of the associations and from farming organizations. All loans were to be amortized so that the farmers would not continually be borrowing their way deeper into debt. The interest was to cover costs and to be non-profit making.

Three other important recommendations were made. The establishment of cooperative societies for the purchase and sale of farm products and supplies received priority as the first recommendation. A provincial bank, when feasible, was also recommended, and the University of Saskatchewan was requested to furnish classes on accounting methods and cooperative principles.[31] Dr. Oliver's involvement with the university and his belief in the rewards of a good education, and his desire to have the university serve the community at its own level were all reasons for this recommendation.

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31. Report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, pp.217-219.

Cheaper credit through a farmers' cooperative credit association was the theme of the report. The farmers had to be careful not to land in the controlling arms of the government once they had finally wrenched themselves out of the clutches of the eastern financial institutions. Oliver had in view a government with a limited service function in society, a view shared by Premier Scott as well. In writing to John Dickinson, chairman of the Limerick Liberal Association, Premier Scott said that:

> The situation helps to show the extreme danger of going too far in the direction of protecting farmers in the matter of their debts. Any measure to save people from their debts is a two-edged sword.[32]

During the sitting of the Legislature in the fall of 1913, a Bill entitled "An Act to incorporate The Saskatchewan Cooperative Farm Mortgage Association" was introduced which outlined a financial association similar to the one proposed by the Commission. The advisory board, as proposed in the Bill, was to be composed of five members as chosen by the Government and one each from the University of Saskatchewan; Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association; the Union of Rural Municipalities; Saskatchewan Provincial Winter Fair Board; and the convention of agricultural societies plus five from the Credit Association itself.[33] Provision was made for the formation of local groups.

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32. Walter Scott to John Dickinson, July 30, 1915, Scott Papers, AS.

33. <u>Statutes of Saskatchewan</u>, Cap. 61, 1913.

In speaking to Second Reading of the Bill, Premier Scott stressed the importance of the farming industry to Saskatchewan and the hardship of the high interest rates. He said that the Bill was "for the purpose of improving the standing of the important agricultural industry within this province and to advance the general well-being of the average farmer."[34] The Bill was passed by the Legislature and received Royal Assent on December 19, 1913. The "coming into force" clause of the Bill stated that the Bill would not become law until it was proclaimed. The Act, however, was never proclaimed.[35]

The reasons for the failure of the government to proclaim the Act are not clear. Perhaps it had something to do with an element of internal opposition within the Commission with regard to the question of cooperation. Although this split was not aired publicly, J. H. Haslam wrote to Scott expressing his disagreement with several points in the report. He believed that the agricultural cooperative credit schemes in Europe were based on public

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34. Morning Leader, December 16, 1913.

35. On examination of the Saskatchewan Gazette for the years 1913-1917, no proclamation was issued in relationship to Chapter 61 of 1913. The consolidation of the Statutes in 1920 puts this Act in the category of not revised, consolidated or repealed. The Saskatchewan Gazette is the only means of knowing if an Act has been proclaimed. It is a confusing aspect of the law whereby an Act can exist "in limbo" without either being proclaimed or repealed and will disappear from the Statute books at the time of the next revision.

enthusiasm and government propaganda which, in Haslam's opinion, were both missing in Saskatchewan.[36] Haslam not only questioned the cooperative credit system but feared any government involvement in credit.

> I may say that I am strongly of the opinion, however, that with the necessity that exists for the Government of Saskatchewan to keep its credit at the highest point possible that any scheme of endorsement for temporary credit must be very carefully considered by the Government and only entered into as a last resort when every other scheme fails.[37]

Haslam, of course, was the businessman and financier on the Commission. His advice would carry weight and could be a reason why the Scott cabinet hesitated to implement a cooperative credit plan in 1913. However, the unsettled political situation in Europe in 1913 and the resulting tightened money market undoubtedly also had a disruptive effect upon the Saskatchewan Government's plans in the area of agricultural credit. Not only was it difficult to get credit, but interest rates had climbed, making it difficult for the government to obtain credit at a low rate so as to be able to pass savings on to the farmer. The Speech from the Throne at the Prorogation of the Session, therefore only included a reference to the Mortgage Association Bill as follows:

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36. J. H. Haslam to Walter Scott, October 15, 1913, Scott Papers, AS.

37. Ibid., August 18, 1913.

> The measures you have passed to enable our agriculturalists to secure farm loans on a more satisfactory basis must be regarded as of the greatest importance to the future welfare and development of our chief industry, and it is to be hoped that existing monetary conditions will be improved to such an extent as to enable the bringing into force of this measure at an early date.[38]

This qualification at the very end of the Session might cast some doubt upon the intent of the government to implement the Mortgage Associations Bill. Whether the government would have proclaimed the Bill had the War not occurred is open to speculation. It can be argued that the government intended to leave the Bill on the books and proclaim it once the economic conditions improved. When the economy did start to improve before the end of the War, the 1913 Bill was not proclaimed but rather a new Bill was introduced into the Legislature entitled: "An Act to provide for Loans to Agriculturalists upon the Security of Farm Mortgages."[39] The provisions of this Bill were similar to the sister Bill of 1913, and, in fact, some of the clauses were identical. However, there were some important differences. The aim of borrowing and lending money for the advantage of the farmer remained but it was to be done by a government board and not by a cooperative association. The board was to consist of one commissioner and two other

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38. Morning Leader, December 20, 1913.

39. Statutes of Saskatchewan, Cap. 25, 1917.

members, all of whom were to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. There was no provision in the new Bill for local associations or representation on an advisory board by local agricultural groups or members of a credit association. By 1917, in short, the Government of Saskatchewan had opted for the second alternative outlined by the Agricultural Credit Commission, that is, a strictly governmental scheme. The aim of providing cheaper credit was still present but the local involvement and cooperation was gone. The government apparently did not have Oliver's and Dunning's faith in cooperative administration. If the government was going to guarantee the credit scheme financially, it apparently believed that government administration and control were necessary safeguards.

The intentions of the government regarding the 1917 Bill were more definite because when the Bill was assented to on March 10, 1917, the "coming into force" clause stated that the Act would be effective on May 1, 1917. Curiously, even after the Farm Loans Board had been established, the Farm Mortgage Association Act of 1913 was not repealed. Leaving it on the books might have had some sentimental effect but was of no legislative use to the Saskatchewan farmer.

Regardless of the actions of the provincial government in the implementation of a low interest credit system for Saskatchewan farmers, Dr. E. H. Oliver's outlook

on agricultural questions, as revealed in the Commission report, had much in common with the independent agrarian movements of the first two decades of this century. Oliver's interest in agriculture continued after the Commission had completed its study. During the year 1917, when Dr. Oliver was instrumental in establishing the University of Vimy Ridge, he listed, in a letter to his wife, the subjects which were to be taught: "Agriculture, business, history, geography, mathematics and science."[40] In 1917, Dr. Oliver reminisced to his wife about his experience on the Agricultural Credit Commission:

> Some agricultural question was up (for discussion in the British House of Commons) and it reminded me what I had nearly forgotten that I myself was once an agricultural expert.[41]

In the many articles and books written by Dr. Oliver, the development of agriculture in the West remained a key topic. He knew that agriculture was the cornerstone of the economic and social way of life in Saskatchewan. If the farmer could obtain credit, purchase his farm supplies, diversify his product and market his produce at reasonable rates, the family farm and the agricultural industry as a whole would be sound, and rural life in the province generally enhanced. All of this was essential to Oliver's vision of the province's future and was closely linked to his other social objectives.

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40. Oliver to his wife, December 7, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

41. Ibid., April 26, 1917.

However, cheaper credit and material prosperity would not necessarily of themselves guarantee the quality of life in Saskatchewan. There were quite precise moral as well as a legislative and economic measures necessary to that objective and for Oliver, the moral issue that created the major stumbling block in the path that led to a healthy, prosperous agricultural way of life was the trade in alcoholic beverages.

CHAPTER III

PROHIBITION: THE MORAL EDUCATION OF A PEOPLE

The sale of alcoholic beverages in Saskatchewan has always been and still is a critical economic, social, moral and religious issue and one that governments, throughout the history of the province, have handled with care so as not to lose electoral support. As early as September 1905, Walter Scott, the first provincial premier of a Liberal regime that lasted through the next generation, expressed his personal opinion with respect to alcohol.

> Upon this matter (prohibition), I hold pretty strong opinions personally, and I cannot say that I look with favor upon the licensing system at all. I should like very much to bring about the adoption of a system which would eradicate the bar.[1]

He was quick to add, though, that his personal views did not necessarily represent public policy and that he would have to consult his cabinet colleagues on the matter. Prohibition campaigning had expanded in subsequent years and by March 1915, Premier Scott believed that the Saskatchewan public, too, was ready to close the bars. He therefore announced that Saskatchewan would copy the South Carolina

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1. Walter Scott to Mr. Sissons, Yellow Grass, September 12, 1905, Scott Papers, AS.

liquor dispensary system. It appeared to be a precipitate declaration, for it was not until a month later, on April 6, 1915, that a two-man Royal Commission was established by order-in-council to inquire into and report upon the system of liquor dispensaries or shops which recently existed in South Carolina under state control.[2] Once more, Scott's choice of Commissioners included E. H. Oliver. Associated with him was J. F. Bole, a businessman and Liberal M.L.A. for Regina.

The events leading up to the Scott announcement in Oxbow on March 18, 1915, to close the bars and replace them with government owned and operated dispensaries and the subsequent appointment of the Commission deserve some attention. The prohibition movement in the Canadian West experienced several peaks which were followed by defeats and a temporary decline in popularity. There are parallels between the prohibition movement in the United States and in Canada. The decade of the 1880s in the United States was a period of high tide for the prohibition forces.[3] The Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1874, was dedicated to the goal of the abolition of alcohol. The introduction of the dispensary system in South Carolina in

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2. Sessional Paper No. 5, Session 1915.

3. Charles Merz, The Dry Decade, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), p. 3.

this decade was an experiment in controlling the sale of liquor. Even though the prohibition movement was ebbing in the 1890s, the Anti-Saloon League was formed in 1893. It was under the auspices of the church that the league was formed but the church refused to respond with official support, fearing political involvement that this support might bring.[4] The turn of the century meant the dawning of a new era for the prohibition movement in the United States generally and particularly for the Anti-Saloon League. By 1913, church support of the league had been won and became in turn, the springboard for further growth. In Canada, official support from major Protestant denominations had come two decades earlier and campaigning had been strong until the failure of the national plebescite in 1898, which threw the initiative back into the provincial area.

In the Territories, prohibition had prevailed prior to 1892 but enforcement had been lax. The beginning of the provincial period in 1905, brought the association of liquor with new problems such as immigration and congested urban housing and led to a renewal of prohibition campaigns on the Prairies, which could now benefit from the rising campaign in the United States. The formation of the national Social and Moral Reform Council (SMRC) and the Provincial Temperance and Moral Reform Councils in and around 1907 were

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4. Ibid., p. 9.

sure signs that the Protestant Churches were mobilizing their forces in the fight against alcohol and other social problems. By 1913, the Banish the Bar movement had grown out of the SMRC which drew most of its support from the Protestant Churches and the YM(W)CA. An action committee of the SMRC of Saskatchewan, known as the Committee of One Hundred, was formed to promote the prohibition cause. The Banish the Bar movement held a mass rally in Regina on November 25, 1913, with three to four hundred people in attendance.[5] The Committee of One Hundred held the abolition of all bars as a primary objective with total prohibition as its ultimate goal. The Committee was careful not to aim at total prohibition at too early a stage so as to keep their support broad and strong, and since they did have support for the abolition of the bar, it was decided to pursue this objective first.

The similarities between the Anti-Saloon League and the Ban the Bar movement suggest the broader reform spirit which was growing on either side of the forty-ninth parallel. Both organizations held mass rallies in November 1913. It has been suggested that prohibition in Saskatchewan was part of an overall reform movement including the nonpartisan movement and the agrarian revolt. "The social gospel set the liquor problem in the context of a

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5. Morning Leader, December 14, 1913.

broader program of social, economic and political reforms."[6] Edmund Henry Oliver, although a newcomer to Saskatchewan, was already imbued with the social, political and evangelical reform spirit and early became one of the prohibition leaders within the Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan. There were others, of course, such as Dr. J. L. Nicol, convenor of the Presbyterian Committee on Home Missions and Social Service, and convenor of the Social and Moral Reform Council of the Saskatchewan Synod in 1920-21; Rev. A. Henderson, former moderator of the Saskatchewan Synod in 1913-14; and Rev. Murdock MacKinnon, Pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church, Regina.[7]

The American and Canadian prohibition movements shared two common methods of operation: legislation and education. Legislation, it was argued, was needed in order to protect man from himself in the field of alcohol. In the forward to Prohibition in Canada, John Redpath Dougall, publisher and editor of the Montreal Witness, vice-president for Quebec for the Dominion Alliance and president of the Quebec branch of the Dominion Alliance, wrote:

> The discovery was soon made that men are prone to evil, and that to save them from it they must be saved from

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6. Erhard Pinno, "Temperance and Prohibition in Saskatchewan," (Unpublished Masters thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, 1971), p. 4.

7. Ibid., p. 15. Dr. Nichol is shown with initials of "J. C." in Pinno's thesis. The minutes of the Saskatchewan Synod show his initials as "J. L."

themselves.[8]

F. S. Spence, Canada's leading prohibitionist, put the matter in a broader context in a speech in July 1908, where he said that in order to conquer the liquor problem

> we must have, firstly, sound sentiment in the community, and secondly, wise laws on the statute books, and thirdly, honest administration of the law when it is enacted.[9]

Dr. E. H. Oliver, like most prohibitionists, believed that the ultimate solution to the liquor problem rested with the individual.[10] Through a program of education and public pressure, people would become aware of the social and moral dangers of alcohol and would abandon it. Even though the liquor question was one of individual responsibility, he advocated, as an interim measure, proper legislative action to prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol together with an active public education campaign.[11] He, like F. S. Spence, was very aware of the fact that legislation in all fields, but especially in liquor control, required public support. A

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8. Ruth Elizabeth Spence, Prohibition in Canada, (Toronto: The Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance, 1919), p. XI.

9. Ibid., p. XVI.

10. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, (The Board of Home Missions and Social Service, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1923), p. 264.

11. Ibid.

proper education campaign was therefore necessary to ensure popular support. Ideally, once the liquor problem had been eliminated and once everyone witnessed the positive results of total prohibition, the liquor laws would no longer be required. It was an optimistic position, but consistent in its own terms.

Dr. Walter Murray and Dr. E. H. Oliver were two members of the Committee of One Hundred.[12] Although the road toward prohibition was long, rough and rocky, the Committee of One Hundred, the Banish the Bar Committee and the SMRC were all actively applying public pressure on the Scott Government to legislate against the bar. The Committee of One Hundred met with the premier in December 1913, concerning proposed legislation to have a plebiscite on the abolition of the bar. The point of dispute was the number of votes necessary to indicate that the bars should be closed. Premier Scott argued that 50,000 votes minimum were required while the liquor interests suggested 60,000 votes and the Committee of One Hundred argued that 30,000 votes were clearly sufficient. The Committee believed that a compromise of 40,000 votes was finally agreed upon between the premier and themselves. But Premier Scott ultimately

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12. Erhard Pinno, "Temperance and Prohibition in Saskatchewan," p. 297. Pinno bases his statement on a letter from Rev. J. A. Donnel, Clerk of the Saskatoon Presbytery to Rev. Hugh Dobson, March 1, 1924.

decided to withdraw the legislation and to cancel the proposed plebiscite, for which he was severely criticized by the prohibitionists. This was a temporary defeat for the prohibition cause but Principal Lloyd of Emmanuel Theological College, Saskatoon and president of the Ban the Bar Committee continued to meet with the premier to press for the abolition of the bar.[13]

During the winter of 1914-15, even though the prohibition groups exerted great pressure on the provincial government to close the bars, Premier Scott refused on the grounds that this action would cause economic hardship and excessive unemployment during the severe winter months. Yet on March 10, 1915, George Langley, Minister of Municipal Affairs, in speaking to a rural municipal convention in Saskatoon, warned that vigorous action must be taken to combat the liquor problem during wartime.[14] There was split reaction to Langley's speech. Some felt he was rebelling against the cabinet's liquor policy while others argued that he was giving advance warning of a pending change in government policy. It could be too that Langley was putting the proverbial "straw to the wind" to test public opinion.

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13. Morning Leader, February 24, 1915.

14. Canadian Annual Review ,(CAR), 1915, p. 666.

Eight days after Langley's speech, Premier Scott delivered his famous Oxbow announcement in which he outlined a totally new policy. Effective April 1, 1915, the bars would be closed at 7:00 p.m. each evening and as of July 1, they would be abolished entirely.[15] A limited number of government owned and operated liquor dispensaries would be opened on July 1, 1915, which could be closed or new ones opened by means of a petition and a local plebiscite. That the hotel owners would not receive any compensation from the government for their lost liquor trade was also announced by the premier. The public, Scott declared, was "now ready" for this new policy, and he argued that his decision to close the bars was not in conflict with his earlier statements in December.[16] Since the winter was over, the economy was recovering; both the economy and the public were ready for the bars to be closed.

In his March 18 announcement, the premier did not mention any royal commission. Yet on April 5, he announced the appointment of a two-man commission to study the liquor dispensary system in South Carolina. It seems apparent that Scott had decided to establish the Commission after his Oxbow announcement. Why had he decided to establish a commission at all and why at that time? He knew that since

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15. Morning Leader, March 19, 1915.

16. Ibid.

the Session to consider the liquor legislation would meet in early May, time was certainly short. Royal commissions can be used for various reasons. A commission can test public opinion. Since Scott seemed to be quite aware of the public pressure for closing the bars, and since the Commission was not instructed to hold public hearings in Saskatchewan, it is not likely that the Commission was established for this reason. A commission can be used to guide public opinion. For the same reasons given above, it does not seem likely that Scott believed he could guide public opinion by means of this Commission. In fact, Scott gave the appearance of wanting to follow public opinion on this issue rather than to shape it. A commission can be used as a fact finder. The terms of reference instructed the Commission to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the South Carolina system in order to assist the government in drafting its proposed legislation. There is merit in the argument that Scott wanted to avoid the pitfalls of the South Carolina system and wanted J. F. Bole to study the smaller administrative details. This argument is weakened though by the fact that the government already had one study of this dispensary system which was done in 1904 by J. A. Reid, Clerk of the Executive Council of the Northwest Territories.[17]

A commission can also be used to deflect any

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17. Sessional Paper No. 6, Session 1915.

criticism which might be hurled at a government. Scott was anxious to follow public opinion and avoid criticism. Had he, in fact, received any criticism after his March 18 announcement? There were four possible sources of criticism: the Liberal backbenchers; the Conservative Party; the liquor and hotel interests; and the prohibitionists. One surprising source of criticism of Scott's new policy was from his own Liberal backbenchers. Scott obviously had discussed his plans with his cabinet colleagues and in fact, George Langley knew of the pending policy announcement by March 10 when he spoke in Saskatoon. It is not likely that Scott discussed his new liquor policy with his caucus since the caucus usually only met on the eve of and during a legislative session. When Scott revealed his new liquor policy, some negative feedback came from the Liberal Association at Humboldt, a community populated heavily by German Catholics. On April 19, 1915, the secretary of this association sent a resolution to Scott which opposed his new liquor policy and called for a plebiscite on the matter.[18] On April 23, Dr. Neely, M.P., and mover of the Humboldt Liberal Association motion, spoke out against the Scott policy and was subsequently supported by the Conservative press in Saskatchewan.[19] Although these two instances of opposition to Scott from the Liberal ranks came after the April 5 appointment of the

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18. Erhard Pinno," Temperance and Prohibition in Saskatchewan," p. 77.

19. Ibid.

Commission, it is possible that negative feedback from within the party had reached Scott before the Humboldt resolution.

The Conservative reaction to the Oxbow announcement was one of vacillation. Mr. Willoughby, Leader of the Opposition, initially supported Scott on the closing of the bars.[20] It was not until a speech in Moose Jaw that he publicly opposed the liquor dispensary system and called for a referendum for total prohibition. He argued that the Scott Government had not gone far enough. This type of criticism from the Opposition was customary and was not, in itself, likely to be taken too seriously by Scott. They were, however, backed by the hotelmen, who received Scott's announcement with stunned silence, and it took several days for their reactions to surface. They strongly opposed the government's new policy and threatened that the accommodation service, offered by the hotels to the travelling public, would be lost.[21]

The initial reaction from the prohibitionists was one of joy and thanksgiving. Scott had decided to close the bars without a plebiscite which was a step beyond what the prohibitionists had called for or expected. Principal Lloyd, president of the Committee of One Hundred, praised Scott's announcement.[22] E. H. Oliver, in commenting on the new policy

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20. Evening Province, March 19, 1915.

21. Erhard Pinno, "Temperance and Prohibition in Saskatchewan," p. 85.

22. Morning Leader, March 19 and 20, 1915.

said: "It is the most important step in advance which Liberalism has ever made in this province and those of us who are not in politics, but who have been asking for such a policy will support Mr. Scott in the action he has taken."[23] The dispensary system was also supported by the Saskatchewan Synod of the Presbyterian Church.[24]

Alderman C. B. Keenleyside, member of the executive of the Committee of One Hundred, was the only prominent prohibitionist who initially criticized Scott's decision. He supported the closing of the bars but was concerned with government involvement in the liquor business. In commenting on the dispensary system, he said: "It (government-owned dispensary system) has proved to be a very demoralizing influence in politics and to the temperance cause in South Carolina."[25] Keenleyside's comments indicated that he was familiar with the system in South Carolina and that all was not well there, information which could have affected Scott greatly. In order to stay in line with what he thought public sentiment was, Premier Scott had avoided the plebiscite question and had decided to launch a dispensary system immediately. He felt that public opinion demanded it and wartime left him no choice. He surely had expected support from the

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23. _Ibid._, March 20, 1915.

24. _Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of Saskatchewan of the Presbyterian Church in Canada_, 1915, p. 12.

25. _Morning Leader_, March 19, 1915.

prohibitionists by banning the bar without requiring a plebiscite, but he obviously did not feel the public was ready for total prohibition. After Keenleyside's comments, it was apparent that Scott had not pleased the prohibitionists universally. Most prohibitionists had been willing to accept the dispensary system as a temporary measure until total prohibition could be achieved, but not so for diehards like C. B. Keenleyside. To put liquor in the hands of the government was "dangerous." "I think it is a mistake for any government to be mixed up with the liquor traffic in any way, shape and form."[26]

On March 25, the executive of the Committee of One Hundred met to consider their plan of action. After having considered Scott's announcement and proposed temperance legislation, the executive of the Committee of One Hundred decided "that Premier Scott's proposed legislation was so drastic and its scope so far-reaching that no action should be taken by the executive without conferring with the entire Committee of One Hundred."[27] Keenleyside had attended this executive meeting which had released such an ominous sounding executive report. Instead of resounding support for closing the bars, the executive called Scott's policy drastic and hinted that drastic action by the prohibitionists was forthcoming. Was an unholy *de facto* alliance of prohibitionists and their opponents developing over Scott's sudden announcement?

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26. *Ibid*.

27. *Ibid*., March 26, 1915.

The Committee of One Hundred met on March 31 and removed that possibility by voicing strong support for Scott's policy, and deciding to continue to press their educational policy along more total temperance lines.[28] The Committee "fully approved of the Government taking over the wholesale trade, as a temporary measure, looking towards total prohibition...."[29] This was a far cry from the drastic policies which had been referred to on March 25. But the situation taken together seems to have alarmed Scott sufficiently that a royal commission appeared to be the path of political wisdom. None of the foregoing, however, could detract from the overwhelming support Scott's announcement secured from organized associations in Saskatchewan's social and political life. However, the concept of liquor dispensaries and government involvement in the liquor trade was new and experimental in Canada and ,in fact ,in Northern America outside of South Carolina. Scott's policy was a bold new move on a highly political and emotional matter. He had not initially decided to appoint a royal commission but his decision to study the South Carolina system was based on the desire to deflect any criticism from either the prohibitionists or his own supporters. The study could also help the government avoid the pitfalls experienced in South Carolina. Since

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28. Ibid., April 1, 1915.

29. Ibid., April 2, 1915.

Scott could not afford administrative bungling in such a controversial experiment, the day to day administrative details needed to be studied so that the Saskatchewan system would operate smoothly.

Whatever the complex of pressures and motives behind Scott's relatively hasty decision to establish a royal commission, at some point in late March, possibly even before the crucial meeting of the Committee of One Hundred on March 31, Scott was in touch with Oliver, sounding him out on the possibility of serving on yet another Royal Commission for the government. Obviously he had been more than satisfied with Oliver's role on the Agricultural Credit Commission. Oliver, for his part, may well have been tempted to decline the honour--and the labour. The absence of Oliver's name in the newspaper accounts of the Committee of One Hundred, suggests that he did not attend many of their meetings, but his absence can be explained, not by any lack of interest in the prohibition cause. Rather the two years from 1913-1915 were particularly busy for Principal Oliver during which time he travelled to Europe with the Agricultural Credit Commission; wrote the Commission's report; helped found the theological college; established a curriculum and recruited a faculty for the new college at the same time as he was completing his term as professor of history and economics at the University of Saskatchewan. Furthermore, the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon

encountered serious financial difficulties right from the start due to the collapse of the real estate boom in Western Canada and the college was forced to open, not on the new campus but in an old rented house in the city. Establishing a new theological college in such troubled times was more than enough to keep Dr. Oliver away from many of the meetings of the Committee of One Hundred. By the same token, he may have hesitated before agreeing to the Premier's suggestion. The issue, however, was a vital one to his hopes for prairie society; the call came from "on high"; and he was never a man to back away from a challenge or work. He had accepted and the announcement of the Royal Commission on April 5 linked himself with J. F. Bole as Commissioner.

The order-in-council,which established the Commission, described Dr. Oliver as the "Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon."[30] In the Morning Leader, Premier Scott was quoted as describing J. F. Bole as a shrewd businessman and Dr. Oliver as "an authority on political economy."[31] Oliver was, in fact, the chief Commissioner and the author of the Commission's Report. Since J. F. Bole, M.L.A. was subsequently appointed Commissioner of the liquor dispensary system, Premier Scott

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30. Sessional Paper No. 5, Session 1915.

31. Morning Leader, April 24, 1915.

may well have chosen Bole for this Commission in order to familiarize him with the intricate details of the system in South Carolina. In Scott's own words he said: "In addition to inquiring into the system itself and its operation, Mr. Bole, as a businessman, will inquire into the business end of the system."[32]

Apparently, there was some question whether the two men might not be chasing a will o'the wisp, for there was some public confusion as to whether the liquor dispensaries were still in existence in South Carolina at the time of the appointment of the Commission.[33] One Saskatoon newspaper jokingly said that the Commission was setting out to examine something that was out of existence. The title of the Royal Commission may have led to this confusion. The Commission was instructed to study and report on the liquor dispensary system "which recently existed in South Carolina under state control."[34] The dispensaries in South Carolina had been under state control from July 1893 to February 1907.[35] In 1907, however, the dispensaries had been transferred from state to county control, but otherwise, at the time of the appointment of

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32. Ibid., April 5, 1915.

33. Ibid., April 24, 1915.

34. Sessional Paper No. 5, Session 1915.

35. Ibid.

the Royal Commission, the system was identical and still in effect.

The terms of reference of the Commission were to investigate how the shops were established and managed; the defects in the system; and problems regarding bootlegging. The Commission was also instructed to prepare recommendations for the creation of a Saskatchewan government liquor dispensary system.[36] During a six-week period, the Commission examined the South Carolina liquor dispensary system in operation, interviewed many of the persons involved and prepared a ninety-five page final report for Tabling in the Legislature.

There is no evidence to indicate that the Commission employed a secretary or kept formal minutes of its proceedings. It would appear that Oliver may himself have performed this role and have drafted the report as well. The evidence for this is slight, but is provided by a comparison of passages in the report and in a book Oliver later wrote on the subject.

A section of the introduction to the final report of the Royal Commission reads as follows:

> In the prosecution of its investigations and in making of recommendations the conviction has not been abandoned that the ultimate solution of the liquor problem rests with the individual--not with the government. The Commission believes that the final basis to triumph over this insistent evil will be found only in the moral

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36. *Ibid*.

> equipment of every citizen. This can be expected from no legislation, however prudent, and from no method of conducting the traffic, however carefully conceived or wisely and conscientiously administered. But short of this ultimate goal, which is a spiritual attainment of character toward which we must untiringly strive and ceaselessly educate, there is a proximate and practical goal to which we have a duty to press without addicating [sic.] the right to cherish the hope of higher attainments in the future.[37]

Nearly eight years after the Commission's report was written and Tabled in the Legislature, Dr. Oliver wrote a book entitled The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, which was published in March 1923. In the introduction to this volume, Dr. Oliver wrote:

> For the ultimate solution of the liquor problem must rest with the individual, not with a governmental regulation. The final basis of victory over this insistent evil will be found only in the moral equipment of every citizen. This can be expected from no legislation, however prudent, and from no method of conducting the traffic, however carefully conceived or wisely and conscientiously administered. But short of this ultimate goal, which is a spiritual attainment of character towards which we must untiringly strive and ceaselessly educate, there is always a proximate and practical goal to which we have a duty to press without abdicating the right to cherish the hope of higher attainments in the future.[38]

These two quotations, which are nearly identical, leave little doubt that Dr. Oliver was indeed the author of the introduction to the final report of the Liquor Dispensary Commission and likely of the entire report as was the case with the Royal Commission on Agricultural Credit.

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37. Ibid., p. 6.

38. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, pp. 11-12.

The Commission's report noted that the terms of reference did not include an investigation of prohibition nor was it instructed to make recommendations in that regard, though it did suggest that prohibition could be a viable alternative in the future.[39] In the report, the Commission offered twenty-six recommendations for the implementation of a liquor dispensary system, a system headed by one independent person with the shops being physically as austere as possible so as to not encourage the purchase of alcohol. The quality of the liquor was to be controlled and the selection to be offered small. The employees were to have no connection with the liquor interests and were to be on a straight salary without commission based on sales. The dispensary system, as recommended by the Commission, was based on three basic but broad principles: that temperance features of the system were to be stressed rather than the feature of revenue to the government; that honest and efficient management was to be coupled with strict enforcement of the law; and that the system emphatically was not to be used for political advantage.[40]

On May 18, 1915, the Commission's report was Tabled in the Legislature. Ten days later, the Act

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39. Sessional Paper No. 5, Session 1915, p. 8.

40. Ibid., p. 95.

governing the sale of liquor was introduced into the Assembly which proposed the creation of a liquor dispensary system as recommended by the Commission. J. F. Bole was appointed Commissioner in charge of the liquor dispensary system. When Premier Scott outlined his temperance policy in the Legislature on June 3, 1915, he credited the Committee of One Hundred as one of the influences on government policy.[41] Scott carefully pointed out to the Legislature that his government was closing the bars in response to public pressure and particularly the Committee of One Hundred. He wished to make it clear that his government did not want to act until they were sure that their policy was in line with the public opinion.

In his book on the history of liquor traffic, Dr. Oliver wrote that the Commission's report had had an effect on government policy. "The Government gave it (the Commission's report) the most careful consideration and the subsequent legislation shows the effect of it at every stage."[42] Dr. Oliver commented on the Opposition's use of the report.

> A synopsis of the report itself was Tabled in the Legislature, but not a single member of the Opposition read it, to the great relief of the government, for the picture that the report gave of the South Carolina

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41. Morning Leader, June 4, 1915.

42. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, p. 244.

dispensaries was anything but flattering.[43]

If the description of the dispensaries was not flattering, why had Oliver recommended that they be used in Saskatchewan? His options had been limited. The Commission had not been instructed to weigh the merits of establishing dispensaries as opposed to privately-owned bars or total prohibition. The Commission was based on the premise that Saskatchewan was going to have liquor dispensaries and was instructed to examine the pitfalls of the South Carolina system. Although Dr. Oliver would have preferred total prohibition, he was willing to accept dispensaries as a temporary measure as long as the many pitfalls of the South Carolina system could be avoided. In sending a South Carolina newspaper editorial clipping to Scott, Oliver drew one particular sentence to his attention which was as follows: "This is a recognition even by the South Carolinans that experiments that have failed in that state need not for that reason fail elsewhere under better conditions of law enforcement."[44] Years later, Dr. Oliver emphasized the point that the liquor dispensary experiment in Saskatchewan had promoted prohibition. "They (dispensaries) had greatly restricted the sale during the year and one-half they had been under operation, and had

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43. Ibid.

44. E. H. Oliver to Walter Scott, May 11, 1915, Scott Papers, AS. The newspaper clipping was from the Charleston News and Courier, April 20, 1915.

paved the way for complete elimination of the traffic."[45]

Within the first ten years since the formation of the province, Saskatchewan had already shown signs of becoming one of the prosperous and populated provinces within Confederation. The new Legislative Buildings on the banks of the Wascana were completed. The size and grandure of these buildings, still impressive by modern standards, stand as a reminder of the grand vision and spirit of optimism that was present in the province's first decade. Parliamentary responsible government had been established. The acres of fertile land in the province were capable of supporting such a large population that Saskatchewan would surely have the largest population of any province within Confederation. By 1916, the population of the province had risen to 647,835, which was a 151.3 per cent increase from 1906. The church, the university, the school and the agricultural industry had to respond to this new growing western community. Since the West was still new and its institutions and culture still apparently malleable, it was the opportune time to style this growing community on the ideal and thus avoid the economic and social problems of Eastern Canada and the old country.

Edmund Henry Oliver was part of this growth and development. He had delivered the first lecture in the

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45. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, p. 262.

University of Saskatchewan; became first principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon; preached on weekends in many Saskatchewan rural communities which did not yet have a resident minister; taught theology to young men so that they too could help make the West God's Dominion; as a member of the Committee of One Hundred, pressured the Scott Government to root alcohol out of this new society and ban the bar forever. The challenge posed by the new settlers scattered across the flat prairie was a threat and an opportunity to Oliver's prospectus for the West. The task was large and the stakes were high but Dr. Oliver believed that it was a battle that could be won. He concluded a later book, His Dominion of Canada, by writing: "On the Prairies we have the last West. It is still in the making. Let us see to it that we make the last West the best West."[46]

Cooperation was one of the keys. Cooperative elevators, cooperative credit, and community school building bees were ways that human and physical resources could be pooled in order to meet the challenge. Dr. Oliver lent his efforts to all of them as well as to the pooled temperance forces to ban the bar. Scott's Oxbow address was proof that the collective voice was mightier than the individual's.

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46. E. H. Oliver, His Dominion of Canada, (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1932), p. 98.

The Ban the Bar crusade, in crossing denominational lines, had produced the desired results. Cooperation on the rural mission fields was also tried. The old denominational barriers from Eastern Canada and Europe were slowly being eroded by the western challenges. Dr. Oliver believed that the same forces would, in time, also erase racial barriers in the West.

The healthy, prosperous region of rural morality for which he yearned, appeared well in the making as the second decade of the century progressed. He made little if any reference to the red lights of James Gray's recent writings but the "institutionalizing of the prairies" of which he was to write in greater detail later was clear evidence of his conviction as to the gradual realization of his ideal.[47] The expansion of the wheat economy had brought the creation of large cooperative farm organizations, emphasizing the moral and spiritual qualities of life along with the economic.

From 1909, when he arrived, to 1916, he had witnessed continued development along those lines, and in the agricultural credit and liquor commissions had played his own role in that drama. The clouds of war, however, had intervened. Immigration had trickled to a stop; the government's ability to finance an agricultural cooperative

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47. J. H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies. (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1971).

credit system undermined the application of his scheme for cheaper credit; and the young men who might have manned the barricades in other western causes were drawn to distant battle fields of Europe. The War however, brought another larger challenge than the western frontier provided. Oliver accepted that challenge, enlisting in the University's Battalion No. 196. As it turned out, the War held a double challenge, and Oliver soon found that the causes he had championed in Saskatchewan were often as threatened by the wet canteens and army camp life as they were by the "Hun!"

CHAPTER IV

THE CHAPLAIN OVERSEAS

The ill-fated visit of Archduke Ferdinand to Sarajevo in the summer of 1914 led to the beginning of a war which was unmatched in world history. Emotions ran high within the Commonwealth that "the Hun" and all of the forces of evil and autocracy that he represented, had to be suppressed and eliminated. Small helpless Belgium symbolized the liberties and freedoms of the liberal democratic world which had to be defended. Canada, for more reasons than just its ties with Great Britain, found itself committed to this European struggle. That battle, as is well-known, did not summon all Canadians with equal urgency. But on the Prairies there was no doubt as to the response when the call went out to Western Canada for soldiers and food to support the Canadian war effort. Oliver met the news of war with sadness and bade farewell with sorrow to the many young students and colleagues who left Saskatoon for the far-off battle fields. Because the battle at home for a dry Saskatchewan was heightening, Edmund Oliver apparently chose first to finish his struggle against the "demon rum" before making his own personal commitment to military service.

The question of war provoked much soul searching

and debate within the churches, particularly the Methodist Church. Prior to the War, the Presbyterian Church, like most denominations, declared their abhorrence of war and killing, and favoured pacifistic devices such as international arbitration.[1] But it is one thing to debate the question of war during peacetime and quite another when actually faced with the realities of war. The Presbyterian Church readily maintained its belief in peace but accepted the fact that the Kaiser had invaded Belgium and France and that the liberties which the church believed in were being threatened. They could not turn their backs on the European situation in the hopes that peace would return. The War came to be viewed as a noble cause of right against wrong, in time even a war to end further wars and finally a war for the establishment of a righteous world order. At the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Synod of the Presbyterian Church, November 7-9, 1916, great concern was shown concerning recruitment and the need for more soldiers and the following resolution was passed: "this Synod hereby urges upon all its members to do all in their power to stimulate recruiting both by personal appeal and, where possible,

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1. Edward Alexander Christie, "The Official Attitudes and Opinions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada with respect to Public Affairs and Social Problems, 1875-1925," (Unpublished Masters thesis, University of Toronto, 1955), pp. 117-122.

by personal dedication of their lives by joining one or another of the battalions being formed...."[2]

In the Protestant press, the arguments for the war effort took on both a patriotic and a religious tone. The Presbyterian publications described Britain's cause as a just one and developed an attitude of "whatever concerns the empire concerns us."[3] The Presbyterian Church argued that the war must be fought to its conclusion so that a lasting peace could be achieved. A partial settlement or a lenient compromise with the enemy could not be tolerated.[4] The Methodist Church also took up the war cause and actively participated in the recruitment campaign, not only believing that God was on their side but that the War was a punishment to Canada for her own sins.[5] To fight in the War was, on the one hand, working as part of God's plan and, on the other hand, working for forgiveness of their sins. Oliver subscribed to all such trends of argument, and even a decade after the War, defended the Church's role in the war effort

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2. Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of Saskatchewan of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1916, p. 16.

3. Edward Alexander Christie, "The Official Attitudes and Opinions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada with respect to Public Affairs and Social Problems, 1875-1925," p. 117.

4. Ibid., p. 128.

5. J. M. Bliss, "The Methodist Church and World War I," The Canadian Historical Review, 1968 , p. 224 and Richard Allen, Social Passion, (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 35.

by arguing that:

> It was the Church that did seek to check its (war) ravages by humanizing its methods, by chivalry, by the truce of God, by the Red Cross, and by endeavoring to link it only to righteous causes.[6]

Notwithstanding his abhorrence for war and death, a personal sense of duty to engage directly in the struggle weighed ever more heavily on Oliver. It was no coincidence that within eleven months after the bars had been closed in Saskatchewan, Oliver left Saskatoon as a chaplain in the Western Universities Battalion, No. 196. Prohibition, one part of Oliver's vision for a morally pure West, was nearer with the closing of the bars. He believed that the time was right to join his students and colleagues who had already left for the European shores. This was the third time that E. H. Oliver had set off for Europe. After completing his theological degree in 1910, he had travelled to Europe,and particularly Germany,in order to study and upon his return to Europe in 1913 with the Agricultural Credit Commission, he was impressed by the German cooperative agricultural credit scheme. It is obvious that Oliver admired the German scholastic standards and their experiments in cooperation but by 1916, felt compelled to return to Germany once more to help destroy a regime he considered to be the antithesis of freedom, scholarship and cooperation.

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6. E. H. Oliver, The Social Achievements of the Christian Church, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 4.

In his first letter to his wife, Rita, after leaving Saskatoon for the War, Oliver promised to write her every day and asked her to keep the letters. Upon his return, he wanted to be able to reminisce with Rita about the War. Rita in fact did keep her husband's daily letters, which are of great assistance in getting to know Oliver. Rita was his <u>confidante</u> through the letters as he discussed war, education, morality as well as outlining his daily activities. In turn, Rita and Dr. Murray became Oliver's sources of information as he maintained contact with the developments and inner politics of the university and the new theological college. It was difficult for a man to try to hold a new college together from such a distance. The college lacked money, students and a permanent residence. Through his letters to Rita and Walter Murray, he did what he could to keep the college alive and united until his return. His personal commitment to the economic well-being of the college was so great that in June 1917, he asked Rita to enquire whether the college had enough money to open for another term because if it did not, she was not to cash his pay cheques for July and August.[7]

E. H. Oliver had enlisted, not as a regular soldier, but as a chaplain. His duties, as chaplain, were to visit the sick and wounded; counsel and pray with the dying; write letters to the families of the disabled soldiers and often to

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7. Oliver to his wife, June 15, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

break the news to a family that their son had been killed. Over and above the bedside care given by a chaplain, he was expected to present a chapel service every Sunday in camp. For some time Oliver was able to assume only a portion of these duties. He had arrived in England in November 1916, and much to his chagrin, remained there for eleven months. Oliver's delay in being posted at the Front was because of a surplus of chaplains of all denominations. A report, dated December 29, 1916, from the Office of Senior Chaplain, Shorncliffe, England, showed that one brigade of 4,000 men came to England with eight chaplains which meant that the chaplains were "banked up in England."[8] It was true that there was work for the chaplains in England, but Oliver, like many of his colleagues, felt that they could be put to better use in France.

> It just makes me sick to think of the glorious things that are taking place across the channel and here we are sitting here in the south of England, working it is true but kept away from the place where all the interest is.[9]

> I shall never sing again with much satisfaction 'Like a mighty army moves the Church of God.' The army is too slow for the Church.[10]

In order to get to the Front sooner, Oliver was, for a time,

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8. Andrew Baird Papers, United Church Archives, Winnipeg.

9. Oliver to his wife, March 19, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

10. *Ibid.*, March 21, 1917.

tempted to resign from the chaplancy corps in order to become a private soldier.[11] He was not long in England, however, before he realized that the War was to be fought on several fronts, some of which were in and about the armed camps of men presumably committed to the lofty purposes of the War.

When Oliver left Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan bars had been closed for nearly one year and the struggle to close the liquor dispensaries and establish complete prohibition was continuing. If he thought he was leaving behind the battle against the ravages of alcohol and the struggle for a higher morality, his experiences overseas would quickly change his mind. On the way to Europe, Dr. Oliver became very conscious and fearful of the different moral and social attitudes in Europe as compared to Western Canada. "We are reaching the other side where I am fearful as to conditions. I fear for the effects of the wet canteen. We can only do our best to minimise its effects."[12] Upon arriving in England, his fears were confirmed.

> The canteen is wet in this country. I am hoping that our boys will be able to withstand the temptation which that affords. I have seen what I have never seen in Camp Hughes (Manitoba), drunken soldiers and officers in this neighborhood. I think it is an infinite pity.[13]

During the summer of 1917, Dr. Oliver worked to

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11. Ibid., March 31, 1917.

12. Ibid., November 6, 1916.

13. Ibid., November 16, 1916.

prevent the establishment of a wet canteen on the base believing that it was wrong to have alcohol supplied to boys between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.[14] He was successful in his efforts but in doing so, created some hard feelings and animosity. "To fight for a principle against those whom one admires and respects, to have them regard you as narrow and bigoted, to appeal against their decision is to me a very disagreeable business."[15] Yet the battle against "demon rum" had to be waged wherever it was found. Dr. Oliver had a strong sense of responsibility in caring for the Canadian troops and often referred to them as "our boys." As chaplain, his duty was to protect them from the European temptations so that they would return home after the War, morally and physically healthy. When any of the troops were off the base on leave, he frequently arranged for them to stay at residences of the Daughters of the Empire.[16] He was not prone to come to the aid of transgressors, refusing for instance to use his influence as chaplain to have the penalty reduced for an officer who was facing court martial on a charge of drunkenness, declaring that the officer in question should "take his medicine."[17]

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14. Ibid., August 15, 1917.
15. Ibid., August 19, 1917.
16. Ibid., November 21, 1916.
17. Ibid., April 18, 1917.

The issue, however, was much more than the personal morality of soldiers and men, for the course of developments for Canadian soldiers overseas and Canadian citizens at home were running in opposite directions. While Oliver was overseas, the prohibition struggle was continuing back home--and with notable success. The dispensary system in Saskatchewan, as established on July 1, 1915, lasted exactly eighteen months. A plebiscite in December 1916 finally favoured the abolition of the dispensary system and the establishment of full prohibition. This involved, of course, the polling of soldiers' views as well, with Oliver commenting in a letter about a lady being in camp to supervise a prohibition vote.[18] The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan had continued to press for total prohibition and in his absence, the 1917 and 1918 Synods of the Presbyterian Church passed resolutions commending the provincial government for bringing prohibition to Saskatchewan and expressing approval of the manner in which the temperance laws were being enforced.[19] Other provinces had fallen in line, establishing prohibition Acts, and in 1918, the federal government, by an order-in-council, abolished all manufacture and trade in alcoholic beverages for the duration of the War and one year thereafter.

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18. Ibid., February 19, 1917.

19. Act and Proceedings of the Synods of Saskatchewan of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1917, p. 29; 1918, p. 19.

Much of this had been accomplished because the Canadian prohibition leaders argued convincingly that the war effort necessitated the elimination of alcohol in order to save grain for food and to improve the productivity of Canadians at home and overseas. But on the other hand, the War introduced Canadian soldiers to the European culture where they experienced a freer attitude toward alcohol. The overseas chaplains, such as Oliver, and the churches in Canada argued that to eliminate the liquor problem was one major way of winning the War. "Many Canadian Methodists came to believe that sex and liquor in England were worse threats to Canadian manhood than the guns in France."[20] E. H. Oliver joined the Methodists in that opinion.

Coupled with the liquor question was a general crisis in sexual morality and the threat of venereal disease. Before Oliver left Canadian soil, he helped Dr. Walker, the base medical officer, lecture to the troops on venereal disease. He wrote to his wife: "We are anxious to keep our boys clean when we get them there (Europe)."[21] The general moral standards in Great Britain appalled Dr. Oliver. "The stories told about the immorality prevalent during wartime in London are appalling," he wrote but "the boys have been

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20. J. M. Bliss, "The Methodist Church and World War I," p. 225.

21. Oliver to his wife, October 28, 1916, Oliver Papers, USA.

carefully cautioned."[22] Counselling the troops became vital so that the social and moral pitfalls of wartime could be avoided. Dr. Oliver even went so far as to check on married men who were leading unfaithful lives at the Front, but from those who were reaping the consequences of their profligacy, he often kept a cautious distance. While visiting and counselling in the military hospitals, he inevitably met soldiers who had contracted venereal disease, and wrote:

> When these (men with V.D.) come I always feel that they have made a mess of their lives and bodies. Fortunately the number that comes here is few, but four or five arrived in one ward yesterday. I pass them by for I cannot write home for them nor am I going to expose myself to accidental contact.[23]

Though he added: "Yet I imagine they have their bitter moments of remorse and need help even more than some others."[24]

Those who attempted to publicize the moral conditions in and around the military bases housing Canadian soldiers, however, met with official disapproval in Canada. When two books reached Canada describing the social and moral conditions of the Canadian soldiers in England, Defeat or Victory by Dr. Stuart Holden and Arthur Mee and The Fiddlers by Arthur Mee, both books were banned in Canada by

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22. Ibid., November 21, 1916.

23. Ibid., November 26, 1917.

24. Ibid.

the Canadian Secretary of State upon recommendation of Mr. Chambers, Chief Press Censor for Canada.[25] Reaction from the churches was immediate and intense. The matter was raised in the House of Commons. The churches argued that censorship was wrong and that the conditions in Europe should be exposed. This, they hoped, would further the cause of prohibition in Canada which in turn would help the Canadian war effort. Exposure might also bring action to ameliorate conditions and increase the efficiency of the Canadian soldiers. The Canadian Government, however, argued that the books should be banned because they felt the description greatly exaggerated the situation in England. But it was nervous about the books for other reasons too. The government, like its chief censor, believed that if these books were widely read in Canada, parents would prevent their sons from joining the war effort, thus threatening the Canadian recruitment program which was in any case entering a period of severe crisis.[26] Grain producers in Canada and the United States, strongly committed to prohibition, furthermore were threatening to reduce the grain shipments to England and Europe if the grain was being used for the production of alcohol. Supporters of prohibition, such as

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25. E. J. Chambers to L. C. Christie of the Prime Minister's office, July 18, 1917, Borden Papers.

26. Borden Papers. Mr. Chambers used reports from the Department of Militia and Defence to substantiate his argument that the two books exaggerated the situation.

Dr. Oliver, believed that the liquor and venereal disease problems were very real and a threat to the war effort. When Dr. Oliver returned to Saskatchewan in 1919, his experiences in Europe had strengthened his conviction that the bar must never be allowed to return to Saskatchewan.

Although the army moved too slowly for Dr. Oliver, he did not waste his time while he was waiting to go to France. He did not merely confine his duties as chaplain to preaching sermons, writing letters for injured soldiers and visiting the sick but was, immediately upon his entry into the army, deeply involved in the educational field. Upon his arrival at each camp where he was stationed, he established reading rooms, usually in tents, where the men could write letters and read. He invested some of his own money into this venture and was able to obtain many books from Dr. Walter Murray. The library collection became of such a size that moving it to his next camp became a problem for Oliver. Because the War had taken the Canadian youth at such an impressionable age, Oliver hoped, by means of his reading rooms, to guide these young men so that they would eventually return to Canada as solid Christian citizens. Knowing that many of these young men would never return to Canada, might have deterred those of a different mind than Oliver. For his part, he was anxious to begin a broad educational program "for if we don't hurry, our pupils may

get shot or killed before they are educated."[27] This positive attitude of having to live life fully, even if there might not be a tomorrow must have been a great inspiration to the soldiers on the bleak and muddy fields of France. It can be speculated that Oliver's reading rooms were established not only for their educational value but also as a diversion to the soldier's temptation to pass his idle time in a bar. Charles W. Gordon, a Presbyterian chaplain and a colleague of Oliver's, supported the reading room concept as an aid to promoting prohibition.[28] Oliver not only despised alcohol and the bar in their own right, but also because of the evil influences such as prostitution and gambling which often accompanied the bar.

The months passed, and although usefully occupied from some standpoints, Oliver was dissatisfied at still finding himself in England. He felt guilty, in some measure, that he was "merely a chaplain" and not an active soldier. His struggle with his own self image, his desire that he could adopt a more soldierly stance so that wife and family--and, indeed, others "back home" might gauge him correctly. He feared the War might end before he could prove himself in

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27. Oliver to his wife, January 1, 1918, Oliver Papers, USA.

28. Edward H. Wood, "Ralph Connor and the Canadian West," (unpublished Masters thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1975), p. 46.

his and their eyes by going to the front, and took pains in his letters to point out his willingness and ability to fight, but that his current role was temporarily a more useful one. Finally the opportunity came to go to France, and in April 1918, he was able to declare: "Now I have satisfied myself that I have played the man and was well to do my utmost. I have not tried to shirk."[29]

Oliver was transferred to the Front in France as the conscription issue and the wartime union government campaign were reaching a peak. Oliver himself was firmly convinced of the necessity of conscription, which he linked to his conception of democracy, but which also reflected attitudes toward the Canadian Confederation which were almost endemic in Canadian Anglo-Protestantism. "I am a firm believer in democracy," he wrote to Rita, "but I think that a democracy must realize its duties as well as its rights, and one of its duties is to prosecute this war."[30] The conscription issue brought out in Oliver an intense anti-Laurier and anti-French Canadian outburst. He kept statistics showing how few French Canadians had joined the war effort in comparison to population ratios in Canada. "The war is not over but those Quebeckers act as though they don't know there was a war at all. It makes one fume.

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29. Ibid., April 4, 1918.

30. Ibid., June 9, 1917.

Of course no one wants to get killed but why should a man put a higher value on his carcase than on his manhood or soul." [31] "Though I could hardly become a Tory myself I certainly could not consent to be ranked as a Liberal (because of Laurier's opposition to conscription)."[32] "The French want all the advantages of citizenship without its obligations and dangers."[33] Oliver commented that he was glad that he was not at home during the conscription crisis because he would not have been able to withstand the temptation to talk politics from the pulpit, a practice he normally considered unwise.[34]

The War for Dr. Oliver, was God's war--a struggle of right over wrong, for the defeat of those "boastful Germans" was "a great vindication of right and one feels surer that there is a God that reigns."[35] Yet there was a nagging doubt that was always overcome by the totality of the evil Germany represented. In his letters to Rita, he continually expressed his thankfulness that their sons were still small and not part of the War. The War was a chance to make the world a better place in which his children could live. "I hope that all these dreadful times and wars

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31. Ibid., July 2, 1917.

32. Ibid., August 18, 1917.

33. Ibid., July 19, 1917.

34. Ibid., July 24, 1917.

35. Ibid., November 15, 1918.

are over before our boys grow up. I feel that all this fighting will not be in vain, that it will mean a new and a better world for them."[36] But as rumours came out of an early peace, he hoped that peace would not come until the Kaiser, and all he stood for, would be crushed once and for all. For him as for so many, the symbols which justified the great crusade came to obscure the reality of battle.

Oliver was not without some inner conflict concerning war, however. He believed that the War was right and that he was serving a righteous cause but he could not help but question all of the human suffering. As he visited the wounded soldiers and prayed with the dying, he wrestled with his philosophy of death. "It is dreadful to think of all this loss to the human race but somewhere, somehow there must be good come out of it!"[37] When peace was finally declared in November 1918, Dr. Oliver wrote: "It is difficult to realize there is no fighting and no guns firing. The war is over and Peace has been won. The World has been made safe for democracy and we'll all get home to our wives."[38] Upon his return home, he wrote to the Saskatoon newspaper the incredible claim that, "by God's grace, a great thing has been brought to pass. Righteousness

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36. _Ibid_., April 19, 1917.

37. _Ibid_., September 21, 1918.

38. _Ibid_., November 12, 1918.

has been established in the earth."[39] Such comments were common in the euphorea of the first post-war months but it would not be long before many would ask how the massive slaughter of human life on the European battleground could have been a triumph for the Lord. However, even before the War had ended, the question of soldier rehabilitation was rising. On December 1, 1917, Oliver had left the chaplancy corps to devote his whole time to educational work that anticipated the successful conclusion of the War and the new world that would come in its train.

The upshot of his work was the establishment of the University of Vimy Ridge. The challenge of trying to establish a university in the pock-marked mud of France seemed insurmountable. The soldiers were continually on the move and were involved with the full-time occupation of soldiering. This was not the first time that Dr. Oliver had had to meet the challenge of establishing a new university under trying conditions. However, he was not long in establishing a curriculum for the new university. In a letter, dated December 7, 1917, he listed the initial subjects to be taught as agriculture, business, history, geography, mathematics and science, all of which would create well-rounded Canadian citizens--a recurring theme that Oliver repeated with the new Canadians upon his

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39. Saskatoon Daily Star, July 5, 1919.

return home.[40] Dr. Oliver noted that in the first week of lectures, 4,000-5,000 troops had been reached.[41] The university started with twelve instructors and was headed by Dr. E. H. Oliver. By February 1918, there had been twenty-three libraries established for the Canadian troops in France and in one particular week, 4,412 books had been loaned from these libraries; 3,913 men had attended classes and 6,390 men had attended lectures.[42] While the university had a problem of obtaining manpower without interfering in the war effort, the lectures were held away from the Front when the soldiers had time off and the instructors travelled from camp to camp by bicycle. Dr. Oliver's first title was: "Officer in Charge of Technical and Vocational Education for the Canadian Corps."[43]

Oliver devoted his full energy to coordinating this loose union of libraries and lecturers. More books were requested from Dr. Murray and other colleagues, and able men were recruited to serve as instructors for the university. Dr. Oliver spoke every day to the troops on topics that were his standbys at home such as: "The Language Question;" "Canadian Citizenship;" or "What it Means to be a Christian." Throughout the hard work and

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40. Oliver to his wife, December 7, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

41. Ibid., December 13, 1917.

42. Ibid., February 21, 1918.

43. Ibid., December 16, 1917.

countless disappointments, E. H. Oliver seemed to enjoy his work.

> I have not had so much fun since I had the mumps. The hospital was tragic and serious. This is serious but funny. We use Breweries, Mines Buildings, tents, school houses,--for the University of Vimy Ridge can't wait.[44]

It was ironic that Dr. Oliver had been offered other university positions if he would leave the army and now he was the head of a new university in any case.

> It seems like a big joke to have refused the Principalship of Queen's and to have got in its place the Presidency of the University of Vimy Ridge.[45]

The curriculum planned by Dr. Oliver for this new university was apparently well accepted by his army superiors. According to an article in the Morning Leader, Dr. Oliver's course for the University of Vimy Ridge was adopted for use in the Khaki University in France which was the University for all of the allied forces.[46]

By April 1, 1918, the University of Vimy Ridge declared a holiday so that all of the troops could fight in the big offensive. However, the university resumed its

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44. Ibid., January 1, 1918.

45. Ibid., January 8, 1918.

46. Morning Leader, October 18, 1918. The University of Vimy Ridge was for the Canadian troops overseas but was amalgamated with the Khaki University which was begun later for all of the allied forces.

activities after the armistice, greatly expanding its operations to serve all of the troops once they were no longer fighting at the Front, and fulfilling a vital role of educating the men during the long tedious process of returning to Canada. After the armistice, the university became a big operation and was for a period of time quartered in the University of Bonn.[47] The period of demobilization was a crucial one for Dr. Oliver and his university, for although the men had more time on their hands each day, the time was short, and the university had been given the task of preparing the men psychologically for their return home.

As the conclusion to the War approached, problems of reconstruction and demobilization began to loom large. The Presbyterian Church prepared a study on the War. It reported that:

> The period of the war will certainly prove not to have been that of our greatest difficulty. The duties and problems of peace will prove severer than any we have known during the war.[48]

The Presbyterian Church emphasized evangelism, study and service during the War to promote Christ and to serve the soldiers on their return. Two themes were followed: the

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47. Oliver to his wife, January 8, 1919, Oliver Papers, USA. Dr. Oliver noted that sixteen tons of books had just arrived.

48. Presbyterian Church of Canada, "The War and the Christian Church," p. 14.

church had to be strengthened and believers brought to Christ in time of war and the church had to be of service to the returned soldier. Dr. Oliver was also aware of the changes that War brought and the challenge of reconstruction.

> The war has changed us all very much. It has changed me, I know. My experience with soldiers dying has given me a different thought of death. ...I no longer mourn a man who falls.... But it was glorious, and the thought of him (a fallen friend) will be a challenge to the rest of us all our lives. The University will always be a different place to us now, consecrated with the blood of her sons.[49]

He realized that the soldiers who returned would also be much changed in their thinking.

> When the boys come home many things will be vastly different in their ways of thinking. The war will continue to colour their outlook for years and its lessons will serve to influence the policy of the Church and state for a long time.[50]

A good education policy was needed during the War in order to guide and influence the soldiers. Dr. Oliver saw this urgent need for education.

> I want to remind you that these men will be scattered abroad carrying certain convictions regarding citizenship. They have reached certain conclusions and these conclusions will dominate the future. These men will have earned the right to shape, if not to rule, the world they have saved. It is going to matter supremely what views they carry back.[51]

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49. Oliver to Dr. Walter Murray, n.d., Oliver Papers, USA.

50. Oliver to his wife, May 2, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

51. E. H. Oliver, "Educational Reconstruction," n.d., Oliver Papers, USA.

The War was a totally new and horrifying experience on a larger scale than ever before. The Canadian soldiers, who had travelled to the European shores, were confronted with the atrocities of war, and with a totally new living and moral standard. The wet canteens, the "immoral women" and the "live it up for tomorrow we may die" attitude were threatening the very foundations of the society that Oliver was committed to building. Dr. Oliver knew that if a man had seen this new way of life and had risked his life for democracy and "the good life" back home, he would therefore expect these democratic ideals in existence when he got home. If he did not, he would likely work to bring reform. For these, the Khaki University reinforced the trend of their pre-war and wartime experience. For others, proper education was needed to counterbalance the influence of the "immoral life" encountered in Europe before the return home. Yet on the whole, the War and the victory of right over wrong had filled many of the soldiers with a zest for reform and reconstruction. Dr. Oliver could see that the Canadian nation was on the edge of a new reform era. "We are only blind if we do not see ahead of us profound social upheavals and new political adjustments."[52] And he sketched the true spirit in which the post-war world should be met:

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52. Ibid.

> In the days to come we must be knit together with a sense of social service in a democracy that is diligent and refined. We must advance with the spirit of true, unfrightened liberty, honouring toil, demanding justice, shrinking from no sacrifice, confident of the eternal verities, and, daring in every department of life, to battle with brain and brawn against wanton wrong and wilful waste and wicked war.[53]

It was true that the soldiers had seen the world bow to an all-time low, and many were determined to correct the evils of society upon their return home. Yet as it turned out, the returning soldiers were to be one of the most influential groups in bringing the prohibition gains to the ground. Many of the veterans, who had become accustomed to having alcohol in Europe, joined the Moderation and Liberty Leagues upon returning home, with their officers frequently assuming positions of leadership in a campaign that would not have been defined as "reform" by Dr. Oliver. Whether the post-war society would assume the shape of Oliver's moral visions was an open question indeed.

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53. *Ibid*.

CHAPTER V

A VISION IN CRISIS

The silencing of the guns on the European fields in November 1918 marked the beginning of a new age--a time for reflection on the past few years and of prediction of what lay ahead. E. H. Oliver, although busy with the Khaki University and the process of demobilization, turned his mind to the problems and challenges that were waiting for him in Saskatchewan. Before he left for the War in 1916, he had been deeply involved in the prohibition crusade together with the immigration and school questions. The bars were closed before he left as were the liquor dispensaries while he was away. Although continued vigilance would be necessary, in 1918, the reopening of the bar did not appear to be one of the problems facing Oliver. More to the fore for him and many of his colleagues was an expected resumption of the heavy pre-war flood of immigration. The lack of a comprehensive "Canadianization process" was, in 1919, still much as Oliver had left it in 1916--a very real threat to Oliver's vision of a prairie society devoted to the primary cultural values of Anglo-Protestantism in Canada. But hand in hand with that went broader tasks of reform in both church and society.

Dr. Oliver had foreseen, even before the end of the War, that reconstruction would be the new challenge facing the church and the nation. The returned men had changed since departing from the Canadian shores several years before and in fact, meanwhile, Canada too had changed. Now that the Kaiser had been defeated and the 'wrong righted,' the Canadian nation had to convert its wartime economy to a peacetime one which resulted in fewer job opportunities. The men returning to Canada compounded the unemployment situation to crisis proportions. Oliver was not only concerned with the economic crisis but with the challenge of renewing the struggle to awaken the church to the moral needs of society. During the War, the social service goals of the church had had to take second place to the patriotic goals of recruitment and successful restoration of peace in the world, although partly because of the War, the reform spirit had remained high. The end of the War offered the church more time to return to its social service at the same time as problems such as unemployment and recession were increasing. For many, the days of glorious opportunity through individual initiative and *laissez-faire* were gone. Society had worked as a unit with government planning and control to win the War.

The post-war period was a time of renewed hope for regeneration for the church and the nation and was a time of social gospel revival. Industrial individualism symbolized the problems in society with industrial democracy as the

proposed solution.[1] Greater support for public ownership of the natural resources and utilities became apparent in Canada. The Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in particular manifested a further heightening of social consciousness, and some within the Protestant Churches began to conceive the Kingdom of God on earth as a cooperative commonwealth.[2] The Methodist General Conference in 1918 provided the most advanced expression of this rising social awareness and concern. Resolutions arising out of this conference promoted a democratizing of industry with worker involvement in management and insurance schemes against illness and unemployment. Anyone who was at a disadvantage due to ill health or unemployment, both of which were beyond his own control, was to be the responsibility of society.[3] A report from the Army and Navy Board of the Methodist Church, which was ultimately passed by the conference, called for a transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of cooperation and service.[4] The tone of the conference was that if society was going to have democratic politics, democratic economics was a resulting necessity.

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1. Richard Allen, Social Passion, p. 64.

2. Ibid., pp. 64 and 67.

3. Ibid., p. 74.

4. Ibid.

Although the philosophy of the Methodist Church as shown at its General Conference in 1918 was more radical than any other denomination or major political party at that time, it is a useful barometer to measure the growing concern in Canada for redistribution of the wealth, resources and opportunities equally to all within Canada. The Presbyterian Church too showed a renewed interest in the social gospel movement but was not as "left wing" as the Methodist Church in 1918.

At its General Assembly in 1919, the Board of Home Missions and Social Service of the Presbyterian Church reviewed the 'social unrest' in society and passed a resolution calling on labour and capital to work together in a spirit of harmony and cooperation for the welfare of the country. The resolution encouraged management to give the workers "an equitable share in the wealth jointly produced..."; and to provide: better working conditions; shorter work days with more leisure time; insurance against accident, unemployment and illness; pensions for the widowed mothers and the aged; and a greater voice for labour in determining the working conditions and a proper share in the control of industry.[5] Reform in the labour-management field was advocated by the Presbyterian Church as being a solution to the social unrest which was prevalent in the early post-war

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5. The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1919, pp. 81 and 82.

years.

The end of the War was a time of evaluation for some of the army chaplains as well, which resulted in a jointly signed letter describing their experiences together with recommendations for changes. The emergency conditions during the War had necessitated common church parades whereby the soldiers from the various Protestant denominations attended the same service. Due to the heavy workload and the difficulty of separating the men into denominations to match the chaplains, it became common for a chaplain to work with men of any and all denominations. The chaplains had allowed all denominations to come to communion; to worship together at church parade and the chaplains themselves had worked together "in all matters affecting the social and spiritual welfare of the troops."[6] The report indicated that this cooperation amongst the denominations had not been detrimental to religion.

Some chaplains were not sure if these shared religious services would have to be continued after the War, yet for the majority, this experiment in cooperation and interdenominational service had been successful and useful. The majority of the chaplains believed that "so much has been gained by the good-will and cooperation of the past four and

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6. "A Message from the Chaplains of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada to the Churches at Home," n.d. The report was published in pamphlet form and printed in The Presbyterian and Westminster, July 3, 1919.

a half years, that to go back on what has been so fruitful in success would be to go back on the blessing and guiding of the spirit of God."[7] This experiment in religious cooperation came about, in the eyes of the chaplains, because of divine guidance.

Since the report had to be carefully worded so as to achieve as much unanimity as possible amongst the chaplains, it did not discuss the union debate or controversy which had been rekindled by the ending of the War, but the majority of the chaplains felt it was essential that they share their experiences with the Canadian people and the message on this count was clear. Their experience of working together brought most of the chaplains to "a much nearer common ground for the consideration of fuller unity than ever before."[8] The great majority of the chaplains, therefore, recommended that:

> In the interests alike of a better understanding between the Churches and of the effective carrying out of the work of the Kingdom of God, that what has been the practice under active service conditions should be authoritatively sanctioned when they return to Canada, and become the general practice of the Church.[9]

Lieutenant Colonel E. H. Oliver not only signed the report as part of the majority who spoke out in favour

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7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

of union, but he also expressed direct support of the common church parade and worked hard to promote cooperation amongst the various denominations.

> You can tell the President (Murray)...that I have begun to convert the heathen, that is to say, the English, in the matter of Church Union.[10]

Oliver's interest in church union began even before the War. In an address in 1923, Dr. Oliver reminisced about the times before the War when he had debated with his father who adamantly opposed union with the Methodists.[11]

Oliver's dedication to the union cause was shown at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg in 1916, when he was appointed to the Advisory Council which was to extend the union movement.[12] His experiences as chaplain during the War only served to strengthen his pro-union views, although Rita, in her letters, kept him informed of the extent of the anti-union sentiment remaining in his own church enclosing an account of a meeting in St. Thomas Church, Saskatoon which drew Oliver's comment:

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10. Oliver to his wife, March 31, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

11. "Address by Rev. Edmund H. Oliver, Ph.D., Principal of Presbyterian Theological College, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, at Complimentary Banquet given by Sir James Woods, K.C.M.G., January 9, 1923," (A pamphlet issued by the Presbyterian Church-Union Movement Committee), p. 10.

12. House of Commons Transcript of Proceedings before the Private Bills Committee, May 1, 1924, p. 172.

> It seems to have been an exciting gathering. I notice that Mr. Honeyman is true to the faith of his fathers and moved a motion to preserve the Church.[13]

He early appeared to favour the union of theological colleges, writing to Rita in 1917:

> Now that Dyde is leaving Robertson College to become Theological Principal at Queen's, I shouldn't wonder that an attempt was made to make the two colleges in Edmonton into one Union College.[14]

His letters make constant reference to the use of Anglican, Roman Catholic and YMCA facilities in an attempt to provide a full religious and social program for the troops. Church union had its limits, of course, but although Dr. Oliver never recommended union or even the possibility of union with the Roman Catholics, he did appreciate the value of working with them too in their time of need, and no doubt broadened his sympathies in the process.

The expression "necessity is the mother of invention" holds true for denominational cooperation during the War. Wartime had created an unique set of circumstances for the chaplains whereby they often had to offer communion or prayer to a dying soldier without determining whether they had a denominational match. Out of necessity, the debate over polity or scriptural differences in interpretation became secondary. To many church leaders, the

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13. Oliver to his wife, October 15, 1916, Oliver Papers, USA.

14. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1917.

urgency and challenge facing the church at home was now as great as had confronted the chaplains overseas. If cooperation and unity worked during the War, surely it would and could work in Canada.

Wartime was an era of challenge to the church and society whereby many of the long accepted beliefs and principles were shaken. The Presbyterian Church had had to rethink its policies on world peace after its participation in the War and the recruitment of soldiers. The moral and social attitudes in Europe and the Canadian bases overseas offered a threat and a challenge to the church. But not just more chaplains and ministers were needed to meet this challenge. The church needed strong leadership and an all encompassing policy on future action in order to meet the post-war challenges. The church could not afford to be complacent or disunited when its foundations were being shaken by the War.

Dr. Oliver was impatient with his own Presbyterian Church,in particular, over its lack of educational policy but this conflict was broader than just a disagreement over the curriculum in the Sunday schools for example. He was frustrated with the church's lack of national leadership both during the War and in the reconstruction demobilization period: "I am interested in education but the church has no educational policy."[15] He noted that he met with

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15. Oliver to his wife, February 23, 1918, Oliver Papers, USA.

Col. C. W. Gordon, better known as Ralph Connor, the novelist, and chairman of the Manitoba Moral and Social Reform Council in pre-war years, about "concocting some plan to awaken the church at home."[16] Through the University of Vimy Ridge, Oliver had tried to teach the men not only secular education but also to awaken in them a Christian social and moral conscience and a sense of citizenship.

> It is in our national interest that there should be a larger measure of popular education...that will lead to a more vital conception of citizenship and a higher degree of efficiency.[17]

The Presbyterian Church had been tardy, in Oliver's opinion, in pressuring the Canadian Government to ban the wet canteens on the Canadian bases. The European moral standards, particularly during wartime, combined with the wet canteen, had an influence on the men who were returning to their homes. Oliver's vision for the Prairies was facing a larger challenge than ever before but yet the Presbyterian Church seemed to Oliver not to be arousing itself sufficiently to realize so high a goal. Oliver's frustration with his church tempted him several times to resign from the college and the chaplancy corps. He consoled himself by writing to his wife that he could find some other type of work in the educational

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16. Ibid., March 20, 1918.

17. E. H. Oliver, "Educational Reconstruction," n.d., Oliver Papers, USA.

field or he could return to the plot of land that he would be granted as a veteran.[18] When Oliver left France and headed for home, he had decided to return to the church and the college for one more year. If the church still lacked dynamic leadership and aggressive plans for social reform by the end of that year, he would then resign.

Frustration with organized denominational religion was not unique to Oliver alone and in fact this was a point that Oliver had in common with more prominent social gospellers such as J. S. Woodsworth and Salem Bland, one of whom did leave the church in the late War years. As will be shown in later chapters, Oliver was not as radical as Woodsworth or Bland and it will be argued that Oliver was a moderate social gospeller. He was not radical enough to ultimately leave the church but was not content to stay in the church without a new reform policy.

As Oliver boarded the ship for home, he looked back over the past three years with a sense of accomplishment. As a soldier of God, he had touched the souls and minds of many thousands of men in the hospitals, reading rooms and at the University of Vimy Ridge. Now, with some frustration, Oliver was returning home to face old problems that had been there when he left in 1916. Although the War had stopped the flow of immigration to Western Canada, the thousands of

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18. Oliver to his wife, April 16, 1917, Oliver Papers, USA.

new Canadians who had settled in the West before the War were still a threat to Oliver's new frontier. Oliver was not alone in his concern about the influx of new Canadians. J. T. M. Anderson and J. S. Woodsworth, to name only two, wrote books and articles proposing needed church and state action to meet the challenge and threat which was posed by these newcomers. The core of the concern was with the numerous immigrants from Southern Europe. The old racial, cultural and religious conflicts between Northern and Southern Europe had been transplanted into the new land. The Northern Europeans (especially Anglo-Saxons) were characteristically described (usually by Anglo-Saxons) as being intelligent, industrious, honest and Protestant. The Southern Europeans were described with all of the opposite adjectives.

The new immigrants tended to settle in the West in groups thus creating blocs of farmers who were all of the same nationality. In the period 1888-'97, since the immigrants were mainly British, the non-Anglo-Saxons were the minority, and therefore created no problem of assimilation.[19] After 1897, this proportion changed and those of British American background faced the possibility of not being able to assimilate all of the newcomers. The call

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19. E. H. Oliver, "Saskatchewan and Alberta, General History 1870-1912," Canada and its Provinces, Vol. XIX, p. 174.

for more Anglo-Saxon settlers had gone out. Rev. I. M. Barr responded to this call and outlined to prospective immigrants, his motives for settling in Canada:

> It is not as a clergyman, although I happen to be one, that I am promoting immigration to my native land, but simply as a man who wishes to see Canada remain British.[20]

The Presbyterian Church was also concerned about the "immigrant problem." A resolution was passed at the 1918 meeting of the Saskatchewan Synod urging restricted immigration.[21] This was certainly one possible solution. If you could keep the foreigners out of Canada, you would avoid the foreigner problem. In 1919, a report of a Committee of the Presbyterian Church urged the church to cooperate with the government in the Canadianizing of the non-English speaking citizens.[22] The public school and the use of the English language were the keys to this Canadianization process.

Even though the Presbyterian Church had passed resolutions, E. H. Oliver wanted action as well as debate. Canadianization of the immigrants was a priority even before Oliver went overseas. In a letter to Dr. Ramsay, Convenor of the Board of Education for the Presbyterian Church in

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20. Ibid., p. 181.

21. Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of Saskatchewan of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1918, p. 31.

22. Ibid., p. 24.

Canada in 1916, Oliver expressed the frustration that apart from the hospitals at Wakaw and Canora, "Our Church can be said to be making almost a negligible contribution" to the work among non-English speaking peoples in the West.[23] The farmers' organizations were helping in this work, wrote Oliver, but that was not enough. What was first needed by the church was a thorough study of the problem and an analysis of the needs of the new Canadians. Oliver noted in the letter that J. S. Woodsworth was conducting one such survey of the immigrants' needs and wrote that he would have liked to help Woodsworth in this study, had he not been heading for the front.[24]

After the church had completed such a survey of the needs of the Ruthenians, which would be done in cooperation with the Methodists, the Bureau of Social Survey and the provincial departments of agriculture and education, Oliver recommended that a Ruthenian be selected and trained so that he could return to teach his own people. He was concerned though, that the courses in theology offered at the college were "adapted to the more normal conditions of Ontario that [sic:than] to the non-English speaking people

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23. E. H. Oliver to Dr. Ramsay, April 15, 1916, Presbyterian Church of Canada, (hereinafter referred to as PCC), Board of Home Missions and Social Service, UCA.

24. Ibid.

of Saskatchewan."[25] Clearly Oliver saw the theological colleges as being part of the Ontario fragment but the model needed to be adapted to meet the challenge of the new Canadians. Missionaries to the new immigrants, once trained, would make full use of the public school, the church and agricultural fairs and would be part of a "Canadianization team."

J. S. Woodsworth and E. H. Oliver showed many similarities in their concern for the immigrant. In similar words to Oliver, Woodsworth asked: "But how shall we weld this heterogeneous mass into one people? That is our problem."[26] In his book, J. S. Woodsworth, described common characteristics of the main nationalities that had immigrated to Canada. Both Oliver and Woodsworth tended to look for cleanliness and industry in new settlers stressing education as a tool to weld the nationalities together.

The point of difference between Woodsworth and Oliver lay perhaps in the different images of the West as a melting pot or a kaleidoscope of cultures. In his book, which was early in his career, Woodsworth argued for complete assimilation or the melting pot.

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25. Ibid.

26. J. S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates, (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, Canada, 1909), p. 203.

> We, in Canada, have certain more or less clearly defined ideals of national well-being. These ideals must never be lost sight of. Non-ideal elements there must be, but they should be capable of assimilation. Essentially non-assimilable elements are clearly detrimental to our highest national development, and hence should be vigorously excluded.[27]

Assimilation and selective immigration policies were advocated.

The most prominent provincial figure in the language and school politics of the time was Dr. J. T. M. Anderson, who was appointed school inspector in 1911, and later director of education among the new Canadians. Anderson spelled out his views on public schools and the English language in a widely circulated volume, The Education of the New-Canadian. Dr. Oliver supported Anderson's appointment and his beliefs. To Rita he wrote:

> I received your clipping about the Ukrainians objecting to Anderson as a School Inspector. Premier Martin was wise in appointing him and the sooner these mal-contents know that the West does not belong to them the better for them and us.[28]

Dr. Anderson believed that it was difficult to Canadianize the older immigrants but that the children would be easier and thus this was the place to start. If the child of the foreigner did not receive a proper education in English, Dr. Anderson argued that the foreigners would endanger "our national existence, and at the same time making us the laughing-stock of all enlightened peoples."[29] The

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27. Ibid., p. 278.

28. Oliver to his wife, February 2, 1919, Oliver Papers, USA.

29. J. T. M. Anderson, The Education of the New-Canadians, (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1918), p. 25.

public school was the solution.

> It is surely manifest that the greatest agency in racial assimilation is the common or public school. This is the great melting-pot into which must be placed these diverse racial groups, and from which will eventually emerge the pure gold of Canadian citizenship.[30]

Oliver supported the public school and realized its impact on society.

> Out of this mixed people in this West we might in time make a greater stock than even the British, provided, of course, that the public school is given a chance and all contribute their best to the common store and stock.[31]

What was to happen to the newcomers? Should all of the nationalities be combined and melted together? Should the nationalities work side by side maintaining their own individuality and form a cultural mosaic? There was no common consensus on this argument. Dr. Anderson believed that the melting pot concept was the correct one and that the public school was the most efficient melting pot. "The safety and happiness of our nation depend upon their assimilation."[32]

> We may despise the 'foreigner' and all that is non-English, but the fact remains that this element is here to stay, and its presence is bound to make an impress upon our future citizenship. The paramount factor in racial fusion is undoubtedly the education of the children of these non-English races....[33]

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30. Ibid., p. 114.

31. Henry Esmund, Beaver Lodge, p. 14.

32. J. T. M. Anderson, The Education of the New-Canadian, p. 88.

33. Ibid., p. 89.

E. H. Oliver seemed to differ with Woodsworth and Anderson in his views regarding the immigrants. That he did not want a country full of small foreign enclaves is quite clear but his opposition to the melting pot concept grew as time passed. Oliver's description of the immigrant was often not complimentary to them.

> Where the New Canadians have been accorded neighborly treatment they have responded; where we have exploited them they stand to us in a relation of suspicion and distrust or else of stolid indifference. Their presence is a menace in this land because they contribute to the paganizing of life. The standards of sanitation, of education, in some cases even commercial honesty, are not ours.[34]

It is implied that the immigrants were not only different but inferior. Oliver was convinced that the immigrant had to be elevated and united with the rest of the Canadians.

> To this Frontier of the life of the Dominion the duty of the Churches of Canada is not primarily proselytism, but understanding, respect and sympathy. If neglected, the new Canadians will, of course, not only suffer moral shipwreck and spiritual unsettlement, they will also paganize all our life."[35]

Dr. Oliver, on the other hand, could see many good qualities within the various cultures and seemed to encourage them to maintain their traditional customs and culture, writing in 1926 that:

> we need the artist, the poet, the thinker, the musician and composer quite as much as the sewer-digger and

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34. E. H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1930), p. 234.

35. Ibid., p. 241.

> the track-layer. It is high time we encouraged these people to bring their best to us.[36]

Oliver's view of Canada was one of unity without complete assimilation and destruction of the old customs. The immigrants should be encouraged to become Canadian citizens; to speak English and to send their children to the public school. All of this would help the new citizen play an active and intelligent role in the Canadian society. Oliver's concept was unity without assimilation--Canadianism without the loss of their culture. Although Oliver spoke of a unified country and sometimes hinted assimilation, his final choice rested with the kaleidoscope vision for Canada.

The difference in perspective between Oliver and Woodsworth (as shown in Strangers Within Our Gates) is mainly one of a difference in time. Woodsworth wrote his book in 1909 which was during the period of immigration. Oliver had the advantage of approximately 22 years of watching the immigrants adjust to Canada and Canadians react to immigrants before he wrote his book, The Winning of the Frontier. The difference in terminology between Oliver's "The New Canadians" and Woodsworth's "The Strangers" may therefore better illustrate a general change in outlook over time than differences between the two men.

Dr. Oliver described the immigrant situation as

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36. E. H. Oliver, "The Settlement of Saskatchewan to 1914," TRSC, 1926, p. 87.

the "Twofold Menace."[37] The new Canadians posed a threat to the Canadian nation and the Canadian way of life. The immigrants "dilute the rich wine of national feelings and impulses."[38] He was concerned that the immigrants were allowed to settle in blocs in the West which allowed pockets of the old country to form and posed a threat to the nation. He also noted that this process posed a threat to the newcomer himself and the new country was itself a menace to the immigrant. Because they were allowed to settle in groups, they would find it harder to adapt and adjust to a new land. Dr. Oliver believed that the state, the church and the school had to work together to help the newcomer adjust to the new country and to teach them to become good Canadian citizens.

> It is not a wise policy that aims at making these people into Anglo-Saxons. Rather are they, with us, each contributing his best to the common stock, to strive to make the Canadianism that is to be, full-orbed and free.[39]

For example, in Beaver Lodge, a novel written by the pseudonym of Henry Esmund. Oliver described a social at a school house, stressing the different clothing and cooking

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37. E. H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, p. 233.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., p. 240.

of the various nationalities.[40] The different types of food combined to make a grand banquet. The different nationalities were able to eat together and to work together to build their school and teacherage on the frontier. The old customs and heritage were not to be forgotten but Dr. Oliver hoped that the English language, the public school, and the Christian Church (Protestant as well as Christian) would help join these people in common allegiance to the Canadian nation.

In an article entitled "What the Canadian Expects of the New Canadian," Oliver listed first what the Canadian does not expect of the newcomer.[41] According to Dr. Oliver, the new Canadian was not expected to forget the land of his birth; to forego the use of his mother tongue; to forfeit any religious liberty; to be handicapped in either a civic or an economic way due to his being a new Canadian; or to do the impossible by adapting to the Canadian way of life immediately.[42] Oliver believed that the new Canadian was expected to be loyal to Canada; encourage his children to learn the English language; not to interpret religious liberty as moral laxity; to help the children to be efficient workers and noble-minded citizens.[43] Dr. Oliver felt that all Canadians should

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40. Henry Esmund, Beaver Lodge.

41. The Presbyterian Record, November 1921.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

live together like neighbours.

> Canada can be made our common home, a happy land, and a blessing to the earth only when we seek to understand and help each other. We are native Canadian. You are new Canadians. Let us work together with mutual love and respect for a better Canada. Let us be brothers.[44]

The school, the church and the state were, in Oliver's opinion, a strong triumvirate to overcome the 'immigrant menace.' This triumvirate shared a common concern to formulate an educational policy. Schools had to be built, a standard curriculum had to be set, the standards had to be enforced and well-qualified English-speaking teachers had to be hired. But most important of all, once the educational system was placed on a strong moral base, it would, in turn, instill these moral standards in the children--the future generation.

Oliver was actively involved in the education question very early in his career. On July 12, 1915, a committee of one hundred school examiners and teachers met with Premier Scott and presented him with a memorial which called for a "systematic campaign of popular education."[45] Edmund H. Oliver, was one of those educators who urged the Department of Education to enforce the law regarding compulsory school attendance. This meeting led to the formation of the Saskatchewan Education League on July 27 and called for compulsory attendance at public schools with English as

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44. Ibid.

45. CAR, 1915, p. 678.

the only language. The League's president was Rev. W. P. Reekie, secretary of the Saskatchewan Prohibition League, secretary of the Child Welfare League and general secretary of the Social Service Council of Saskatchewan. W. G. Cates was the secretary and Rev. Father Daly and E. H. Oliver vice-Presidents of the Education League under Reekie.[46] J. B. Musselman, secretary of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, J. W. Sifton and Dr. N. F. Black were other prominent League members. This was a union of clergy, academics and farm leaders who saw the need for a non-party action committee to alert the Saskatchewan public of the danger of the lack of proper education in the province and to pressure the government into corrective action. Oliver's address, "The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities," was part of this campaign which was actively supported by the Better Schools Movement and five newspapers in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Canora.[47]

Notwithstanding Oliver's frustration with the church's apparent lack of leadership or educational policy, it would be unfair to intimate that the Presbyterian Church had not shown some concern and initiative in the field of education during the War. The Saskatchewan Synod in 1915

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46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 1916, p. 712. The newspapers were the Regina Leader, Saskatoon Phoenix, Moose Jaw News, Moose Jaw Times and the Canora Advertiser.

endorsed a policy of ensuring that every child should be able to read, write and speak English; Presbyterian ministers should become involved in the public school system; and the Presbyterian Church should provide homes for children attending school away from their own homes.[48] The 1916 meeting of the Saskatchewan Synod passed a resolution encouraging the establishment of English as the only language in the schools and in 1917, encouraged the Presbyterian ministers to make use of the half hour at the end of the school day for religious instruction.[49] Three years later, the education committee of the Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan, in its report of 1919, urged the Protestant Churches to draw up a joint syllabus for religious education in the public schools; called for better salaries and working conditions for the teachers so as to raise the quality of the teaching staff; gave hearty support of the government's policy regarding the Mennonites, which was to insist on attendance at English-speaking public schools; called for the elimination of extra languages in the school and reaffirmed its belief that English should be the only language in the school.[50] The

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48. Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of Saskatchewan of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1915, p. 19.

49. Ibid., 1916, p. 30 and 1917, p. 18.

50. Ibid., 1919, p. 23.

report did concede that the French language could be used sparingly as long as it did not interfere with the child's total knowledge of English. Since Presbyterians were so dominant a religious group in the Saskatchewan Legislature, it is perhaps not surprising that this position on the language question was essentially the one adopted by the Saskatchewan Government in the schools crisis of 1918 in that province.[51] Synod minutes of the early 1920s continued largely, to reiterate the above points.

The language, school and immigrant questions were obviously all tied together. If the language was English and the schools were public, the problem of trying to Canadianize the newcomers would be solved. "Public school" came very close to meaning "Protestant school" to Dr. Oliver, notwithstanding his remarks in "What the Canadian expects of the New Canadian." The public school was not to be a "middle-of-the-road school" that could suit all beliefs but might promote religious and social principles which were unacceptable to the Protestant Churches generally. Underlying Oliver's concern for English language and the proper education of the new Canadians, was one particular fear, and that was the possible influence that the Roman Catholic Church could have through a fragmented, multi-lingual school system, inevitably

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51. The Morning Leader, February 19, 1919, listed 35 Members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan as supporters of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, 19 of whom were Presbyterians.

enhancing the position of French Canada in Confederation. "Remember they (the immigrants) are largely Uniats, but the R.C. Church would like to make them Roman Catholics."[52] Dr. Oliver's emphasis on education was not just aimed at the public school. In order for the church to increase and further its teaching and leadership role, theological colleges were needed. Yet the task of interesting young men and women to enter the ministry had its frustrations.[53]

Church involvement in the public schools and the concern for Protestant English-speaking public schools became a controversial issue at the Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church in 1928. The Assiniboia Presbytery presented an overture in which an objection was raised as to the type of French text books that were being used in the schools; the use of religious garb and crucifixes in the schools; and the locating of public schools within convents.[54] The Conference established a committee, chaired by Dr. Oliver, to investigate these objections and to report back to the Conference. The committee reviewed the complaints but found that not enough time was allowed to fully examine the facts of the situation. Instead, Dr. Oliver sent the contents of the overture to the Hon. J. G. Gardiner, Premier and Minister

52. E. H. Oliver to Dr. Ramsay, April 15, 1916, PCC, Board of Home Missions and Social Service, UCA.

53. Oliver to his wife, July 3, 1916, Oliver Papers, USA.

54. Morning Leader, June 5, 1928.

of Education, for his perusal. According to the newspaper report, Oliver, as chairman, was instrumental in inviting Premier Gardiner to the Conference and in the drafting of the resolutions.

Premier Gardiner spoke to the Conference saying that he did not intend to sway the thinking of the delegates assembled nor to tell them what resolutions they should agree to. He merely wanted to present some 'facts' to them for their consideration.[55] He said that the school question in 1928 was not actually based on the number of foreign-born living in Saskatchewan. In fact, Premier Gardiner argued that the number of foreign-born living in Saskatchewan had declined in 1926 as compared to 1921. He said that 76 per cent of all people in Saskatchewan had been born within the British Empire. This 76 per cent did include French Canadians since they had been born within Canada. He felt that the unrest arising out of the Assiniboia Presbytery actually involved French Canadians and not Europeans as stated in the overture. Out of the 4,776 school districts in Saskatchewan, Premier Gardiner said that there were only eight or ten with this "French Canadian problem." This situation was surely not serious enough to warrant a resolution of the Conference condemning the Department of Education for its policies. He said that in the case of the crucifixes, where there had

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55. Ibid.

been complaints made to the Department of Education, the Department had requested the schools to remove the crucifixes which subsequently had been done.[56] Regarding the French text books, the new policy involving these text books had been approved in 1919 but the text books that had been recommended could not be obtained. Text books that had been used in other provinces were brought into Saskatchewan without thorough examination by the Saskatchewan Department of Education. Premier Gardiner assured the audience that the offensive French text books were being removed and more acceptable ones would be printed by the Department itself.

Premier Gardiner informed the Conference that out of the 146 nuns teaching in Saskatchewan, 145 of them were fully qualified. The one exception was teaching in a parochial school on a short-term basis. He agreed that it was true that the public school in Gravelbourg was actually in the convent but that this was not as a result of a decision of the Department. The convent had space to rent and the public school board needed space. The space was rented by the public school board and the school itself was still a full-fledged public school even though it was temporarily housed within the convent building.

As a result of this discussion, Dr. Oliver and his committee proposed resolutions to the Conference supporting the practice of leaving the last half hour of the school day

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56. Ibid.

for religious instruction; encouraging the United Church ministers to make good use of this opportunity; commending the Department for obtaining "unobjectionable" French text books and for not encouraging religious garb in the public schools. The Conference firmly endorsed the principle that the public schools were to be conducted in an unsectarian manner.

The resolutions, passed by the Conference, were consistent with Oliver's overall educational beliefs that the public school should be unsectarian and that Roman Catholic separate schools were to be discouraged. The half hour of religious education each day allowed the various denominations to work with their children.

Thus the Saskatchewan Conference had accepted Gardiner's 'facts' and passed resolutions which did not condemn the Liberal Government on its educational policies regarding the immigrant but reaffirmed the United Church stand on unsectarian public schools. It would seem that the contentious issues raised by the Assiniboia Presbytery had been carefully sidestepped. Since the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan into Saskatchewan in 1926, the school question was one issue that was used as a focal point for opposition to the Gardiner Government.[57] Much of the support of the Klan in Saskatchewan may have come from United Church members and

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57. William Calderwood, "The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan," Unpublished Masters thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, 1968, p. 194.

at least ten United Church ministers were Klansmen.[58] The Klan also received a lot of support from the Assiniboia area.[59] It therefore seems clear that the overture at the 1928 Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church was made by Klan sympathizers in the church. Many ministers at the Conference, however, wanted the Assiniboia overture shelved without the United Church taking a firm stand on the issues raised. Oliver, as chairman of the committee which was formed to investigate the Assiniboia complaints, invited J. G. Gardiner to speak to the Conference in order to swing the delegates away from a pro-Klan stance. Oliver's plan and Gardiner's speech had the desired effect because the Conference finally reaffirmed its stand on education and did not take an anti-Gardiner, anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant stance that the Klan would have preferred.

The United Church not only had, within its fold, some supporters of the Klan, but it also had some outspoken members who opposed the Klan and its principles. The United Church in the late 1920s, encompassed a liberal and a conservative school of thought. "Fundamentalism was arising to contest the gains of liberal theology; social conservatism was engaging in a counter-attack upon the social gospel."[60]

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58. Ibid., p. 180.

59. Ibid., p. 197.

60. Ibid., p. 199.

"...the Klan offered the conservatives an opportunity to participate in a superficial way in the progressive movement for social reform without compromising their fundamentalist theological viewpoint."[61] E. H. Oliver, as has been shown, was clearly a subscriber of the liberal theological school of thought. Although there are no articles, books, or speeches written by Oliver which lash out against the Klan and even though Oliver was very involved in the Canadianization of the immigrants through the church and the public school, he did not accept the extreme Protestant and conservative philosophy that was espoused by the Klan. The crises over the school question at the 1928 Conference became a time of action for Oliver. Through Oliver's invitation to Gardiner to speak to the Conference and because of his influence in drafting the resolutions, he was able to rally the liberal wing of the church to prevent the United Church from adopting an anti-Gardiner--pro-Klan stance. This position, if allowed to develop, would have been in direct opposition to Oliver's theological and social principles and would have led to a split in the United Church. Although there was, in 1928, a provincial election pending and in fact one was called in 1929 which ultimately led to the defeat of the Gardiner Government, it cannot be logically argued that Oliver's invitation to

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61. _Ibid._, p. 200.

Gardiner was an attempt to bolster Gardiner's support within the province. Instead, Oliver's actions were motivated by his own philosophy and by a concern to keep his church united. Oliver's vision was in crisis but he had been able to successfully defend it once again.

Oliver's vision for the West was based on a sound educational policy. Education through the church and the public school was not merely a method of imparting knowledge to young scholars but was, in Oliver's opinion, a way that new Canadian youth could learn the language and culture of their new home nation. Post secondary education through the university and the theological college could continue this culturalization and could convert the "helped into helpers." If the new Canadians could be trained as ministers and teachers, they could return to their home communities to help Canadianize fellow new Canadians. Dr. Hoffman, a friend of Dr. Oliver and a graduate of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon, is one such example of a Hungarian new Canadian who, after graduating, helped establish a residential school affiliated with the theological college and did much work among Hungarian Protestants in Saskatchewan. Dr. Hoffman became one of the ethnic missionaries that Oliver had envisaged in April 1916, and incidently, the hero in Oliver's Beaver Lodge.

The language question, education and the concern over the immigrants were interrelated in Oliver's

mind. The question he asked himself was on the lips of many Western Protestants: "Are we to be a homogeneous people on these plains or are we to repeat the tragic sufferings of polyglot Austria? This question must be solved in our elementary schools. And we must solve it now. A few years and it may be too late."[62]

The private religious schools were troublesome to Oliver. These schools used the native tongue as the main and often only language of instruction. The subject of study was either of the mother country or the catechism of their church taught by teachers who were not well versed in the English language or the Canadian institutions and life style.[63] These separate or private schools were financially supported privately and were not open to inspection or subject to common standards. Oliver was concerned that Western Canada would become sectionalized with each section having a different culture and language. Knowledge of the English language and the history of Canada were surely essentials in Canadianizing these people and combining their cultures into a common one which could be achieved in the public schools. Oliver's theme was:

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62. E. H. Oliver, "The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities," (Pamphlet of an address by E. H. Oliver delivered before the Saskatchewan Public Education League in Regina, September 22, 1915), p. 7.

63. Ibid.

> The citizenship of our country and the interests of our citizens themselves, both now and in the future, alike, demand that every pupil in this Province shall receive an adequate education and a thorough knowledge of the English language.[64]

The question that remains to be answered is: Did Oliver's views regarding the immigrant change over time? A brief summary of his statements regarding the immigrant is therefore necessary. In 1915, as a member of the Saskatchewan Education League, Oliver spoke out on the need of having a good public school system for all prairie citizens, but particularly the non-English speaking new Canadians.[65] In 1916, Oliver urged his church to study the needs of the new Canadian and to involve itself in the Canadianization process. He wrote about the Roman Catholic threat in the West and the need for the Protestant Church to work with the new Canadians.[66] In February, 1919, Oliver supported the appointment of Dr. J. T. M. Anderson as school inspector.[67] In an article in 1921, Oliver urged the new Canadian to learn the English language and to adopt the Canadian way of life but cautioned them not to

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64. Ibid., p. 3.

65. E. H. Oliver, "The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities."

66. Oliver to Dr. Ramsay, April 15, 1916, PCC, Board of Home Missions and Social Service, UCA.

67. Oliver to his wife, February 2, 1919, Oliver Papers, USA.

forget their homeland and their native culture and language.[68] By 1926, Oliver encouraged the new Canadians not just to be satisfied with doing manual labour but to also develop and nurture their own cultural abilities in the field of music or cooking, for example.[69] It has been shown that by 1928, Oliver was not a supporter of the Klan or its extreme ultra-Protestant stand regarding the immigrant. Clearly by this point, Oliver did not support Dr. Anderson's philosophy and goals. By 1930, Oliver in his novel, wrote about the new hybrid race--possibly a better race than the British.[70] His description of the socials at the school house shows his appreciation for the cultural mosaic that was developing in the West. The peak of Oliver's writing career regarding the immigration question came in The Winning of the Frontier, when Oliver, while writing that the sanitation standards of the immigrants left something to be desired, believed that the immigrant needed not criticism nor prejudice but understanding, respect and sympathy.[71] Oliver acknowledged that the immigrants could not be forced into the Anglo-Saxon mould but they must be allowed to contribute to the Canadian cultural mosaic.

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68. E. H. Oliver, "What the Canadian expects of the New Canadian," The Presbyterian Record, November 1921.

69. E. H. Oliver, "The Settlement of Saskatchewan to 1914," TRSC, 1926, p. 87.

70. Henry Esmund, Beaver Lodge.

71. E. H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, p. 241.

With this overview of fifteen years of Oliver's life, a slight change of philosophy can be seen. Although Oliver was greatly concerned, as early as 1915, about the massive influx of immigrants into the West and the threat they posed to Oliver's goals for the frontier and even though he supported J. T. M. Anderson in 1919, it can be argued that he did not actually endorse the melting pot concept. Rather than changing from the melting pot philosophy to the cultural mosaic concept, as J. S. Woodsworth and others did, it can be argued that Oliver did not firmly support the melting pot principle but became more and more of an advocate of the mosaic concept as time passed. Oliver shared Woodsworth's concern regarding the immigrant and the need for action through the church and school to teach the immigrants English and to help them learn to understand and respect the Canadian culture and form of government. Oliver did not want the immigrants to become Anglo-Saxons but instead, Canadians. Oliver supported the development of a new Canadian race which would encompass the strengths of each of the incoming cultures. Although Oliver supported Anderson's appointment in 1919, Oliver did not adopt Anderson's ultra Protestant fundamentalist and conservative platform of 1928. Oliver at times feared the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in the separate schools and he promoted a liberal Protestant philosophy. On the other hand, Oliver did not insist on the limitation of religious freedom as was espoused by the Klan.

As Oliver was involved in the Canadianization of the immigrants, an old nagging problem began to rear its head again. Even though the Ban the Bar Committee and the Committee of One Hundred had had success during the War in closing first the bars and then the dispensaries, the struggle had not ended there. Many of the prohibition supporters had helped close the bars as a patriotic act so as to enhance the war effort. This support quickly faded after the War was over. Many of the returned soldiers, who had had access to alcohol overseas, were anxious to have the bar reopened in Saskatchewan and lent their support to the Moderation and Liberty Leagues.

The first major sign of trouble for the prohibition forces in Saskatchewan, was the resumption of the sale of alcohol in British Columbia in 1920. This defeat of temperance forces in one province plus the rising tide of public sentiment against prohibition in Saskatchewan prompted E. H. Oliver to publish a history of the liquor traffic.[72]

The book was written to remind the reader that the struggle to create a dry Saskatchewan had been long and strenuous, and to warn that if the prohibition workers continued to "rest on their oars," all of the prohibition gains would be wiped out by the Moderation League. Oliver

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72. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in The Prairie Provinces, (The Board of Home Missions and Social Service, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1923).

called for a constant vigilance--a challenge to 'hold the line.' "There will be no return to the Bar," he predicted, but warned that "the greatest danger to the prohibitory cause of the future lies in the apathy of those who were once temperance workers,--that they will cease to educate and to inform."[73]

The prohibitionists were fighting a losing battle though as a new plebiscite was allowed in 1924 which led to a narrow victory for the "dry's." Because of the increased number of persons in Saskatchewan who were demanding the end of prohibition, the dispensaries, in effect, were once again opened in April 1925. The end of prohibition was a bitter defeat for the conservative wing of the social gospel movement. Although E. H. Oliver had strongly supported the prohibition movement, its defeat did not crush Oliver's overall drive for social reform. With the exception of his book in 1923 on the liquor traffic, there is little evidence to show that Oliver took an active part in the campaign to keep the liquor dispensaries closed. His efforts by this time were keenly devoted to the drive for church union--a national church which would strengthen the campaign for a righteous prairie society to which Oliver had devoted his life.

By the mid-1920s, a new Canadian national awareness had developed. Canada's efforts and achievements to

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73. Ibid., p. 336.

produce world peace and its acceptance in international diplomatic negotiations created a feeling in Canada that they were achieving full and independent nationhood. The loose union of colonial provinces in 1867 was coming of age and Canadian scholars and writers, such as E. H. Oliver, were part of this growing Canadian consciousness.[74] Dr. Oliver remained loyal to the Empire but had also become conscious of this new race of Canadian people. A Canadian was hard to describe but could be identified as being neither Anglo-Saxon nor American. Dr. Oliver foresaw a new race or nationality, not poured out of the Anglo-Saxon mould but a combination of the many European and American nationalities. Although the mother tongue and the fatherland were not to be forgotten, each newcomer to Canada was to learn English, send his children to the public school and be a neighbour and friend to the native Canadians. Together they would work to settle and develop the Canadian West and the Canadian nation. However potent the public school was as an instrument of these objectives, it had its limits and was dependent in turn upon the constant renewing of morality, the inner spiritual life and the social vision by the church. There were many arguments for a union of Protestant Churches, but among the most telling for Oliver was the united effort

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74. Mary Vipond, "National Consciousness in English Speaking Canada in the 1920s; Seven Studies," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974.

required to achieve this goal of Christian brotherhood amongst races in the West. Time was short and the challenge great. Lethargy or competition could only be viewed with repugnance. A united church effort through cooperation and a common vision for the last frontier was needed. It was in response to this need that Oliver set his sights on helping to bring his fellow Presbyterians into a proposed new national church.

CHAPTER VI

CHURCH UNION

When E. H. Oliver came to Saskatoon in 1909, he came to help create a new university and to serve his church on the frontier. His experience with the Agricultural Credit Commission and the prohibition movement proved to him that cooperation was essential in order to overcome the problems and social ills facing the new settlers. He came west as a representative of a Presbyterian Church that had been united nationally for barely a generation, but he soon discovered that further cooperation amongst the various denominations was mandatory if the sparse population spread over vast distances was to be able to hear the Word of God, receive the church sacraments such as communion and baptism and have the church's presence at marriage and death. As was noted earlier, Oliver, prior to going overseas, favoured union with the Methodists and his experience as a chaplain overseas became, by necessity, an interdenominational experiment which proved to him, that denominational cooperation and even union could work. But it was not until June 10, 1925 in the Toronto arena, that the representatives from the Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and Local Union Churches attended the inauguration ceremony which finally marked the end of a long and bitter struggle and

the beginning of a new church.

The remainder of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, which had not gone into union, also met in Toronto to continue their General Assembly, regarding June 1925 as the end of a struggle and a time for a new beginning. Ephraim Scott, editor of The Record and the new moderator of the Presbyterian Church in 1925 summed up as follows:

> The Presbyterian Church in Canada is the same Church as in the past, 'but reduced.' That Church had accumulated much that was not Presbyterian, in membership, ministry, doctrine and polity. But through recent strenuous exercise of her rights as a Church of free people she has 'reduced', and is more fit and free than [in] many a bygone year.[1]

What about this "impurity" within the Presbyterian Church? Why had the Presbyterian Church been split and who were the leaders within the Presbyterian Church who had pushed for union? E. Scott believed that when the question of union first surfaced in the Presbyterian Church, the majority of the West was not in favour of union.[2] Yet by 1925, only 104 congregations in the four western provinces, which was less than five per cent, stayed out of union.[3] Thus in the years between approximately 1906 and 1925, a great change of mind had overtaken western Presbyterianism.

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1. E. Scott, Church Union and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, Ltd., 1928), p. 110.

2. John S. Moir, Enduring Witness, (Don Mills: Presbyterian Publications, 1974), p. 201.

3. Ibid., p. 222.

Prairie conditions undoubtedly played their role, but so did a corps of persuasive men, able to influence their western colleagues enough to have a nearly unanimous contingent in the West join union. Dr. E. H. Oliver was very influential within the unionist camp and as will be shown, was one of the key leaders who created this change of mind in the West.

Even though much negotiation and preparatory work had been done prior to the War and a Basis for Union had been drawn up, the Presbyterian Church was internally divided over the union question. In 1917, further union negotiations were deferred until after the War. The unionists hoped that this delay and cooling off period would weaken the anti-union camp. Although the union talks ceased on an official level, the anti-unionists continued to strengthen their forces. When the union talks were officially revived in 1921, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church voted to renew union talks and to proceed toward union. It was Dr. W. J. Clark who moved, seconded by Dr. E. H. Oliver, that the General Assembly "take such steps as may be deemed best to consummate organic union. . . ."[4] A delay amendment was moved but the final vote was 414 for the motion and 107 for the amendment.

Oliver's influence in moving the church back onto

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4. The Acts and Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1921, p. 31.

the road to union was recognized and appreciated, not only in his own church but also by the General Council of Union Churches, whose secretary wrote:

> I was ... more than pleased with the decision of the Assembly to consummate Union 'as expeditiously as possible.' I observed that both you and Dr. Oliver made valuable contributions to this end.[5]

It was not until 1921, that Dr. Oliver began to write articles for the Presbyterian-Westminster in favour of union. Although he favoured union before this date, his involvement in two Saskatchewan commissions, his war service, the new theological college, his historical surveys of early western prairie history plus the prohibition campaign were all possible reasons why he did not enter the union debate sooner. But by late 1922, as the church union debate began to increase in tempo and as Oliver became even more prominent in union circles, his articles began to frequently appear in the church newspapers.

The church leaders within the Presbyterian Church who supported union began to organize a campaign based on articles which could be published in the Presbyterian-Westminster. Alfred Gandier reported to Dr. Walter Murray that: "MacBeth has been down here asserting that the West neither needs nor desires union, and this must be offset by a strong pronouncement from the West itself, and especially

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5. John Reid to Dr. W. Murray, June 9, 1921, Murray Papers, St. Andrew's College Archives, (hereinafter referred to as SACA).

Saskatchewan."[6] Dr. Gandier also requested Dr. Murray and Dr. Oliver to prepare some articles on such topics as: "The West and Union" or "If Not Union, What?"[7] These articles were to be published in leaflet form for distribution to support the union cause. The writing of articles for the magazines and leaflets was a task that both Dr. Murray and Dr. Oliver took very seriously.

In addition to the pamphlet war, the unionists relied on Oliver to address public gatherings on the union topic. He worked very strenuously alongside Dr. W. Murray, A. Young, R. J. McDonald, J. A. Donnell, W. C. Clark, Murdock MacKinnon and Dr. Dix in the union battle. As an example of Oliver's prominence in union circles, he followed Mr. Justice Martin, former Premier of Saskatchewan and an avid anti-unionist, to Regina, Moose Jaw and Calgary "correcting" statements made by Mr. Justice Martin and offering the pro-union arguments.[8]

In late 1922, the church union committee agreed that the "anti-union forces" were beginning to gain ground. If union was to include the Presbyterian Church, a well organized campaign for union was needed. Dr. George Pidgeon

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6. Alfred Gandier to Walter Murray, October 30, 1922, Murray Papers, SACA.

7. Ibid.

8. Dr. Dix to R. J. Wilson, December 13, 1924, Church Union Papers, United Church Archives, Toronto, (hereinafter referred to as UCA.)

and J. H. Turnbull, union committee members, wrote to Walter Murray in early December 1922, to ask Murray to persuade Oliver to become the leader of this new campaign.

> You will probably have heard from other members of the (union) Committee of the unanimous and most earnest desire of the men here to have Principal Oliver direct the Union Movement for the first five months of 1923. Only the most capable leadership can carry us through, and Oliver is the only man in sight who is equal to the demand. We do feel that the best service Oliver can render Saskatchewan and all the West is to come east now for this campaign.[9]

Robert A. Falconer, president of the University of Toronto and also a union committee member, wrote to Murray that Oliver was the "best possible man." "He knows the situation in the West; he has great power of putting a case and he is an excellent Speaker. Nobody could do as well."[10]

J. H. Turnbull, the minister at High Park Church, Toronto, backed up all that Falconer and Pidgeon had said and wrote that: "after a careful survey of the whole field (the union committee) determined unanimously that Principal Oliver is the man they want."[11] Turnbull indicated that the job would be to give general direction to the entire union

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9. George Pidgeon to Walter Murray, December 2, 1922, Church Union Papers, UCA.

10. Robert A. Falconer to Walter Murray, December 2, 1922, Church Union Papers, UCA.

11. J. H. Turnbull to Walter Murray, December 2, 1922, Church Union Papers, UCA.

campaign. Oliver, if he accepted the position, was to have a "free hand" in the planning of the publicity programs. Dr. Murray was urged by all three writers to persuade Dr. Oliver to take the job. Turnbull even suggested that they would talk to the Board of Governors of the theological college to ensure that Dr. Oliver would have a leave of absence in order to lead the union campaign.

On December 8, 1922, Walter Murray reported to Dr. Pidgeon that Oliver had declined the position for two reasons: that he could not leave the college at that time and that he did not think that a western man would be acceptable to the East.[12] The position offered to Oliver was thus one of the most powerful and influential in all of the union forces since the position was later transformed into secretary of the Bureau of Literature and Information.

Oliver's refusal to assume the position of leader of the union publicity campaign did not reduce the pressure on Oliver to continue to play a leading role in the union campaign. In a letter from Rev. J. H. Edmison, general secretary of the Board of Home Missions and Social Service, to Walter Murray, he outlined E. H. Oliver's speaking tour in Eastern Canada. In one week, Oliver was to preach in High Park, at Bloor Street; give a major address to leading laymen of Toronto at a banquet hosted by Sir James Woods;

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12. Walter Murray to Dr. George Pidgeon, December 8, 1922, Church Union Papers, UCA.

address a banquet organized by the Birks to mark the opening of a new hotel in Montreal and finally preach in Montreal on the Sunday.[13] A very heavy and impressive week for anyone to have undertaken.

Rev. R. J. Wilson, secretary of the Bureau of Literature and Information, relied very heavily on Dr. Oliver to supply him with a steady stream of articles which could be printed in the Canadian newspapers and church papers or in pamphlets which were to be used as part of the campaign. In one handout which was prepared by the Bureau of Literature and Information, out of fourteen articles, Dr. Oliver's writing is recognizable in at least five articles.[14]

Dr. Oliver was continually used as a key speaker in the West. Wilson wrote to Dr. Oliver in September 1924 expressing concern over whether the Synod in Alberta would join union. Wilson worded the letter very firmly to the effect that if the request came to go to Alberta "at any personal sacrifice and even at the risk of some of your excellent lectures remaining undelivered, it will be necessary for you to be there and give them some leadership."[15]

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13. J. H. Edmison to Walter Murray, dated December 22, 1922, Church Union Papers, UCA.

14. Church Union Papers, UCA. The five articles identified contained the same stories or phraseology as Dr. Oliver used in many of his speeches.

15. Rev. R. J. Wilson to Dr. Oliver, September 23, 1924, Church Union Papers, UCA.

R. J. Wilson, as chief organizer of the union forces, was impressed by Oliver's ability to speak to an audience and convince them to join union. Wilson wrote about Oliver that:

> If we could have persuaded the Hamilton Presbytery to have given him an hour, no such fiasco at the last meeting of that Church Court would have been perpetrated on a long suffering Church almost ready to take the step into Union.[16]

The two key contributions that Oliver made to the unionist cause were his appearances before the Private Bills Committees of the Saskatchewan Legislature and of the House of Commons in 1924. Because of controversies in a previous church union in Scotland, the Canadian church union leaders felt it was wise to legalize the proposed union by proposing legislation at the provincial and federal levels. The purpose of the legislation was to ensure that the property was transferred in a manner that could not later be questioned by the anti-unionists.

On January 22, 1924, a Petition for a Private Bill was filed with the Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislature confirming the proposed union of churches in Saskatchewan. This Private Bill was introduced and given First Reading on February 7, 1924, and was ultimately referred to the Private Bills Committee. This standing committee was composed of five Methodists, twelve Presbyterians, three Roman Catholics,

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16. Rev. R. J. Wilson to Walter Murray, January 12, 1923, Murray Papers, SACA.

one Anglican and seven of unknown faith.[17]

Bill 08, "An Act respecting the Union of certain Churches therein named," was first considered by the committee on February 15, 1924.[18] This Bill proposed the ratification of the Basis of Union and a method of transferring church property and colleges to the United Church. The provincial legislation was drafted in such a manner so as to match the pending federal legislation regarding the United Church.[19]

It was agreed by the committee that they would hear representation both for and against the Bill before the "clause by clause" consideration. The witnesses who appeared before the committee on behalf of the Private Bill were Messrs. Oliver (Presbyterian), Tuffs (Methodist), Dunn (Congregationalist) and Hughes (Regina Union Church), along with their solicitor, Mr. J. Balfour, K. C. Messrs. Galloway, Ross, Farrell, Chisholm, Martin and McConnell appeared before the committee in opposition to the Bill.

Dr. Oliver was the key Presbyterian spokesman supporting the Bill. Dr. Oliver was asked by Dr. Gandier, moderator of the Presbyterian Church, to appear before the committee in order to represent the Presbyterian Church in

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17. The Journals, 1924 and The Parliamentary Guide. Since the Members of the Assembly supply information about themselves to the Guide, the religious denomination is sometimes not shown.

18. The Journals, 1924.

19. Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1924, Cap. 64.

support of the Bill.[20] Although there was no verbatim record of the committee proceedings, from the newspaper reports, it is clear that Dr. Oliver presented forceful and factual arguments with some humour sprinkled throughout his remarks.[21]

The Legislative Committee was cautioned by the unionists not to become involved in the actual union controversy because they were being asked to merely ratify a decision which had been made by the denominations. Notwithstanding this warning, the Legislature found itself in the middle of a heated battle with the debate centering upon whether the state should and could interfere with the affairs of the church. W. F. McConnell, presenting the arguments for the anti-unionists, said that since the Presbyterian Church had not been incorporated under law, the Legislature had no power to now change the Presbyterian Church. He argued that it was a church decision and not within the realm of the state. This argument was very forcibly voiced by Ephraim Scott, editor of The Record, in his across Canada campaign against union.

Oliver agreed that the Presbyterian Church was a voluntary association, but argued that it was a democratic one as well. Since the Presbyterian Church courts had decided to join with the Methodists and Congregationalists,

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20. Dr. Gandier to Dr. Oliver, February 14, 1924, Private Bills Committee Records, Session 1924, Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

21. Morning Leader, February 16, 1924.

the church was fully within its rights to do so. Oliver believed that Parliament or the Legislature was not being asked to make a decision on the union issue at all. The churches had already decided that but Parliament was merely to be asked to confirm an agreement that the churches had made. "We are asking Parliament only to register that as a contract between us, just as a minister registers the marriage between a man and a woman."[22] Dr. Oliver contended that if the minority within the Presbyterian Church did not want to enter union, they could leave. Scott meanwhile argued that it was actually the unionists who were leaving and that the Presbyterian Church would last forever. The material question was, who had rights to what property?

The Private Bills Committee held seven meetings to deal with Bill 08 and finally reported it to the Assembly with amendment on March 12, 1924. Although the committee had encouraged the two opposing sides to come to a compromise on property division, and after several meetings between the unionists and anti-unionists amidst newspaper reports of pending compromise, no agreement was reached between the unionists and anti-unionists.[23]

Premier Dunning was privately a supporter of union

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22. The Toronto Daily Star, June 10, 1924.

23. Morning Leader, March 12, 1924.

but refused to publicly take a stand on the issue.[24] He knew that support for either side of the argument could affect his political popularity. In the committee, he urged compromise and even threatened to have the Sergeant-at-Arms lock up both sets of witnesses until an agreement could be reached. Without compromise, the Legislature was forced to make a decision. After trying to ensure that minority rights were protected, the Legislature finally passed the Bill, which received Royal Assent on March 25, 1924. Not only did the debate center on the issue of whether there should be union or not, but the anti-unionists argued that the proposed legislation did not adequately protect the property of the congregations who did not want to enter union. The Bill, as finally amended by the Legislature, outlined a set of rules and procedures for conducting a referendum within the congregations and prescribed a procedure for the non-concurring congregations to retain their property.

Dr. Oliver was pleased with the committee's proceedings. "We got our case very clearly before the Private Bills Committee and had a very favourable hearing."[25] Wilson was also pleased and wrote to Oliver:

> This is just a note to tell you that all accounts which reach this office of your presentation of the case be

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24. C. Dunning to E. H. Oliver, January 18, 1923, Church Union Papers, UCA.

25. E. H. Oliver to Rev. R. J. Wilson, February 16, 1924, Church Union Papers, UCA.

> [sic - before] the Private Bills Committee in Regina lead us to believe that it could not have been in better hands, and your whole argument was unanswerable.[26]

Three western and two Maritime Legislatures passed the church union Bills before the legislation went to the House of Commons.[27] The union Bill was introduced in the Commons on April 10, 1924 and was ultimately referred to the Private Bills Committee. Once more, Oliver's skill was called upon to help the union cause again by speaking to the House of Commons Private Bills Committee. Dr. Oliver was the sixth unionist witness to appear before the committee but was actually the second Presbyterian pro-union witness. The first five witnesses were as follows: Sir Robert Falconer (Presbyterian), Elmer Davis (Methodist), C. B. Macauley (Congregationalist), G. W. Mason, K. C. (legal counsel) and A. Geoffrion, K. C. (legal counsel).[28] The first three unionists were not well prepared. They had not brought statistical data with them regarding the number of union churches that existed or the results of the votes that had been taken in the church regarding union. C. B. Macauley admitted that he had not even read the Act before coming

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26. R. J. Wilson to E. H. Oliver, March 13, 1924, Church Union Papers, UCA.

27. Union Bills in B. C., Ontario, Quebec and P.E.I. received Royal Assent after April 1924.

28. House of Commons transcript of proceedings before the Private Bills Committee.

before the Committee.[29] Although he was probably very conversant with the negotiations that had led up to union and of the features of the proposed union, his confession that he had not read the Bill weakened the unionists' cause.

Dr. Oliver's appearance as a witness before the Committee on May 1, 1924 and his well-documented presentation leaves little doubt that the performance of the first three unionist witnesses had prompted the union promoters to be better prepared. Dr. Oliver had all the facts. Rev. J. H. Edmison, D. D., secretary of the Committee on church union, wrote to Dr. Oliver on April 24, 1924 saying that:

> There is no doubt the antis at Ottawa will launch a fierce attack on our maps and on our statements in regard to co-operation that has already been secured. The Law and Legislation Committee felt that some one person should be assigned the task of getting a reply ready and they feel that you are the man. You have been in touch with the co-operative movements from the beginning.[30]

It was part of Dr. Oliver's character to be well prepared well in advance of the event.[31] His detailed preparations and the briefings that he received from his

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29. Ibid.

30. Rev. J. H. Edmison to E. H. Oliver, April 24, 1924, Church Union Papers, SACA.

31. Bob Oliver, nephew of E. H. Oliver, described his "uncle Ed" as a highly disciplined and well prepared man. He wrote a sermon once a week without fail. Dr. R. D. Tannahill, Archivist of St. Andrew's College, recalls that Dr. Oliver did not believe in any last minute preparations but was often writing a speech six months in advance of the date that it would be needed.

colleagues paid off. Similar to his presentation before the Saskatchewan Committee, he forcefully argued the necessity of church union. He had come well prepared with a bundle of statistical information, charts and maps showing the number of union congregations that had been formed with black dots showing the centres that had both Methodist and Presbyterian services and red dots indicating some degree of cooperation or local union at that centre.[32]

In his remarks before the Legislative committees, in his articles and pamphlets and in his public speeches, he offered three main arguments: that union existed in the West already; that the frontier required union; and that church union was mandatory in order to create a national church.

In his speeches before both Private Bills Committees in Regina and Ottawa, Oliver argued that the congregations in the West, through desire and necessity, were forming various combinations of union churches. He began his speech before the House of Commons Committee by briefly tracing the early church history in the West with the missionaries bringing Christianity to the original inhabitants and to the new settlers. Because of the rugged conditions in the West, the people found that they had to work together in order to conquer the distances, the land

32. House of Commons transcript of proceedings before the Private Bills Committee, p. 167.

and the weather. Cooperation in all ventures was stressed. In Oliver's own words: "They have made a success of the co-operative elevator. They will make a success of the co-operative church."[33]

One of Oliver's key arguments for church union was that union already existed in the form of double and triple affiliations together with local union churches. In his speech to the House of Commons committee, he stated that in Saskatchewan, there were about 350 cooperative churches, 60 double affiliations, a dozen triple affiliations and some quadruple affiliations. He estimated that there were approximately 440 places in Saskatchewan where union of some description had already taken place.[34] In Canada as a whole, he could give the names of 1,245 places which had formed a union or cooperative church.[35]

The concept of cooperation amongst churches was first recognized in 1899 when the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in the West agreed to share the burden of bringing religion to the vast territories west of the Great Lakes. They formally agreed to not organize a church within six miles of a church of the other denomination. As the railway was ever expanding its new lines across the Prairies, the

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33. Presbyterian Witness, June 9, 1921.

34. House of Commons transcript of proceedings before the Private Bills Committee, May 1, 1924, p. 176.

35. Ibid., p. 181.

church planners of cooperation designated alternate towns on the map as being either Methodist or Presbyterian. It was an arbitrary method of offering a church to the people but was necessary in matching the job to be done to the available resources, both human and financial. Dr. Oliver liked to joke about the results of cooperation in the western churches.

> No matter where you came from, if you got off at Vanscoy, then your chances were that you had to become a Methodist, that is, if you got off at the wrong station (laughter). If you got off at the adjoining station, you became a Presbyterian.[36]

The people of a community had the choice of travelling a long distance to the church of their denomination, or attending the church of a different denomination which was in that local community or not attending church at all. Most often, the people attended the church nearby and accepted the denomination that was available. Frequently, in order to prevent overlapping, where two or more churches of different denominations existed in a community, they joined together into an unofficial union. If Methodist and Presbyterian congregations joined but maintained allegiance to the parent churches, this became a double affiliation. They would attend the same services, would often hire ministers from each denomination on rotation but would separate the offering for Home Missions into Methodist and Presbyterian contributions. Such double, triple and even

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36. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 169.

quadruple affiliations were recognized by the parent churches. Dr. Oliver had even seen examples of physical joining of two churches. He said that in one community: "The basement is Methodist and the superstructure is Presbyterian (laughter). The only improvement on that would be to have the foundation Presbyterian and the superstructure Methodist (laughter)."[37]

In Melville, a Local Union Church was established in 1908, which began a new trend in church cooperation. This community decided to pool their resources and talents in order to worship in a shared church which was not affiliated with any parent denomination. Melville was soon followed by Kerrobert and Frobisher. The local union churches formed their own executive structure with John Reid as its secretary. An advisory council was established with representation from the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational denominations and Dr. Walter Murray was the Presbyterian representative on this council. These local union churches were formed originally not out of rebellion against the parent denominations but only as a temporary move until actual church union in Canada was accomplished. The motto of the local union churches was: "All roads lead in England to London. All Church Union negotiations and formations in Canada lead to The United Church."[38] When a union church was formed, its

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37. Ibid., p. 180.

38. Church Union Papers, UCA.

bylaws began by stating that: "Until the Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of Canada, this Church shall be known as 'The Union Church of ....'"[39] The original intent of the local union churches was that this union was a temporary measure, but as church union negotiations faltered, there was a clear danger that the local union churches could become impatient and would form a permanent union of their own.

The condition that had created cooperative and affiliated churches also encouraged local union churches. The conditions of the West and the cooperative spirit it fostered were manifested in many ways but all were attempts to prevent overlapping and competition that the West could afford neither socially nor financially. It was realized that it was foolish to have many Protestant Churches in a small community with only a few families in each. Oliver himself believed that competition was not only wasteful but unchristian.[40] While he was anxious to have a union across Canada and looked upon all of the temporary unions in Western Canada with apprehension, he was careful not to strongly discourage local unions for fear that these families and communities would form a new church without any affiliation to the parent denominations. He did not,

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39. Ibid.

40. E. H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, p. 248.

on the other hand, want to openly encourage the formation of local union churches. Walter Murray and Edmund Oliver both handled the union churches warily so as to not damage the Canadian-wide union negotiations. With regard to the local union churches, Dr. Murray wrote:

> I think it wise for us not to attempt to wrangle too much over the formation of union of these churches at present, but to wait for the larger union.[41]

The parent churches adopted the practice of double and triple affiliations in an attempt to maintain as close a tie as possible between the parent churches and the local cooperative congregations. Oliver believed that representatives from the local union churches should be included in the negotiations for the larger union, which they were, and in fact, the Regina Local Union Church had a representative appear before the Saskatchewan Private Bills Committee in favour of the Bill. The church leaders were sitting on the proverbial boiling pot and were trying to hold the lid on while also trying to release some of the steam. Dr. Oliver believed that: "if for a little while the utmost tact and consideration can be employed, the Union movement will not only cease to be a menace here but will be a positive ally."[42]

While trying to handle the western union movements with tact, Dr. Oliver also realized that this pressure in

41. Dr. W. Murray to Rev. W. T. Gunn, January 23, 1922, Murray Papers, SACA.

42. J. W. Grant, George Pidgeon, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962), p. 78.

Western Canada was forcing the issue.[43] Either a Canadian church union was to be formed or he feared that the local unions would form their own permanent union. Union could only come either locally or nationally, the type of union depending on the actions of the rest of Canada:

> The West wants to know how long it is going to wait. The West takes it for granted that there is going to be church union; the West needs union, the West wants it, and the West already possesses it to an extent that there cannot possibly be any turning back, and no matter what I or some other church worker may say, the West is bound to consummate it.[44]

By 1923, with regard to the church union issue, Oliver had clearly ceased to be part of the Ontario fragment and had become a westerner. He came West to recreate Ontario on the frontier but, by 1923, the West had become his centre of reference, a West whose needs and whose role in larger national purposes was different from Ontario's. Church union, Oliver believed, was being initiated on the frontier and that it was Eastern Canada that was dragging its heels.

The anti-unionists accused the unionists of creating local unions in the West as a means of forcing the union issue but Dr. Oliver denied these accusations arguing that the local union movement in the West was a grass roots movement that grew up from below and was not

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43. House of Commons transcript of the proceedings before the Private Bills Committee, May 1, 1924, p. 172.

44. Address given by E. H. Oliver at complimentary banquet given by Sir James Woods, January 9, 1923, p. 8.

led from above. "The Church Courts have rather restrained than pushed the church union."[45] He believed that the conditions in the West had created the local union movement and that these conditions and events would not disappear. The West had issued the challenge to the East to cease their disputes and to form a united church. Oliver was fearful of what might result if the East did not accept that challenge.

Another argument that Dr. Oliver voiced in the union debate had to do with the significance of "the Frontier." Church union was necessary in order to win the frontier. The church, like the progressive movement, viewed the West as the last open virgin territory where one could start with a clean slate and build a model society. This was one of the elements that placed Oliver with the progressive and the social gospel movements of the time. He had earlier cited cheaper agricultural credit as a means of improving the family farm and the western way of life. Prohibition would purify the roots of social life. Church union was another vehicle for building the new society. Oliver viewed the frontier as a combination of need and opportunity for the church. The church had come west to serve its people but the frontier in turn had its effect on Eastern Canada. With regard to the union question, Oliver

45. House of Commons transcript of proceedings before the Private Bills Committee, May 1, 1924, p. 179.

joined Turner's frontierism. "The Church Union of 1925 was forced forward from the Frontier of the Prairies."[46] The need to economize on men and money in order to supply the many western mission fields was a key argument for church union. Unity in spirit and cooperative efforts helped to meet the needs of the frontier but Oliver believed that only actual and full national union of the three denominations would Christianize and Canadianize the West. The need was urgent because the great economic and political growth in the West in such a short period of time meant that progress was defined and measured in material standards, making church union the more necessary for the spiritual progress of the region.

The coming of the new Canadian, as we have seen, was one of the key challenges Oliver saw before the Canadian Protestant Churches, but the issue was joined with the lingering issue of Protestant-Catholic hostility. The new Canadians were often viewed as having come West without a church and therefore were "easy pickings" for the Roman Catholics. Oliver likewise, feared that unless the Protestant Church increased its efforts in the West, the Catholic Church with its separate schools would dominate. He described vast territories in Western Canada with small communities of Germans or Ukrainians or Mennonites who were

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46. E. H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, p. VI.

without the benefits and guidance of a Christian minister which meant that funerals, baptisms, communion and marriages were often not available to these new settlers. The English language and the public school were often also missing. An effort was being made by the railways to build rail lines into the newly settled communities for the transportation of their grain to market. Why were the Canadian institutions such as schools and the churches not being built in these new communities at the same rate as the railways? The Canadian nation was offering the newcomer some of the material services but none of the spiritual or academic opportunities. How could these new citizens study English or the Canadian system of government if schools were not available? Not just any school was needed but a school that could properly help these new settlers to become proper Canadians. Likewise, not just any church or churches were needed. Dr. Oliver's image of a proper Canadian was patterned on the Protestant Anglo-Saxon, and hence the need for proper Protestant religious training was vital to Oliver.

The massive influx of new settlers into the vast area west of the Great Lakes prior to the First World War threatened the Anglo-Protestant image of "His Dominion" in Western Canada. The opportunity to create a strictly Protestant and Canadian society was disappearing quickly. Although immigration tapered off substantially during the War, Dr. Oliver and others predicted that the

immigration flow would resume. In January 1923, he said: "I have heard that thousands and millions are coming to these shores."[47] The challenge and the need to win the frontier was ever present after the War. Dr. Oliver and other church leaders knew that because more immigrants were coming, they had to continue to press Eastern Canada for aid. Oliver believed that church union would free enough money and manpower in Eastern Canada to meet the challenge of the frontier, which,among other things,was also the challenge of the newcomer and the challenge of the Roman Catholic Church. Because the need could increase with more settlers, union was even more urgently required.

The churches tried to serve many of the western communities by sending students out for the summer months. Because of the vast distances, the student minister could barely hope to cover his field in the few months that he was there. The field, of course, was usually unattended during the winter months. "Our neglect of the winter field is the opportunity of the religious faddist."[48] The opportunity for the churches was there but unless the need was met quickly, Oliver could see that the gap would be filled by "religious faddists," on the one hand or the Roman Catholic Church on the other. "The Roman Catholics are

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47. Address given by E. H. Oliver at complimentary banquet given by Sir James Woods, January 9, 1923, p. 16.

48. E. H. Oliver, "Canadians Look to Your Frontier," The New Outlook, November 2, 1927.

planting their hospitals at strategic centres, even in almost purely Protestant Communities."[49] Not only could the unclaimed communities be lost, but the Protestant gains could disappear.

The need and the opportunity for the church in the frontier was great and it was urgent. Dr. Oliver argued that church union was one possible solution to the dilemma. The need in the frontier and the formation of the local union and cooperative churches in the West were pressuring Canada toward church union. The expanding frontier was both pushing and pulling the Canadian churches toward union.

When the union was finally completed in 1925, it was a time of looking to the future, as was indicated by the title chosen for the official church publication, The New Outlook. Dr. Oliver wrote an article for this magazine which was published in the first issue dated June 10, 1925.[50] Church union did not mean the end of the challenge from the frontier but only the beginning. Not only did Oliver look to the frontier but he exhibited in his speeches and his articles, an awareness of the nation as a unit. The frontier was vital because of the importance Oliver attached to the development of the nation. A growing national awareness

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49. Ibid. The emphasis are mine.

50. E. H. Oliver, "The Place and Work of the United Church in the Life of Canada," The New Outlook, June 10, 1925.

was thus another aspect of Oliver's support of church union. "It is necessary, however, in order to understand aright the church union of 1925 to see in it at once an effort made by Canadian churches to meet frontier needs and a further endeavour made by ecclesiastical bodies of the Dominion to overtake the national problems imposed upon the religious life of Canada by Confederation of 1867."[51] The term "nationalism" has many connotations and wrong implications which should not be used in this context. Mary Vipond's use of "national consciousness" is descriptive of what existed.[52] In 1867, Canadian political union began with subsequent additions to the Canadian unit periodically through to 1949. Three churches also experienced this spirit to unite.

The Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist unions in 1875, 1884 and 1906 respectively, were a culmination of several internal unions. Upon the union of the Presbyterian Church in 1875, the Moderator believed that this union was merely a stepping stone toward further unions. In 1902, three Presbyterian observers to the Methodist General Assembly broached the possibility of church union.

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51. E. H. Oliver, "The Significance of the Canadian Confederation for the Church Life of the Dominion," TRSC, 1928, p. 163.

52. See Mary Vipond, "National Consciousness in English-speaking Canada in the 1920s; Seven Studies."

By 1906, the Presbyterian Church had established a committee to explore the possibilities of union. It can be argued that these church leaders were caught up in the awakening of a national consciousness and that it was this consciousness that promoted the eventual formation of the United Church of Canada.

According to John Webster Grant, Confederation challenged the church to lay a Christian foundation and to operate on a national level. "This required not merely greater resources than the existing fragments could command but a broader vision than their sectarian bases could support."[53] Confederation did not automatically mean that a unified and happy family of regions existed. Dr. Oliver was very conscious of an East-West struggle and often argued that the commonalities between East and West should be stressed and the differences eliminated. He was raised and educated in the East, yet had lived in the West and was devoting his time and talents to the West. He was aware of the economic differences between the East and the West. The report of the Commission on Agricultural Credit of 1913 shows his awareness of this problem.

In a speech at a banquet in Toronto sponsored by James Woods, Oliver mentioned that there were political

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53. J. W. Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, (London: Butterworth Press, 1967), p. 18.

differences between the East and the West and a disagreement over tariff policies. Yet he believed that a union within the church could help bridge this gap.

> The union of 1875 in the Presbyterian Church and of 1884 in the Methodist Church created a warmth and a kindliness which I believe has contributed to the union of Canada, and I believe the consummation of union will contribute to an understanding and kindliness, and to the integrity of this Dominion in a way nothing else can. Transportation cannot keep it together. We are kept together by our affections, by our love, by our sympathies, and the Christian church more than anything else is a factor in that regard.[54]

A loose union of local churches or a cooperative arrangement or an informal federation of churches would have possibly met the needs in the West temporarily but Dr. Oliver was convinced that a national united church was the only means whereby the church could meet the needs of the nation and would create a national spirit of unity between the East and West. When asked what he meant by a national church, Dr. Oliver replied: "a church, Dominion wide, ministering to the good of all Canada."[55] He did not mean by this that it should be a state church--it was to be a united church of Canada. "We are of Canada, Canada is our parish."[56] When the union vote in the congregations was taking place

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54. Address given by E. H. Oliver at complimentary banquet given by Sir James Woods, January 9, 1923, p. 14.

55. Church Union Papers, UCA.

56. E. H. Oliver, "The Place and Work of the United Church in the Life of Canada," The New Outlook, June 10, 1925.

in December 1924, the pamphlets stressed the argument that any congregation that did not vote to join union would be refusing "to take its part in a great Canadian movement of national scope and significance."[57]

Dr. Oliver believed that church union was necessary in order to help overcome sectionalism and provincialism. The political and economic unit had been formed.[58] The spiritual forces could not afford to maintain narrow selfish goals and miss the national scope and vision that was before them.

Dr. Oliver worked diligently for the union of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists but his vision of church union did not stop there. When speaking to the Saskatchewan Private Bills Committee, he said:

> I hope that we (unionists and anti-unionists) shall ultimately be members of the same Church even if we are parted for a season, and that when united once more we shall not cease till we press on to Union with the Baptists, Anglicans or whoever of God's children will unite on the basis of a common allegiance to Christ and a common crusade for the Kingdom.[59]

Although he supported union on a wide basis, he did not favour union with the Anglo-Catholics.

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57. "The Effect of Independence," pamphlet published by the Bureau of Literature and Information of the Presbyterian Church, n.d.

58. E. H. Oliver, "The Problems of Saskatchewan," _The Presbyterian Witness_, June 9, 1921.

59. Private Bills Committee Records, Session 1924, Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

> I do not believe that there should be organic unions where there are vital principles that divide. I personally would be averse to uniting with the Anglo-Catholics on the basis of their recent congress in London. I have no liking to travel towards Rome.[60]

The need in the West, the challenge of the new frontier and the existing unions in the West were all arguments for church union. When the Presbyterian union leaders could see that union meant a split in the Presbyterian Church and the losing of a substantial portion of the Eastern Canadian Presbyterian Church, the national spirit won out. The Presbyterian leaders could see that they would lose the Presbyterian congregations in the East or the West no matter which choice was taken. To proceed or to delay meant a split in the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian union leaders were willing to sacrifice some of their eastern followers in order to become part of a larger national church from sea to sea. This would be a church that would create a spirit of national unity and national purpose. The West was the land of newness and opportunity. It represented the future. The majority of the Presbyterian Church opted for the larger national church at the expense of losing some of its oldest supporters. Dr. Oliver believed by 1924, that there was no turning back. "No matter what

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60. E. H. Oliver, "The Mingling of Three Streams of Tradition and Influence," an article published by the Bureau of Literature and Information of the Presbyterian Church, Church Union Papers, UCA.

decision is made by Church Courts, and I personally would say no matter what decision would be made here (parliament), we are not in a position to help ourselves; we simply must go forward, carried by the necessities of the situation."[61]

The national argument, however, was not just a matter of heightened national awareness, but of national social problems. Hence, a fourth argument used by Oliver was that union would revitalize the church and stimulate it to renew its battle to improve the social conditions in Canada. An editorial in The Presbyterian Witness supported the concept that church union would revitalize the church in the area of social reform. "May we not expect that a union such as that contemplated will bring a fresh accession of spiritual power and efficiency? Every union, both in our denomination and in other churches in Canada has resulted in quickened life and greatly extended usefulness."[62]

Concern over social reform and regeneration was one of the key points of disagreement between the unionists and anti-unionists within the Presbyterian Church.[63] A section of the Presbyterian Church feared the growing tide of social concern and social reform believing that these

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61. House of Commons transcript of proceedings before the Private Bills Committee, May 1, 1924, p. 179.

62. The Presbyterian Witness, May 24, 1923.

63. J. W. Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, p. 54.

priorities would create a church devoted to material rather than to spiritual ends. It was this segment of the Presbyterian Church which opposed uniting with the Methodists and Congregationalists.

Dr. Oliver believed that church union would bring new life to the social reform movement. In his history of the social achievements of the Christian Church, he traced the history of the church through periods when personal redemption was the only priority of the church while social service was ignored.[64] The church, according to Oliver, had two primary goals: to preach about Christ and to bring social improvement and service to mankind. Although he believed in Christ and redemption, service was a means of proclaiming your faith.

> The sum total of a Church's activities is their social service. The Church has not given up the task of regenerating the individual. But it believes that this work is not accomplished until it has linked him to a task of social service, fighting against social evils, Christianizing all human relations, establishing social justice, outlawing war, and crusading for God's Kingdom.[65]

Dr. Oliver believed that church union would combine the three denominations so that the forces for social improvement would be even greater not only in the West but in all of Canada.

The need in the West and the challenge from the

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64. E. H. Oliver, <u>The Social Achievements of the Christian Church</u>, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930).

65. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 172.

frontier that Oliver described, certainly fell within the argument that the unionists were looking to the West as their last hope for reform.

> The West was most obviously crucial because it was the largest habitable but still unsettled area in the country, and therefore, the home of future millions of Canadians. But the West was much more than empty land--it was the last hope for the regeneration of mankind.[66]

As was noted earlier, Dr. Oliver, in 1923, still believed that there would be millions of people flooding into Western Canada. In order to prevent the sectioning of Western Canada into old European national blocs, a regenerated social and religious program was necessary. This program would try to ensure that the West was Canadianized and Christianized.

As has been shown earlier, Oliver favoured church unions as long as there was agreement on the underlying fundamental principles. Although he did not favour union with the Catholics because of the necessary agreement on the principles, Oliver was not an ultra-Protestant and not a supporter of the Ku Klux Klan. Oliver had used anti-Roman Catholic arguments to promote union but yet by 1926, the Klan began to grow in Saskatchewan. Although there is no record of Oliver campaigning against the Klan, several of his friends and colleagues, such as Rev. H. D. Ranns of Biggar, Dr. Charles Endicott of Saskatoon and Dr. J. L. Nicol, all of whom had worked with Oliver on the prohibition or

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66. Mary Vipond, "National Consciousness in English-Speaking Canada in the 1920s; Seven Studies," p. 193.

church union campaigns, were vocal opponents of the Ku Klux Klan.[67] Oliver, like the members of the Klan, was concerned about the importance of the public school and the immigrant and Catholic menace. However, he had worked closely with the Roman Catholic priests on the overseas Canadian army bases during the First World War and knew that cooperation, even with them, was possible though it could never lead to organic union. Although Oliver had worked with the Roman Catholics, he tended to view them with careful suspicion and, as was noted earlier, he viewed the French Canadian opposition to conscription as another example of their lack of effort to work for a unified nation. He linked the French Canadian language, culture and religion together with their desire to have separate schools. He treated the Roman Catholic missionary efforts as a threat to his vision of a Protestant West yet he did not go to the other extreme of proposing to limit a Catholic's right to religious freedom. Oliver was prepared to work with the Catholics if they were willing to work for an English-speaking united Canada. He would not have opposed the Catholics using the last half hour of the school day to work with their children in the same way as Oliver wanted the Presbyterians to do but he viewed the separate religious and French-speaking schools as not only a religious threat, but an

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67. William Calderwood, "The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan," p. 191.

obstacle to a united Canada. Thus Oliver cannot be viewed as an ultra-Protestant, but he could not be taken for a pro-Catholic either. He respected the Catholic beliefs and their right to religious freedom and would work with them if they shared a common goal. However, this cooperation ceased if any of his Protestant principles or if his vision for the West were being threatened.

Oliver made brief reference to the K.K.K. in Beaver Lodge, when one of his fictional characters, Bruno, a German Catholic, who was working in a teacherage building bee, engaged in an argument with a supporter of the Klan. Bruno "sprang to the defence of his faith" and urged his neighbours to discontinue this political and religious debate and to continue the work bee. "No politics till we get this teacherage built!"[68]

This brief reference to the Klan helps pinpoint Oliver as a moderate Protestant of whom there were so many in the Saskatchewan electorate. The Klan threatened to interrupt the development of Oliver's beloved West and even to divide the newly created church! Oliver's invitation to J. G. Gardiner to address the 1928 Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church regarding the schools question, as was shown earlier, clearly supports the argument that Oliver opposed the Klan. The Klan's principles

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68. Henry Esmund, Beaver Lodge, p. 52.

were contrary to Oliver's liberal theology and social gospel philosophy.

Oliver's contribution to church union in 1925 then was outstanding and elevated him in the ranks of United Church leadership to the point where he was elected as the first western moderator of the church in 1930. However, before exploring his role as moderator in the early depression years, a brief examination of his written work is necessary. His books and articles which were written in the 1920s were Oliver's vehicle for explaining more systematically his goals for the West and his vision of a righteous nation.

CHAPTER VII

THE FRONTIER HISTORIAN

Edmund Henry Oliver was a prolific writer. Within twenty years, quite apart from his commission reports, he wrote five major books, one novel, one survey history of Saskatchewan and Alberta, presented ten papers at the annual meetings of the Royal Society of Canada, edited a two-volume collection of Territorial Legislative records and wrote countless articles for newspapers and church magazines, particularly during the church union debate.

Oliver's best known work, and the one which earned him a reputation as a frontier historian and puts much of his other work in perspective was _The Winning of the Frontier_, published in 1930. It is clear from the preface to the book that, as a church historian, Oliver self-consciously identified himself with the first generation of scientific historians in Canada. His ample use of primary documentation testified to his genuine commitment to scientific history, as did his rejection of church histories written for propaganda purposes. In _The Winning of the Frontier_, he deliberately reached out for a single dominating theme with which to link the various aspects of Canadian religious

history over four centuries and found it in the concept of the frontier which had been so fruitfully applied to American history over the past generation.[1] His conception of the frontier, however, went beyond Frederick Jackson Turner's classical use of that concept. Oliver defined "frontier" three ways: first, like Turner, as a geographical line, ever moving westward, which separated civilization from the untamed West; second as an area of physical and spiritual need, whether on the margins of settlement or in the populous cities, and third as the advancing line of Protestant civilization where the Protestant ethos met its counterpart.[2] Throughout Oliver's work, indeed in his whole corpus of writing, these three conceptions of the frontier tended to overlap or coalesce:

> The Frontier demanding the Church's message and work for its untouched area may be the neglected slum of an old city no less than the unreached community on the farthest verge of settlement. But in Canada, just because of the primitive conditions and pioneer settlements characteristic of a young and growing country, it has been the geographical Frontier that has afforded the most striking challenge to the Church.[3]

Oliver believed that the frontier, as an area of need, was thereby often the initiator of change. Church union was a

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1. E. H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, p. v.

2. Ibid., pp. 1-3.

3. Ibid., p. 2.

case in point.[4] But at the same time, Oliver's identification of the location of need coincided with areas of obvious challenge to the Protestant churches--prairie and city--to which masses of non-Protestants recently immigrated, or with parts of the Dominion where they remained unassimilated, as in French Quebec. J. M. S. Careless's description of E. H. Oliver, as a frontier historian, therefore, is not entirely true if it suggests a simple application of Turner's thesis to Canadian conditions.[5] Oliver was using the idea in his own way and for his own purposes.

Given Oliver's conception of the frontier in Canadian history, it is easy to see why he believed that western Canadian history was unique geographically, socially and theologically. Because of the vast distances and sparse population, the solution to the western problems required a peculiar blend of initiative, cooperation and adaptation. Because he believed God intended the West to be an agency in the creation of a righteous nation, the history of and the hope embedded in western causes had to be committed to the written word and the printed page. The nation needed to be reminded of the national significance of the West; the West must never forget its destined role; and

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4. Ibid., pp. 250-252.

5. J. M. S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History, "Approaches to Canadian History, Ramsay Cook, Craig Brown and Carl Berger (ed.),(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 68.

the church needed both knowledge and inspiration as an agency of social transformation. Oliver's writing served all of these purposes.

There could be no mistaking Oliver's sense of the distinctiveness of prairie development.

> Without these creative conceptions and achievements cannot be understood the economic and social life of the Prairies, the effort to correct its isolation, the early and extensive use of rural telephones, the growth of the Church Union Movement, the extension of branch lines of railway, the expansion of agricultural industry and the emergence of farmers' organizations up to and including the Wheat Pool, the problems associated with the New Canadians. Church and School and Law Court and other kindred institutions function on the Prairies in a manner not unlike that in which they function in other portions of the Dominion. But the Prairies are distinctive in that they have had to organize their social and economic life to combat drouth, distance, the emptiness of the great open spaces, and the isolation and individualism of the agricultural industry.[6]

Much of Oliver's work pertained to western prairie history which was aimed at a western audience. Oliver believed that the history of the West had a lesson in it which could offer solutions to the western problems. Even though the history of Western Canada seemed shorter in comparison to the history of Ontario, Oliver believed that the early history of the West could offer leadership to future generations. The early explorers, then missionaries and finally pioneers, brought with them a part of the old world and of Ontario and they had battled the climate and the distances in order to create this new society on the Prairies.

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6. E. H. Oliver, "The Institutionalizing of the Prairies," TRSC, 1930, p. 20.

Prairie history, brief as it was, showed the dramatic growth and development of the West. Within a matter of a few years, towns and cities with stores, newspapers and even the Legislative Buildings appeared on the open prairie. The West not only experienced material growth but also became a centre for reform and fertile soil for new concepts and ideas. Oliver recorded and interpreted this history to show the westerner that he had something to be proud of. Frank H. Underhill, a well-known liberal national historian, shared Oliver's excitement over the rapidly changing society in the West where the prairie farmers refused "to be fitted into the old two-party system of Eastern Canada, or into the orthodox religious denominationalism of Ontario--the United Church was born on the prairie--or into the dominant banking and financial system of Montreal and Toronto."[7]

Eastern Canada was the second audience to which Oliver directed his written work. His books and articles illustrated the need in the West for more money, manpower, concern and involvement from Eastern Canada. This was Oliver's challenge and plea from the frontier to Eastern Canada for assistance in creating "His Dominion" in the West.

Oliver's histories of the West were also written with an archival intent in mind. Much of the early development of the West was only remembered by the early pioneers.

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7. Frank H. Underhill, In Search of Canadian Liberalism, (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1960), p. XI.

If this was not recorded, much of the early history would be lost. Oliver's concern to preserve western history was further shown in 1923, when he, as convenor of the historical committee of the Saskatchewan Synod of the Presbyterian Church, urged the churches to send in their records and annual reports so that they would be preserved.[8]

In 1921, Oliver received one of the greatest honours that an historian and academic could receive at that time, when he was nominated and elected to Section II of the Royal Society of Canada, and in so doing, joined other prominent historians such as G. M. Wrong, O.D. Skelton, under Secretary of State for External Affairs, Walter Murray, A. S. Morton, H. A. Innis, Robert A. Falconer and J. W. Dafoe of the Winnipeg Free Press, to name only a few. Membership in the Society was not only an honour for Oliver, but also an opportunity to explain his vision for the West. The Royal Society of Canada, founded in 1882, was a forerunner of the Learned Societies, and was formed at a time when the social standing and prestige of the academic community was declining.[9] The membership of the Society, two hundred members by 1930, was closed. New members were nominated when

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8. Acts and Proceedings of the Synods of Saskatchewan of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1923.

9. Mary Vipond, "National Consciousness in English-speaking Canada in the 1920s: Seven Studies," p. 69.

a vacancy occurred due to death or resignation. It was indeed an honour and a compliment to be elected to the Society since it was composed of only the academic élite.

The Historical Landmarks Association of Canada grew out of the Royal Society of Canada in 1907 which eventually led to the formation of the Canadian Historical Association (CHA) in 1921. Oliver attended the founding meeting of CHA in 1921 when its constitution was considered.[10] Oliver's contacts with the educational élite were not restricted to the RSC and CHA however. His written work on the immigration question, as has been shown, shared much with that of J. S. Woodsworth and J. T. M. Anderson although it varied on the ultimate solution. Oliver's surveys of early prairie history, particularly his survey of Saskatchewan and Alberta for Canada and its Provinces, was similar to Dr. N. F. Black's A History of Saskatchewan and the Old North West. They both showed an interest in recording and interpreting the early prairie development, particularly the development of the eastern institutions on the Prairies and the development of responsible and representative government. It was no coincidence that Dr. Black and Dr. Oliver were both founding members of the Saskatchewan Education League. Oliver even tried his hand at writing a novel, under the pen name of Henry Esmund, which was similar

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10. Ibid., p. 71.

in the style and message to several of Ralph Connor's novels. Oliver and Connor (C. W. Gordon) knew each other through their church activities and the First World War. Oliver, thus, was acquainted with prominent western writers and historians such as Woodsworth, Anderson, Black and Connor and shared their concern for creating a morally sound community in the West.

Oliver's writings in 1914 and throughout the 1920s can be classified into four main categories: the liquor traffic; church union; immigration and education; and the growth and development of institutions in the West such as a representative and responsible government. Underlying all of these categories was Oliver's vision for the last frontier and his challenge to Eastern Canada to help form a new society in the West which, early in his career, he believed would be patterned on Ontario.

As was shown earlier, prohibition was a key link in the creation of a morally pure West. Oliver had helped create a dry Saskatchewan through his service on the liquor dispensary commission. In 1923, he traced the history of liquor traffic in the West to encourage the prohibition supporters to "hold the line" and to continue to work to prevent the return of the bar.[11] If people could be reminded of the evils of the bar and of the long struggle that had

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11. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces.

been waged to bring prohibition, Oliver believed that they would be convinced of the merits of a dry Saskatchewan and would press the government to keep liquor out of Saskatchewan.

Oliver's paper, which he presented to the 1928 annual meeting of the Royal Society, argued that church union resulted from Confederation in 1867.[12] As has been already noted, Oliver wrote many articles and presented speeches in favour of church union but only one church union paper was presented to the society.

The bulk of the books and articles by Oliver in the 1920s concentrated on prairie history and the immigration question. The survey histories of the West were necessary for Oliver, not only from an interest point of view, but to record the settlement and development of a vast empty frontier. His articles for the society in 1925 and 1926 both trace the early settlement in the West. His 1923 article on Lieutenant Governor Royal's term of office plus his 1930 article on the institutionalization of the Prairies both trace the development and achievement of responsible and representative government in the West. The roots of this western society were still very new and shallow but Oliver saw the need to interpret and record its early growth. At Saskatoon, he had the additional stimulus of A. S. Morton, minister and historian, whose classic synthesis of prairie history was published in 1938.

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12. E. H. Oliver, "The Significance of Confederation for the Church Life of the Dominion," TRSC, 1928.

Like Ralph Connor, E. H. Oliver capsulized life on the Prairies in a novel, Beaver Lodge. In this novel, Oliver described all of the problems of an early frontier community as they fought the weather and isolation, but yet showed how they maintained their desire to build a school and a church in order to have the social and religious comforts of home.[13] Although a pen name was used, the author of this novel was clearly E. H. Oliver. The Transcript of the Royal Society of Canada, 1936, lists Beaver Lodge, as one of Oliver's publications. Although the names in the novel have been altered slightly, Professor Henry of the theological college in Saskatoon is obviously E. H. Oliver himself, and Rev. Hoffner, in the novel, is actually Rev. Hoffman, the close friend and colleague of Dr. Oliver's described above.

The novel mixes romance with light humour and some human suffering as a pioneer family try to break the sod and to build a school and church in their community. The public school, as an influence on the immigrant children, was stressed. One mother, in the novel, mentioned that the new teacher "even tells them (the children) what to eat and how often to wash."[14] The school also became a social centre

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13. Henry Esmund, Beaver Lodge.

14. Ibid., p. 54.

for the adults where the different cultures mixed and became part of Oliver's Canadian mosaic. Underlying the entire novel was Oliver's plea to Eastern Canada to contribute to the Missionary and Maintenance Fund so that the church could serve its people on the frontier. When the area of Beaver Lodge was denied a mission field because of a lack of finances in the Presbytery, Dr. Oliver, through the words of one of the characters in the novel, lamented that the cost of "two chocolate bars per week per member from the whole Church" would have been enough to finance this new mission field.[15]

Oliver's written works were factual, well organized and rarely showed the sense of humour that he exhibited in his public speeches. His addresses to both parliamentary committees regarding union, as has been shown, were sprinkled with light humour as he forcefully presented his case. His address to the Saskatchewan Public Education League in 1915 is another example of his sense of humour. He mentioned that the Ontario public discussions often took place as the people sat on the rail fences. "Ontario owes much of its public life to the rail fence. It remains to be seen what Saskatchewan can evolve from barbed wire."[16] Oliver was very much at home at the podium or the pulpit

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15. Ibid., p. 41.

16. E. H. Oliver, "The Country School in non-English Speaking Communities," p. 5.

but his sense of humour was rarely shown in his written work.

Do Oliver's written works over the sixteen year period from 1914 until the depression show a change in historical interpretation? One element of his work that did not change was his love and concern for the West. In his survey history of the West in 1914, Oliver was optimistic, noting the growth and expansion in the West as being only the beginning of an even greater future. Oliver's articles in the TRSC in 1923, 1925 and 1926 indicate that Oliver was an example of the Hartzian fragment theory. Oliver, a son of Ontario, brought the church, school and British parliamentary form of government with him as tools to help him create in the West, a morally pure society which would be modelled on Ontario and which could even surpass Ontario in its religious, intellectual and social standards. Oliver believed that the flow of ideas in Canada was from East to West and thus may have absorbed some of the discussion of metropolitanism in his Royal Society of Canada associations with people like Innis.

Yet Oliver's warning to Ontario that the struggle with the immigrant menace would not be easy, came as early as 1915 in an address to the Saskatchewan Education League.[17] Even in 1913, Oliver, in writing the final report of the Agricultural Credit Commission, saw that the industrial

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17. Ibid.

lobby in the East had created governmental policies that were detrimental to western agricultural interests. By 1930, Oliver, in writing about winning the frontier, saw a rising threat to "His Dominion," and issued a call to the East for more help through the Missionary and Maintenance Fund.

Dr. Oliver did not write any books or deliver any papers at the Royal Society within the 1920s which debated scriptural points or directly revealed his theology. This was not the tenor of the Royal Society of Canada discussions in the 1920s. Yet Oliver's basic theology was behind all of his written work. He had come West as part of the educational élite and as part of a national mission to create a new Christian society on the last frontier. His theology was subordinated in his crusade for a West which had a farm family on every half section of land; a country public school with an English-speaking teacher and a curriculum based on teaching people to be Canadians; a Protestant Church and minister in each community; no sale of alcoholic beverages in the province and a united church with an active and aggressive policy of social leadership in the West. All was part of Oliver's vision and constituted the themes of his written work. This vision was based on the firm belief that this type of model society was in accordance with God's will and the scriptures. It was a model far from the Calvinist and Puritan theocracy of his

religious ancestors, and owed much to more recent evangelical and liberal currents in Christian thought. Fundamentally, it was continuous from the Biblical story of God's quest for a faithful people. Oliver's theology made it possible for him to conceive of the righteous nation, and his practice and his writing aimed at a national entity that could be called "His Dominion of Canada." In the pursuit of that quest, the events of his life move from one crisis to another. Called upon to function as an economist, historian, college principal, and church politician, it is not surprising that he had little time to become a systematic theologian as well.

Was Oliver's vision merely a dream or did he actually believe that this model society could be achieved? The answer to this question is open to great speculation. Every leader usually has two sets of goals: the one he is aiming for and the one he honestly feels he can achieve. The enthusiasm in which Oliver promoted his vision of the West and the force with which he presented his arguments leads us to believe that he felt that his vision for the West could be achieved, if not totally, in some utopian sense, at least in substantial measure. Just as the newly united national church was testing its new wings and as Oliver, with the union struggle behind him, was trying to return the church to its social programs, the depression and the drought combined forces to dash many dreams and visions for the West. The years 1930 to 1932 would prove

to be the most challenging and frustrating years of his career. The depression, combined with the drought, brought a severe test to Oliver's vision for the West. Whether the vision would be lost and forgotten or would reshape itself in the face of new challenges was the question that was rising to the fore as he boarded the train in September 1930 for London, Ontario, where the United Church was scheduled to hold its next General Conference.

CHAPTER VIII

PASTOR TO THE NATION

When the delegates of the newly formed United Church of Canada left the Toronto arena on the tenth of June 1925, the outlook was bright. The union struggle had left many internal wounds and divided congregations but the new united organization would work to heal those wounds and would renew its efforts for social regeneration. Although the three denominations had not deserted their social programs during the union debate and in fact church union had been a triumph for the social gospel, the struggle for a united church and the division in the Presbyterian Church had absorbed much of the attention and energy of the church leaders. Concern, particularly in the Presbyterian Church, over their own internal organization and the final battle to preserve prohibition, weakened their social programs. By 1925, the prohibition battle had been lost on most fronts, the Sabbath was increasingly being ignored and the influence of the church within society was decreasing. It was time for the new United Church to move forward with a new outlook. The future held unlimited potential. Yet before the United Church could recover from the union battle and the prohibition losses, the stock market fell in 1929, signalling the

beginning of an economic depression that affected the entire world. By a strange coincidence of nature and poor farming practices, a drought in Western Canada combined with the depression to create an emergency of great magnitude. It was at the beginning of these urgent and turbulent times that the United Church met in 1930 in London, Ontario, to formulate church policy and to select the fourth moderator. The first three moderators had been chosen from the former Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational denominations respectively. Each had had their term. Who then would be the fourth moderator? Five candidates were nominated.[1] Three of the candidates withdrew leaving Brown from Kingston and Oliver from Saskatoon. On September 17, 1930, the United Church decided that Dr. Edmund H. Oliver, at age forty-eight, would be its fourth moderator.

Why was Oliver chosen for this position? It can be argued that since he had been a Presbyterian, he was chosen because it was time again to have a former Presbyterian as moderator. The election, however, was more than a mere selection of a candidate due to a rotational denominational roster. The selection was, in part, a result of Dr. Oliver's leadership in the union battle, which generated widespread

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1. Dr. Wylie Clark nominated Dr. T. Albert Moore; Dr. G. C. Pidgeon nominated Dr. W. T. G. Brown; Dr. L. McTavish nominated Dr. E. H. Oliver; R. W. Armstrong nominated Dr. J. W. Woodside; Rev. P. A. Walker nominated Dr. Robert Laird.

respect for him among his colleagues not only in Western Canada but across the nation. The Church was aware as well, of the crucial role of the West in the accomplishment of union and that the three moderators to date had come from Eastern Canada. The election was a fitting tribute not only to Oliver but to the West. Oliver, appropriately, did not take the credit for himself, but interpreted the election as a symbol of honor paid to the men of the frontier.[2] Upon his election, in his speech of thanks, he said: "When the radio broadcasts the news over the prairies, they will say, 'you have honoured us in honouring him.'"[3]

The paying of tribute to this western leader was momentary. The United Church had not only selected Oliver to pay tribute to him, but had chosen him to tackle a new job and to lead the church through what, it was increasingly being recognized, would be difficult times. Oliver was not long in starting his job in earnest. Within three weeks after the General Council, the moderator's schedule for the next year was published in The New Outlook.[4] He planned to visit Central and Eastern Canada in the autumn of 1930, in the interests of the Missionary and Maintenance (M. & M.)

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2. The New Outlook, November 5, 1930.

3. Ibid., October 15, 1930.

4. Ibid., October 8, 1930.

Fund; to tour Western Canada in the winter and to devote the spring to attend meetings of boards and conferences across Canada while the following summer was to be devoted to Home Missions. Within the first six months, he planned to visit the main regions of Canada and no doubt bookings of special appointments for services by the moderator began to flood the head offices.

Dr. Oliver, in helping to create a national church, had stressed the importance of tieing the East to the West and mobilizing the entire church. His speaking tour was an attempt to do just that. His whirlwind tour often led to headlines in The New Outlook such as "Keeping up with the Moderator."[5] By the beginning of November 1930, it was reported that he had attended eighteen banquets in three weeks.[6] In the period from October 13, 1930, to December 16, 1930, during his eastern tour, he delivered 125 addresses in seventy towns and cities and attended fifty-four banquets.[7] On his tour of Western Canada, he spent nearly three weeks in British Columbia delivering thirty-one addresses which included five addresses within one twenty-four hour period.[8] During his moderatorship, his tours were not spent entirely

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5. Ibid., August 3, 1932.

6. Ibid., November 5, 1930.

7. Ibid., January 7, 1931.

8. Ibid., March 4, 1931.

in attending formal banquets and addressing the crowds from the platform. He felt it was of utmost importance to meet as many people as was possible. While visiting the Peace River country in July 1932, he reported:

> I spent a good deal of the day hunting up the Protestants, feeling that the Moderator could spend his time in no better way than in a house-to-house pastoral visitation of United Church folk.[9]

He made it a point to visit the backwoods as well as the large urban centres. His message throughout was one of courage and optimism. He stressed the importance of the church working together as a unit and becoming involved in the issues that faced it. Better church attendance, more faith, increased social service and increased contributions to the M. & M. Fund were common themes. He stressed that the frontier was still issuing its challenge to the church. He had visited new communities in Northern Ontario, Saskatchewan and Northern British Columbia. No place was too small, nor distance too great for the moderator to bring the challenge or the comfort of the new church. The Prairies had trained him well to have an eye for local needs, which in turn became part of the challenge and message he broadcast to the rest of the church.

One of the biggest challenges to the new church was the "dirty thirties," which was a national catastrophe that surpassed any other in the history of Canada. Canadians had

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9. Ibid., August 10, 1932.

experienced depressions, recessions and drought before but not at the same time nor of the same magnitude as was experienced from 1929 until the Second World War. The worsening conditions in Canada and particularly in Western Canada, required attention by the churches. As Dr. Oliver commenced his tour of the West in December 1930, he announced that he had called a conference of the United Church leaders to meet in Regina on January 5 and 6, 1931 to discuss the situation.[10] In his announcement, he said:

> A church that scarcely exists in the rural settlements of Western Canada might easily avoid the strain. The United Church of Canada, however, cannot choose to abdicate its responsibilities. It will do its full duty and it will challenge its membership to larger sacrifice and self-denial in this hour of trial for many of its ministers and members who are facing privations and suffering.[11]

Forty men were present at that meeting which had been called by the moderator. The reports in The New Outlook praised Dr. Oliver for his leadership and foresight in having called the meeting to discuss the drought situation in Western Canada. Many leaders in their speeches expressed their thankfulness that Dr. Oliver had been called to be moderator during such troubled times.[12]

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10. Ibid., January 7, 1931.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., January 21, 1931.

Oliver reported to the meeting that the demands on the M. & M. Fund were increasing at the same time as the contributions to the Fund were dwindling. He stressed that through the United Church, the East was bound to the West and that they would work together in finding solutions to the problems. The church leaders were briefed on the situation in Southern Saskatchewan. During the Christmas week of 1930, Oliver had prepared himself for the meeting in Regina by touring part of the province himself. Rev. George Dorey, Superintendent of Missions in Southern Saskatchewan, drove Dr. Oliver through 480 miles of the Assiniboia Presbytery with stops at many of the charges.[13]

The outcome of the emergency meeting in Regina in January and the increasing concern amongst the leaders regarding the situation in the West, led to the establishment of the National Emergency Relief Committee by August 1931. The original intent of the committee was to try to provide clothing for the destitute in western areas but this goal was quickly expanded to provide food as well as clothing. Rev. R. B. Cochrane, secretary of the Home Missions Board, became the chairman of the committee with Rev. D. N. McLachlan as secretary and Rev. John Coburn as organizer.[14] Other committee members were: Mrs. Anson Spotton, Mrs. G. A. Saunders, Mrs. E. D. Banfield, Mr. Thomas Bradshaw,

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13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., September 9, 1931.

Gershom W. Mason, Rev. Peter Bryce and Rev. Kenneth J. Beaton. Dr. Oliver and Dr. T. Albert Moore, secretary of the General Council, also joined the committee. Dr. Cochrane, in an open letter to all congregations, issued the plea for everyone to contribute clothing. Rev. John Nicol and Rev. George Dorey, Home Mission Superintendents for Northern and Southern Saskatchewan respectively, were appointed to receive the food and clothing and to arrange for its distribution to the needy. There had been small and scattered relief attempts in 1930 but the National Emergency Relief Committee was the first large scale relief movement. The use of the word "national" in the title of the church committee is worth noting. The church leaders realized that the calamity Western Canada faced was one of concern for the entire nation.

Although the United Church was the first to establish a relief program, it was soon joined by the provincial and federal governments. In September 1931, the Anderson Government established the Provincial Relief Commission and the United Church offered to work hand in hand with the provincial commission. By October 1931, the federal government also joined the relief efforts by agreeing to pay the freight on the first twenty rail cars of relief going to Western Canada. Eventually the two major railways agreed to transport all relief supplies free of charge.

During July 1931, Dr. Oliver was driven 1600

miles through Saskatchewan viewing the effects of the drought. In his notes of this trip, he described the Prairies as:

> Nothing but sand, wide-reaching sand, powdered and shifting relentlessly, wind-whipped, sun-scorched, cutting as with a razor any tender roots that dared to try to grow... . Here and there as spectres of a ruined town rose the gaunt mockery of grain elevators to remind men of unfulfilled hopes and labors lost.[15]

It was only seventeen years before, that Oliver was filled with optimism and believed that the potential of the West was unlimited. The drought and depression dashed the optimistic dreams for Oliver and for the West and reminded many of Palliser's assessment of the Prairies as being an arid zone unfit for agriculture.

Dr. Cochrane, Dr. C. Endicott, and T. A. Wilson accompanied Oliver on his tour of the drought-stricken areas and wrote a joint report of their tour: "The impression made upon us is that of Desolation. If there was added to the scene a battered house here and there and an occasional trench it would be like the Desolation of the Western Front in time of War."[16] Dr. Oliver's western homeland and the world's bread basket had been turned into a deserted and desolate dust bowl. In his notes, Oliver could not help but constantly return to the utter desolation.

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15. The United Church Record and Missionary Review, November 1931.

16. Report by Oliver, Cochrane, Endicott and Wilson after touring Southern Saskatchewan in July 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

> What a lonesome countryside. No men in the fields. No crops. No traffic. No animals. Not many gophers but a plenitude of grasshoppers.[17]

Oliver's tour through Southern Saskatchewan also enabled him to stop at many of the small towns and villages. He met with the local United Church minister and his family in order to offer them encouragement. He stressed that the people of these rural communities needed spiritual and psychological help as well as food and clothing. The church could not desert them now in their darkest time of need. Dr. Oliver did not offer any quick solutions to the problems nor could he promise that the church would pay the salaries owing to the ministers. He only asked them to hang on and to be the centre of strength and endurance in the community. In a speech, as reported by The United Church Record and Missionary Review, Oliver publicly re-emphasized this encouragement to the clergy:

> Stay on the job. The United Church of Canada will stand behind you. We won't give you luxuries. We won't even give you the minimum. We will see you don't starve. We will see you are here to break the bread of life to all the people on the Prairies.[18]

He spoke to the local communities asking them to give what money they could to the Missionary and Maintenance

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17. E. H. Oliver's personal notes on his trip through Saskatchewan in July 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

18. The United Church Record and Missionary Review, November 1931.

Fund. Then, after having viewed the western catastrophe firsthand, he travelled to other parts of Canada calling on United Churchmen everywhere to respond to this need. He encouraged Canadians to donate food and clothing to the relief committee and to contribute as much money as they could to the M. & M. Fund. He issued the "Challenge Extraordinary" to all Canadians. For himself, he offered all of his time and talents to lead the campaign. It was up to the people to respond.

The campaign throughout Canada stressed two points: the need of the people in the West and the glorious opportunity for service. As was the case during the struggle for church union, the frontier was mentioned again during the relief campaign. One of the reasons why the United Church had been formed was to respond to the challenge of the frontier. The church could not let its outposts close and wither in time of need. The United Church could not fail to respond to the area that it had originally set out to serve. They had created a national church and this national crisis fulfilled the church's desire to respond to a national need.

Rev. John Coburn, organizer for the relief committee, in an article in The New Outlook, entitled "Saying it with Cauliflowers," raised a further argument as to why Canadians should contribute:

> It is difficult to decide who will get the most good out of this move--the needy folk in the West who

receive, or the generous folks in the East who give.[19]

That, of course, was to paraphrase the New Testament teachings that it was more blessed to give than to receive. The depression, however, was more in Oliver's mind than a potential unifying influence in the church, or an opportunity to point morals. Oliver believed that in a profound way, God was using the depression as a test for the church and its people. It did provide opportunity for faith and service, but he went on

> God can transform the desert of Southern Saskatchewan, and the depression and the difficulties of Canada into the Church's chance, into the building up of His Kingdom. God is teaching us in this hour that we are brothers with all people that dwell on the face of the earth. He is teaching us through suffering, yes, but he is teaching us also within Canada that we are brothers with all people who dwell east or west. God is making in His own way, a better order of society. He is making a more Christ-like Church. He is making better men and women. God has a purpose in it. It is not chaos: it is purpose, a better order of society. [20]

The depression and drought in Western Canada also aroused, in the minds of the church leaders, including Oliver, racial and national fears which were not always in harmony with such convictions. In a letter, dated July 7, 1931, from Dr. Oliver, Dr. Endicott and Dr. Cochrane, to various church leaders, this threat to the nation surfaced:

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19. The New Outlook, October 21, 1931.

20. The United Church Record and Missionary Review, November 1931.

> I am afraid that we shall lose some of our best people through this discouragement and their places will be taken by German and Mennonites and Doukhobors who will stick to it until they come through triumphantly.[21]

The western situation posed a threat to the very moral fibre of society according to H. W. Treffry.

> We must first maintain our churches here to cheer, guide, hold people to standards of decency, to stem the tide that might otherwise mean revolt against all traditions of the past, breaking down all barriers. When respect for self, when hope for a future is lost, when one feels alone, that none cares; then danger is very near.[22]

It was believed that the church, through its spiritual and physical aid to the destitute, could help maintain social and political stability in the country, both in message and means.

Hence, Dr. Oliver stressed the cooperative features in the efforts to meet the needs of the people. Through his addresses and articles in The New Outlook, he repeated his message that the National Emergency Relief Committee was a centralized, cooperative and efficient means of offering assistance with the assurance that the contributions would reach those who were most in need.[23] In a sense, it was the issue of farm credit repeated on a vaster scale.

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21. E. H. Oliver, C. Endicott and R. B. Cochrane to various church leaders such as Peter Bryce and T. Albert Moore, July 7, 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

22. H. W. Treffrey to Dr. E. H. Oliver, July 23, 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

23. The New Outlook, September 23, 1931.

The depression must have struck deeply at the hopes Oliver had long held for a region of prosperous family farms, yet seldom did "a discouraging word" fall from his lips. The reason would seem to be that for all that he coveted prosperity for his people, the spiritual vision had always held first place. Now was a time for it unequivocally to take its central place. The depression also offered Oliver and the church an opportunity to revive its message of social service which could cause a regeneration within the church itself.

> We have long prayed for a revival of religion, but did not expect it to come in such a way as this; but 'God moves in a mysterious way,' and if out of this hour of agony and need the membership of our Church in sharing with and sacrificing for others find their own souls, and in a new and wonderful way find God, we shall have cause for rejoicing. [24]

In short, Dr. Oliver, along with other church leaders, interpreted the depression as all being part of God's will. It was a test of the faith of the people in the church. Precisely because the depression was God's will and a test to all Christians, it was also a threat to the nation as a whole and to the national church. The church leaders, including E. H. Oliver, were quick to emphasize the appeal to the national conscience. "To save Canada, we must save the Church and its work. At any cost we must stand

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24. _Ibid._, October 21, 1931.

behind our workers in sympathy and with support."[25]

The National Emergency Relief Committee was one product of the situation and the arguments used in its favour were varied. Economic, national, and spiritual--even racial--arguments were raised in order to encourage Canadians, from coast to coast, to respond to the desperate need on the Prairies, and respond they did. By late 1931, it was reported that through the efforts of the relief committee, the West had received 165½ tons of clothing and a total of 159 cars of relief to Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta.[26] Saskatchewan received most of the relief with a small portion going to the other two prairie provinces. Each car of relief served approximately 250 to 300 families. A spirit of community developed whereby an eastern town adopted a western town. As an example, the two carloads of fruit and vegetables gathered in the Oxford county were sent to Limerick, Saskatchewan.[27] Although the details of the collection and distribution were coordinated by the relief committee, the communities involved established a bond of friendship. The western clergy reported great appreciation

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25. Report by Oliver, Cochrane, Endicott and Wilson after tour of Southern Saskatchewan in July 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

26. Oliver Papers, SACA.

27. The United Church Record and Missionary Review, November 1931.

and relief in their communities. A feeling of gratitude to Eastern Canada grew up as the westerners realized that the East had helped them in their time of need. Yet there must have been at times, a spirit of bitterness at having to receive "welfare" from the East.

The depression and drought, however, also provided a unique dilemma for the United Church.[28] The United Church was a melding of three traditions. The Methodist and Presbyterian Churches had a tradition of church involvement in social reform and regeneration. The depression and drought were a social need on a national scale. A national church could not avoid responding to this need. "The sense of national mission evident in the movement to Church Union was heightened by the Depression wherein it found not only impetus but justification."[29] The proportions of this national crisis demanded that there be national state response. The United Church could not totally fill the need without state assistance. Of this, Oliver was quite aware and for him, it created no problem of principle. Assistance from the government in the solution of social problems had long been accepted by Dr. Oliver. The Royal

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28. Barbara Ann Riley, "The United Church of Canada and the Depression: Canada's 'National Church' and Political Action," Unpublished Masters thesis, Carlton University, Ottawa, 1969.

29. Ibid., p. 21.

Commission on agricultural credit in 1913 and the Royal Commission on liquor dispensaries in 1915 had both recommended government involvement as a part of the solution to the problem. Dr. Oliver had not been reluctant in the past to call on the government to help the church in social reform, but the call for government intervention had certain dangers. The United Church of Canada was composed of people from all political parties. In order to maintain internal unity, it had to avoid direct political friendship or confrontation with any political party. Since the church depended on contributions from the wealthy, it had to be careful not to disturb the status quo.[30]

> Caught between vested interests and an uncertain concensus about political action on the one hand, and national duty on the other, the Church had to move carefully.[31]

The economic crisis led to many theories as to why the depression had occurred and there were many possible solutions offered. In a broadcast over CFQC, Saskatoon, Dr. Oliver dealt with the economic arguments. His earlier concerns about proper credit for farmers were raised again. He criticized the eastern financial companies for building palaces for offices but yet refusing to afford relief by means of credit to western farmers. He concluded:

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30. Ibid., p. 18.

31. Ibid., p. 45.

> What the world does need is a new distribution of wealth and labor. We assume that the world needs a return to prosperity. What it needs is a return to God.[32]

To return to God implied a return to social justice.

Oliver was not alone in the church in his belief that the Canadian economic system needed reform. In 1932, the Evangelism and Social Service Committee of the Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church passed resolutions seeking a Christian economic system and supporting socialization of vital industries, public ownership of natural resources and a reorganization of the entire financial system.[33]

The Toronto Conference of the United Church, in June 1933, received a report from the Evangelism and Social Service Committee which called for an end to the capitalistic system. The report defined capitalism as an economic system which was administered by individuals for their own profit. The Committee report called for a new system whereby the capital would be used, not for private gain but for the "service of the general good."[34] The report called for the "socialization of banks, natural resources, transportation, and other services, and industries in so far as their operation under private ownership places undue power, over

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32. The New Outlook, January 20, 1932.

33. United Church of Canada, Saskatchewan Conference, Evangelism and Social Service Report, 1932, SACA.

34. United Church of Canada, Toronto Conference, 1933, UCA.

the subsistence of the people in the hands of special groups."[35] Rev. John Line, of Victoria College, moved the adoption of the report which was carried by a vote of 121 to 97.

The debate over such questions did not, understandably, increase the spirit of unity in the new church. According to The New Outlook, major objections were raised to the Evangelism and Social Service Department's report because of the fear that the church would become involved in party politics by recommending such a new economic and social order.[36] The paper was disappointed though that the conference was so divided over the issue.

> To those who had noted the sensitiveness of the Conference to the injustice of present conditions and the need of bringing the Christian conscience to bear upon present day social problems, it was a disappointment that the Conference should divide on this issue. It seemed clear when those who sponsored the resolution explained what they meant by such phrases as 'the socialization of banks, etc.,' that other phraseology just as forceful and much more clear in its meaning, could have been used, which the conference might have supported almost unanimously. Certainly a vote of 121 for the resolution and ninety-seven against did not accurately register the conviction of the Conference on the injustice of present conditions and the desire to see remedial measures introduced.[37]

The New Outlook's reaction to the Toronto conference's report of 1933 on the new social and economic system is an example of internal conflict within the church. Such

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35. Ibid.

36. The New Outlook, July 12, 1933.

37. Ibid.

debates reflected the growth within the church of an articulate widespread minority of clergy and laymen , frequently intellectuals of the church, who believed that cooperation was not enough and who had given up all belief in an economic system which had created such a depression and economic chaos. They were organizing themselves in 1931 into a movement for a Christian social order, and were virtually calling for a new Christian socialist economic state which would move beyond the class basis of society and operate for the good of all. Many of this group of United Churchmen, in the years 1932 and 1933, contributed to the beginning of a new political party, the C.C.F., which expressed similar concerns for a new economic order. The more radical social gospel thought was present both within the church and the partisan political realm. Yet the church was not united on the extent to which economic reform had to go in order to cure the depression.

Dr. Oliver was very aware of this internal dilemma within the church. While he called, therefore, for a more just system of economics, he treated state assistance with great care so as to avoid any attached strings. During his moderatorship, he scorned anyone who wanted to play politics with the depression. In his notes about his trip through the dried-out area of the Prairies in 1931, he noted that J. G. Gardiner, Leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan, was criticizing the Anderson Government for mishandling the situation. Dr. Oliver wrote: "It would be a thousand pities,

of course, if the matter of relief should become a matter of political controversy."[38]

Dr. Oliver, as leader of the United Church, had a three-cornered problem: he knew that the United Church had to respond to the physical and psychological suffering in Western Canada; the church needed the state's assistance in order to provide comprehensive relief; yet the church had to be careful in asking for state assistance so as to avoid direct political involvement. The church could not afford to be too forceful and critical of the state or it would lose all form of state assistance. If the church was not forceful enough in its pleas for assistance, the government possibly would not respond at all.

It was along this tightrope that Oliver had to lead his church knowing that if the church did not respond, its credibility as a force for social reform would be destroyed. He was working not only to save Canada but also the very church that he was leading and he believed there were limits beyond which he could not go in his remarks on the need for a new economic system with a new distribution of wealth--which would be a visible sign of a people's return to God.[39]

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38. E. H. Oliver's personal notes on his trip through Saskatchewan in July 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

39. The New Outlook, September 16, 1931.

Although Dr. Oliver's contributions to the relief committee were strenuous and time consuming, his moderatorship was devoted to other issues as well. He devoted what seemed to be endless energy in travelling across Canada representing the United Church in many far-flung outposts that had not had contact with the church before. During his visit to the Peace River country in the summer of 1932, in twelve days he performed five baptisms, opened five new churches, and preached twenty-four times. He was also able to personally visit many of the families in the communities.[40] His concern for the frontier was not lost when he became moderator. Even with his high post and his many pressures, he never lost his sense of humour or his pioneering sense. In describing a baptismal service in the Peace River country, he wrote:

> I baptized two babies, then with the simplicity of the Frontier, the missionary emptied the water in the baptismal bowl out of the window to use the bowl to take an offering from these pioneers for the Missionary and Maintenance Fund.[41]

Throughout his extensive travels and his hard work with the relief committee, Oliver continued as principal of St. Andrew's Theological College and even had time to attend the College's convocation in Saskatoon in March 1932.

The status of women within the United Church was

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40. Ibid., August 17, 1932.

41. Ibid.

another issue that Oliver, as moderator, became involved in. E. H. Oliver was, as early as 1916, expressing progressive views on the role of women within society. In commenting in a letter to his wife on Premier Scott's resignation and the resulting government shuffle, Oliver wrote that the Liberals would possibly be running "some of you women folks" in forthcoming elections.[42]

The question of women members of Session surfaced at the 1930 General Council as Mrs. A. D. Miller moved, seconded by Mrs. G. H. Benne, that the Basis of Union be amended to allow women to become members of Session.[43] According to Mrs. Benne, E. H. Oliver, the new moderator, had supported and encouraged her in her drive to increase the status of women in the church.[44] By 1932, the United Church passed Mrs. A. M. Scott's motion, which was seconded by Dr. E. H. Oliver, to accept women as members of Session.[45] By 1934, E. H. Oliver moved, seconded by Dr. T. Albert Moore, that the question of ordination of women be remitted to the

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42. E. H. Oliver to his wife, October 17, 1916, Oliver Papers, USA.

43. United Church of Canada, Record of Proceedings, 1930, UCA.

44 Interview with Mrs. G. H. Benne conducted by A. M. Nicholson. Transcript of interview in AS.

45. United Church of Canada, Record of Proceedings, 1932, UCA., p. 75.

Presbyteries for their consideration and judgement.[46] It was not until 1936, one year after Oliver's death, however, that ordination of women was finally accepted by the United Church. Oliver's influence can be seen even then as the first woman to be ordained, Lydia Gruchy, was a graduate of his own St. Andrew's College, the head of her class. She first asked to be ordained in 1926 and repeated her request, likely with Oliver's encouragement, at every General Council thereafter until she was finally ordained in 1936. Oliver very clearly had had an influence as moderator and as past moderator in leading the church to reform its own constitution in order to accept women as equal members within the church.

An obvious underlying theme of Oliver's moderatorship was Canadian unity. The spirit of national consciousness in Oliver, which motivated his drive for church union, continued throughout his term as moderator. He issued the challenge that:

> We need to be only one country, but we need to be a Christlike and a missionary church. The foe of the United Church is sectionalism; the foe of a Christlike church is sectarianism; and we must wage unremitting warfare of the spirit against those divisive forces, whether it be in church or state.[47]

His efforts with the National Emergency Relief Committee is

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46. Ibid., 1934, p. 26.

47. The United Church Record and Missionary Review, September 1935.

a prime example of his efforts to have the East work with the West and in so doing, create a united church within a united Canada. But further church union was another aspect of that theme that Dr. Oliver spoke out on, although it could not then be actively pursued. In a sermon delivered at the 1932 General Council, the retiring moderator said that "the United Church of Canada stood ready to confer with any other ecclesiastical body relative to any matter in which a better understanding or truer cooperation might be reached."[48] The challenge from the drought and depression served to strengthen Oliver's belief in cooperation and unity amongst the various denominations so that the challenges facing the church could be met. Oliver's early lessons from the West regarding the cooperative elevator and cooperative credit system were still present in Oliver's basic philosophy as he retired as moderator of the United Church.

As the social challenges of the depression loomed larger, E. H. Oliver, believing that he had to go beyond his own actions and sermons, wrote a summary of his social philosophy which showed the trend of his theology in his last two books: The Social Achievements of the Christian Church and Tracts for Difficult Times. In his book on the social achievements of the Christian church, he traced the history of the church in terms of its priorities for social

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48. The New Outlook, October 5, 1932.

reform. The church had two priorities: personal redemption and social reform. Oliver showed that throughout the history of the church, personal redemption, pilgrimages, tything and penance were emphasized at the expense of its efforts in social reform. The usefullness of the church in Oliver's opinion, was its ability to serve mankind. Personal redemption would come through service. But the record of the church was not without some tarnish: "One of the most deplorable features in the history of social service is that... the Church believed in poverty as a fixed social condition, the incurable and necessary lot of a certain proportion of the human kind."[49] During the middle ages, service in the church was a means to redemption only, rather than for the good of the poor.[50] Service became barter for benefits in the world to come.

For all of the faults of the church throughout the ages, Oliver believed that the church "has sought man's good, has challenged his moral life, has supported his faith, has reminded him of the Better Country and shown the way, has spoken of God, has preached the story of the Cross,--this is the social service of the Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[51]

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49. E. H. Oliver, <u>The Social Achievements of The Christian Church</u>, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 16.

50. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 106.

51. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 161.

Oliver, through the church, the school and the government had tried to create a new society in the West. In 1914, Oliver had great dreams of what the West would achieve both materially and spiritually. By 1930-'31, Oliver's vision had been challenged. Prohibition had been defeated, the agricultural economy had been brought to its knees and the future for the West looked gloomy. It was in these dire circumstances that Oliver wrote his last work, Tracts for Difficult Times, which became a summary of his social philosophy. As was noted earlier, Oliver, upon receiving his degree in theology, was educated within the liberal school of theology. Oliver's liberal theology is shown in his analysis of the Darwinian theory and its effect on the church. For the conservative segment within the church, Darwin's explanation of the evolution of man seemed to disrupt the Old Testament's account of creation and man's preferred place in God's Kingdom. Edmund Oliver disapproved of the radical and extreme statements made by scientists and churchmen alike in their running debate over evolution and the validity of the Bible. Many defenders of the "Old Church" had created a "God of the gaps." As science advanced and explained natural events with facts and formulae, the concept of God retreated and became an explanation of the phenomena that science could not yet explain. Oliver argued that to compare God and science was like comparing the mind to the body. They are related but not the same. God was part of

the spiritual world while science was explaining the physical world.

> So when we assert that God is real, we are not restricted to a comparison with the reality of atoms and electrons. We shall not be upset if the scientific explorer fails to find God.[52]

The search for both scientific truth and spiritual well-being had to continue. Darwin's theories, according to Oliver, should not be viewed as a threat to the church but as a reality and as an explanation of God's world. The Darwinian controversy served as a stimulus for the social gospel movement.[53] Survival, for the social gospeller, necessitated cooperation within the church in order to serve its members and society generally. Survival was not just limited to the fittest but also to those who could work together toward a common goal. Those who could work together were fittest to survive.

During the early 1930s, Oliver turned for guidance to Walter Rauschenbusch, the leading American spokesman of the social gospel earlier in the century. The material goals of the West were being crushed, the church was facing hardship and defeat at a time that the western families needed religious comfort the most. Government assistance was needed in order to bring aid to the people and to re-establish

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52. E. H. Oliver, Tracts for Difficult Times, (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1933), p. 194.

53. Richard Allen, "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada," The Social Gospel in Canada, pp. 29 and 30.

economic order. This was not the first time that Oliver had encouraged governmental assistance, yet he wanted to protect individual liberty. In evaluating Rauschenbusch's philosophy, Oliver stated his own position as follows:

> Has Rauschenbusch given a complete and final answer to his question, What to do? Is his Christian Socialism adequate for the political, economic, social, ecclesiastical and religious spheres of modern life? In law and politics it has been the achievement of Anglo-Saxons to effect a reconciliation between personal liberty and national unity better than has any other race. It has required efforts that date from before Runnymede itself. But this same reconciliation is no less needed in social, in economic, in ecclesiastical, indeed in all human relationships. The problem has been particularly insistent since the inception of the industrial revolution. To build a Christian social order it is not enough to emphasize alone either the laissez-faire which for decades has characterized Western nations nor the communism which in Russia has submerged the rights of individuals before the interests of the whole group. This problem arises as by far the most critical issue in this day. What initiative belongs to the individual and what initiative and authority must be exercised by the whole? To give a balanced answer to this question of the relation of the one and the many, which will allow sufficient opportunity for fullness of life to the individual and permit security and abounding achievement for the whole challenges the best thought of today in every civilized nation. This reconciliation for every department of life must be achieved along the lines and in the spirit which Jesus foreshadowed in his dream of the Kingdom of God, in which each individual has the life abundant and the Kingdom as a whole has obligations, constituted as it is of neighbours, and dedicated to the purposes of God. This problem lies at the root of progress in all departments of our organized life. Thus, as we have stated, in political life individual liberty must be adequately safeguarded, but as well national unity and public welfare must have scope to become increasingly integrated.
>
> In economic administration individual initiative and industry must each have sufficiently free play to meet the necessities of individual and family life, while the economic good of the whole is progressively sustained and strengthened. The future of the Church as an organized

> group will depend upon its powers to effect a reconciliation between the liberty of life and thought and service of the individual member or denomination on the one hand and a growing catholicity of all Christian believers on the other. It is not too much to say that the solution in all these spheres roots itself in what is indeed the profoundest problem of religion in our day, namely, the recognition of privilege and freedom of the individual in his religious life and his definite responsibility to that Power in whom we all live and move and have our being.[54]

This quotation is as clear a statement as one can find of the political, social and religious views which Oliver represented: traditional liberal constitutionalism coupled with modern progressive liberalism concerned with the positive uses of the state; traditional Protestant religious individualism joined to the social gospel's emphasis on the religious life as a corporate enterprise, a Kingdom of God. Within the collective authority represented by the modern trends in politics and religion, and which in some measure he endorsed, he was concerned to preserve the human freedoms won by the liberal and Protestant traditions. The excellence of the statement lies in the way in which it unites the concerns and objectives of the progressive Christian liberal in the realms of both politics and religion. Like many such, he did not formulate with precision a clear program for the times, and sometimes seemed clearer on the extremes he wished to avoid than on the lay of the land between. Socialism was doubtful and communism impossible.

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54. E. H. Oliver, Tracts for Difficult Times, p. V.

Yet Oliver's position was not without its specifics. Certainly Oliver had believed for some time that the church should and could influence governments in drafting and enforcing legislation. "Churches are within their rights in influencing legislation and in watching over the execution of the laws."[55] Oliver and other temperance workers had supported that right when they pressed the governments to enact temperance legislation and to enforce it. Prohibition is a good example of having to forego some individual freedoms in order to eliminate liquor which was, in Oliver's opinion, for the common good.

In Oliver's social philosophy, he was not only concerned with public welfare but also national unity, that is unity within Canada. His plan for social regeneration thus not only included reform measures to improve the social welfare of the people but also to strengthen national unity. His concerns about "Winning the Frontier," preserving "His Dominion" and creating a "United Church" all tie into his vision for a united nation. It was at once a political nationalism and a religious or evangelical nationalism. A strong united Canada politically without an active national church with no strong social passion would not have satisfied Oliver. In his Tracts for Difficult Times, Oliver pointed out that the Gospel was the "only sure power for social regeneration."

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55. Ibid., p. 206.

The key issues in Oliver's life were soundness of prairie society; cooperation of East and West; church union and national unity. This unified nation and national church would thus be able to institute responsible local government in the West for the new settlers and open new public schools and and churches in order to meet the social needs of the people. For Oliver, government and church through social reform would balance individual freedoms with national unity and public welfare.

What then were Dr. Oliver's goals for social regeneration? In The Social Achievements of the Christian Church, he defined what he saw as the church's social tasks. "The Church has not given up the task of regenerating the individual. But it believes that this work is not accomplished 'till it has linked him to a task of social service, fighting against social evils, christianizing all human relations, establishing social justice, outlawing War, and crusading for God's Kingdom."[56] The concern about the individual surfaces again. Individual salvation was needed, but if the church stopped there without social regeneration, Dr. Oliver believed that the church had not met its goal. The helped had to be converted into helpers. As a group, they would work to improve the public welfare. He believed the church had too often considered its role was to preach and had

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56. E. H. Oliver, The Social Achievements of the Christian Church, p. 172.

neglected its duty to serve. He outlined five duties of the church in social service: to be a conscience; to educate; to pioneer; to study in order to prevent rather than cure; and to transform the helped into helpers. Dr. Oliver saw the position of Protestant Churches as being between indifference and dominance (which was exhibited in the Roman Catholic Church). If the church had established a hospital, for example, once the local people were trained to operate it, the church would then move on to a new project. The church was to be an initiator but not a dominator.

Oliver's five duties of the church in social service were not so much social goals, as ecclesiastical guidelines. For all his vision of the West and his hopes for the church, he was fundamentally a very practical man, and hardly a believer in blueprints of future perfection. He did believe that the church could be a conscience to society, a social pioneer and a transforming influence in society; but it is safe to believe that Dr. Oliver did not expect that the world could ever be reformed in entirety into some form of Christian Utopia. If the Gospel, the Word of God, could regenerate the church in order to provide social service, the immediate goals would be reached.

The early 1930s had had a very definite effect upon Oliver's social and economic philosophy. By 1932, he was calling for a change in the economic system and was looking to Rauschenbusch, a more radical social gospeller,

for guidance. The depression was a time to renew one's faith in God and to re-emphasize spiritual goals. Government involvement was also needed but with caution so as to not stifle all individual initiative and cooperation. Oliver was not defeated by the depression. His material optimism had been dampened but his spiritual goals and his faith in God remained firm. Oliver became even more determined that the church should be involved in shaping a morally sound society and a righteous nation.

As the two year term of moderator came to a close for Oliver, he could look back with some satisfaction. Although the drought and depression had not ended by 1932, his church had responded by sending aid to the western families and in so doing, had created new bonds between East and West. The national church which Oliver had helped to create, had reacted to the national crisis.

Oliver's efforts as moderator had not gone unnoticed by his colleagues and friends as they publicly and privately expressed their praise and gratitude to him for his contribution to the church and to Canada. Rev. George Dorey, a close friend of Oliver's, jokingly wrote to Oliver that:

> I have let all my friends know that when the next General Council meets they should be sure to elect a moderator who is decrepit, worn out and one who comes from a land of plenty; and, as a final thing to be desired, one who will never say to us 'ten per cent off' (referring to the salary cuts for ministers)--but we do rejoice in being able to share with you, even in a slight way, in

> the great work which you are doing for the Church.[57]

The editor of The New Outlook wrote:

> What to do with a man who has gathered the head of steam that he has in these two years will be a task indeed. That he will be content to settle down to do the work of one or two men who have been doing the work of ten seems hard to believe.[58]

Dr. Oliver had been doing the work of ten men with seemingly unending energy. He would board trains at 3:00 a.m. bound for the next stop on his all-Canada tour. His grueling schedule, however, was not without its harmful effects. Nearly three years after his retirement as moderator and just less than a month before he died, Dr. Oliver wrote to his brother George about his health.

> The Moderatorship enlarged my heart,--like an athlete's heart. Then the fat prevented it from functioning properly and I had a smothered feeling. I suppose my heart is permanently impaired, but I have put myself in shape to do a regular man's work.[59]

Although he was aware of his failing health, he neither slowed his pace nor indicated to his colleagues or friends that the pace was slowly killing him. It was within weeks after writing this letter that he died of a heart attack at Camp MacKay, Saskatchewan.

His holidays always consisted of a trip with a purpose such as leading a youth camp or a series of addresses

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57. Rev. George Dorey to E. H. Oliver, August 28, 1931, Oliver Papers, SACA.

58. The New Outlook, September 28, 1932.

59. E. H. Oliver to George Oliver, June 22, 1935, Oliver Papers, SACA.

and banquets. Not only his time as moderator but all of his life had been devoted to his work. His second son, John, remembers his father most, if he was home, as working in his study each evening. There was always a lecture or a book manuscript or a speech or a sermon that needed some attention. Family holidays for the sake of pure leisure and relaxation were nonexistent.

Dr. Oliver had devoted his life to the college, to the church, and to the nation. His efforts and his hard work led him to the moderatorship which, in turn, required more time and devotion. Fortunately for the church and for Canada, a strong leader was chosen at a time of crisis. As Canada experienced the depression and drought, Dr. Oliver issued the "Challenge Extraordinary" to his people. He burnt up much of the rest of his life in the task of being the pastor to the nation in one of its darkest hours.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

"That a country boy, without means and without influence, should in two-score years become the head of a great Church and a figure of national importance is convincing evidence of great ability and high character."[1] These were the words of Dr. Walter Murray, one of Oliver's closest friends and colleagues. One would also have to add that such accomplishment was convincing evidence that Oliver's character, ideas and objectives were peculiarly congruent to the needs of his time, or at least of a large and significant constituency in Canada and the West between 1909 and 1935. The Murray-Oliver team had shared many common campaigns in education, prohibition and church union, all of which were based on the broad vision of creating a society of Christian righteousness on the last Canadian frontier. This partnership had begun in 1909 when Oliver came west to teach at Saskatchewan's new university. Oliver brought with him many Ontario influences and upon arriving in Saskatchewan, joined the ranks of a small and select

1. C. MacKinnon, The Life of Principal Oliver, p. VII.

Protestant educational élite who were determined to lead in the creation of a new western society as the cornerstone of the Canada of the future.

Although Oliver came west to teach history and economics, by 1910, he also held a degree in theology. The rapidly developing West was desperately short of well-trained ministers and Oliver was soon involved in founding a theological college, whose graduates could establish the churches in all of the new farming communities and stand as a guarantor of their moral and spiritual life. This transfer to the principalship of a theological college did not mean that Oliver had left the university. On the contrary, he viewed this move as a step closer to the centre of the university. For him, as for Murray, the university and the West had their basis in the church, and the creation of the college was a natural step toward the creation of Oliver's new West.

Oliver's role, however, was not to be confined to higher education and he soon reached into public life. His first major opportunity to influence economic and social policies of the Saskatchewan Government came through his appointment to the Agricultural Credit Commission. Like many Ontarians who came west, he early began to feel the economic and political tensions between Eastern and Western Canada and to recognize their primary causes. He threw his support behind western unrest and supported the farmers' efforts to unite, believing that through a cooperative effort

and government support, they could produce a new agricultural and economic way of life to balance the inequities that arose out of eastern industrial policies. That was the essential message of the new agricultural cooperative credit scheme with government backing which he urged upon the Saskatchewan Government. As were the other moral and social reforms which Oliver early espoused in a prominent way, his credit proposals were equally an expression of his Protestant sensibilities. Yet as has been shown, the agricultural cooperative scheme was not implemented either in 1913 when credit was tight or in 1917 when a government credit board was established. The minutes of the commission show that the three members had considered the principles behind the commission's report and had, in fact, approved the actual wording of the report. Oliver and Dunning were both well aware of the success of the cooperative elevator company and the growing cooperative spirit amongst the Saskatchewan farmers. Oliver had become quite familiar with the German cooperative credit plan and had used the commission's Saskatchewan public hearings to encourage this cooperative spirit. It would appear that Oliver was in tune with the new trends in cooperative credit but was unable to persuade the Scott government to implement such a programme in Saskatchewan.

Oliver's performance on the agricultural credit commission must have been quite acceptable to Scott because within two years, Oliver was invited to study

the South Carolina liquor dispensary system and to advise the Scott Government on the ways and means of replacing the Saskatchewan bars with a system of government run dispensaries. As a member of the Committee of One Hundred and an active supporter of prohibition in Saskatchewan, this was not only an opportunity for Oliver to study the South Carolina experiment, but also to recommend the dispensaries as a stepping stone toward total prhibition. As it turned out, the Saskatchewan liquor dispensary system, as implemented in July 1915, was shortlived and proved indeed to be the foot in the door for total prohibition.

In retrospect, it should be asked whether Oliver actually believed that a government-run liquor dispensary system was practical and could be kept free of politics and graft. When Oliver was asked to be a Commissioner, his options were limited. He could have refused to be a part of the liquor dispensary system as a sign of protest against the system. Yet this was not Oliver's way. He believed that the only method of bringing reform was to campaign for it, not to opt out. Oliver's options within the commission were also limited. The commissioners were not asked to evaluate the merits of total prohibition but to examine the South Carolina dispensaries. Although believing that prohibition was preferable, Oliver was willing to recommend

a dispensary system, even with all of its potential evils, as being a better system than the open bar and one that, he believed, would lead to prohibition. Within eighteen months, Oliver was proven right when the dispensaries were closed. Oliver was aware of the political corruption in the South Carolina system and spared no pains to point them out in the report. Yet he believed that the fault lay not with the dispensary concept as such, but with its implementation. If the Scott government could be persuaded to resist the temptation to use the dispensaries for their own political gain and if the temperance forces in Saskatchewan would watch the dispensary system in order to keep it honest by means of public pressure, then according to Oliver, the dispensary system would work. Oliver sincerely believed that alcohol was sinful and harmful to society but once alcohol was eliminated, everyone would soon realize the merits of a dry Saskatchewan. Oliver's recommendations for liquor dispensaries and his ultimate goal of total prohibition were genuine and were based on his vision of a morally sound society in the West.

The First World War seemed to interrupt Oliver's educational and social activities in Saskatchewan, but proved to be merely a transfer in location and not in goals. As chaplain, Oliver not only followed the traditional role of preacher and counsellor, but as soon as he landed on the

European shores, was once more waging war on demon rum and its related social ills of sexual immorality and venereal disease. Oliver's battle against alcohol and moral laxity could not stop. Not only must these Canadian boys be protected for their own spiritual and moral well-being overseas, but Oliver well knew that these same men would help create or destroy the West of his dreams upon their return home.

Likewise, Oliver's interest and concern in education soon led to the establishment, first of reading rooms, and eventually to a series of libraries and the University of Vimy Ridge. For Oliver, idle minds were worse than idle hands, and he strove to provide Canadian soldiers with the options of higher thinking, a better Canadian citizenship and more elevated Christian living which he considered to be their birthright, regardless of their present circumstances--or perhaps the more because of them. The wartime university became even more vital upon the cessation of the hostilities as a major part of the demobilization and reconstruction process. The re-introduction of war weary soldiers back into Canadian civilian life was not a small task but again offered Oliver the opportunity to preach the gospel of Canadian and Christian citizenship.

Upon Oliver's return to Saskatchewan after the War, the immigration question surfaced again as another threat to Oliver's vision for the West. The immigration situation was not just a question of nationality but also involved language,

religion and attitudes toward alcohol.

> Among the English a considerable number could be found who did not drink; among the French, very few; among the Germans and Half-Breeds, absolutely none. The Canadians who had come from the Eastern provinces were more pronouncedly temperate. They were also the most successful settlers. Their aim was to make the Territories a second Ontario or a second Manitoba,--Christian, moral, temperate.[2]

Oliver's belief in and support of the Ontario fragment coming west to create a new society is clear in this passage. Oliver linked Christianity, morality and temperance. The new immigrant, in Oliver's standards, often violated all of these social and religious goals.

Religion, nationality and language were in one package for Oliver. The Roman Catholic Church was a force in the West competing with Protestants for new religious converts. The French Canadian Catholics were doubly threatening to Oliver because of their insistence on separate religious schools and the use of the French language--both of which were threats to Oliver's view of a united Canada. Oliver devoted his life to the public school, the use of English as a natural unifying force, the freedom of each denomination to use the last half hour of each day in the schools for religious education and the development of a Canadian consciousness in all citizens, particularly the new Canadians. Unity within the Canadian nation was a high

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2. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, p. 209.

priority for Oliver, and he feared the division of the West into virtually separate nation states, each with its own language and culture. However, Oliver did not wish to eliminate all aspects of immigrant cultures: each new Canadian could and should keep his mother tongue and the culture of his homeland, and maintain at least some religious tradition. In short, Oliver encouraged the development of a Canadian cultural mosaic, and allowed a certain degree of cultural pluralism in Western Canada.

In order for the church to achieve all of these ideals in Western Canada, Oliver promoted denominational cooperation and finally church union. As has been shown, Oliver became a pro-unionist in order to strengthen the church throughout Canada partially in response to a rising Canadian national consciousness, but more immediately as a response to the challenge from the frontier. Oliver's concerns regarding education, language, religion, immigration and prohibition, were all combined in his campaign for a united church. A united church effort was what was necessary, in Oliver's opinion, to accomplish that vision of the civilization that would succeed the last frontier.

It will have been obvious from the foregoing study that E. H. Oliver did not debate points of theology or scriptural interpretation in either the church union debate or in his written work or his speeches. Whatever he taught at college--and the records are slight--Oliver often gave

the impression that an explanation of his theology was not necessary since his life itself would reveal his theology. Perhaps his subject, church history, reflected that bias, for Oliver believed that the usefulness of his church should be measured more by its works more than by its beliefs--and he was not alone in holding to this position as J. W. Grant, Canada's leading church historian, has noted:

> Churchmen of the first decade of this century, interested more in the application than in the definition of the gospel, thought of the Church more readily as an instrument for the realization of the Kingdom than as in any sense itself a realization of it.[3]

This did not mean that Oliver lacked a theological basis but that its overt expression was subordinated to the concerns of a practical Christianity. Social service, for Oliver, was the sign of life dominated by the spirit of Christ:

> What is the primary consideration in the whole task of social service from the modern point of view? It is the spirit of the man who renders the service. And the spirit of Christian social service means that such a man will be dominated by the spirit of the Christ. The second consideration is that social service requires empirical study, a detailed study, in the light of that spirit, of the actual situation where the service is to be rendered. There has arisen among the ministers and members of our churches a social interest amounting to a passion. I believe that will bring new life to our church. But as faith without works is dead, so passion without knowledge is futile.[4]

Social service in Christ's Spirit was the basis of Oliver's

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3. J. Webster Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, (London: Butterworth Press, 1967), p. 34.

4. E. H. Oliver, The Social Achievements of the Christian Church, preface.

social passion--but the passion had to be based also on knowledge. This belief in the necessity of empirical knowledge was a recurring theme for Oliver; abstruse theologizing was not!

If Oliver stressed deeper church involvement in social concerns, then church union was a vehicle for even greater church involvement. Negatively, that was demonstrated when the three denominations seeking union discovered that only five meetings of the joint union committee were necessary for the formation of the Basis of Union.[5] However, Oliver also viewed church union as a combining of the elements within each denomination--a "mingling of three streams of tradition."

What then was Oliver's view of Presbyterianism and what factors led to the difference between Oliver and the anti-unionists. Little can be said of the Presbyterianism of his family upbringing. However, one of the key influences on Oliver's direction within the Presbyterian Church was his theological studies at Knox College, Toronto. This college was known for its liberal theology and under the direction of Professor George Paxton Young, based its theology on a Kantian-Hegelian idealism which was employed to bridge the gap between science and religion.[6] The liberal theology of

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5. J. Webster Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, p. 31.

6. H. H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 291.

Knox College can be seen in Oliver's liberal acceptance of the Darwinian theory.[7]

A second factor which influenced Oliver's Presbyterianism was the frontier. He lived in the West and preached in nearly every small church in Saskatchewan. He could see the need for a united effort by the churches, rather than competition. The challenge of the frontier outweighed any reluctance Oliver might have had over doctrinal differences with either the Methodists or Congregationalists. Oliver certainly considered himself a Presbyterian right up to union in June 1925, but he had rejected the conservative Calvinism that he saw in some of his colleagues who had joined the anti-union camp. The main point of disagreement between Oliver and the Calvinists was the value of faith versus works in the attainment of salvation. Oliver's Presbyterianism was based on evangelization of the national life and the promotion of social action. It was on these specific points that the gap widened between the unionists and anti-unionists.[8]

His early theological training together with the frontier society and the liberal progressive reform spirit in the West, combined to make Oliver a religious and social

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7. E. H. Oliver, Tracts for Difficult Times.

8. J. Webster Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, p. 54.

progressive and a strong supporter of church union. Yet church union did not signal the achievement of Oliver's western vision nor the end of his struggle to shape prairie life. By 1928, the social gospel movement and the reform movements generally were losing energy and support.[9] The end of the 1920s marked the decline of the social gospel and a brief hiatus before the beginning of a new Christian socialist movement.

It was within this time of transition in the reform movements and at the beginning of the depression that Oliver was chosen as the national leader of the United Church of Canada. Oliver's term as moderator was a time of challenge for him within the church and for his own social philosophy. The new challenges prompted Oliver to press the church harder toward higher spiritual goals, even while he called for a new cooperation and assistance between the East and West. Both came together in his appeal to the United Church to respond to the physical and psychological needs of Western Canadians. The drought and depression may well have clouded Oliver's material vision for the West but he did not give up in defeat. "What the Age calls for is not counsels of despair nor talk of depression, but words of comfort, challenge and reconstruction, and a reminder that 'Your Heavenly Father Knoweth.'"[10]

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9. Richard Allen, Social Passion, p. 347.

10. E. H. Oliver, Tracts for Difficult Times, p. V.

These times of hardship caused Oliver to seek guidance from the works of Walter Rauschenbusch, of which he had, no doubt, knowledge for some time. Rauschenbusch's Christian socialism suggested a more radical approach to these troubled times than Oliver had heretofore adopted but by 1932, Oliver himself, like many of his colleagues, called for changes in the economic system. His remarks on the subject, however, remained very general, but offered encouragement to those further left.

The preceeding chapters have examined E. H. Oliver as the historian, chaplain, educator, church unionist and moderator. But where does Oliver fit within the broad perspectives of the reform era? T. D. Regehr's periods of prairie historiography help describe Oliver somewhat.[11] Oliver's survey histories of the West and his articles on the institutionalization of the West conform to Regehr's first period of historiography. Oliver traced the development of the West and was proud of the expansion and development. Prior to the First World War, he viewed the potential for the West as being unlimited. Yet Oliver does not fit into Regehr's third category, in which many prairie historians interpreted the history of the Prairies during the 1930s with pessimism and discouragement. The depression dampened neither Oliver's enthusiasm nor drive. Oliver replaced

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11. T. D. Regehr, "Historiography of the Canadian Plains after 1870."

his material goals with intensified spiritual goals. If anything, the depression strengthened Oliver's drive for both reform and spiritual growth. Oliver's The Social Achievements of the Christian Church and Tracts for Difficult Times were not pessimistic nor filled with discouragement but were intended to show the past achievements of the church in order to spur the church onward in her confrontation with the depression decade.

Oliver's interpretation of prairie history, early in his career, place him within the metropolitan school of thought. He had traced the development of the West in terms of the coming of eastern institutions such as the missionaries, the railway, the police force and the British parliamentary system. Oliver believed that the early development of the West was being promoted by Eastern Canada. Yet the church union battle, like that of the farmers for an equitable national policy, was led by the frontier. It was the sparse population spread over a vast prairie, together with the influx of new Canadians and the threat from the Roman Catholic Church that forced the frontier toward cooperative agreements between denominations, local union churches and finally church union. The frontier environment had necessitated church union, and it was a portion of the Presbyterian Church, largely based in Eastern Canada which failed to respond to the frontier challenge, eventually splitting the Presbyterian Church. Oliver's interpretation of the

history of church union, written in 1930, falls within the frontier thesis and appears to move away from his earlier metropolitan approach he took in his contribution to the history of the West in Shortt and Doughty's volumes of 1914.

Aside from the historiographical interpretation of the West, Oliver himself was a product of the East and the religious and political climate of his home had a long lasting effect on his life.[12] He was part of the Ontario fragment which had come west and had transplanted many Ontario institutions and attitudes in the new western soil. Oliver noted that his theological college was patterned on Ontario lines and not suitable to the needs of some of the new Canadian students. He also noted that the Anglo-Saxons from Ontario were trying to style the new West along the pattern of Ontario.[13] It would appear that Oliver represented the 'fragment' of the Hartzian theory. He cherished and respected the Anglo-Protestant culture and the British style of responsible parliamentary government and encouraged the growth of such ideas and institutions in Western Canada. Yet Oliver departed from the Ontario fragment in three ways. According to J. E. Rea, the fragment stressed uniformity, conformity and the melting of cultures into an Anglo-Saxon

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12. E. H. Oliver, "The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities."

13. E. H. Oliver, The Liquor Traffic in the Prairie Provinces, p. 209.

mould.[14] While valuing this Anglo-Saxon ideal, Oliver saw the dangers and impossibilities of trying to force the many cultures, languages and religions into one rigid mould.[15] Instead Oliver stressed the English language, the public school and the Canadian institutions as being tools for moulding all the people in the West into a new Canadian society and culture which could be an improvement even on the Anglo-Saxon race. The good strains in each culture could be cultivated in order to produce a new strong mosaic.

Oliver was also critical of eastern economic policies which, in his opinion, favoured the eastern industrial interests at the expense of western agriculture. The tariff, exhorbitant interest rates and the high freight charges, all set by Eastern Canada, combined with low prices for agricultural produce, forced the western farmer to continually buy in a seller's market and sell in a buyer's market. Within four short years after arriving in the West, Oliver encouraged the farmers to cooperate and to unite in order to fight eastern economic dominance.

The reluctance of many Eastern Presbyterians to join the United Church proved to be a third point on which

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14. J. E. Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," Prairie Perspectives, edited by David P. Gagan, (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Limited, 1970), p. 51.

15. E. H. Oliver, "The Settlement in Saskatchewan to 1914," p. 240.

Oliver was critical of his eastern colleagues. Although the Hartzian theory is helpful in measuring Oliver's general philosophy and his motives for coming west, once settled in Saskatchewan, he became a westerner himself and on several points became critical of Ontario, his former home. Oliver had travelled west in order to shape and change it but the West, in turn, had its effect on Oliver. He wrote: "I am now a Westerner. I have learned to know the needs of the West fairly well."[16] Although he received offers to take more powerful and prestigious positions, he decided to devote his life to the Prairies. Regarding the offer to become president of Queen's University, he felt that:

> Men of ability and training and sympathy will gladly go to Queen's. But the workers in the West are very few and frequently not well trained. And being in the West I cannot desert it. I must stay by my Battalion until the end of the War and after that I must return to the prairies."[17]

He took pride in being just an earthy westerner. He understood the people and the country.

> Bald and monotonous the prairies can never be to him who has a heart to know their people, the sky, birds, flowers and waving wheat.[18]

"These are my neighbors, these prairie folk," he wrote, admiring the Prairie people for their courage and pioneering

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16. Oliver to J. K. MacDonald, August 16, 1916, Oliver Papers, SACA.

17. Ibid.

18. The New Outlook, August 10, 1932.

spirit. He described them as "gentlemen adventurers of the soil" and was proud to work with them.[19]

Oliver's contribution to the reform era in the West underlines in its own way the integral part the social gospel played in the progressive movement of the times.[20] Oliver shared the progressive concern for agricultural reform, an English-speaking public school, the abolition of the bar and the Canadianization of the new immigrants. Yet Oliver was more than an example of the secular evangelism that Morton has discerned in the progressive movement at large in the West.[21] Underlying all of Oliver's efforts in education, prohibition, agricultural reform, the language question and the overall policy direction of the church was a vision that the West, the last frontier, could be a society of moral righteousness. This ideal society would be based on the Protestant religion, English language and Canadian culture generally. But Oliver believed that God's will undergirded the entire society. Oliver's reforms were based on the gospel and the belief that man, through the church, through the state and through cooperative social and economic institutions could create this new society.

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19. Ibid.

20. Richard Allen, Social Passion, p. 347.

21. W. L. Morton, "Direct Legislation and the Origins of the Progressive Movement," p. 279.

Even though Oliver did not debate theology, his theological beliefs were part of his whole life philosophy and his vision of a new society. The social gospel movement had at least three theological bases: pietism, rationalism and idealism.[22] Pietism, a movement particularly in Germany, encouraged a revitalization of Protestantism by departing from rigid orthodoxy and emphasizing prayer, Bible study and the belief of universal priesthood. The social gospel movement, basing itself on pietism, called for service within the church. Edmund H. Oliver's beliefs on service within the church have been noted as being typical of this segment of the social gospel movement.[23]

The social gospel also based itself on rationalism whereby Christian beliefs had to be justified by reason. Although the extreme rationalist would rule out faith, Oliver, like his colleague, Robert A. Falconer, believed that there was a role for both reason and faith. As has been shown, Oliver was not afraid to face Darwin's theory or science and to apply reason to the material world. However, Oliver knew that faith, coupled with empirical study, was vital to his Christianity.

Idealism was the third base for the social gospel

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22. Benjamin G. Smillie, "The Social Gospel in Canada: A Theological Critique," The Social Gospel in Canada, edited by Richard Allen, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 320.

23. Ibid., p. 324.

movement which encouraged the development of a moral self-consciousness and stressed equality and brotherhood. Oliver's solutions to the "immigrant menace" were based on the ideals of brotherhood and cooperation. His aim to convert the helped into helpers and his call for all nationalities in the West to be brothers and to live together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding are examples of Oliver's ideal for a universal priesthood.

Oliver's theology was thus based on pietism, rationalism and idealism. His studies in Halle, Germany in 1910-'11, would have exposed him to the pietistic school of Protestant thought and, as has been shown, Oliver's theological training at Knox College steeped him in both rationalism and idealism.

Smillie noted that one major weakness in the social gospel movement was that some social gospellers tended to leave the church becoming humanists without the continual inspiration of God.[24] Although Oliver was a liberal progressive social gospeller, he never lost sight of his church or his God. Even during 1919 when he was frustrated with the lack of leadership in the church or during the depression, when he might have been tempted to foresake his God for allowing such a disaster to occur, Oliver continued to base his life on God and through the church, devoted his

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24. _Ibid._, p. 337.

life to creating a new morally righteous society which would be part of His Kingdom.

Rather than stressing faith or works as a means to salvation, as many Calvinists did, Oliver stressed social service as part of his faith--a faith that was "dominated by the spirit of Christ." Oliver did not serve society for what he would receive in return. Service was part of his faith. Oliver's social service though, was not to be based solely on blind faith, but on empirical knowledge arrived at through study. By using this knowledge, faith and service through the church, state and school, Oliver believed that a society could be achieved on the new frontier, which retained something of virgin innocence of the unbroken land itself. Although Oliver did not often debate the scriptures or abstract theology, his actions throughout his life reveal a deep theological basis underlying his religious and social goals. An ethical faith expressed in service, an emphasis on empirical study and a preoccupation with a social ideal all mark him as a child of the liberal theology of his day.

It has been shown that Oliver was indeed part of the social gospel progressive reform movement, but was he a conservative, progressive, or radical social gospeller?[25] The conservative wing followed "traditional evangelicalism,

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25. Richard Allen, Social Passion, p. 17.

emphasizing personal-ethical issues, tending to identify sin with individual acts, and taking as their social strategy legislative reform of the environment."[26] Oliver clearly shared some of this outlook, as his concern for evangelism and his support of prohibition shows. Defeat of prohibition was a major setback to the conservative wing of the social gospel.[27] Oliver worked for prohibition and encouraged the prohibition forces to continue their fight to preserve a dry province. Yet when the liquor stores were reopened, Dr. Oliver continued to press for social reform in other areas. The defeat of prohibition was a disappointment to Dr. Oliver but it did not end his drive for further social regeneration. Thus Oliver does not fit completely within the conservative position, a conclusion underscored by his acceptance of liberal theology and his openness to the Darwinian theory.

On the other extreme, the radical social gospellers believed that there could be no personal salvation without social salvation.[28] The radicals, such as Woodsworth, because of their frustration with the lack of social reform within the church frequently withdrew from the church. Between these two extremes was a moderate or broad centre party of progressives and it is in this category that Oliver

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26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., pp. 282 and 283.

28. Ibid., p. 17.

can be classed. It has been noted that Oliver's frustration with the church's lack of educational policy and leadership by 1919 nearly led to Oliver's withdrawl from the church, though this was confined to letters to Rita and formed no part of his public posture as it did with the more radical of the social gospel. Yet he chose to stay within the church and to work for reform from that base.

Viewing Oliver's life as a whole, and taking into account his theological and social philosophy, he was a liberal progressive within the social gospel movement. This description must be qualified though by saying that the three groupings within the social gospel, as outlined above, are intended to be general and are meant to separate into sections only and not to confine any individual into a narrow standard course of action. Oliver's actions throughout his life were determined by his own theology and by external circumstances. The depression, for example, was a major influence on Oliver's economic philosophy. The collapse of the economic system based on individual profit and *laissez-faire* was enough to convince Oliver that it needed to be reformed. There is no evidence to prove that Oliver wanted abolition of the capitalist system as was sought by Rev. John Line and others, but Oliver's radio broadcast and his interest in Rauschenbusch's Christian socialism prove that he did see the need for economic reform.[29]

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29. *The New Outlook*, January 20, 1932, and E. H. Oliver, *Tracts for Difficult Times*, p. 209.

The War, the church union battle and the depression may have appeared to be obstacles for Oliver in his attempt to achieve his vision for the West. However, each obstacle proved to be a new challenge which spurred Oliver onward toward the creation of a morally sound society. It is debatable whether Oliver ever expected to achieve the ideal goals that he had set for himself and Western Canada. Yet he devoted his life toward those goals with the energy and determination of ten men. Even though the ideal had not been reached when he died, Oliver knew that he had done his best and if there had been even a small measure of change toward that new society, then he was satisfied. Within days before he died, he recited a poem to some young campers at Camp MacKay which aptly described his philosophy of life and death:

> If this bit of prairies be
> Worthier because of me,
> Stronger for the strength I bring,
> Sweeter for the songs I sing,
> Purer for the path I tread,
> Lighter for the light I shed,
> Richer for the gifts I give,
> Happier because I live,
> Nobler for the death I die,
> Not in vain have I been I.

E. H. Oliver 1882-1935.

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