Western Canadian Populism:
Reflections on the Turner Thesis and Canada

by

Philip J. Kachmar

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Abstract

Frederick Jackson Turner's influential Frontier Thesis has been widely applied in the United States to explain the development of America's democratic and individualistic political culture. Despite Canada's North American location, colonial heritage, and sprawling geography, the Frontier Thesis failed to take root in the collective imagination of early Canadians. However, as the economic influence of the Canadian west has shifted, so too has the relevance of Turner's thesis for Canada.

This paper asserts that political developments in 19th, 20th, and 21st century western Canada can be explained, at least in part, through an application of the Frontier Thesis. I begin by comparing Turner's argument to the works of Harold Innis and J.M.S. Careless to illustrate why the frontier had a greater effect on 19th century America than 19th century Canada. The results of this comparison illustrate the need for a reconsideration of the frontier's relevance in the Canadian west. I argue that, although Canada's early western political culture was dominated by European influences, historical and geographical factors ultimately facilitated the emergence of western Canadian populism.

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Turner, the Frontier, and Canada: An Introduction

Frederick Jackson Turner's influential Frontier Thesis provides a valuable structural framework for understanding the development of American society. He argued that the vast and undeveloped North American continent allowed for citizens of the United States to shirk notions of European hierarchy in exchange for rugged individualism and democracy (Turner, "Frontier,"). While Turner's thesis surely contains some elements of truth, his arguments do raise questions regarding the extent to which the frontier influenced the development of Canadian society. Since Canada shares the same geographical vastness and rugged topography as the United States, assuming Turner's thesis contains at least a kernel of truth, the frontier experience must have had some influence on the development of Canada.

In this paper, I will examine the extent to which the frontier shaped Canada's societal evolution. In order to accomplish this task, I will begin by examining Donald Creighton and Harold Innis's Laurentian Thesis, as well as J.M.S. Careless's Metropolitan-Hinterland Thesis. Both of these theses emphasize the powerful influence of European-dominated, central Canada on the evolution of the Canadian west. By contrasting these theories with the Turner thesis, I intend to illustrate the benefits and limitations of each approach. My argument will center on the way in which strong cultural influences coupled with geographical separation and the passage of time have shaped Canada's North American character and strong regional identities. Because Canadian westward expansion occurred with a much higher degree of British influence than on the American frontier, an application of the Turner thesis to Western Canada must take into account these divergent historical circumstances. Therefore, I will

emphasize the idea that physical separation from established social institutions serves as the true catalyst of political and cultural innovation on the frontier. In order to illustrate the effects of the interplay between these factors, I will conclude by examining historical and contemporary examples of the populist evolution of the Canadian frontier.

The St. Lawrence, Defensive Expansionism, and the Canadian Hinterlands

In order to illustrate the similarities and differences between the development of the frontier in Canada and the United States, it is essential to discuss the competing theories that purport to describe these phenomena. Harold Innis's seminal work, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, examines the impact of staple trade on Canada's economic and political development. Because of the popularity of beaver hats among wealthy Europeans, he argues, a unique system of trade developed in the areas surrounding the St. Lawrence River. European colonists exported beaver pelts to Europe in exchange for a variety of manufactured goods, which were unavailable in North America. The colonists then traded tools relevant to the fur trade to aboriginals in exchange for beaver pelts. While these sorts of trade relations were not unprecedented in North America, they are unique in that they fostered a close relationship between European elites and North American colonists (Innis, *Fur Trade*, 385). Because Canadians became reliant upon industrialized Europe to import manufactured goods, their societal development was heavily influenced by European norms. This economic system also seems to partially explain Toryism's powerful influence on early Canadian politics. Since Canada was heavily reliant on British exportation of manufactured goods, enacting public policy compatible with these interests was of the utmost importance.

Innis's account of Canadian development significantly contrasts with Turner's arguments regarding the American frontier. Turner asserted that westward expansion facilitated a fundamental break from old-world traditions. He argued that as successive generations moved west, they replaced European social norms with American values. Turner asserts that these values created a disconnect between the European values of the

East Coast and the challenges of life on the frontier (Turner, *The Frontier*). Instead of the subordination described by Innis, the American West, according to Turner, experienced greater freedom and autonomy. He asserted that, if a frontiersman felt constricted and dominated by the practices of his region, he would simply move further to the West (Ibid, 9-10). This radical sort of freedom does seem to be a powerful catalyst for the development of new traditions to cope with dynamic realities. It also explains the development of Jacksonian, populist democracy inside the United States. Because moving further West could diffuse power and influence concentrated on the Eastern seaboard, individuals had greater freedom to create institutions better suited to their environments.

Both Turner and Innis's theories are certainly of descriptive value for the United States and Canada, respectively. They are also valuable in that they illuminate the variables the have created differences between the two countries. Geographical and climatologic realities seem to underlie the contrast between the economic and political development of Canada and the United States. While the frontier of the United States boasted vast swaths of arable land, the Canadian frontier was less suited for agricultural development. Currently, 18.01% of land in the United States is arable. This sharply contrasts with Canada, where only 4.57% of land is suitable for farming (CIA World Factbook). Although these statistics do not provide quantifiable insight into the realities of agriculture in the 18th and 19th century, they do illustrate the potential land use of settlers during the time period. What agriculture was to the United States, the fur and timber trade was to Canada. While beaver pelts and timber were plentiful, they were not valuable in and of themselves. Instead, they required a system of trade with Europe to

import manufactured goods in exchange for staples (Innis, *Fur Trade*, 386). In contrast,

the American pioneer required no such ties to Europe or even the East Coast for

subsistence farming. Additionally, the high percentage of arable land in the United States

fueled further westward expansion. As Turner describes:

> Year by year the farmers who lived on soil whose returns were diminished by
> unrotated crops were offered the virgin soil of the frontier at nominal prices. Their
> growing families demanded more lands, and these were dear. The competition of
> the unexhausted, cheap, and easily tilled prairie lands compelled the farmer either
> to go west and continue the exhaustion of the soil on a new frontier, or to adopt
> intensive culture (Turner, *The Frontier*, 11).

While, according to Turner, the dissatisfied farmer had freedom to escape societal

impositions, the Canadian trader was more reliant upon the European market. This

reliance made it far more difficult for a Canadian pioneer to completely break with

British and French culture.

Besides market-based factors, it is also essential to note that communication

played a significant role in differentiating the development of Canada and the United

States. Since the St. Lawrence River connected Lake Ontario, Montreal, Quebec City,

Ottawa, and Toronto to the Atlantic, central Canada had clear shipping lanes and lines of

communication to Europe. Additionally, a vast network of smaller rivers connected these

major cities to Canadian metropolises and, as a result, European cities. As Donald

Creighton argued, the St. Lawrence River provided early Canada with a centralized

means of communication and had powerful influence over the development of Canada's

national character (Creighton, *Commercial Empire*). While economics provided the

incentive for close ties with Europe, communication with London and Paris influenced

the development of society. This is not to say that a fur trapper in Northern Quebec was

a mirror image of a London aristocrat. Instead, he was informed of the European affairs

that affected his subsistence. As a result, even in the Canadian hinterlands, the settlers had a line of communication with Europe.

While major cities in the United States eventually connected with the American frontier through railways and channels, the development of infrastructure took time. Settlers ventured westward into the United States before technology could connect them with the East. As a result, the influence of the Eastern seaboard and Europe was initially muted by the geographic realities of the North American continent. While it is tempting to assume that the advent of the railway and communication with major cities would diminish potential for societal change on the frontier, Turner argues that this was not the case. He asserts, "As successive terminal moraines result from successive glaciations, so each frontier leaves its traces behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the region still partakes of the frontier characteristics" (Turner, *The Frontier,* 2). This is to say that the break from civilization on the American frontier left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of the early settlers.

When comparing the experiences of Canadian and American settlers, it is clear that geography and time, again, played an essential role in their divergence. While the St. Lawrence provided early Canadians with a direct and instantaneous link to Europe, the United States was forced to construct a line of communication. Because building railways and canals was a time intensive process, settlers advanced westward more rapidly than technology could. This severed, albeit temporarily, lines of communication between the developed East and the frontier. Canada had no such problem. The St. Lawrence River and its tributaries provided an instant link between the frontier and developed cities. This connection preserved at least some of the European habits and

characteristics of the Canadian settlers. Whereas, in the United States, a severed line of communication allowed for a more decisive break from European habits among American frontiersmen.

More broadly, differences between the United States and Canada can be explained through Careless's discussion of the relationship between metropolitan areas and their hinterlands. For Careless, metropolitan areas exercise varying degrees of influence over less developed regions (Carless, *Careless at Work*). Comparatively, Canada had much stronger control over its peripheral regions then the United States.

In Canada, the investments of European fur companies in Montreal and other cities concentrated substantial wealth in these metropolitan areas. Subsequently, this economic power afforded large cities great influence in the development of rural Canada (Ibid, 118). The power of urban Canada over peripheral areas was not limited to economic influence, however. This influence also shaped Canada's early political character. Because foreign investments and business interests reigned supreme, Canada developed "its distinctive, conservative characteristics" (Cook, *The Maple Leaf*, 171). Wealthy Quebecois and Ontarian urbanites used their economic power to tailor early Canadian public policy to business interests. Because these interests were directly related to the exportation of fur and timber to Britain and France, Europe maintained substantial influence in the region. Additionally, the interests of even wealthier Londoners and Parisians trumped their Canadian bourgeois counterparts. This further solidified Europe's significant power over Canada. Metropolitan power in European and Canadian cities also mitigated the power and influence of democracy in Canadian society (Careless, *Careless at Work*, 119). Well-off Canadians and Europeans, quite simply, did not want

their lucrative mercantilism to be subject to the whims of the lower class. This is not to say that democracy never took hold in Canada. Instead, its growth was retarded because of the wealth and power concentrated in major eastern cities.

While, in the United States, metropolitan areas did possess influence over peripheral regions, the concentration of power in these urban centers was substantially less than in Canada. Careless attributes the difference to the greater number of powerful and wealthy cities in the United States. Because of varied and competing interests among the cities, metropolitan power was more diffuse than in Canada (Ibid, 121). The influence of more traditional, English cities like Boston were muted by the interests of other cities including New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. While these cities exercised a degree of control over their peripheries, their interests were ultimately subordinated to New York (Ibid, 122). If New York was a more traditional city, then the American development on the frontier might have mirrored Canada's. However, as Turner asserts, New York represented a "Middle Region" (Turner, *The Frontier*, 14). Because of New York's Dutch heritage, the city was more culturally diverse than Montreal. Immigration and New York's location on the mouth of the Hudson River into the Atlantic allowed for the development of a more varied society. The diversity of New York, coupled with the diffusion of power among other cities in the United States, minimized metropolitan influence on the American frontier. These factors contributed to the rise of democracy and populism in the American West. This "antipathy to control" allowed for the development of new political customs in the frontier (Ibid, 15). This new sort of politics favored individualism over collectivism and liberty over strong state-control. These values significantly contrast with the conservative political culture of early Canada.

This is not to say that the Canadian experience did not bring about some elements of populist democracy. The emergence of the Clear Grits in southwestern Ontario illustrates that individuals outside of dominant metropolitan areas desired an increased role in political discourse. However, the graduate integration of the party into Canada's established political structure indicates that Canadian business interests trumped populist frustrations. Frank Underhill attributed the emergence of the Clear Grits to dissatisfaction with political domination by European and Canadian elites as a result of their experience on the frontier (Underhill, "Upper Canadian Radical Opinion," 47). This new political party was ideologically similar to Jacksonian democracy in the United States in its emphasis on universal male suffrage and skepticism towards the traditions of hierarchical society. However, this sort of agrarian populism was quickly dominated by Toronto elites. Association with George Brown's British liberalism rapidly diminished the party's origins on the frontier (Underhill, "Liberal Tradition in Canada"). While the emergence of the Clear Grits illustrates that experience on the frontier shaped Canadian political outlooks, the party's quick decline indicates that elites in Canada wielded more metropolitan power than the United States.

The political contrast between early Canada and the United States is also exhibited in the role that government played in westward expansion. While American westward progress was largely fueled by individual ambition, Canada's advance to the Pacific was driven by governmental policy.

The 1803 Louisiana Purchase may seem to indicate that the United States government directly controlled the settlement of the West. However, Turner argues that this territorial expansion was rooted in "frontier needs and demands" (Turner, *The*

Frontier, 13). This is to say that populist desires for more land encouraged Thomas

Jefferson to greatly expand United States territory. After the purchase, the more

traditional Federalists did attempt to control the distribution of land. However, their

efforts to gradually sell the land as a source of revenue were, ultimately, futile. Western

land was either sold to settlers for staggeringly low prices or given to the first pioneers

who reached it (Ibid, 13). The possibility of inexpensive or free land provided a powerful

incentive for Americans to move west. As previously discussed, individual pioneers

often settled land before the government established a meaningful presence in the

territory. While this sort of territorial expansion was unquestionably dangerous for the

settlers involved, it does seem to indicate the sort of rugged individualism that Turner

asserts is the hallmark of the frontier. Additionally, elites attempted to marginalize the

political voice of their state's westernmost regions by gerrymandering districts to

minimize the clout of frontiersmen (Ibid, 17). These attempts ultimately failed as the

westward expansion of the United States continued.

   However, the American West was not completely devoid of governmental

involvement. Army posts were established to protect the settlers from Native American

attacks. These locations provided stability and increased the incentive for further

westward expansion (Ibid, 8).   Additionally, the Pacific Railways Act authorized the

construction of a transcontinental railway line. The construction of the railroad eased

communication between the East and West. It also facilitated increased industrialization

by enabling manufactured goods to be shipped across the continent.

   Perhaps the most powerful traditional influence on the American west came not

from government, but from religion. Missionaries from all faiths vied to establish

religious hegemony across the new territories (Ibid, 18). While no denomination became completely dominant on the frontier, western settlers did tend to maintain their religious convictions. Although faith remained an important element of the pioneer experience, modes of religious expression shifted in both Canada and the United States to match frontier demands. Much like the ad-hoc governmental institutions that emerged in the western United States, new religious sects appeared and evolved based on rapidly shifting social circumstances. S.D. Clark describes this change in Canada arguing that, "the phenomenal spread of religious sects in Saskatchewan and Alberta after 1930 was a manifestation of a growing disillusionment on the part of the population with the sort of rationalist appeal which had been made by political parties and farmer organizations" (Clark, *Church and Sect*, 432). This is to say that established wisdom concerning matters of both government and religious faith was of little relevance to the day-to-day lives of frontier settlers. Instead of altering their lives to suit the demands of established religions or political institutions, settlers in Canada and the United States altered these established social entities to suit their needs. This phenomenon is clearly illustrated in the prevalence of new religious sects including Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses in the Canadian and American west. On the frontier, religion had a certain malleability. Theological decisions tended to be handled at the grassroots level and backlash against hierarchical control of religious institutions by privileged social interests was frequent (Ibid, 433). However, with regards to political institutions, established organizations initially played a much more significant role in Canada than in the United States.

The aggressive expansion of the United States to the Pacific coupled with the rhetoric of "Manifest Destiny" to drive Canada's governmentally controlled westward expansion. This move was directly facilitated by a policy of "defensive expansionism" to counter the influence and territorial encroachments of the United States (Aitken, "Government and Business," 7). Large corporations, with the financial backing of the Canadian government, were the primary agents responsible for settling the west. While governmental activism in favor of important companies began in the frontiers of Ontario and Quebec, similar policies continued as Canada moved to the Pacific. The policy of government-directed, defensive expansionism is clearly indicated in the politics surrounding the construction of Canada's transcontinental railway. British interests and the Canadian government advocated for the railway to be located much further to the north than the private sector desired. These concerns were rooted in lingering concerns regarding the territorial expansion of the United States. The British government was particularly wary of the potential for American occupation because of the actions of the United States during the War of 1812 (Ibid, 13). While private railroad companies desired to build a line that would connect Winnipeg with Chicago, the Canadian government believed that this connection would usurp Canadian authority in the Northwest. Because of the importance of government subsidies in the construction of an infrastructure project of this magnitude, the efforts of the Canadian government were, ultimately successful. However, these policies delayed the construction of the railway and hindered the projects economic benefits (Ibid, 15). While the Canadian governments role in railway construction did not directly curtail the freedom of individuals to move west, it does effectively illustrate the policy of defensive expansionism. This policy is

also indicated in British Naval presence on the British Columbia coastline. Because of concerns that the United States would take control of the region, the British Royal Navy maintained a continued presence in the region (Sharp, "Three Frontiers," 374). The presence of powerful Brits in the most geographically isolated Canadian territory certainly reinforced traditional European values. The presence of tradition on the edge of Canada undoubtedly colored the Canadian frontier experience.

However, the construction of a railway line was essential in allowing a large number of Canadians to move west because of geographic factors. The gradual migration of individuals across the terrain experienced in the United States was impossible in Canada because of the Pre-Cambrian Shield. This vast stretch of rocky, infertile soil in Western Ontario made large-scale, agrarian resettlement very difficult (Ibid, 371). Because the railroad was necessary for passage into the Canadian west, the frontier experience in Canada was significantly altered. Canadian pioneers maintained a greater connection with the traditional political institutions of Eastern Canada because they did not experience the frontier to the same extent as their neighbors to the south (Ibid, 371). The comparatively civilized nature of Canadian frontier expansion is also indicated in Canada's treatment of its aboriginal population. In contrast to the United States, Canadian Mounted Police avoided direct conflict with the native population of western regions. Because Canadian authorities arrived before settlers did, violent clashes were minimalized (Ibid, 373). While this policy certainty seems more reasonable than the vigilantism that characterized the American west, the lack of conflict also resulted in a more civilized frontier experience. In turn, this created a Canadian frontier with greater loyalty to established societal traditions.

While the differences between the experiences of Canadians and Americans on the frontier are substantial, these contrasts do illuminate the sorts of factors that color the frontier experience. The geography of the United States allowed for a more rapid and independent progression across the continent. However, in Canada, geographic factors reinforced the traditions of the Laurentian system and inhibited free movement towards the west. In the United States, the passage of time did, eventually, result in a more civilized west, but it also facilitated the emergence of new political traditions in early settlers. Whereas, in Canada, time spent in the metropolitan east reinforced connections with Europe. However, time also enabled eventual expansion into the Canadian west and a partial dissipation of British authority. On the American frontier, human agency created new political institutions and ideals that affected the overarching political culture of the United States. Similarly, powerful economic agents and governmental authority inhibited the growth of new political traditions, yet still influenced the collective consciousness of Canadians. While the relevance of the early historiography of Turner and Innis is still of great relevance, the differences between American and Canadian development point to the need for a multi-faceted understanding of the early political evolution of both countries. In spite of the initial differences in the patterns and means of settler colonialism in Canada and the United States, backlash against corporate control over Canada's staple trade facilitated the emergence of substantial similarities between the Canadian and American west.

Political Cultures Across Borders

From the latter half of the 19th century through contemporary times both Canada and the United States share a history of populist politics. Populism is a strand of political action that largely defies classification in traditional terms. This is to say that populism lacks an inherent predisposition to rightest or leftist political claims. Instead, populism, at least purportedly, represents the political claims of ordinary citizens. This political doctrine always relies on the perception of favoritism extended by the government to certain interests. Populism frequently emerges out of economic discrepancies between varying classes in society. Despite divergent settlement patterns, both the American and Canadian pioneers had some level of resentment towards governmental policies. Populists on both sides of the 49th Parallel alleged that national policies privileged eastern business interests at the expense of western farmers and traders. While the political implications of these contentions vary based on region and historical time-period, populist frustrations may qualify as an overarching theme in western North America. Turner's account of the emergence of populism in the United States was of significant social and political influence. However, in Canada, accounts of populism are much more fragmented. This divergence closely corresponds with the end of the British Empire and the rise of American dominance. Because of the tremendous influence that Britain exercised over Canada during the 19th century, the emergence of Turnerian populism was tempered. However, as British influence declined and American power increased, Canada became increasingly willing to experiment with new forms of governance along its frontier.

One of the earliest manifestations of populism in Canada emerged in the form of the Clear Grit Party in Upper Canada, Canada West, and, ultimately, western Ontario. The party emerged in opposition to the Baldwin-Lafontaine administration and advocated for the secularization of the Clergy Reserves, the extension of franchise to all males, and an increase in the power and scope of democratic institutions (Wallace, *Canada,* 80). The leadership of George Brown also expanded the influence of the Clear Grits as they argued for increased political representation for Upper Canada based on their larger population (Waite, *Confederation*, 98). The struggles of the Clear Grits clearly align with the anti-establishment tendency of populism. Opposition towards state subsidization of land for the support of Anglican clergy conforms to the idea that populists take action against the state's "favored" religious interests. Additionally, expansion of suffrage and democratic institutions places more political power in the hands of ordinary citizens, reducing the influence of aristocrats and wealthy merchants.

The populist flavor in what is today's Western Ontario spread to Manitoba in the late 19th century in the form of protests against the role of Catholic clergy. The 1888 Jesuit Estate Act introduced granted the Pope the right to arbitrate certain disputed claims regarding the use of payments to the Jesuits for land ceded to the British Crown (Morton, *Manitoba,* 241). This legislation provided a catalyst for protest against alleged Catholic encroachment into Canadian governance among Orangemen in Manitoba and Ontario. While anti-Catholic vitriol underpinned popular support for the protest, government officials utilized less incendiary rhetoric until politician Dalton McCarthy directed fierce criticism at the Catholic Church (Ibid, 242-4). Although McCarthy's efforts were devoted to the laudable goal of a secular public school system based on the American

system, the creation of these schools would not have been possible without populism

(Ibid, 247). Protestant political elites utilized the anti-Catholic sentiments of a significant

segment of the population to accomplish a distinct political goal.

The role that Orangemen and Anglicanism played in Manitoba politics not only

indicates an early, anti-clerical populism, but also illustrates the early influence of

Ontario on Manitoba politics. Manitoba's decision in the late 19th century to reject

secession from Canada and American annexation as well as their adoption of a flag

bearing the Union Jack illustrate their early allegiance to British Canada (Wiseman, *In*

Search, 218). These practical and symbolic decisions solidified Manitoba's allegiance to

Canada and correspond with the fact that the province's initial colonists migrated from

Ontario. Ontario-born political leaders were of particular importance in shaping early

Manitoban political culture. Rodmond Roblin's Conservatives were the only political

party in western Canada to lobby against populist political measures including the

initiative, referendum and recall, arguing that such political tools were insufficiently

British (Ibid, 219). While Tory influence would eventually have to coexist with labor-

socialism because of an influx of European immigrants, the early prevalence of British

conservatism in Manitoba is still substantial. For Turner, geographic separation played a

vital role in facilitating the emergence of new, populist institutions. Therefore, it is not

surprising that Ontarian Toryism and Liberalism would have significant influence over

the province's neighbor to the west.

While geography and demographics tempered populism in Manitoba, it did not

entirely extinguish this political phenomenon. The provinces close ties with British

tradition actually bestowed additional credibility on the emergence of the Social Gospel

movement in the early 20th century. J.S. Woodsworth's Methodist upbringing and experience with Winnipeg's urban poor led him to advocate for a Christian socialism. Woodsworth was not alone in his frustration with the inapplicability of established church dogma to new agrarian and industrial surroundings. Some individuals turned away from religion entirely, turning to "farmers organizations or the Labor movement for a cause to serve" (Morton, *Manitoba*, 321). Woodsworth and other Social Gospel advocates fused Christian scripture with popular frustration to advocate for enhanced working conditions, urban reform, and improved wages (Wiseman, *In Search*, 232). By integrating Methodism with the needs of a new society, Woodsworth was highly successful in mobilizing popular support for his cause. The Social Gospel movement would eventually influence the Winnipeg General Strike and the formation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF).

Populist fervor in Manitoba was not limited to disputes over religion. This political sentiment also emerged in response to economic issues. The Manitoba Grain Grower's Association (MGGA), alongside other agricultural groups in western Canada, became increasingly radical in the early 20th century. The group became "more and more antagonistic to the protective tariff, and more distrustful of the political parties" (Morton, *Manitoba*, 361). Reactionary sentiments against taxation and skepticism towards established political parties are, undoubtedly, manifestations of populist frustration. To mirror the growing radicalism among rank and file members the MGGA renamed itself the United Farmers of Manitoba (Ibid, 362). The shift in name reflects the leftist *zeitgeist* that was prevalent worldwide following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. The increased anti-establishment fervor among Manitoban farmers was rooted in frustration

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with subordination of agricultural interests to the attentions of industrial development. Nelson Wiseman describes the emergence of the United Farmers in Manitoba, Ontario, and Alberta as a "reflexive lashing out at the intractable evolution from rural to urban society" (Wiseman, *In Search*, 125). While the frustrations of UFM certainly were clearly directed towards the evolution of society, their angst was ultimately rooted in geographic divergence. Life on a Manitoba farm was clearly different from life in a Toronto factory or a Montreal office.

Leftist development in Manitoba was not only isolated to the agricultural community. These sentiments were also prevalent among the industrial proletariat of Winnipeg. Stoked by the emergence of the One Big Union movement, the Canadian equivalent of the International Workers of the World in the United States, organized labor became increasingly aggressive in Winnipeg and other western Canadian cities (Ibid, 363). The frustrations of Winnipeg laborers climaxed with the General Strike of 1919. During the strike, nearly all workers in the prairie city engaged in collective action to advocate for increased wages, improved working conditions, and a reconsideration of the economic system (Ibid, 365). While W.L. Morton's Toryism may cloud his account of the strike, the emergence job action on this scale still indicates the presence of left-wing populism in Winnipeg. The General Strike points back to Turner's emphasis on new social realities requiring new sorts of political institutions. During the strike, D.C. Masters argues that the strike committee essentially, "was assuming functions which tended to make it the *ad hoc* government of Winnipeg" (Masters, *General Strike*, 52). By assuming the functions of the government, the Winnipeg strikers, albeit briefly, worked as a new governing institution, which was grounded in the realities of the General Strike.

Instead of a purely geographic frontier, industrial Winnipeg may have represented a technological frontier. Mechanical advancement paved the way for industrial sweatshops with brutal working conditions. Subsequently, the industrial laborer needed to adapt to his new working environment, forming new political institutions and ideologies to better serve his or her needs. Although it is essential to note that the discursive foundations of the workers' movement in Winnipeg developed out of the labor-radicalism of the British Social Democratic Federation, the means by which the One Big Union and General Strikers operated and consolidated support was fundamentally populist (Ibid, 25-8). Solutions proposed by the strike's leaders were influenced by British labor, but firmly grounded in the realities of early 20th century Winnipeg.

However, geography cannot be entirely separated from the emergence of left-wing populism in Winnipeg and other western Canadian cities. Spatial separation from more established metropolitan areas made it much easier for the emerging cities of the Canadian west to experiment with new conceptions of governance. Moreover, the sheer vastness of the region's topography made provinces like Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta highly suitable for the production of grain. Much like in Canada's neighbor to the south, these farmers required and demanded different sorts of political parties and institutions to represent their interests. Also similarly to the United States, western agriculturalists and urbanites were skeptical and resentful towards policies that they perceived to favor established, eastern cities like Montreal and Toronto. As a result, political groups including the Progressive Party and the UFM emerged out of populist resentment and advocated policies that better represented agricultural and labor interests. Manitoba provides a very clear example of both Careless's Metropolitan-Hinterlands

argument and Turner's emphasis on the influence of frontier realities on means and modes of governance and democracy.

Further to the west in Saskatchewan and Alberta, frontier populism has also tangibly influenced each province's political culture. Despite both province's agricultural origins and similar topography, Alberta and Saskatchewan have markedly divergent political histories. Following their creation in 1905, the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association (SGGA) exercised significant influence over the governments of their respective provinces. While both parties have similar agrarian origins, a variety of factors would thrust Saskatchewan and Alberta down markedly different economic, social, and political paths. Both provinces were settled and developed under the auspices of Canada's national policy of defensive expansionism in order to ward of the looming threat of American annexation. Obviously, early western settlers did not organically generate this policy. Instead, Ottawa had substantial control over the settlement and development over initial policies in Saskatchewan and Alberta (Richards, *Prairie Capitalism*, 15). Again, the external imposition of power on early settlers made it natural for populism to emerge out of frustration towards the region's subordination as a hinterland.

While the UFA and the SGGA were both formed to represent the interests of western farmers, each political party had significant influence on the development of their respective province. The SGGA had an exceptionally close relationship with the province's Liberals, while the UFA elected to maintain significant separation from Alberta's Liberal party apparatus (Bell, "Prairie Politics," 203). This divergence can be explained by the demographics of each province. While Saskatchewan experienced an

influx of European-born immigrants in the early 20th century, Alberta was flooded with immigrants from the western United States. The arrival of Americans in Alberta was so significant that in 1911 22% of Alberta's total population came from the United States (Wiseman, "American Imprint," 4). While Europeans in Saskatchewan came from an industrial background, Americans in Alberta were mostly individualistic farmers. Therefore, it is not surprising that American-born UFA members were more hesitant to fuse with the Liberal party and jeopardize their political autonomy than their SGGA counterparts.

The effects of this attitudinal difference are illustrated by the emergence of the UFA as a dominant, independent political party in 1921. Based on the successes of the North Dakotan Non-Partisan League, the UFA sought to directly represent the interest of Alberta farmers at the provincial level (Bell, "Prairie Politics," 204). In contrast, Liberals in Saskatchewan maintained their cooperative political relationship with the SGGA by arguing that farmers, via the Liberal party, already controlled the province's government (Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism,* 76-7). While independent farmers in Saskatchewan did experience some electoral success in spite of the SGGA's close relationship with the Liberal party, the dominance of Liberals continued in the province until the end of the decade. The 1929 election had lasting implications for Saskatchewan because Conservatives ended Liberal dominance. However, familiar debates over the rights and treatment of farmers did not determine the outcome of this important election. Instead, racial, ethnic, and religious issues, stoked by the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan tipped the electoral balance in favor of the Conservatives (Courville, "The Conservatism," 171-3). The emergence of the KKK in Saskatchewan can be attributed to the mixed

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demographics of the province. Because Saskatchewan had a substantial number of

immigrants from eastern and northern Europe as well as a significant British population,

the province was ripe for the emergence of nativism and racism against the immigrant

population. While nativist populism's mainstream relevance was short-lived, it still had

lasting implications on the political culture of Saskatchewan. Because this phenomenon

affected the results of the 1929 election, it placed the Conservative party in power just as

the province, along with the rest of the world, was about to the thrust into the Great

Depression.

Scapegoating of the party in power at the emergence of the Great Depression was

a global phenomenon. Alberta and Saskatchewan were no different in this respect.

Because the UFA and Conservative party each held power at the dawn of the Great

Depression, both groups and their ideologies were tainted in their respective provinces.

In Saskatchewan, the socialist CCF emerged during the Depression, while in Alberta, the

right-wing Social Credit movement rose to prominence. Because the SGGA was left

unscathed due to the Conservative victory in 1929, leftist populism remained dominant in

Saskatchewan. However, in Alberta the credibility of the UFA was damaged and the

Social Credit movement filled the power vacuum (Bell, "Prairie Politics," 211).

While it is tempting to attribute the ideological rift between Saskatchewan and

Alberta to a historical accident, immigration patterns and geography are the most

important reasons why the attitudinal shift that originated in the Great Depression has

endured. In Alberta, both the UFA and the Social Credit movement were heavily reliant

upon a similar political base of support. Not coincidentally, both of these populist parties

relied upon American immigrants to southern Alberta as their core constituents. Even in

Saskatchewan, the only two constituencies to elect Social Crediters were the ridings with the largest percentage of American pioneers (Wiseman, "American Imprint," 8). In terms of policy, the transition from the UFA to a Social Credit regime entailed a greater emphasis on populist monetary policy, free-market capitalism, and evangelical Christianity (Ibid, 7-9). The political shifts closely mirror the ascendance of right-wing populism in the rural United States. Therefore, it is helpful to look towards the Turner Thesis for an explanation. According to Turner, westward (and northward) settlement was driven by frustration with existing society and a desire to avoid social impositions. The Americans who settled in Alberta were no different from those pioneers who ended up in Montana. Subsequently, these American-Albertans brought with them the individualistic orientation, and its implicit predisposition towards free-market capitalism with them to their new homes. Clark Banack confirms that, "agrarian politics in Alberta…was fundamentally grounded in an American classical liberalism that was devoid of the more communal-oriented 'toryism'" (Banack, "Religion and Political Thought," 27). While some American pioneers did settle in Saskatchewan and northern Alberta, these regions had a much greater percentage of European immigrants with collectivist political orientations. Therefore, each province as well as each provincial region developed a distinctive political outlook partially rooted in the experience of its settlers.

While settlers in Alberta did have a certain predisposition for individualistic populism, demographics alone cannot account for the staying power of Social Credit and *laissez-faire* capitalism in the province. The emergence of the Social Credit movement preceded much of the development of Alberta's oil resources by just over a decade.

Resentment towards Ottawa's control over the province's natural resources until 1930

and fear that Albertans would be conned out of receiving proper compensation for their

oil allowed the Social Credit movement to solidify political power. Accomplishing this

tactical goal was not easy. Minister of Land and Mines, Nathan Tanner, ran the risk of

alienating hardline Social Crediters in his attempts to attract sufficient capital for oil

development (Richards, *Prairie Capitalism*, 79). Additionally, Tanner and Alberta

Premier Bill Aberhart needed to address mounting calls to provincialize ownership of

Alberta's oil companies. Social Credit's free-market credentials were ultimately

solidified with the election of Premier Ernest Manning in 1944. According to Richards:

> Social Credit now stood for free enterprise against the growing leftist trend in
> Canada: under Manning the movement left its agrarian heritage well behind,
> sought an accommodation with external capital and threw its propaganda
> resources into the Cold War struggle against communism. When Harper Prowse
> revived the provincial Liberal party of Alberta in 1947 he found businessmen
> reluctant to give him contributions. "We've got a business-oriented government
> now," they told him. "Why rock the boat and let in the CCF?" By the 1948
> election Manning was afraid of scaring off oil development capital, and he
> actively campaigned against a rural-backed plebiscite to bring the privately owned
> power companies, notably Calgary Power, under public ownership. Terming
> public ownership "risky" and predicting power shortages by 1951 if the plebiscite
> succeeded, Manning equated the "wild and water" socialism of the CCF with
> Nazism and communism (Ibid, 81-82).

Social Credit's political calculations were necessary to hedge the potential threat

to their political dominance posed by socialism. While socialism represents a populist

appeal to the economic interests of the masses, the right-wing populism of the Social

Crediters drew upon collective fear of the loss of individual freedom. Manning was

reliant upon popular skepticism as to the intentions of eastern political leaders and fear of

an overreaching, Leninist style of government. More broadly, the difference between

populists in Alberta from their other western Canadian counterparts is the sort of threat

that they perceive. While socialist populism relies upon fear of corporate "raiders" and big-business interests, Albertan populism targets "big government" (Wiseman, *In Search*, 249-50). Demographics and the sudden influx of wealth from the oil industry just as this individualistic populism was ascending solidified the hegemony of populist conservatism in the collective consciousness of Albertan political culture.

Much like the other provinces of western Canada, British Columbia's political culture owes much to the demographics and geography of the province. Nestled between the Canadian Rockies and the Pacific Coast, British Columbia has a substantially different landscape from its inland, and comparatively, flat western counterparts. The province's costal location made it both an attractive landing point for new immigrants and a potential target for American expansion. Both of these factors have had tremendous influence of the political development of British Columbia. Because of the American myth of "Manifest Destiny," the British Crown was particularly keen to protect an important gateway to the Pacific. Therefore, they stationed the British Royal Navy in Victoria to solidify British-Canadian territory north of the 49th parallel. This early British influence encouraged transplanted Britons to settle in Canada's westernmost province. Late 19th and early 20th century British Columbia was home to roughly 175,000 British immigrants who brought with them class consciousness and a proclivity for labor-socialism (Wiseman, *In Search*, 251). The province's geography also contributed to British Columbia's economic development. Because endless mountain rages made arable farmland difficult to access, industries including mining, timber, fishing, manufacturing, and trading flourished. Economic development coupled with the province's strong

British influence created a society bi-furcated along class lines (Ibid, 252). Not surprisingly, political culture and parties developed that reflected a divided society.

The politics of British Columbia mirror the province's early social divide in the emergence of two distinctive political ideologies. The first was a philosophy of free market capitalism, driven by exploitation of the province's vast natural and human resources. The second was a socialist ideology, fueled by class tensions and frustrations towards the exploitive practices of the ruling class (Friesen, *The West*, 70-1). This political divide eventually crystalized into the formation of rightest and leftist political factions, beginning with a Liberal and Conservative coalition on the right and the CCF on the left. Cooperation between Liberals and Conservatives originated in the mutual perception of a socialist threat, which would endanger the economic development of British Columbia (Barman, *West Beyond*, 343). On the left, unions reacted to uncertain wages tied to the market value of commodities and poor working conditions in labor camps, mining towns, and cities (Ibid, 204). This polarization was compounded by the absence of an agricultural middle sector that could have moderated the left and right (Ibid, 206). Both of British Columbia's political poles were reliant upon familiar populist tactics to consolidate support. The left utilized resentment towards the material prosperity of the upper class and frustration with the exploitive economic relationship to unite the working class. On the right, fear of a communist-socialist takeover of the province united both Liberals and Conservatives.

Early Premiers of British Columbia were also quick to mobilize populist support by bashing Ottawa for any perceived slight. What early 20th century B.C. lacked in population, it made up for in stridency. Richard McBride's decision to leave a 1906

meeting between federal and provincial leaders in protest of unfair treatment made him a hero in the province. He was greeted and cheered by approving crowds all the way from Revelstoke to Victoria (Resnick, *Resentment*, 3). Even in more recent years as the province's population and economic power have grown, British Columbia's Premiers have persisted in the tradition of aggressively criticizing federal policies. This phenomenon is rooted in the frustration over the province's subordinate relationship to Ottawa and Quebec for much of the 20th century and a desire among British Columbians to be recognized as a unique region (Ibid, 28). The geographic origins of this resentment are fairly clear, as British Columbia remains relatively isolated from the rest of Canada by the formidable Canadian Rocky Mountains. However, B.C.'s status as the province in English Canada most likely to bash Ottawa is firmly grounded in western Canadian populism.

Unionists and socialists in British Columbia involved themselves in many of the significant Canadian and international labor events. In 1919, with higher unemployment rates and inflation than other provinces, British Columbians held sympathy strikes in support of the general strike in Winnipeg. Support for collective job action was boosted in the province by a general strike held in Seattle (Barman, *West Beyond*, 220-1). Also like in Winnipeg, the One Big Union concept briefly flourished, but eventually fizzled out. The failure of OBU can be partially attributed to the statements of established politicians, including British Columbia Premier, John Oliver. These leaders declared the group a "Bolshevist plot and ordered various union officials arrested" (Ibid, 222). Antagonistic relations between organized labor and business interests, again, point to the divided nature of British Columbia politics.

Political polarization magnified even further when Social Credit replaced the Liberal-Conservative coalition as the alternative to CCF and, eventually, NDP socialism. The rise of Social Credit in British Columbia can be attributed to changing demographics and the charismatic personality of W.A.C. Bennett (Ibid, 273). However, underlying these demographic shifts is the allure of British Columbia's mild climate and a more diverse assortment of occupations. In the grips of the Great Depression, migration from the prairie provinces westward to British Columbia was a common means of seeking enhanced economic opportunity. Along with their families and possessions, these new British Columbians brought with them their political ideals. For many of these new arrivals, their political ideology included faith, both religious and in free-market capitalism.

British Columbia's internal political antagonism between classes closely mirrors the province's often-difficult relationship with Ottawa and federal authority. In the province's early history, leaders frequently threatened secession over the delayed construction of the transcontinental railway and lashed out against inadequate federal subsidies (Resnick, *Resentment,* 3-4). British Columbia has had significant leverage in negotiations with the federal government because of their geographic isolation and coastal location. With the growing importance of Pacific trade routes, Canada's westernmost province will continue to exercise enhanced influence over the rest of Canada. Also, like other western provinces, British Columbia has a history of racial tensions, particularly directed towards the Asian population. The Asiatic Exclusion League and other overtly racist organizations perpetuated political exclusion based on ethnicity and nationality (Friesen, *The West*, 9). While Turner spoke of the emergence of

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populist democracy in glowing terms, the rise of new political and civil organizations

often had a darker side.

The 20th Century Canadian "Frontier"

Individualistic and collectivist populism has clearly been present in western Canada for most of the 20th century. However, the leftist CCF and the rightist Social Credit movement no longer exist in their previous forms. Charismatic leadership capable of mobilizing the support of western Canadians fueled the evolution of both of these political organizations. The CCF, under the leadership of Tommy Douglas, transformed into the New Democratic Party (NDP). In Alberta Ernest and Preston Manning facilitated Social Credit's transition into the Reform Party. Reform Party ideology still has significant influence over the politics of the contemporary Conservative Party. The success of both political organizations in their respective provinces and at the national level illustrates the continued significance of frontier populism in Canada. Despite the divergent ideologies of the NDP and Reform Party, both organizations were heavily reliant upon populist fears during their ascendance.

While Fabian influence on the emergence of modern Canadian socialism cannot be dismissed, frontier realities facilitated popular support for British-influenced socialism. Medicare, perhaps the crowning achievement of the NDP, originated in the mines of Alberta and on the prairies of Saskatchewan (Felske, "Our Past," 125). Dangerous working conditions in Alberta's mines necessitated a communal health care system. While miners approved deductions from their paychecks and contributed their labor to the construction of hospitals, mining companies provided land, financial resources, and building materials (Ibid, 126). The combination of difficult frontier conditions and the absence of established hospitals and health care systems fueled the

creation of these new social entities. The emergence of community-based health care in

Alberta closely conforms to the Turner Thesis.

In Saskatchewan, Tommy Douglas's CCF introduced universal medical

insurance, a first for Canada. Establishing a single-payer governmental health care

system in Saskatchewan was met with significant resistance from doctors and business

interests (Richards, *Prairie Capitalism*, 200). Despite these difficulties, Medicare has

had staying power not only in Saskatchewan, but also in the rest of Canada. While

inspiration for Douglas's plan can be traced to European national health care systems,

popular support for Medicare was again fueled by the nature of Saskatchewan's

agricultural economy. Although industrial and agrarian Canada share a history of

difficult working conditions, workers living in a province with a commodity-based

economy like Saskatchewan have an additional layer of uncertainty; price fluctuation.

Even urban residents of the province share the concerns of farmers because of familial

ties (Friesen, *The West*, 102). The volatility of Saskatchewan's economy made it an ideal

laboratory for the creation of Medicare. Because Douglas's system assured medical care

for all individuals, it provided Saskatchewan residents with certainty that, regardless of

influence of the market or meteorology on agricultural products, each citizen was still

entitled to medical treatment. Uncertain economic outcomes and variable living

conditions, again, helped to fuel dynamic political innovations in western Canada.

While leftist populism manifested itself in the form of enduring policy reform,

right-wing populists devoted themselves to a variety of disparate political goals. In the

1970s some western Canadians mimicked Quebec's separatist movement and briefly

united to form the Western Canadian Party. This new party called for a new state,

separate from eastern Canada, united by the free market, Christian faith, and expedient

use of the area's vast natural resources (Melnyk, *Alienation*, 52). While the Western

Canadian Party failed in its nationalist project and in exercising significant influence over

Ottawa, it is still indicative of the allure of right-wing populism, particularly in Alberta.

The party not only embodied long-standing frustrations over the alleged economic

subjugation of the Canadian west to the east, but also mobilized racial resentment

towards the Quebecois and other minorities in Canada (Ibid, 54). Although western

Canadian separatism lacked the staying power of other populist movements, its base of

political support found a new outlet in the form of the Reform Party in the 1980s.

Building on the ideology and familial lineage of the Social Credit movement, the

Reform Party emerged in 1987 under the leadership of Preston Manning. The emergence

of the Reform Party can be linked to lingering animosity regarding Ottawa's alleged

focus on eastern Canadian issues rather than western concerns as well as the economic

differences between eastern Canada's industrial focus as opposed to western Canada's

reliance on natural resources (Betz, et al., *The New Politics of the Right*, 174). Broadly,

these two factors that resulted in the rise of the Reform Party can be attributed to

geographical differences. First, because of physical isolation from Ottawa, western

Canadians are skeptical as to whether Ottawa is genuinely concerned with their best

interests. Additionally, because of the sprawling topography of the Canadian west, the

area is less densely populated than the Canadian east. This can cause mainstream

political parties to pay greater attention to the interests of Ontario and Quebec. When this

problem is coupled with the economic differences between the two regions, it can seem

as if Canadian economic policy is tailored to eastern industrialism rather than western

resources. The emergence of different economic systems in eastern and western Canada

can also be attributed to geographical differences. While Ontario and Quebec's location

and access to water makes these places ideal for manufacturing and distributing goods,

western Canada's vast stretches of forest and oil allow for the emergence of a resource-

based economy. As a result of these underlying problems, western Canadians created the

Reform Party to effectively represent their interests. Rhetorically, the Reform Party

attempted to embody the emerging populist frustration in the Canadian west. The party

organized in accordance with "grass roots" traditions by providing the public with the

opportunity to influence the party's platforms and access to partisan leaders (Ibid, 177).

These political moves were necessary to combat the political skepticism of western

Canadians towards Ottawa elites. Ideologically, the party emphasized the idea that

mainstream politicians are disconnected from the concerns of average Canadians and that

expert opinions cannot be trusted (Ibid, 179). Again, these positions seem to closely

conform to the populism and individualism that characterized American frontier politics.

Because of the Reform Party's emphasis on the geographic and economic disconnect

between western and eastern Canada, the party was, at least initially, successful in

mobilizing political support and influencing political discourse.

Manning was successful in corralling voters around a hybridization of

evangelical Christian values, free-market capitalism, and increased democratization

(Taras, "Experiments," 299-300). While previous western populists had largely failed in

having a tangible influence on federal Canadian policy, the Reform Party was successful

in shifting political priorities in Ottawa. The Liberal Party, during the Chrétien and

Martin governments, shifted political positions and moved in favor of lower taxes,

increased fiscal discipline, the ratification of the NAFTA Treaty, and increased sentences

for young criminals. These policy changes were made in order to both appeal to and

appease Reform Party constituents (Ibid, 302-3). Although western resentment of eastern

Canada's "privileged" status continued to drive the movement, the Reform Party had

greater ambitions then serving as another regional protest party. Manning argued the

Tory-influenced Canada of old was in decline and that the rise of the Reform Party

represented the birth of a new Canadian identity (Melnyk, *Alienation*, 61). While

Manning's assertions ultimately prove both premature and hyperbolic, the rise of the

Reform Party did foreshadow a substantial shift by the Canadian right away from

Toryism and towards a more American, populist brand of conservatism.

　　　　While religion has had significant influence on right-wing and left-wing political

movements in Canada, the Reform Party was unrivalled in its ability to integrate

Christianity into its political rhetoric. The choice of Preston Manning, son of Social

Crediter and Evangelical preacher Ernest Manning, as party leader clearly illustrates the

importance of Christian values to the Reform Party. Manning's strong evangelical

background and preacher-esque speaking style endeared him to born-again Christian

voters throughout the Canadian west (Taras, "Experiments," 301). Following a

pragmatic compromise to consolidate the conservative vote into a single party between

Reformers and Tories, Manning was succeeded as party leader by Stockwell Day. Day

continued the trend of fusing religion and politics in his vehemently pro-life and anti-gay

political sentiments (Ibid, 305). He was also unique among Canadian politicians in his

willingness to integrate the divine into his political speeches and in openly espousing his

strict creationist views (Ibid, 306-7). While the party's base welcomed the integration of

Christianity into political discourse, many outside of Alberta and British Columbia were wary of this development.

The rhetorical power of Christian appeals to the political sensibilities of many western Canadians is, again, indicative of Turner's relevance to developments in the region. While Turner did not explicitly argue that the frontier experience would lead to the emergence of new religions, his arguments emphasis on the emergence of new social and political institutions out of experience in the west seems to imply this possibility. Much like in the American west, Canada's frontier is home to a significant percentage of evangelical Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses. These new Christian sects developed and prospered largely out of the spiritual needs of North American settlers. As a result, these new denominations were more democratic than hierarchical and emphasized individual freedom as one of the most important goods. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that members of these new Christian sects had a certain predisposition towards political populism. Clark Banack argues that Preston Manning's understanding of Christian scripture as well as evangelical influence on the earlier Social Credit movement had a substantial impact on Alberta's populist political culture (Banack, *Religion and Political Thought*, 209). While Manning believes that that style of Jesus's ministry was fundamentally populist, earlier Albertan populist evangelicals had a deep skepticism of a top down approach to theological and political matters. When combined, these approaches to public policy and religion both had significant influence on the Reform Party.

The new parties populist focus is also clearly illustrated in the campaign tactics employed my Manning and other party leaders. The Reform Party utilized a potent blend

of grassroots political tactics and folksy imagery to portray itself as a genuine

representative of the average prairie resident. David Taras describes:

> The outcome in western Canada was aided by the fact that the Reform Party
> waged a masterful campaign. Populism was the central element in both its
> policies and its strategy. The message and the delivery were melded into one.
> The party fought a low-key and low-tech campaign of bag lunches, passing the
> plate, billboards, and mail-outs of the Blue Book, which contained the party
> platform. Manning would often address crowds from the back of a pickup truck,
> wear a blue denim shirt and use an old pioneer cabin as a backdrop for news
> conferences. One billboard ad in particular seemed to capture the message – the
> billboard showed Manning with a fist jutting out at the viewer. The fist
> symbolized an anger that could no longer be contained. The party spent little on
> TV ads or polls, the engines that power most campaigns. (Taras, "Experiments,"
> 301).

Not surprisingly, these populist political tactics were most successful in solidifying

support for Reform in Alberta and British Columbia. In 1993, Manning's party won 24

out of 30 seats in B.C. and 22 out of 26 seats in Alberta (Ibid). While previous western

populist success was typically confined to provincial elections, the Reform Party

successfully mobilized into an organization with federal influence. However, this

influence was limited to Parliament, as the party had limited electoral success in Ontario,

Quebec, and the Maritimes.

In the decade following the initial emergence of the Reform Party, pragmatic

considerations eventually managed to supersede populist fervor as the party transitioned

from Reform to Alliance, to Conservative. However, the Reform/Alliance merger with

the Progressive Conservatives in 2003 did not diminish the populist roots of the party.

Under the leadership of Stephen Harper, the Conservative Party has moderated some of

the blatantly racist and xenophobic influences that plagued the Reform Party, while

maintaining the party's anti-establishmentarian streak. Even as the Conservative Party

became the establishment in 2006, Harper and his fellow Albertan MPs retained their

populist credibility, continuing to support Senate reform and stronger provincial rights

(Wiseman, "American Imprint," 11). While Harper, as Prime Minister, did move

towards the center, he maintained an emphasis on individualism and personal

responsibility. Contemporary Canadian Conservatives, like Harper, typically coalesce

around fiscal conservatism and stronger provincial rights (Lett, "All or Nothing"). Gloria

Filax attributes these political positions to a historical narrative in which Alberta's self-

conception shifted from "rugged pioneer" to "new-age entrepreneur" (Filax,

"Historicizing Discourses," 1). Contemporary political culture in Alberta clearly

corresponds with the historical experience of early western settlers and economic self-

interest. While Alberta's individualistic political orientation is not shared to the same

extent across western Canada, glancing at a 2011 map of Canadian election results

reveals that the Conservative Party's frontier message does have some resonance

throughout the west. With the exception of densely populated urban areas, British

Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba strongly supported the Conservative

Party (Elections.ca Results Map). Again, these results point to the relevance of the

frontier in molding political ideologies. While urban centers, including Vancouver and

Winnipeg, were more inclined to vote for the NDP and the Liberal Party, sparsely

populated, rural areas staunchly supported the Conservative party. Therefore, the

individualism of the frontier experience seems to have manifested itself in the political

outlook of modern western Canadians.

Although populist conservatism has at least some resonance throughout the

Canadian periphery, Alberta remains the province in which this political phenomenon is

most pronounced. The recent emergence and success of the Wildrose Party represents a

continuation of the legacy of Social Credit and Reform in the province. In terms of

policy, the Wildrose Party is strikingly similar to previous right-wing populist parties,

advocating for fiscal responsibility, direct democracy, and energy rebates. Additionally,

the party is operating under the strategic leadership of Thomas Flanagan, the University

of Calgary political scientist with close ties to the Reform Party and the emergence of

Stephen Harper's Conservatives (Davison, "Wildrose"). Despite these ties to the political

establishment in Ottawa, the Wildrose Party has maintained its populist credibility by

aggressively criticizing the Progressive Conservatives that have dominated provincial

politics in Alberta for decades. While Wildrose party leader, Danielle Smith, and her

fellow candidates lack high-level political experience, they present this potential problem

as a strength to voters, asserting that outsiders will bring common sense and

accountability back to government (Ibid). As a party of "outsiders," Wildrose fell victim

to the tendency of right-wing populist parties to make culturally and religiously

insensitive statements regarding homosexual rights (Wingrove, "Candidates Gaffes").

While these mistakes may have damaged the party's credibility enough to cost them the

2012 provincial election, the Wildrose Party will almost certainly continue to exercise

significant influence in Alberta for the foreseeable future. Thomas Flanagan and

Danielle Smith both argue that, despite the party's failure to muster enough support to

oust the Progressive Conservatives in 2012, the Wildrose Party is in a strong position to

influence Alberta's government in an opposition role and will have a strong chance at

victory in the next election (Corbella, "Rosy Future for Wildrose"). Additionally, based

on the long history of populist and conservative success in Alberta, it seems likely that

the Wildrose or a similarly-minded party will continue to exert influence within the province.

The Political Significance of Western Populism

Although my previous discussion illustrates that traditional, European values had tremendous influence on the development of the early Canadian frontier, more recent events illustrate divergence from these traditions. Because of the vast and varied topography of Canadian territory, it should come as no surprise that distinctive regional characteristics developed. Broadly, the development of regional peculiarities can be attributed not only to traditional political influences, but also to geographic realities and the passage of time. As the population of the Canadian west increased, so too did the ability of the region to shirk traditional values and develop into a more distinctive society. Geographically, western Canada's vast array of resources facilitated increased economic independence from eastern Canada. In turn, this brought about the sort of resource exploitation and individualism that characterizes the United States. Additionally, the passage of time facilitated the emergence of a more globalized world economy. As a result of the latter, Canada has become a country that looks increasingly to the Pacific, rather than the Atlantic, for economic advancement. Finally, Canadians reacted to changing circumstances, as political agents, and embraced new political values and institutions because of their frontier experience. While these changes have not entirely diminished earlier European traditions, they do indicate that Canada is increasingly willing to embrace its North American and Pacific characteristics.

Although the desire for economic growth can certainly fuel the expansion of a territory, western Canada's natural resources also generated an increased independence from eastern Canada. As previously discussed, the power relationships present on the early western Canadian frontier typically occurred in accordance with the Metropolitan-

Hinterland thesis. However, the discovery of oil in Alberta created the potential for increased political freedom. In contrast to the tight government restrictions imposed on the construction of the transcontinental railway, individual capitalists played a leading role in early Canadian oil production. The first oil pipelines constructed in Alberta were financed entirely by private investors (Aitken, "Government and Business," 15). Additionally, the Interprovincial Pipeline linked Edmonton with Wisconsin, while the Transmountain Pipeline extended from Edmonton to Vancouver. The decision to construct the first pipelines to these specific markets was rooted in a capitalist desire to sell to larger markets in the United States (Ibid, 16). The role of private-sector businesses in the development of infrastructure projects significantly differs from earlier, state-controlled development. More broadly, it is indicative of the free-market individualism and opportunism that characterized the American west. When United States protectionism limited Canadian oil imports, the companies lobbied for a government-subsidized pipeline to link Edmonton and Montreal. While their attempts to persuade the government were initially in vain, the oil companies, ultimately, succeeded in 1959 with construction of the Trans-Canada pipeline (Ibid, 17-19). The success of the private sector in influencing public policy also points to the increased political power afforded to Alberta. Because the exercise of this power was rooted in economic self-interest, the new political clout afforded to Alberta mirrors the individualistic politics of frontier America.

While the discovery of oil in Alberta had unquestionably fueled some of western Canada's growing power, structural changes to the global economic system have also affected the political influence of the western provinces. Although Europe and the United States dominated the global economy for much of the 20th century, the emergence

of strong Asian economies has diminished the economic hegemony of traditional powers. At the very least, this has resulted in increased economic growth in British Columbia. However, the increased importance of Asian-Canadian trade relations has created a new, commercial frontier in Canada. Exports from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba presently account for two thirds of Canada's total exports to the Asian-Pacific Region (Holden, "Through the Gateway," 1). Total exports from the Canadian West to the Pacific are only expected to rise along with the relative strength of the Chinese economy. This illustrates that Western Canada's economic importance will continue to grow. Obviously, the Canadian West's commercial advantage in Pacific trade stems from the province's geographic location on the North American continent.

Western Canada's access to the Pacific has not only created more opportunities for exports, but also has facilitated an influx of foreign investment. This recent development is clearly illustrated by the rapid increase in real-estate prices in Vancouver. This price increase has largely been fueled by increased demand among wealthy individuals from China, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan (Donville, and Yu, "Chinese Spreading Wealth"). While foreign investment coupled with increased commodity prices has strengthened the economy of the Canadian West, it has also made owning a home in Vancouver increasingly difficult for many Canadians. The influx of Chinese capital into the Canadian real-estate market can be attributed to Western Canada's proximity to Asia, Vancouver's mild climate, and less stringent regulation of property purchases (Ibid). Broadly, these factors can be attributed to a dialectic between geography and the passage of time. While Western Canada's physical location makes it an attractive place for Chinese to relocate and invest, the passage of time has allowed for

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the growth of Asian economic strength. Combined, these factors illustrate a new dimension of Canada's frontier. While primarily British settlers previously settled Western Canada, it is currently a social and commercial frontier for Asian "pioneers." Because the influx of Pacific investment is a fairly recent phenomenon, the political effects on British Columbia have yet to fully manifest themselves. However, it certainly seems possible that wealthy settlers from across the Pacific and their "frontier" experience could have a tangible influence on Western Canada's political culture.

Additionally, while other areas in Canada have been subject to the population stagnation and decline that plague other post-industrial areas, western Canada has experienced significant population growth. Overall, Canada is still a growing country, even in Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes. However, the rate of growth in the Canadian west far exceeds the relatively small population expansion in the east. Western provinces now constitute 30.7% of Canada's total population while Quebec and the Maritimes make up only 30.6% (CBC News, "Canada census"). While Ontario is still the most populous province, the Canadian west's natural resources and the mounting importance of Pacific trade indicate that the west will continue to experience population growth at the expense of the east.

Shifting population also foreshadows political change for Canada, as western provinces will continue to expand their federal influence. This political shift has almost certainly already begun, as evidenced by the success of Stephen Harper's Conservatives (Ibid). Both British Columbia and Alberta will gain six seats in the House of Commons in the next election based on the data collected in the 2011 census (Elections Canada). Increased representation will almost certainly translate to increased influence for the two

westernmost provinces. Given the distinct political culture of each province, particularly in Alberta, these developments will have an impact on Ottawa. In the near future, it would not be surprising to see longstanding ambitions of western populists including increased provincial autonomy and greater political power for western Canada within the federal system come to fruition. While the precise political implications of the western boom in Canada will be more apparent in the future, it is safe to assume that this shift will increase populist influence in Ottawa and, perhaps, make Canada's political culture more American.

Concluding Reflections on Turner and Canada

While Canada's early historical development was tightly regulated and heavily influenced by British and French influences, recent developments in the Canadian West indicate the importance of geography. Despite this imposition of traditional values on the early Canadian frontier, Western Canada's growing economic strength has facilitated increased divergence from these traditional values. The geographic realties of the Canadian West have not only fueled economic growth, but also triggered the development of distinctive political and cultural values. While it would be a gross overstatement to assert that these developments represent a genuine paradigm shift, the rise of individualism in Western Canada and increasing emphasis on the Pacific are still substantial. Even more importantly, the ascendance of new values in the Canadian West has yet to be completed. Although the contemporary Canadian frontier bears little resemblance to the wild and largely unsettled 19th Century American west, recent developments illustrate the tangible effects that geography and time can have on societal development. Geography has provided Western Canadians with abundant natural resources and access to the Pacific. However, historical circumstances and political actors have also shaped the development and rising influence of western Canada.

When considering the relevance of Turner's frontier thesis for Canada, it is essential to emphasize the factors that underlie the transformative characteristics of the frontier. While Turner is very clear in his assertion that, "the wilderness masters the colonist" (Turner, "Frontier," 13), the Canadian example raises questions as to why this is the case. Although the western United States was settled by intrepid pioneers, established corporate and governmental interests drove settlement in the Canadian west.

Despite this divergence, both countries experienced varying forms of democratic populism in their hinterlands. Ultimately, a degree of political and cultural separation from Europe seems necessary for geography and environment to exercise their transformative influence. However, this separation does not have to be absolute. As western Canada was able to exercise increasing autonomy from Britain and Ottawa, each province's political culture evolved. Although some provinces moved to the left and some to the right, all of western Canada shares a history of democratic populism, the hallmark of the frontier.

As the population of the Canadian west has grown, the political power of the region has also increased. Coupled with the prominence of democratic populism, it is likely safe to conclude that the transformative power of the frontier is waning and that the Canadian frontier is closing. Growth in western Canada will continue, but most of it will occur in urban centers and their suburbs. However, geographic separation from the more European east has still left an indelible imprint on the region's political cultures. Turner feared that the closing of the American frontier would diminish the dynamic political characteristics of the region. While political experimentation did stagnate with the absence of free land, populist governmental and religious influences persisted throughout the western United States. The same will almost certainly hold true for Canada. Whether in the form of class-based antagonism in British Columbia, Wild Rose conservatism in Alberta, agrarian socialism and conservatism in Saskatchewan, or Social Gospel collectivism in Manitoba, frontier populism has made a lasting impact on the political culture of western Canada.

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