

WILLIAM ABERHART



Little could the parents of William Aberhart have envisioned the remarkable career that lay ahead for their son when he was born on the family farmstead near Seaforth, Ontario, on December 30, 1878.

His potential became evident at an early age, as he distinguished himself at school by his "studious habits, exceptional powers of concentration, and amazing powers of retention." His earnest approach to learning brought him a diploma from the Chatham Business College, a teaching certificate from the Normal School in Hamilton, and a Commercial Specialist Certificate with Honours from the Ontario Department of Education. His proudest achievement was the B.A. degree that he received from Queen's University via the difficult road of extramural study.

Not only a dedicated student, Aberhart became a dedicated teacher. He began his teaching career at Morris, Ontario, and in 1901 became principal of Central Public School in Brantford. In 1910, he decided to pull up stakes and move to Calgary, "the last best West." Here, in 1915, he was appointed principal of the newly-organized Crescent Heights High School, a post that he would occupy for twenty years. A legendary figure at Crescent Heights, Aberhart was renowned for his organizational talents, his great energy, his use of diagrams and charts, and his attention to detail. He became "one of the most efficient educators and administrators in Western Canada during the period from 1910--1935."

Aberhart also displayed a deep interest in religion, particularly in biblical exegesis, and became active in Bible classes in Ontario and in Calgary. Under his initiative, the Calgary Prophetic Bible Conference was organized in 1918. His Sunday afternoon talks drew large audiences to the Palace Theatre, and, in 1925, he began to broadcast these talks to a radio audience. Aberhart's broadcasts were a huge success, at one time attracting 350,000 listeners across the Prairies.

Just at this time, the Depression struck, and Aberhart became a concerned witness to the anomaly of poverty in the midst of plenty. In 1932, one of his students, distraught over the effects of the Depression, committed suicide, and it was a deeply grieved Aberhart who went to Edmonton that summer to mark examination papers. A fellow examiner, and a student of Social Credit, Charles M. Scarborough, saw in Aberhart the qualities of leadership necessary for the propagation of the Social Credit message. He gave Aberhart Maurice Colbourne's book, Unemployment or War, in the study of which Aberhart became fascinated. He was convinced that he had found the solution to the economic misery that surrounded him.

The rest of Aberhart's story is well known. He began to introduce Social Credit doctrine into his Sunday broadcasts. He went on lecture tours throughout the province, teaching Social Credit and organizing study groups. When the U.F.A. government refused to listen to the demands of the people of Alberta for economic reform, Social Credit mobilized for political action. With an irresistible organization that reached into every corner of the province, the Social Crediters took 56 of the 63 seats in the provincial legislature in the election of August 22, 1935. William Aberhart became the head of the first Social Credit government in the world.

Despite violent opposition from the press and financial institutions, despite misunderstanding and criticism, despite the disallowance by the federal government of his attempts to inaugurate economic reforms, Aberhart was persistent, and succeeded in giving Alberta an efficient and honest administration which the people of that province have endorsed over and over during the past 35 years.

William Aberhart himself died in Vancouver on May 23, 1943, at the age of sixty-four. But the message that he delivered has not died. He will long be remembered for the indelible vision of financial emancipation that he gave, not only to the people of Alberta, but to all Canadians.

Fellow Social Crediter:

On behalf of the Social Credit Rally, I would like to extend a warm invitation to you to attend our Western Canada Convention and grand Aberhart Day celebration in Edmonton August 21 and 22.

The program will get under way with a brief provincial convention of the Alberta Branch of the Rally the morning of August 21. Delegates from other provinces will be welcome as observers. That same afternoon, the Western Canada Convention will begin at:

THE EDMONTON INN (Registration: 1:30 p.m.)

The Convention will continue through the morning of Saturday, August 22.

The Western Canada Convention will be a crucial moment for Social Credit in Canada. It will bring together Social Crediters from the four Western provinces--British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba--to map a strategy for effective political action at the federal level. It will be a prelude to the National Convention planned for Ottawa in the summer of 1971. It will be a springboard for the next federal election, to be held in 1972. Now is the time for us to prepare the Social Credit alternative.

The Western Canada Convention will be your opportunity to meet and talk to Social Crediters from other provinces, to hear of activities across Canada, to review our constitution and policy, to consider a program of nominations of Social Credit candidates for the next federal election, to plan a publicity campaign, to discuss a Social Credit educational program, and to consolidate our organization. You will have the unique opportunity of meeting many of the federal Social Credit Members of Parliament, and a number of the newly-elected Social Crediters in the Quebec legislature, who will be making the trip to the West.

In conjunction with the business of the Convention, we will be celebrating ABERHART DAY--August 22--the 35th anniversary of the truly historic election of the first Social Credit government in the world. The week-end will be one not only of accomplishment, but of enjoyment.

The Alberta executive will kick things off with a banquet at the Edmonton Inn at 7:30 p.m., Friday. You will be treated to the double pleasure of good food and good listening, in the form of an address by Mr. Camil Samson, the leader of the Social Credit Rally of Quebec. This will be a preliminary to the grand ABERHART DAY RALLY, to be held:

AUGUST 22, at THE JUBILEE AUDITORIUM, 8:00 p.m.

You will not want to miss this event.

Many of the original Social Credit MLA's and MP's will be present as platform guests, as will the visiting MP's and MLA's from Quebec. A glimpse into the past will be provided in a pageant recreating the history of the times when William Aberhart's government was first elected in 1935. You will hear recordings of Aberhart's voice; you will see the educational slides prepared by Aberhart for the first speaking tour of the Social Credit Board of Alberta; you will hear the impressions and recollections of pioneers in the Social Credit movement. There will be music and stage entertainment, and the evening will be rounded out with an address by our National Leader, REAL CAQUETTE.

This will be a night to remember, a night at once commemorating the history of Social Credit, and marking its resurgence at the federal level. Plan now to attend this historic event. Bring your family and friends. Come to the Western Canada Convention: we invite your participation. Come to Aberhart Day: we promise you an unforgettable evening.

I look forward to seeing you August 21 and 22 in Edmonton.

Yours for Social Credit,

Gilbert Rondeau, M.P.
National Organizer
Social Credit Rally