

## The Significance Of Alberta

by W. Johnson, Calgary ( 1935 )

*A Great Man who was crowned one day,  
Imagined a great deed.  
He shaped it forth of cloud and clay;  
He touched it finely till the seed  
Possessed the flower. With heart and brain,  
He fed it with large thoughts humane,  
To help a people's need.*

The most amazing election Canada ever saw, has just concluded in the foothills Province. It is not the first time, of course, that a party strongly entrenched in power, has suddenly found itself in opposition. But that, we looked on as the normal seesaw of politics, the natural exchange between ins and outs... between two parties equal in prestige, and both well equipped with the sinews of war. Prince Edward Island gave us the latest example of this stereotyped "change your partners."

In the usual run of Canadian politics, with all the provinces changing their allegiance in the time honored manner sanctioned by our traditions. Alberta should have fallen into line and returned a Liberal Government to Edmonton. Consider what happened! Two parties have been annihilated almost to the last man... gone are Labor and Independent groups... The U.F.A. Government left without a representative. Four or five lone liberals and one Conservative represent the Opposition. And what has taken possession of the seat of Government?

From the germ of one man's ideas, fed by one man's indignant revolt against the conditions around him, sprang the Alberta Social Credit League. That was three years ago. Ever increasing in numbers, its study groups spread over the Province... more than 2200 of them from Peace River to the boundary... educating, studying, training in economic thinking men and women who had always left other people to think for them. The election found the vast majority of Alberta voters grimly determined that talking of change had lasted long enough; they would see to it that the change came in August 1935.

The significant thing is this. This movement... crusade... call it what you will... deride its principles if you will... entered the field against what opposition? The Farmer Government, entrenched after fourteen years in office, Liberal, Conservative, Labor, and Communist parties;

**united in a Holy Alliance with one war-cry: "Down with Aberhart!"... the entire press of the Province... the unseen power of finance fighting disparately to stop this first leak in the dike... the organized churches who decried this "blending of religion with politics."**

**Orators of Dominion-wide fame were brought in to exercise their powers. Every one who would go on record against Social Credit, from janitor to bank-president, filled the columns of the newspapers. The leader of the new movement was maligned, and vilified, and misrepresented in a manner unexampled in Canadian election campaigns. Charlatan, quack, fanatic, and dictator, were some of the milder terms applied to him in the nightly radio blasts of which he was the target.**

**It was all about as successful as Mrs. Partington's famous attempt to sweep back the Atlantic with her broom. Without funds other than the subscriptions of its supporters, the Social Credit League completed a Province-wide organization. Railway shopmen, city workers, farmers contributed their dimes to pay for a twice-a-week broadcast. At every meeting the plate went around. after a meeting in a so-called Communist mining town, the collection totaled \$172. The theme-song: "O God Our Help In Ages Past." ... never smile... woke a new spirit in Alberta. As in the 12<sup>th</sup> century knights and men-at-arms took the Cross, and joined the Crusade, with impassioned cries of "God Wills It." Matter of fact Western men and women threw themselves into what they felt was a brotherhood for economic security.**

**On Nomination Day every one of Alberta's sixty-three seats had a Social Credit candidate. A Social Credit Chronicle wit a circulation of 16,000 in Southern Alberta knit the movement into a fighting force. The thing grew and grew, and every day of the campaign it became more plain that, whether the Social Credit plan were a delusion or a godsend no other party had a plan at all. Parrot cries of : "It Can't Be Done," to people demanding that something must be done, combined with mud-slinging at Aberhart, only swept the silent vote, which always sways elections, into the Social Credit ranks.**

**The Candidates were fairly representative of the life and business of the Province. Three or four ministers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and farmers carried the banner of the Basic Dividend. Calgary's six nominees are typical: a cashier in a department store, secretary of the Bible Institute, a lady-man, shop mechanic, lawyer, accountant. And leading and inspiring all, the most dynamic personality in Canada today.**

**Watch this man! He is a portent. I have seen him at home in the Bible Institute he built with the slogan of : "Every Two Dollars a Brick." Wiping his brow in the heat of oratory.. he does everything in dead earnest.. no pulpit mannerism. I have talked with him in his High School office of the progress of one of his pupils. I have been a unit in vast audiences, hanging on his words, as he revealed his hopes and aspirations, smote his opponents with hefty two-handed strokes, or ridiculed them under some funny story of an old farmer in his native Ontario. Abraham Lincoln in his homespun eloquence, and his life for the common people.**

**What manner of man is William Aberhart B.A? A big man with a 250 pound body, a big bald brow, and a big jaw; big hands which shake the pulpit, a big voice which makes the pilot lights of the radio flicker, a big brain... ( the only first rate brain in Western Canada) ...big every way you take him. With his friends, ... jolly as a sand-boy .... Against what he deems injustice, a ruthless, no-quarter fighter. In Alberta he looms among the men of his day, like a trout among minnows.**

**Even these things are not enough to account for the man's position as Premier-elect of Alberta. In a world of shysters, and gold bricks, and "prosperity around the corner" the people have found a man they can trust implicitly. Whether they support, or oppose his theories, they believe in this man. Newsboys, men on relief, railwaymen, farmers, blasé pool hall lizards, cynical businessmen, bridge playing women, have absolute faith in the man's transparent honesty and sincerity. After certain nauseous happenings in the political world of Edmonton, Albertans – Like Diogenes – were looking for an honest man. They have found him.**

**Born fifty-seven years ago in old Huron County, Ontario, of third generation Canadian extraction, his pursuit of education led him through Seaforth Collegiate, the halls of Queen's University, and Hamilton Normal School. Calgary first saw him twenty-five years ago, and he recently completed his Silver Jubilee as school principal. As head of Crescent Heights High School, he directed the education of over 800 boys and girls. In 1913, he initiated the Calgary Prophetic Bible Conference, and in 1927 the Bible Institute, adding a radio Sunday School which reaches over 5,000 prairie children. As if this were not enough to occupy his time, he threw himself with all his powers, into this fight to end "poverty in the midst of plenty."**

**Did Canada, or any other country, ever produce this type of leader? Principal of a High School which sweeps practically all the scholarships and championships...head of a religious organization with multifarious**

**activities...reaching every Sunday ( ed. thousands of listeners over the radio ) ....and yet finding time and energy to travel from end to end of the Province....to fight and win an election campaign. Contrast him with our run-of-the-mill politicians with their leisurely "wooden sword" warfare and occasional radio addresses to prevent the public from forgetting their existence entirely.**

**Watching the Calgary bulletin boards on election night, I was struck by the remark of a young man beside me. He was shabbily dressed, but his face was full of enthusiasm. "We're making history," he said. "The whole world is watching us." It may be that August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1935 ushered in a new epoch. It showed that without force or threats, if the people really want something in grim earnest, not all the powers of men, money, or influence can stop or turn them from reaching their goal.**

**Quite apart from the question of whether Social Credit will live up to the glowing hopes of its supporters, the men...and especially the women...of Alberta wanted it. A record poll, with over-worked officials struggling to cope with the rush of votes, proved that they wanted it. All Canada will watch the progress of the new movement, and the leader who has risen like a new star in the political sky.**