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SOCIAL CREDIT IN ALBERTA

A Canadian « Cargo Cult » ?

Lieber Volker !

Dies ist das Werk,
von dem ich im letzten
Brief gesprochen habe.
Viel Spaß im Lesen!

Dein Tom

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A Canadian « Cargo Cult » ?

THE last generation of research has brought impressive progress in our knowledge of millenarian movements. There has been a long series of individual monographs and, more recently, a number of comparative and synthetic works. This research has had two foci: 1) the syncretistic chiliasm of the uncontacted peoples of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas; 2) millenarian movements within the prophetic, revelatory high religions — Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In either case, millenarianism appears as something external to, or lying on the fringe of, advanced industrial society. It has, however, been suggested that « there are secular millennial equivalents within these advanced societies » and in this paper, I propose to discuss one example, namely the Social Credit movement which arose in Alberta, one of the Western provinces of Canada, in the wake of the Great Depression. After a brief gestation, Social Credit became an independent political party, won a sweeping victory in the provincial election of 1935 and formed the provincial government for the next 36 years. I will analyze the origins and early years of the movement in order to demonstrate the parallels with recognized millenarian patterns of behaviour.

ORIGINS OF THE SOCIAL CREDIT LEAGUE.

The ideology of Social Credit was created by Major Clifford Hugh Douglas (1878-1952), a British engineer and business consultant. In the economic aftermath of World War I, Major Douglas was struck by the contradiction between

(1) Major comparative works are Henri DESROCHE, *Dieux d'Hommes* (Paris-La Mouton, 1969); Norman COHN, *Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York, 1957); Peter W. LEWIS, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (2nd ed.; London, 1968); Vittorio LANTERNARI, *The Religions of the Oppressed*, tr. Lisa Sergio (New York, 1963); Kenelm BURRIDGE, *New Heaven, New Earth* (Toronto, 1969); Sylvia THRUPP (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action* (The Hague, 1962); Kurt MÜHLMANN, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus* (Berlin, 1961); Guglielmo GUARIGLIA, *Propheten und Heilserwartungsbewegungen als völkerkundliches und religionsgeschichtliches Problem* (Vienna, 1959). Cf. also two special issues of the *Archives de sociologie des religions*, nos. 4 and 5 (1958).

(2) George SHEPPERSON, « The Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements », in Sylvia THRUPP (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

the industrial system's almost boundless capacity for production, which had been eminently displayed during the War, and the lack of sufficient purchasing power in society to keep the industrial machine running. « Poverty in the midst of plenty » is one of the central problems of modern economic theory ; Douglas was able to recognize it, but, with little formal training in economics, seized upon a partial, oversimplified answer. Instead of a thorough analysis of the economy, Douglas produced only an indictment of the credit and financial system. In an endless stream of books and pamphlets, Douglas argued that banks and other financial institutions were manipulating credit to cause economic disaster. His remedy, though expressed in obscure and eccentric concepts, was essentially very simple : nationalize all instruments of finance, and let the government issue purchasing power as needed to all citizens. Thus the ability to consume could always keep pace with the ability to produce, and society would enter an age of perpetual prosperity. More profound reforms, such as the socialization of the means of production, would not be necessary. With the enthusiasm of a *petit bourgeois*, Douglas believed that capitalism would run perfectly well if only the malignant financiers could be put in their place (3).

Associated with the simplistic economic analysis was a type of « end of all fundamental human problems » caused by economic disorders, there would be no need for a resolution of conflicts once the financial system was put on a healthy basis. Competing interests would naturally attain a satisfactory equilibrium. In the phrase of Saint-Simon, « the government of men » could be replaced by « the administration of things ». Inequality, poverty, war, etc., would cease to be problems demanding coercive solutions. Public affairs would be reduced to the technical manipulation of credit by « experts ». The apparatus of democracy, which Douglas held in contempt, would shrink to a simple plebiscite, in which the electors would vote for « results ». All this, it should be added, was to be accomplished peacefully. People would only have to recognize the truth of Social Credit in order for the system to be put into effect.

If the Douglas system were only a defective economic and political theory, it would be of no interest here ; but it also has the structural features of a millenarian vision. First is the fundamental theme of a world in crisis, accompanied by the paranoid belief that all the forces of evil are united in a single conspiracy, in this case the secret league of the international financiers. (In his later years, Douglas reached bizarre heights of paranoia on this point. Influenced by the spurious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (4), he came to believe that the Jews, bankers, Bolsheviks, and Nazis (!) were all part of the same conspiracy against the free capitalist world). There is also the prophecy of a transcendent new age in which all important conflicts will be resolved, leaving politics redundant. For Douglas, this was to be an « age of abundance » in which the unleashed forces of industrialism, freed of the financial incubus, would guarantee material welfare with almost no human labour — a technological fantasy which still has wide appeal. In the words of a Social Credit journal :

(3) Major Douglas' many works are extremely repetitive. Widely read is *Social Credit* (3rd ed. : London, 1934).

(4) Cf. Norman COHEN, *Warrant for Genocide* (New York, 1966) for an excellent study of the impact of the *Protocols* on modern anti-Semitism.

"The world has changed. Science has conquered nature. No longer need man slave and toil to wrest a meager living from the soil. Your father and his like made it easier for man to earn his living. Labor-saving devices replaced manpower. Long hours of labor are no longer necessary. Leisure and comfort have been created, but man has not yet received them. Where there was scarcity there is now superabundance" (5).

This same journal carried a cover with a picture of the dawning sun together with the motto

"As the Rising Sun Proclaims a New Day
So Will Social Credit Proclaim a New Era".

In the Social Credit vision, the present moment is the watershed between the evil past and the splendid future — in theological terms, the *kairos*, where the divine message is manifested. The supernatural revelation poses as economic theory, but actually is a creed which can only be accepted on faith, promising terrestrial salvation through application of a simple formula.

The Douglas system caused considerable controversy in the English-speaking world in the 1920's and 30's, in Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This may seem surprising in view of the system's obvious defects, but one must keep in mind the contemporary state of economics, and remember that before Keynes no satisfactory explanation of underconsumption existed. In spite of the wide hearing it received, nowhere did Social Credit become a powerful social force except in the Canadian province of Alberta. This development must be attributed to two factors. First is the impact of the economic crash of 1929 upon the province of Alberta, which was economically dependent upon highly mechanized wheat farming for sale in the world market. This farming, moreover, had been capitalized with large loans from the financial institutions of Eastern Canada. The subsistence farmer who owned his own plot of land could endure a recession with relative ease; not so the commodity farmer who had borrowed heavily to finance large-scale cultivation. When the market prices of agricultural commodities dropped (6), such a farmer still had to carry a crushing burden of debt, and faced the very real prospect of mortgage foreclosure. Thus the havoc caused by the Depression in Alberta fostered the growth of Social Credit: the wheat farmer could see with his own eyes the duplicity of the banks and mortgage companies, who had been so eager to loan him money in the boom days, and now were insistently demanding repayment.

Yet hardship alone did not turn Social Credit into a powerful social movement. Identical conditions prevailed in the neighbouring wheat-growing province of Saskatchewan where Social Credit also sprang up but soon withered away. The crucial variable in Alberta seems to have been the charismatic leadership of the

(5) *Alberta Social Credit Commentator*, 1 (November 1936), p. 94.

(6) The price of wheat varies depending upon variety and grade, but in general it fell by over a half from 1929 to 1930 and remained low for several years thereafter. The problem was compounded in parts of Alberta by prolonged drought, causing soil drifting and erosion. James GRAY, *The Winter Years* (Toronto, 1966), contains a moving description of Alberta during the Depression.

evangelist William Aberhart from the city of Calgary (7). Aberhart, a teacher and high-school principal, was also a lay preacher of the fundamentalist Protestant stripe. Having pioneered in radio evangelism in the 1920's, Aberhart achieved prominence throughout the province, to the point where by 1927 he could open his own Bible school, the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute. A man of unquestioned rectitude, and of shrewd but dogmatic mind, Aberhart was ideally suited to transform Douglas' exotic system into a popular creed which could attract a mass following.

Aberhart became converted to Social Credit in 1932 through reading a book by one of Douglas' followers (8). Aberhart suddenly believed he had found the key to understanding the Depression. At first, he mingled his own version of Social Credit with the fundamentalist Christianity of his Sunday radio broadcasts. Then, as the Depression worsened, Aberhart formed Social Credit study groups and discussion clubs, using the organizational model he had employed among his radio following. Finally, as the provincial election of 1935 approached, Aberhart welded his followers into a political party, the Social Credit League, which won an overwhelming victory. He became and remained premier of the province until his death in 1943.

In the campaign, Aberhart presented to the electorate a less complex version of Social Credit theory, which he even once referred to as a «wondrously simple plan » (9). In fact, he emphasized that while understanding was desirable, perfect comprehension was not necessary in order to put Social Credit to work. In one speech he said :

* You don't have to know all about Social Credit before you vote for it ; you don't have to understand electricity to use it, you know that experts have put the system in, and all you have to do is push the button and you get the light. So all you have to do about Social Credit is to cast your vote for it, and we will get experts to put the system in » (10).

The esoteric mysteries of the Douglas theory were reduced to a single promise : Social Credit will not only end the misery of the Depression, but will usher in an era such as has never been known. These hopes were symbolized in the very concrete promise of a monthly dividend, payable to each person, of \$ 25.00, no mean sum in those days. In 1935, even the most highly paid skilled tradesman would have been lucky to earn more than a dollar an hour — if he could find work. In offering \$ 25.00 a month for each adult member of the family, Aberhart was promising a guaranteed income floor of perhaps half a working man's normal earnings, indeed a vision of abundance, particularly when so many could find no employment at all.

Once in office, Aberhart quickly found that his election promises were hopelessly unrealistic. Not only was the economic doctrine intrinsically unworkable, but the constitutional division of powers in Canada between the federal and

(7) An uncritical biography is L.P.V. JOHNSON and OLA MACNUTT, *Aberhart of Alberta* (Edmonton, 1970). The best scholarly sources of information are J.A. LEVING, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* (Toronto, 1959) and HAROLD SCHUTTZ, *William Aberhart and the Social Credit Party : A Political Biography* (Dissertation, Duke University, 1959).

(8) MAURICE COLBOURNE, *Unemployment or War* (New York, 1928).

(9) W. ABERHART, *The Douglas System of Economics*, pamphlet, p. 2.

(10) Cited in C.B. MACPHERSON, *Democracy in Alberta : Social Credit and the Party System* (2nd ed. ; Toronto, 1962), p. 152.

provincial levels of government did not allow him the authority he needed to take the financial and credit system out of private hands. The subsequent history of the Social Credit League would make a fascinating case study of the way in which a millenarian movement with unrealizable goals is able to adapt to the reality of its envisionment while retaining its chiliastic rhetoric. However, limited space requires leaving this subject for another occasion.

MILLENARIAN ASPECTS OF ALBERTA SOCIAL CREDIT.

The Alberta Social Credit movement was obviously on a different level altogether from recognized millenarian phenomena like the « cargo cult » or the « ghost dance ». Although an agricultural region, Alberta in 1935 was an integral part of an advanced industrial nation ; its inhabitants were literate and educated according to Western concepts of rationality. The Social Credit League itself used the most modern forms of propaganda — e.g. the radio — and adopted contemporary forms of organization like the political party. It adjusted, though not without strain, to the complex world of democratic politics and subsequently formed one of the longest-lived governments in Canadian history. All this seems very remote from the jungle of New Guinea, where natives build runways for magic airplanes to land and disgorge their cargo. Yet I will argue below that the Social Credit movement exhibited traits of belief and behaviour which correspond, *mutatis mutandis*, to the characteristics of more primitive millenarianism.

1. *Ideology.*

The Douglas Social Credit theory possesses in all essential respects the structure of the millenarian vision. While retaining the basic symbols and their relation to one another, Aberhart also made certain modifications to render the ideology more appropriate to Alberta. In this new version, the international financial conspiracy remained but was identified with the financial interests of Eastern Canada in Toronto and Montreal, or in Aberhart's colourful language, the « Fifty Big Shots ». Anti-Semitism had no roots in Alberta, and Aberhart was not affected by this aspect of Douglas' paranoia ; but otherwise he accepted the notion of an alliance among financiers, Communists, and Fascists. Aberhart also differed with Douglas over the nature of the coming age. For the latter, it was to be not only an age of abundance but one of leisure and individual freedom ; while Aberhart, the fundamental Protestant moralist, had difficulty seeing beyond the confines of Puritanism and the work ethic. His age of abundance was to be inhabited by hard-working, morally upright citizens. Finally, Aberhart vastly simplified the complexities of the original economic theory. In fact, it may be doubted whether he understood them himself. Douglas regarded Aberhart's understanding as limited, and wrote that the latter's « own writings upon the subject are defective both in theory and in practicability » (11). But this simplification made no essential difference to the millenarian appeal of the system ; indeed, it heightened it by reducing the complexities of Douglas jargon — « A + B theorem », « unearned increment », « cultural heritage », etc. — to the tangible promise of perpetual prosperity bolstered by a grant of \$ 25.00 per month.

(11) C.H. Douglas, *The Alberta Experiment : An Interim Survey* (London, 1987), pp. 21-22.

2. *Generative Conditions.*

Millenarian movements have been shown to arise in situations of sudden and extreme social calamity (12) : war, famine, plague, or the social disintegration caused by the contact of a primitive society with a more advanced one. In such conditions, the evocation of a golden future is engendered by the increase in present misery. It is not so much permanently oppressed peoples who conceive of a coming millennium, but those whose sudden encounter with disaster casts doubt on the validity of their cultural premises. The situation of Alberta in the 1930's shows several of these characteristics. After a number of years of unparalleled prosperity, the Depression plunged Alberta into such poverty that even the necessities of life were in doubt. This, furthermore, appeared to the Westerner as a confrontation between Alberta and the outside world, particularly Eastern Canada. It was the Eastern banker, almost a colonial master, who threatened to dispossess the Albertan of his home and farm. All this in turn contributed to the psychological disorientation of the farmer, who saw that intangible forces were depriving him of his livelihood while he worked as hard as ever. And, as if this were not enough, Alberta farmers experienced several bad crop years in the Depression, as drought and wind combined to blow away valuable topsoil. All in all, the grain growers of Alberta suffered as acute a form of multiple deprivation as can be imagined, save in the horrors of war or pestilence.

3. *Leadership.*

Millenarianism almost inevitably demands an inspired leader to play the role of prophet and/or messiah. All observers agree on the importance of William Aberhart to the Alberta Social Credit movement. Without his organizational genius, his renowned oratory, and his prior reputation as a man of God, Social Credit would have remained an esoteric doctrine limited to a coterie of followers. Aberhart transformed the coterie into a mass movement. His messianic legitimacy came from two sources. To his religious followers he already possessed a divine mandate. But within the limits of the Social Credit system, he presented himself as the expositor of a scientifically true doctrine. In this setting, science became an equivalent to revelation. Aberhart presented Social Credit as a set of absolute truths to be accepted even if they appeared incomprehensible, not as a set of hypotheses which had not yet been approved. The openness which is essential to science was dissolved in the possession of absolute certitude. In their misuse of the scientific claim to truth, Aberhart and Douglas were following the example of earlier prophets and messiahs who had wrapped their revelations in the cloak of scientism — most notably Saint-Simon and Comte, as well as Marx and Engels.

Aberhart, incidentally, fits the model of so many prophets and messiahs whom researchers have classed as « semi-intellectuals ». Aberhart was gifted with native shrewdness, and he was a competent if authoritarian and dogmatic teacher of grammar and arithmetic ; but he was almost totally ignorant of the economic and political world.

^a Those who knew him well claim that until he took up Social Credit he had no real interest in public affairs. He was, it is true, preoccupied with the politics of the

(12) N. COHN, *op. cit.*, p. 30 ; LANSTERVAAR, *op. cit.*, p. 245. Cf. the comments of David ABERLE, « A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millenarian and other Cult Movements », in TUNNIP, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-214.

Israelites and the economics of the New Jerusalem; but his concern with the contemporary scene was wholly in terms of its relationship to the prophecies of Daniel. Thus he knew the exact location of Armageddon, but nothing of Czechoslovakia. Dates were meaningless unless they referred to, say, the Second Coming * (13).

His powerful but narrow mind was attracted by a theory which promised a quick and simple remedy to complex problems. From the pulpit, Aberhart had preached a single remedy, the grace of God; it was easy for him to see Social Credit as the economic panacea.

4. *Social Basis.*

While not limited to a single class in the Marxian sense, millenarian movements are typically « plebeian » in character, i.e. they mobilize the less privileged strata of society against the wealthier, the more educated, and the more powerful, who in turn oppose the movement, often dismissing it contemptuously (14). This was precisely the situation in Alberta. Aberhart and his outlandish « funny money » doctrines were ridiculed by the newspaper editorialists, the university professors, the lawyers, the established political parties, and spokesmen for business. Because of this consensus in the upper strata of Alberta that Social Credit was an absurdity, and because these same strata controlled the institutional media of public opinion, the news of Aberhart's smashing electoral victory came as a surprise to many observers who were not closely attuned to the popular mood. Aberhart's movement was, in North American terminology, « grass-roots » or « populist »; and it took the established order by surprise.

5. *Magic and Irrationality.*

Worsley has demonstrated that the chiliastic belief in an imminent supernatural intervention into human affairs, while appearing irrational from the outside, is actually quite logical within its cultural context (15). The Melanesian native sees that, although the white man enjoys unimaginable wealth brought from across the sea, he never seems to work, at least in an understandable, physical way. What is more natural than to suppose that a means exists, if it can only be found, to divert the white man's « cargo » to the native? The conclusion, since it is based on unrealistic premises, eventually leads to the invocation of magical means of transformation. Yet it was reached in quite a logical way, given the limited cultural premises of the native.

Similar considerations apply to the case of Social Credit in Alberta. From the standpoint of orthodox economists, Social Credit is easily shown to be nonsense. Yet most men, even educated men, are not economists; and in any event, economic theory is not without its own deficiencies (even more so in the 1930's).

(13) J. A. LIVING, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Douglas referred to Aberhart as « lacking either political experience or social sophistication » (*The Alberta Experiment*, p. 25).

(14) The social composition of millenarian movements has been discussed at length by several authors, e.g. Cohn, Worsley, Mühlmann. As one might expect, the theme of class conflict is very important in the analyses of Communist students of millenarianism. Cf. the work of Bernhard Törrén, *Das kommunistische Reich des Friedrichs* (Berlin, 1964); Martin Eranosson and Ernst Wernén, *Ideologische Probleme des millenaristischen Plebejerismus* (Berlin, 1966); Antonio Moscaro and Maria Pierini, *Ritella religiosa nella Campagna* (Rome, 1965).

(15) P. WORSLEY, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-280.

Social Credit, moreover, is not entirely fallacious as economic theory. It is rather a distorted and oversimplified anticipation of the modern analysis of the role of credit in the economy. In the desperation of the Depression, it is no surprise that men would be drawn to a doctrine which plausibly promised an age of abundance. Yet if the thought process is intelligible, the result is still akin to magical belief. The Albertan waiting for his \$ 25.00 a month is not so different from the native waiting for a delivery of cargo. Both are seeking deliverance from the native and inequities of the world which men did not create but in which they must live. Both respond to the evanescent lure of an age without tears, when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away' (Rev. 21 : 4).

6. *Syncretism with Christian Pre-Millennialism.*

Aberhart was a fundamentalist Protestant lay preacher. His creed included the literal validity of the Scriptures; the Trinity; The Immaculate Conception, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and Ascension; the working of the Holy Ghost; eternal salvation and damnation; the visible Second Coming, millennium, and resurrection of the dead (16). Such a fundamentalist brand of Christianity was popular on the prairies; its very dogmatism was a source of certainty in the hard and uncertain life of the farmer (17). As a literal believer, Aberhart had to be chiliastic, just as the New Testament is chiliastic, but his convictions about the millennium had subtle implications which must be described further. Aberhart accepted an elaborate periodization of history based on Charles Morgan, *Busy Peoples' Bible Course*, which was tied to the Scofield interpreter's Bible (18). In this context, we need not discuss the complexities of this system of ages, covenants, dispensations, and kingdoms, but the whole points to the culmination of history in the Second Coming, followed by a millennium. Aberhart clung firmly to this pre-millennial eschatology, and made it the subject of numerous lectures and pamphlets (19). Furthermore, he interpreted contemporary events in prophetic terms as signs of the approaching end of history. Thus he was interested in the Zionist movement because the return of the Jews to the Holy Land was necessary for the Last Things to transpire. He was impressed by the wide business recession immediately after World War I because he felt it to be a sign of even greater events in the divine economy. But in all his prophetic speculations (and his speeches and pamphlets on the subject run to hundreds of pages), Aberhart never committed himself to a specific date for the Last Days. He repeatedly said they could be expected shortly, e.g.: 'My friend, you do well to consider your ways as you see events gathering upon us, which point unmistakably to the preparation that comes before the end. Are you ready to be called to

(16) Adapted from the 'Doctrinal Basis of the Institute' in the *Bulletin of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute*. 'Immaculate Conception' refers to the birth of Jesus, not Mary.

(17) Cf. W. E. MANN, *Seed, Cult and Church in Alberta* (Toronto, 1955), p. 158.

Reference Bible (new edition, 1967; first published 1899).

(19) These will be found at the library of the Glenbow Institute in Calgary. A few titles will suggest the subject matter: *The Zionist Movement, or the Restoration of the Hebrews to Palestine*; *The Antichrist: Individual or System*; *The Present Eastern Question in the Light of Prophecy*.

account ? » (20). But he never made his predictions specific enough to be falsified. The result was a disjunction between theory and practice. In his religious preaching, Aberhart fostered a millenarian frame of mind while avoiding any of the typical millenarian forms of behaviour. He never advised his followers to leave their jobs and give their possessions to the poor, or to engage in antinomian practices as a way of rejecting the present order. His advice was rather to remain an integral part of the existing world while being spiritually apart and ready for the Coming. Aberhart himself was employed as principal of a high school even in the years of his most intense activity as a lay preacher. His doctrine may be described as a « suspended chiliasm », in which anticipation of the End is deliberately cultivated but is divorced from behavioural consequences.

I suggest that Aberhart's background of Christian chiliasm predisposed him towards accepting a secular millenarian creed like Social Credit. Aberhart was used to thinking in intimate detail about the dramatic and calamitous events of the Last Days — the « rapture » of the Saints (I *Thess.* 4 : 15-17), the appearance of the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, and the Second Coming — followed by a kingdom in which all problems would be resolved. Such a mode of thought is analogous to the Social Credit doctrine, according to which the world's present evils, namely wars and depressions, are caused by the international financial conspiracy, and will disappear when the conspiracy is overthrown. The two systems of thought are quite different in content but structurally similar, and Aberhart found no difficulty in believing both at the same time, so much so that his brand of Social Credit was described by one contemporary observer as « Douglas on the one hand and the Holy Ghost on the other » (21). One might also observe that the secular millenarian expectation of Social Credit is « suspended » in the same way as Aberhart's Christian chiliasm. The follower of Social Credit is under no injunction to leave the world and set up a scientific community *à la* Walden II, nor to make a violent revolution. He is supposed to preach the theory to the unpersuaded, relying on the self-evident truth of its tenets to speed its ultimate adoption by government. In behavioural terms, belief in Social Credit confers no obligations which put one outside the bounds of legality. The theory is radical but the behavioural consequences are conventional, as in Aberhart's earlier Christian chiliasm.

CONCLUSION:

This brief case study suggests that within modern societies, severe stress and the resulting disorientation can produce phenomena resembling the millenarian movements of more primitive peoples. Even though the conditions of modern secular life are vastly different from the tribal level of development, the human reaction to adversity can take similar forms. A millennial creed can be built from the half-digested fragments of modern science as easily as from religious myths. Such developments are not only marginal to society, like the Flying Saucer Cult described in Festinger's classic *When Prophecy Fails* (22); they can, like the Social Credit League in Alberta, become socially dominant and even take control of the political system. Further efforts in research should be given

(20) *The Present Eastern Question* (1922).

(21) Cited in Harold Schultz, « Portrait of a Premier: William Aberhart », *Canadian Historical Review* 45 (1964), p. 198.

(22) Leon Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis, 1956).

to examining other possibilities, such as Bolshevism and Fascism, which have already been suggested by Norman Cohn (23). In addition, it would be desirable not only to describe and classify such modern, secular millenarian movements, but to investigate their interconnection with larger social processes, as anthropologists have begun to do for primitive millenarianism. Thus we can hope to gain a better understanding of the « irrational » components of modern political mass behaviour (24). A social science which persists in treating political ideologies only as misunderstood and popularized theories cannot go beyond the superficial level. The thirst for cosmic renewal is as much evident in modern systems of belief as in the eschatological myths of primitive peoples.

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(23) Cf. COHN, *op. cit.*, p. 309. * It can be shown (...) that the ideologies of Communism and Nazism, dissimilar though they are in many respects, are both heavily indebted to that very ancient body of beliefs which constituted the popular apocalyptic lore of Europe *.

(24) I do not wish to give the impression that no work along this line has been done. Henri Desroche, for example, has suggested « l'existence, entre la Réforme et le socialisme, d'un élanon socioreligieux, relativement homogène, structuré par une attente d'un millénaire, d'un élanon même fondé sur une interprétation tant du christianisme primitif que des christianismes « Archétypes de sociologie des religions », 8 (1959), p. 45). In his comparative study *Chiliasmus und Nativismus*, Mühlmann has treated modern ideologies as comparable to religious chiliasm, although in many instances he has assumed what needs to be proven. Sociologists concerned with modern mass movements have sometimes noted correspondence with millenarian phenomena, e.g. William KORNYAUZER, *Politics of Mass Society* (New York, 1959), *passim*. But there is still a need for an overall study of the question.