

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

It was about this time I received disquieting news from Premier Manning. The acting Minister of Economic Affairs, in my absence, was the Honourable N. E. Tanner, Minister of Lands and Mines. It was to him that the Deputy Minister, Mr. L. D. Byrne, would have to report the various operations of the Department of Economic Affairs and again it was he from whom the Deputy Minister would receive instructions. Mr. Byrne was still the Technical Adviser to the Social Credit Board and Mr. A. V. Bourcier, as Chairman of the Board, would work in close contact with Mr. Byrne. This, then, was the chain of command.

I received a telegram from Premier Manning informing me that the government, upon the recommendation of Mr. Tanner, had found it necessary to ask for Mr. Byrne's resignation and pointing out that as Mr. Ansley, Minister of Education, and previously Chairman of the Social Credit Board, had supported the recommendations of Mr. Byrne to the Cabinet, it had become necessary for the Premier to ask for his resignation also. Two or three days later a letter arrived from the Premier verifying the telegram and explaining that it was obvious that a conflict of policy existed between Messrs. Byrne and Ansley on the one hand and the remainder of the Cabinet on the other.

Naturally, this news was, to say the least, disconcerting to me, as I had absolute faith both in the knowledge and integrity of Mr. Byrne and Mr. Ansley. I was sure that any recommendations which would be made would be made in good faith and entirely in keeping with Social Credit policy, but because I had not seen the Byrne report and its recommendations, I was certainly in no position to know what stand I might have taken personally had I been in Edmonton at that time.

I must say that I felt sorry for both these men, as I knew that both were dedicated to the Social Credit cause. I believed Mr. Manning also to be so dedicated, but I could not say that my impressions of the Honourable N. E. Tanner were the same. I had never heard him make a speech which could be construed as a Social Credit speech, but had, in fact, on more than one occasion actually cringed as I listened to his espousal of programs at complete variance with Social Credit ideas, while being labelled by him as Social Credit. This is not to be construed as a criticism of Mr. Tanner the man, as I had, apart from his lack of knowledge of what Social Credit is all about, admired him. A high-ranking official of the Mormon Church, he was in all regards to me a Christian and a perfect gentleman.

It disturbed me, however, after my return to Edmonton, to learn that Mr. Tanner had visited the home of Mr. Byrne, and called him from his bed where he was suffering from a bad case of flu, to inform him that the Government was no longer desirous of his services. It seemed to me that a man who had given up what undoubtedly were prospects of a successful and lucrative business career in England and who had come to Alberta to render assistance to a strife-torn Social Credit government at nothing more than a subsistence allowance of twelve dollars per day and who had become a close confidante of Premier Aberhart, had risen to the post of Deputy Minister and had proven that his adherence to Social Credit was uppermost, was worthy of more considerate treatment.

This episode had come to the notice of the British papers, the February 22 issue of the *Sunday Times* of London reporting as follows: "Sacking in Alberta. The Premier of Alberta, Mr. E. C. Manning, announced yesterday," say Reuters, "that Mr. L. D. Byrne, British-born Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Mr. Earl Ansley, Education Minister, had been dismissed from office because their policies 'were at variance' with those of the Province's Social Credit Government."

Social Crediters are unalterably opposed to Socialism, knowing that, under a program of Socialism, individual freedom is reduced to a minimum. Without knowing specifically what recommendations had been made to the government by Mr. Byrne, from my long association with him I was sure that he would recommend that the government should back away from programs already in effect which were socialistic in their concept and would recommend that we practise to the nth degree that which we preach: namely, the encouragement and development of private and free enterprise with a correction of the abuses which over the years had been permitted to creep in.

It was not until after my return in mid-March that I realized what a furore had been caused by the Byrne report. Mr. Floyd Baker, an original member of the Social Credit Board, had tendered his resignation in early January, leaving the Board reduced to a membership of three, A. V. Bourcier, Chairman, N. B. James, Secretary, and William Tomy, member. The report prepared by these three members was based upon that of Mr. Byrne and the result was that the Cabinet had apparently already decided that the Social Credit Board had outlived its usefulness and that it, too, should be abolished.

Both these reports emphasized the need for the Provincial government and the Federal government to be aware of the onslaught of socialistic policies throughout Canada and certainly looking back on those reports today, any fair-minded reader is bound to agree that though some portions were frightening in their aspects, we have lived to see brought to fruition the socialistic policies they foresaw.

In this connection the Byrne report had this to say:

"Shortly after the end of the war, socialist governments were strongly entrenched in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand; governments pursuing socialist policies were in power in Canada and the U.S.A.; half of Europe was under a Communist reign of terror while unstable but strongly socialist governments controlled most of the remainder of that Continent. Communism was being openly advocated and favorably publicized in the nominally democratic countries where powerful Communist fifth-columns were being organized, aided by under-cover Communist organizations. World scarcity has been promoted and the attack against the British Commonwealth with the aid of the socialist British Government has been intensified.

"The Social Credit organization in the Province has ceased to be an effective instrument of action. This smashing defeat, with the loss of all the ground gained in earlier battles, has been inflicted on the Alberta Social Credit forces without any serious attempt at resistance or any counter-action being taken. This is the situation which exists and which must be considered factually in any submission concerned with the future of Social Credit in this Province and the rest of Canada."

Dealing, then, with the nature of the task facing Social Crediters as outlined in the Byrne report, he states the following: "The objective of Social Credit is to liberate the individual from the restricting tyranny of human institutions so that he may live a full and abundant life in the free development of his personality within a society which confers upon him the cumulative benefits of association. Such an objective stems from a concept of life—or more accurately a philosophy—which recognizes Man as a spiritual being created for a Divine purpose which he should be free to pursue before Almighty God. This concept of Life—expressed most perfectly in the teachings of the Christian Gospels—confers upon the personality of every individual a sanctity which precludes the right of any other person sitting in judgment upon him or thwarting the free expression of his personality. (The implication of any individual attempting to dictate and order the life of another is that he is usurping an authority which belongs to Almighty God alone.) A society based upon such a concept must be a free association of individuals each deriving the utmost benefit therefrom in terms of freedom to express and develop their personalities. In other words, the organization of society must be subordinated to the objective of personal freedom, and from this basic consideration are derived the principles which should govern all social organization."

The report ends with the following recommendations being made to the Government: "Unless the appraisal of the facts in the preceding sections of this report can be challenged successfully, the nature of action upon which the Social Credit Movement should be concentrating will be self-evident:

"(1) A full scale offensive should be launched, with speakers informed on the facts, to arouse people to the peril of the situation, to identify and expose the enemy, and to initiate effective counter-action against the policy of Monopoly.

"(2) The Movement should abandon the field of party politics and discussions of economic theory, in favor of a clear-cut course of action to mobilize electors for the purpose of bringing their elected representatives, and thus their respective political institutions under effective control.

"(3) The official organs of the Movement should pursue an uncompromising and outspoken policy in support of the foregoing.

"(4) In Alberta, where a Government pledged to the policy of Social Credit is in office, all available provincial powers should be used;

"(a) – to reform the electoral system so as to progressively increase the political power of the individual and bring representatives under the effective control of their constituents;

"(b) – to repeal to the maximum extent which is practicable, all legislation, order and regulations which restrict the freedom of the individual;

"(c) – to reduce taxation and make all taxation subject to the consent of the electorate concerned.

"(d) – to abandon all fields of business undertakings;

"(e) – to discourage the operations of monopolies and combines, and to encourage local concerns striving to operate against these;

and generally, in all spheres of administration to actively combat the policy of Monopoly and to advance the policy of Social Credit by increasing the economic and political power of the individual."

The Social Credit Board thus came to an end after eleven years in existence, and although I believe the work of the Board should have been continued, my blind devotion to Premier Manning overcame any objection I may have had.

As I have said previously, I met Mr. Aberhart when I went to Normal School and knew him later, while marking high school examination papers and still later when some of my grade eleven graduates from Rocky Mountain House went to Crescent Heights High School to take grade twelve.

Like thousands of other people throughout the length and breadth of Western Canada, I looked upon him as a man sent by God to better the conditions of mankind in those dreary depression days. I still believe this to be true. In the same way, I'd come to recognize Premier Manning and believed him to be so saintly and so God-guided that anything he did or anything he recommended to be done had to be right. Time out of number, entirely unknown to him, I had come to his aid in no uncertain way when I heard unscrupulous people criticize him, especially if they stated or even implied that he was a religious bigot concerned only with his own aggrandizement.

My Wesleyan Methodist background always came to the fore, as it did with my immediate family whenever a critical word concerning Mr. Manning was mentioned in their presence. Until her dying day in 1964 my dear mother would listen faithfully to his Sunday broadcasts and thanked God that such a man as Ernest Manning had been chosen to spread Christ's message of brotherly love in our time. He and his family were always included in her nightly prayers.

Although I regarded Byrne and Ansley as two of my closest friends, my adherence to Premier Manning and my belief in his infallibility were such that I was prepared to believe that in the long run his action would be proven to have been correct.

I was by no means alone in this assessment of Premier Manning. Every minister was aware of one of Mr. Manning's outstanding abilities which came to the fore time after time. This was his almost uncanny competence to listen to a discussion of a topic upon which he previously had no information but could follow a presentation made to him with questions that often astounded those who had made the presentation. All the ministers of his first cabinet had remarked one time or another on this ability and in my zeal to serve him, I had, in my own mind, compared this trait with that of Jesus who, though only twelve years old, had astounded the wise men in the temple in Jerusalem by this same characteristic and the depth of his knowledge.

I am sure that to many readers this statement may appear to be a frivolous exaggeration. There will, however, be thousands of people from coast to coast in Canada who will say that they, too, have looked upon Mr. Manning with the same degree of reverence and awe. I have seen, time after time, people who claimed to be entirely opposed to him politically, completely disarmed when in his presence, even though stating boastfully beforehand how they would "put Manning in his place." Time after time I have heard many men remark that while they themselves were in no way particularly religious, they were pleased and satisfied that the premier of our province subscribed to the religious views he preached. This aura of saintliness has disarmed on many occasions his opponents in the Legislature and I can recall countless occasions upon which a heated debate would be ended quickly in favor of the government by the mere expression of a sentence or two by Mr. Manning.

The old British adage that the king can do no wrong was certainly carried into the realm of Alberta politics to such a degree that the Premier can do no wrong was sincerely believed by thousands. I have seen this Manning magic working at the annual Social Credit convention year after year. Resolutions were often hotly debated while Mr. Manning sat passively in the front row, as though completely unconcerned, yet listening to every word. Always careful to impress upon the delegates that the decisions of the convention would form the basis of government policy, he was more astutely careful to see the vote upon any resolution was in keeping with government policy already decided upon. On occasions when the outcome of a vote was doubtful, a word or two from Mr. Manning was sufficient to assure the desired

results. Usually his entry into a debate of this nature was preceded by one delegate or another asking the chairman to ask Mr. Manning for his views. He usually entered such a debate "with reluctance" and reminded the delegates that it was, after all, their convention and that he and his cabinet were present to be guided by the convention.

These characteristics and abilities mark any man as a leader and, if used in the proper way, bring about nothing but good; on the other hand, these same qualities apply to a demagogue whose inner desires are contrary to those which appear on the surface. They can, therefore, be dangerous.

Upon my return from England in the middle of March, I set about to organize within the Department of Economic Affairs an Immigration Branch which would keep in close and complete touch with the Agent General and his staff in order that no immigrant sponsored by the Alberta government would have any cause for complaint.

In my many public speeches while in Great Britain and in my conversations with prospective immigrants in Alberta House, I tried to give a complete and factual story concerning Alberta and insisted that our staff in Alberta House do likewise. We did not minimize in any way those things our own people complain about, such as our cold winters and our spring-time mosquitoes and we certainly stressed the fact that the policy of our government was to try to develop to the full an atmosphere in which private enterprise could flourish, as opposed to that of the welfare state.

I chose as successor to Mr. Byrne as Deputy Minister, Mr. Ralph Moore, a long-time civil servant who had started work with the Alberta government after World War I at a salary of fifty dollars per month and who had, for a number of years, worked closely with me in the Provincial Secretary's Department as Superintendent of Insurance. He, too, was well aware of the hardships a new immigrant might have to meet unless proper arrangements are made for him, as he, I remember, served his apprenticeship in this country as a section hand on the railroad.

Another ex-British immigrant with a similar background was Mr. Walter Fuller who, upon his arrival in this country as a young man, despite his qualifications as a draper, found only pick and shovel work for some time.

It was to these two men I, as Minister, gave the responsibility of organizing a branch within the Department to work with Alberta House and arrange for the settling of immigrants as they arrived. Mr. Moore, as Deputy Minister, added to the branch three well qualified civil servants, Mr. Gordon Morris, Mr. John Ferguson and Mr. Ronald McLean and the fact that thousands of immigrants were successfully settled over the next few years is a tribute to the type of service they rendered. The success of the program to bring both immigrants and industry to Alberta prompted the *Edmonton Journal* to editorialize on March 21, 1951, as shown.

The public of the province continued to show their support for the Social Credit government, electing fifty-two Social Credit members in the general election of 1948, as opposed to a total of five in the opposition. New companies came into existence daily, increasing from a total of three hundred and fifty in the year 1948 with a capitalization of slightly under fifty million dollars to a total of nine hundred and fifty-six new companies in 1952, with a capitalization of nearly three hundred and fifty millions of dollars. 1953 was a banner year, when twelve hundred and two new companies came into existence. In this same year gross retail sales exceeded three million dollars per day. This was also the year when the number of holes drilled in Alberta in the search for oil and gas was so great that the combined footage would have made one long hole reaching in a straight line from Edmonton to Los Angeles, California. This search for oil and gas cost industries a million dollars a day and prompted an American acquaintance of mine to make the remark that Alberta had become the Texas of Canada and that he could see only one difference between Alberta and Texas, that being that Alberta was a bit more friendly toward the United States.

With this growing prosperity, it was no wonder that the people again on August 5, 1952 supported in no uncertain way the Social Credit government by returning fifty-one Social Credit members to the Legislature as against nine in the opposition. During the same time, provincial revenues soared to heights undreamed of a few years before and the government was able to pile up reserves for a rainy day, in addition to carrying out a pay-as-you-go program in every department of government.

In the 1952 election the Honourable N. E. Tanner did not seek re-election and his constituency of Cardston returned Mr. E. W. Hinman, later to become a Cabinet Minister, first as Minister of Municipal Affairs for about six months and later as Provincial Treasurer and while I did not always agree with him on

some things, I regard him as the best Provincial Treasurer Alberta has ever had. Mr. Tanner resigned from the Cabinet on September 16, 1952 in order to accept a position with an oil company, undoubtedly at a salary far in excess of that received by a cabinet minister.

The Department of Lands and Mines had been for a number of years a great producer of the Alberta government's revenues and Mr. Tanner, as Minister, was being looked upon almost as a miracle worker, as hundreds of millions of dollars poured into the Provincial coffers. In his public utterances Mr. Tanner could point with pride to these achievements and could, with no difficulty whatever, prove to the public that Alberta's oil policy had been devised for the public good and was working in their interests.

His was truly a glamour department, as was the Department of Economic Affairs, where I, as Minister, could also point with un-justifiable pride to the millions of dollars being invested in new industry in Alberta and to the satisfactory settlement in our province of thousands of excellent immigrants.

I often felt sorry for ministers of other departments which were anything but glamorous. The Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Highways, for instance, are always targets for the opposition, as any unscrupulous individual can, by innuendo, suggest that contracts are granted by favor or that "under the counter" pay-offs can be made so that a contractor may be the successful bidder on any construction project.

The Manning government had been for nine years free from such criticism, but following the election of 1952 rumors commenced to circulate that the government had over a number of years bought and later sold various properties and it might just be that government supporters had received benefits from these transactions. These innuendos and accusations were vigorously denied, as they certainly were untrue, nevertheless, they caused the government much concern and our term of office was reduced to three years when the Cabinet decided that only by a Royal Commission could an answer be given once and for all to charges of impropriety and wrong doing.

As is always the case, such charges, no matter how unfounded, are bound to harm the government and the election of June 29, 1955 saw the Social Credit membership reduced from fifty-one to thirty-seven, while the Liberals, who appeared to have spearheaded the charges, increased their membership from four to fifteen under the leadership of Mr. Harper Prowse, now Senator Prowse. The combined opposition numbered twenty-four, this being the largest opposition ever faced by the Social Credit forces.

Meanwhile honors had been heaped upon Mr. Tanner, not the least of which was an invitation to become a member of the board of directors of what was then the Dominion Bank. His acceptance on June 18, 1953 naturally was disturbing to Premier Manning and to Mr. Tanner's cabinet colleagues because as Social Crediters we had been unalterably opposed to the policies of orthodox banking. I well recall the comments often made by government members, all of whom failed to understand how a Social Creditor who condemned the financial system could ever become a bank director.

Not the least of these critics was Mr. Manning himself, who stated that while he could understand a bank inviting Mr. Tanner to become a member of its board of directors, he could not understand Mr. Tanner's acceptance, as certainly it would never be understood by the rank and file of Social Credit supporters.

The successful conclusion of the Royal Commission, however, which followed the election of 1955 put an end, for the time being, to any rumors of wrong doing on the part of the government. The election of June 18, 1959 vindicated the government in no uncertain way, as the Manning forces were returned to power, winning sixty-one seats as against four for the combined opposition. The Liberals were reduced from a membership of fifteen to one and the leadership of Mr. Prowse was brought to an ignominious end, the lone Liberal seat being held by Mr. Mike Maccagno of Lac La Biche, now a member of the Canadian Parole Board.

In every Federal election commencing with that of October, 1935, Albertans had repeatedly sent a good number of Social Credit Members of Parliament to Ottawa, varying from a low of ten to a high of fifteen out of a total of seventeen seats. They were joined after 1952 when a Social Credit government was elected in British Columbia by several Members of Parliament from that province. Under the aggressive leadership of Mr. Real Caouette in the Province of Quebec that province, likewise, had returned as many as twenty-six members to the House of Commons.

The first Social Credit Leader in Ottawa was Mr. John Blackmore, Member of Parliament for Lethbridge, later followed by the Honourable Solon Low who resigned from the Alberta Cabinet in May of 1945 to devote

full time to the Federal field. During all these years, the Alberta Social League took the lead for promoting Social Credit from coast to coast and the League's slogan "On to Ottawa" became known far and wide.