

**THEOSOPHICAL SOCIALISTS IN THE 1920S
OKANAGAN: JACK LOGIE'S SOCIAL ISSUES SUMMER
CAMPS**

By

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Bachelor of Arts, University College of the Fraser Valley 2002

RESEARCH PROJECT
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the
Department
of
History

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2005

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ABSTRACT

The religion of Theosophy was a significant influence in Canada's early socialist movement. Although the influence of Theosophy has been examined in the socialist movements of the United States and the United Kingdom, the work that has been done in Canada has been limited to 1890s and 1920s Ontario. The socialist 'heartland' of Canada in the early twentieth century was British Columbia and the influence of Theosophy there was profound. Theosophy cannot be conflated with the Christian social gospel, whose influence is well documented. By examining a series of political retreats co-sponsored by the Federated Labor Party and the Theosophical Society and organized by Jack Logie in Summerland, B.C. in the 1920s, these connections are brought into sharp relief.

Keywords:

Theosophy, socialism, British Columbia, occult, 1920s, religion.

DEDICATION

To Anne, who talks history to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to the Logie family for graciously opening their family papers to me. I hope that this portrait of Jack Logie and his place in British Columbia's history is true to the man.

It is traditional at this point to celebrate dead white men. I believe that I'll break with tradition at first to celebrate the work of some living white women – Joy Dixon, whose *Divine Feminine* has been a tremendous influence on my work, Alex Owen, who produced in *The Place of Enchantment* one of the most fascinating pieces of social history it's ever been my pleasure to read, and Anne McClintock, whose *Imperial Leather* stands as one of the most provocative intellectual treats of my academic career. In dead white men, Aliester Crowley, Karl Marx and Michel Foucault are uneasy bedfellows in my brain while living men like Joscelyn Godwin, author of *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Ronald Hutton, author of *The Triumph of the Moon*, Ramsay Cook, author of *The Regenerators*, and Callum G. Brown, author of *The Death of Christian Britain*, have all been great inspirations to me. I have mined ideas from a very wide range of sources, an embarrassingly large number of which were required readings in two graduate courses that I took with my supervisor, Derryl MacLean. I owe him an intellectual debt that I will be some years paying down. In addition to my intellectual debt to Dr. MacLean, I appreciated enormously his support during the trials of my graduate career, in particularly as the illness of two primary supervisors in a row required a

substantial redirection of my studies when they both withdrew. Mark Leier was inspiring in his passionate dedication to British Columbia's history and the history of ordinary people and his work to put the tools of historical research and writing into the hands of ordinary people.

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THEOSOPHICAL SOCIALISTS IN THE 1920S OKANAGAN

Our Theosophical activities must bring *mukti* – salvation, to the world of action; our work must set free the slaves who are crushed by work... the bondage which ties the labourer to a life of toil which debases.¹ – B.P. Wadia, Indian trade unionist and Theosophist, 1920.

The trouble over the lack of support of Besant College was that it was miles over the heads of most people at that time, but it bore remarkable fruit, notably among early CCF people, before the movement went “socialist.”² – H.V.S. Page, 1965

The occultist new religion of Theosophy played a key role in the ideological ferment within 1920s British Columbia socialist movements leading up to the formation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. While largely ignored in the historical literature, an examination of the Social Issues Summer Camps held in Summerland, British Columbia, from 1924 to 1929 demonstrates the importance of Theosophy in the socialist movement. The nature of the combination of socialism and theosophy, the intersection of this part of the socialist movement with other factions in it, and the significance of these camps will be assessed by considering the presenters, the content of

¹ B.P. Wadia, “To the South India Convention,” *Canadian Theosophist*, I, no. 9 (1920), 130.

² Letter by H.V.S. Page to Mrs. Wright, of the Fiat Lux Theosophical Society Lodge 15 December 1965, in the Logie family collection.

their lectures, and the attendees. The long-term impact and continuous involvement of Theosophical socialists in prominent positions in the socialist movement into the 1940s, particularly in the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, and the ongoing importance of their ideas will be demonstrated.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 and the socialist-led working-class uprisings of 1919 in Germany, Canada, and elsewhere placed the question of socialist revolution and the seizure of state power by the proletariat front and centre. Where was the working class going to go? In British Columbia, one response to this crisis was the development of the Social Issues Summer Camps, sponsored jointly by the Federated Labor Party and the Summerland branch of the Theosophical Society. Socialist activists in these camps examined a wide range of ideas and approaches ranging from Marxist and Leninist doctrines to labour union organization and cooperativism to the ethical socialism of Theosophy. The participants wished through this consideration to analyse the crisis and locate new approaches capable of revitalizing socialism in British Columbia.

One of the principal socialist activists responsible for the establishment of the camps was Jack Logie, a long-time Theosophist and resident of Summerland. This paper is largely based on the analysis of a collection of Logie's private papers made available to the author by the Logie family. In both socialist and Theosophical arenas, Jack Logie left a legacy of participation and written records. These are supplemented by Canadian Theosophical periodicals and other writings by *Canadian Theosophists* of the 1890s to 1920s and research into the careers of individuals participating in the Social Issues Summer School.

This study will begin with an overview of the secondary literature related to the Theosophical movement and its ties to socialism in Canada, followed by a look at the need to re-evaluate idealist and ethical socialisms. The next section introduces prominent Theosophical socialists of international and national repute, leading into a brief comparison of Theosophy and the Christian social gospel and an overview of Canadian Theosophical socialists. The remainder explores Theosophical socialist activities and developments within British Columbia, particularly the Summerland Lodge and Social Issues Summer Camps, as well as their connections to groups and individuals outside the province.

There has been no stand-alone examination of the history of Theosophy in British Columbia or Canada. For the period of the Social Issues Summer Camps the spectacular rise and collapse of the utopian Theosophical community founded near Nanaimo by would-be Messiah Brother XII's Aquarian Foundation in 1927 has been treated in two popular histories: Ron MacIsaac, Don Clark, and Charles Lillard's *The Brother XII* and John Oliphant's *Brother Twelve*.³ These provide some valuable insight into the Theosophical movements in British Columbia and Canada at the time as well as filling in context for the messianic longings expressed in both the Brother XII and Krishnamurti movements. As popular history, they are less rigorous than academic work, and they do not deal directly with the connection between socialism and Theosophy that is the subject of this paper.

³ Ron MacIsaac, Don Clark and Charles Lillard, *The Devil of Decourcy Island, The Brother XII* (Victoria, Porcupic Books, 1989); John Oliphant, *Brother Twelve, The Incredible Story of Canada's False Prophet* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

Theosophical influence in Canada's intelligentsia has been noted, particularly by Ramsay Cook in *The Regenerators* and Ann Davis in *The Logic of Ecstasy* and articles by Michele Lacombe and Ann Davis.⁴ Cook notes the early Theosophical connections of prominent early Canadian socialist journalist Phillips Thompson, but dismisses his Theosophy as incidental to his political positions.⁵ Thompson himself expressed the belief that the two reinforced each other when he said: "I am a class-conscious Socialist from the ground up and I claim that my Socialism is reinforced by it; in fact, I might go further and say, based upon the truths of Theosophy."⁶ Cook reads Theosophy as a variant of the social gospel strain of Christianity and thus reducible to its role as an agent of the secularisation that he saw as the key effect of the social gospel. Cook's reductionism does not take into account the vigour of religion in the world at the time, and the religious underpinnings of modernity. The collapse of atheist socialisms since his book was written and the importance of religion in movements of resistance and liberation from South Africa to Poland further undercut his thesis. More importantly, Cook does not address the fundamental differences in the theology of these two movements: the Protestant Christian emphasis on individual salvation and morality, which led to a moral obligation on the individual, and the Theosophical emphasis on group karma and evolutionary morality.

⁴ Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators, Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1985); Ann Davis, *The Logic of Ecstasy – Canadian Mystical Painting 1920-1940* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992); Ann Davis, "A Study in Modernism – The Group of Seven as an Unexpectedly Typical Case," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33,1 (Spring 1998), 108-120; Michele Lacombe, "Theosophy and the Canadian Idealist Tradition, A Preliminary Exploration," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17,2 (Summer 1982), 100-118 and "Songs of the Open Road, Bon Echo, Urban Utopians and the Cult of Nature," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33,2 (Summer 1998), 152-167.

⁵ Cook, 167.

In contrast to Cook, Lacombe takes into account the Theosophical ideas and their development in the work of some prominent Ontario Theosophical intellectuals, although she misses much of the extensive communication between these people and those in other parts of Canada. Carroll Aikins, for example, established the little theatre and theatre school at Naramata in the southern Okanagan Valley prior to moving to Toronto to work with Hart House Theatre in 1927.⁷ Both he and his wife Katherine were prominent members of the Summerland Theosophical Society branch in the 1920s and collaborators with Jack Logie on the Social Issues Summer Camps, and Katherine presented there in 1924, its first year.⁸

Ann Davis notes the connection between Theosophy and the arts on a broader scale. She acknowledges the Theosophical affiliations of modernist painters Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, and Frederick Varley of the Group of Seven and Harris's strong influence on British Columbia's Emily Carr. While she downplays the political and broader cultural significance of their part in the rise of a nationalist intelligentsia in English Canada in the 1920s centred on Theosophy, other historians have demonstrated their importance. Carroll Aikins, the Group of Seven artists, Fred Housser, Cecil Williams, William Duncan, and others had broader influence than the purely artistic.

These scholars demonstrate the broad significance of Canadian Theosophy in some places and times between 1890 and 1940. However, they did not extend their

⁶ Phillips Thompson, "Socialism and Theosophy," *Western Socialist* Friday 24 April 1903, 1.

⁷ Betty Clough, "Carroll Aikins," *42nd Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, (Vernon BC, 1978), 121.

studies to the depth and importance of Theosophical influence in the socialist movement. This paper builds upon their work to argue that Theosophical ideas had an ongoing influence in political life in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century, through a variety of socialist-based organizations.

However, historians of the left and of British Columbia's labour movements during the 1920s and 1930s have paid little attention to the connections of several of the key figures to the Theosophical movement. For instance, Peter Campbell's *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, in a section on Harold Winch, deals with the alliance and conflict between Winch and A. M. Stephen in the context of the early Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the Popular Front policy of the Communist Party, and the Winch-Connell battle in the BC party in 1937.⁹ Campbell does not point out, however, that Stephen, in addition to being a prominent Marxist intellectual and poet, was a Theosophist and head of the Julian Lodge (Vancouver) of the Theosophical Society in the 1920s.¹⁰ James Doyle's *Progressive Heritage: The Evolution of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada* provides short but fascinating analyses of the

⁸ *Labor Statesman* 15 August 1924, 5. *Labor Statesman* printed the entire syllabus, included in the appendix to this paper.

⁹ Peter Campbell, *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way* (Montreal, McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), 66-70.

¹⁰ "The Canadian Lodges," *Canadian Theosophist* 1, no. 1 (1920), 16, 2, no. 1 (1921), 16, 2, no. 12 (1922), 190. A.M. Stephen is listed as President of the Lodge in these regular monthly lists until the Julian Lodge merged with Vancouver Lodge in 1925.

literary and journalistic output of Thompson and Stephen, and he does not fit their Theosophy in with their socialism.¹¹

Mark Leier's *Rebel Life* documents the Theosophical and occult interests of Robert Gosden, an Industrial Workers of the World radical activist and spy for the Canadian government inside the labour movement, and hints that a number of other radicals were interested in occultism at the time.¹² Gosden's wife, Helena Hesson, was active as the librarian of the Vancouver Lodge of the Theosophical Society and in 1924 was nominated to run for the national executive by A. M. Stephen for her "activities in reform circles."¹³ She was elected and served for a term. Still, Leier sees Theosophy as irrational and offering "secret knowledge, intrigue, and excitement" but not as a viable alternative analytical framework for socialist theory.¹⁴

Social historians have frequently mentioned in passing the Theosophical connections of Helena Gutteridge, who was elected by the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation as the first woman alderman in Vancouver in 1937, and those of Phillips Thompson, but in most instances prominent socialist Theosophists such as A.M. Stephen, George Weaver, James Samuel Taylor, and Jack Logie are treated purely as socialists and the Theosophical content of their ideas and activism goes unnoticed. Ideological and

¹¹ James Doyle, *Progressive Heritage, The Evolution of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2002). His discussion of Thompson is on pages 34-5, of Stephen on pages 83-6.

¹² Mark Leier, *Rebel Life, The Life and Times of Robert Gosden, Revolutionary, Mystic, Labour Spy* (Vancouver, New Star Books, 1999), 111-112.

¹³ *Canadian Theosophist* 5, no. 3 (1924), 46.

¹⁴ Leier, 112.

personal connections that emerged in the Theosophical context have been missed. But these connections were not trivial and the influence of Theosophical socialism was significant.

Thus, an overview of the existing scholarship reveals a much more complex network of Theosophical organizations across Canada and British Columbia than any single source suggests. It also demonstrates a surprising number and variety of prominent male and female members active in socialist political movements, prompting the question: How did Theosophy influence the socialist movement in British Columbia?

Socialism was, and remains, many movements united by a broadly shared interest in social justice and the redistribution of wealth. The roots for this interest range widely from the materialist and Marxist emphasis on the presumed evolution of the material forces of the economy to the Christian and Theosophical ethical socialisms that recoil from the unethical assumptions and practice of capitalism. In the period covered by this paper, it was still not clear which of the varieties of socialism then current would become the dominant strain. It is a mistake of much socialist historiography to project the dominance through the twentieth century of Marxist or materialist socialisms backward in looking at the earlier period. Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks's study of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis, both thinkers whose influence was substantial in the socialist movements in Canada, Carpenter rather more directly into the Theosophical socialists, shows a type of politics centred on inner spiritual transformation as much as a change in the ownership of production. They see an "effort to relate subjective experience to practical action for a more equal and democratic society," that resembles the ethical

socialism of the Summerland Social Issues Summer Camps.¹⁵ Joy Dixon discusses the emergence of a materialist socialist hegemony in the historiography and the existence of an immanentist theology as an underling common theme uniting a wide range of issues in ethical socialism in Britain in the 1880s, a synthesis that persisted into the 1930s in Canada's Theosophical socialists.¹⁶

Removing the materialist socialist teleology opens up the history of socialism to other questions that are obscured by it. In particular, rather than seeing religious forms of socialism as somehow distorted by false consciousness, their impact and historical significance can be evaluated on an equal footing with their materialist cousins. Theosophical socialism followed through the utopian socialist ideals of Edward Carpenter, William Morris, and others in its belief that "the moral transformation of the individual was central to social transformation."¹⁷

Theosophical socialism was a worldwide tendency on the left, and the influence that it had in Canada was found in other countries as well. The flow of ideas through working class organizations and networks like the First and Second Internationals was supplemented by the flow through Theosophical organizations. In India, the founder of the moderately left-wing nationalist Congress Party, A.O.Hume, was a member of the

¹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life, The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London, Pluto Press Limited, 1977), 9-10.

¹⁶ Joy Dixon, *The Divine Feminine, Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 121-3.

¹⁷ Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 121.

Theosophical Society.¹⁸ Many other Theosophists were involved, including Annie Besant, President of the Society, who also served as leader of the Congress Party, and her deputy W. P. Wadia, the prominent trade unionist who toured Canada in 1922.¹⁹ In the United States, the moderate socialist Bellamyite Nationalist movement inspired by the utopian novel *Looking Backward* in the 1890s was strongly influenced by Theosophy and shared its moral revulsion at capitalist “selfishness” and its desire to dissolve the individual into the collective.²⁰ In the United Kingdom, Theosophists such as Annie Kenney, Grace Roe, and Flora Drummond were among the leadership of the Women’s Social and Political Union, a radical suffrage organization. Theosophist Charlotte Despard led the more socialist and less militant Women’s Freedom League in the 1910s.²¹ News about these developments, as well as speakers’ tours and circulation of publications, were arranged through connections made in Theosophical circles.

The same convergence of socialism, radical politics, and occultism occurred in Canada from the 1890s to the 1930s. Toronto’s Flora MacDonald Denison, for example, was an early member of the Canadian branch of the Theosophical Society, and an early Canadian feminist and president of the Canadian Suffrage Association 1911-1914.²² Her

¹⁸ Edward C. Moulton, “The Early Congress and the British Radical Connection,” In *The Indian National Congress, Centenary Hindsight*, edited by D.A.Low (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1988). Cited in Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 26.

¹⁹ Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold, Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998), 189.

²⁰ Arthur Lipow, *Authoritarian Socialism in America* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982). Lipow deals with the Bellamyite Nationalist movement in the United States.

²¹ Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 179, 185. Dixon deals with the Theosophists in the British feminist movements.

²² “A Comrade Passes,” *Canadian Theosophist* 2, no. 4 (1921), 57.

views on religion, marriage, birth control, and social class were more radical than those of most Canadian suffragists and she was forced to resign the presidency because of her support for the English militant suffragettes. She was a delegate of the Theosophical Social Reconstruction League to the founding meeting of the Canadian Labor Party in 1918 and for the next two years, she lectured for the Party on the poet Walt Whitman, an important figure and inspiration to many Theosophists and ethical socialists like Edward Carpenter, and also on the women's movement.²³

The Canadian speaking tour of the prominent Indian labour leader B.P. Wadia, sponsored by the Canadian Theosophical Society in 1922, is another example of Theosophical influence on the left. Wadia had represented the Indian government at international labour conferences and was a close associate of Annie Besant. During this tour, as well as lecturing to Theosophical groups and to the general public on Theosophical topics, Wadia lectured to the Independent Labor Party in Ottawa on "Indian Labour," the Toronto branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on "The Commonwealth of the Future: The Brotherhood to Be," and the Toronto Workers' Party on "The Labour Movement in India." In Winnipeg he spoke to the Fort Rouge Labor Forum and the Labor Church as well as lecturing in the evening on "The Spiritual Life" to large and enthusiastic audiences. In Vancouver he spoke to the Federated Labor Party.²⁴ Wadia's view of India's role in the Empire, seeking the status of

²³ Deborah Gorham, "Flora MacDonald Denison, Canadian Feminist," in Linda Kealey ed. *A Not Unreasonable Claim- Women and Reform in Canada 1880s – 1920s* (Toronto, The Women's Press, 1979), 47-70. Her involvement in the Canadian Labor Party is noted on page 69.

²⁴ "Mr Wadia's Tour," *Canadian Theosophist* 2, no. 12 (1922), 191. Ibid, 192. "Mr Wadia's Tour," *Canadian Theosophist* 3, no. 2 (1922), 25. "Mr Wadia's Tour," *Canadian Theosophist* 3, no. 3 (1922), 43.

“one of the nations of the great British Commonwealth,”²⁵ the position held by Annie Besant as well, was not radical. He argued, much as was argued by Canadian Theosophists, that “each nation has a culture and an art and a philosophical development all its own,”²⁶ and in terms of a “racial evolution in relation to national ideals and international associations.”²⁷

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York on 8 September 1875, with the original purpose of “the study and elucidation of Occultism.”²⁸ This later expanded into the three purposes of promoting an Orientalized version of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, creating a universal brotherhood of humanity without regard to race, gender, or religion, and continuing to explore occult ideas and powers. It sought to “investigate the hidden mysteries of Nature under every aspect possible, and the psychic and spiritual powers latent in man especially.”²⁹ The chief founding members were Helena Blavatsky, William Judge, and Henry Olcott. Founding members also included John Storer Cobb, later editor of *The Nationalist*, organ of the Bellamyite Nationalist socialist movement, and Charles Sotheran, also a Nationalist who was involved in the

²⁵ “Britain Will Lend Ear to Voice of Indian Empire and Grant Full Autonomy,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 March, 1922, 13.

²⁶ “Britain Will Lend,” 17.

²⁷ “Mr. Wadia’s Address,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 26 April, 1922, 4.

²⁸ H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves* (Adyar, India, Theosophical Publishing House, 1928), 121.

²⁹ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London, the Theosophical Publishing Company Limited, 1889 reprint 1962, The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles CA), 39.

founding of the American Socialist Labor Party in 1890.³⁰ The origin of many of the founding members in Spiritualism brought the concerns of women's equality, racial equality, socialism, and a generalized critique of Christianity into the movement from the beginning. For example, as well as Blavatsky, a medium, and Olcott, a prominent promoter of Spiritualism, founding member Emma Hardinge Britten was one of the most prominent Spiritualist mediums and publishers, and author of the first history of Spiritualism.³¹

The form of Christian Socialism that emerged in Canada in the 1890s was influenced by the writing of critics of Christian orthodoxy such as Goldwin Smith, Agnes Machar, G.M. Grant, and others.³² The foundation of Christian Socialism was the Protestant, more specifically, Methodist, Christian notion of the individual and the free choice of salvation as well as free choice of competition or cooperation, absolute ethical autonomy and a responsibility to others that stemmed from individual choice. Like the liberation theologies that emerged in Latin America fifty years later, they were centred on orthopraxy, rather than orthodoxy, on holiness (living in accord) rather than belief. The foundation of Theosophical socialism, on the other hand, is not individualistic.

³⁰ Arthur Lipow, *Authoritarian Socialism*, 218. (*New York Workmen's Advocate* 4 October 1890 cited in Robert Bills, "How the SLP Emerged as a Marxist Political Party," *People* 20 September 1990. A brief biography of Sotheran and his connections to Blavatsky and to radical, esoteric and fringe Masonic circles is found in Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994), 283-5.

³¹ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits, Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1989). This is an excellent history of the Spiritualists' influence in the radical women's rights movement in the United States.

³² Cook, *The Regenerators*, 8.

The fundamental beliefs of Theosophy, as outlined by Helena Blavatsky, founder and chief prophet of the Society, in her 1889 *Key to Theosophy*, included the rejection of a personal or an anthropomorphic extra-cosmic deity³³ in favour of a “Universal Divine Principle, the root of ALL, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of being.”³⁴ Theosophy was also explicitly occultist, concerned with the hidden powers of humanity. Training emphasized that willpower and the awareness of one’s divine nature were keys to informed action in the world.³⁵ Rather than praying to a god who may not care, Theosophists replaced prayer with good action.³⁶ A key belief was that of progressive reincarnation – the gradual perfection of all souls through numerous incarnations, influenced by karma.³⁷ Another was the belief in group karma, so that “the aggregate of individual Karma becomes that of the nation to which those individuals belong.”³⁸ The interdependence of humanity and the principle of distributive karma provided strong motivation to Theosophical charitable impulses and social activism because “no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting... the whole body of which he is an integral part.”³⁹

³³ Blavatsky, *Key to Theosophy*, 61.

³⁴ *ibid*, 63.

³⁵ *ibid*, 68.

³⁶ *ibid*, 70.

³⁷ *ibid*, 198.

³⁸ *ibid*, 202.

³⁹ *ibid*, 203.

Theosophists denied spiritual individualism on a fundamental level and were therefore inclined to embrace non-individualist and corporatist solutions to social problems. One example was the Bellamyite socialist “Industrial Army” of labour in the late nineteenth century. The Industrial Army was the Bellamyite reorganization of society on a military model in which the free association of individuals would be replaced by bureaucratic military organization of the entire population. This tendency was developed even more strongly by Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society internationally from 1907 until her death in 1933. Following along on the Platonic notion of a society as an organism, she argued that “all that tends toward integration will be recognized as of life” to undercut individualism.⁴⁰

The belief in reincarnation held that the consequences of a person’s actions in one lifetime could be felt by them through many other lifetimes. Theosophy held that because of group, distributive karma and racial destiny, individuals were linked morally to many others in a mutually reinforced web of obligations and responsibilities, whether they chose to be or not. It was not because of individual choice or circumstance that people prospered or failed spiritually but because of joint and cooperative decisions and actions.

Theosophists were distinguished, in comparison to much of Canadian society of the time, by a deep commitment to racial and gender equality, which was expressed through the functioning of their organization as well as their ideals. Rather than wishing to limit immigration based on physical race, as did the Socialist Party of Canada and others, particularly for Chinese, the Theosophists believed that immigrants to Canada

⁴⁰ Annie Besant, *The Evolution of Society* (London, Freethought Publishing, 1886), 2. Cited in Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 189.

were attracted here because they were already in tune with Canada's national destiny and destined to fit into it. Further, Theosophists celebrated, in an Orientalized fashion that denied the differences between the nations, castes, religions, and peoples of South Asia, the "wisdom of the East," and their Canadian organization had members and officers of various ethnic and racial backgrounds and both sexes. Their strong ideas of Canadian nationalism and the Canadian "race" were founded on the belief in a great future for Canada, growing out of the spirit of the land and the national karma inclusive of all immigrants.⁴¹ This form of Theosophical nationalism was not opposed to the prevailing Imperial ideal of England's leading economic and political role, but sought, through the ideal of Brotherhood," to produce a federated Empire, the ideal ultimately expressed through the Commonwealth of Nations.⁴²

Many Theosophists were active socialists, although they rarely produced writing that explicitly combined the two perspectives. One exception was the 1903 publication of a lengthy front-page article by Phillips Thompson entitled "Socialism and Theosophy" in the Socialist Party of British Columbia journal, *The Western Socialist*. Thompson discussed a blend of the two perspectives. "I am a class-conscious Socialist from the ground up," he wrote, "and I claim that my Socialism is reinforced by [Theosophy]; in

⁴¹ Examples of this mystical and aesthetic approach to nationalism abound in theosophical writing of the time, Albert Smythe, "The T.S. in Canada," *Canadian Theosophist* 4, no. 11 (1924), 161-2; Cecil Williams, "Canada's Place in Human Evolution," *Canadian Theosophist* 5, no. 1 (1924), 2-4; Arthur Lismer, "Canadian Art," *Canadian Theosophist* 5, no. 12 (1925), 177-179; F. B. Housser, "Some Thoughts on National Consciousness," *Canadian Theosophist* 8, no. 5 (1927), 81-83 and *A Canadian Art Movement, The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1926).

⁴² Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*. 186. Viswanathan, in her discussion of the career of Annie Besant in chapter six, fits the various shifts and "conversions" of Besant into the social currents of the time and argues that Besant's Theosophy was ultimately an Imperial and racist project. This is in sharp contrast to Joy Dixon, who sees Theosophy as more tied to anti-Imperialist and radical currents in India and elsewhere.

fact, I might go further and say, based upon the truths of Theosophy.” He concluded that “we have not got Socialism simply because so far we haven’t wanted it and don’t deserve it. Just as soon as we do want it, and deserve it – but not before – it will come.”⁴³ He also condemned both materialists and those who believed in self-abasement and religious submission as spiritually and politically mistaken. For Thompson the movement toward socialism began with the moral development of individuals away from selfishness and the emergence of natural socialists. These ideas were later developed more thoroughly in the racial theories of theosophy, with social evolution involving biological evolution guided by spiritual forces.⁴⁴

Theosophical socialists did not form a single organized faction within either the Theosophical Society or the socialist movement. As individuals influenced by Blavatsky’s ideas of social karma and non-individualist philanthropy, they could best be described as an ideological tendency of some importance in both Theosophy and socialism of this period, which was sometimes expressed through group efforts. When the Canadian Socialist League was founded in August 1894, six of the eight founding officers were members of the Theosophical Society: W.J. Watson, M. Simpson, C. Armstrong, Leila A. Davis, Phillips Thompson, and William Scott.⁴⁵ In addition, the Canadian Socialist League was one of the two principal partners in founding the Socialist Party of

⁴³ Thompson, “Socialism and Theosophy,” 1.

⁴⁴ Jack Logie, for example, wrote a letter to *Canadian Theosophist* describing the purposes of his project in which he said; “College will attempt to apply the Ancient Wisdom to the problems of modern life. On the economic and material side this will mean the study of Socialism and various phases of the Labor Movement as these will be dominant factors in the coming subrace.” “Jack Logie’s Proposal,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 7, no. 3 (1926), 53.

⁴⁵ “The Socialist League,” *Lamp*, 15 August 1894, 12.

Canada in 1904, merging with the Socialist Party of British Columbia. The Reconstruction Group of the Toronto Theosophical Society sent delegates to the founding convention of the Canadian Labor Party's Ontario wing 29 March 1918, including the prominent feminist and Theosophist Flora MacDonald Denison.⁴⁶ Thus, the history of socialism in Canada has included from the start the influence of the Theosophical brand of idealistic socialism. It seems only natural that the initiative was taken by some Theosophical socialists to foster discussion of the crisis in the direction of the socialist movement in Canada in the 1920s. It is also notable that the Theosophical socialists had a variety of ways of expressing similar visions: Phillips Thompson, for one, contributed a short-lived column to *The Worker*, the Workers' (Communist) Party journal, in 1922,⁴⁷ and in British Columbia A. M. Stephen served as a voice of Theosophical socialism in education and the arts.

The demoralizing defeat of the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919 sent Canadian socialists looking for explanations, inspiration, and new strategies. Because the strongest socialist groups in Canada, the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social Democratic Party, had been shattered by government repression and internal divisions, a period of rethinking and rebuilding was underway. Further, the Communist Party of Canada, founded in 1921, added a new dimension to the theoretical and activist mix and the Russian Revolution placed new urgency on planning effective strategies for the socialist movements worldwide.

⁴⁶ Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930* (Kingston, Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1968), 142; Gorham "Flora MacDonald Denison", 69.

One attempt to find a new way forward came in 1924, when the Summerland Summer School of Social Science was established by the Summerland branch of the Theosophical Society, principally led by Jack Logie and George W. Weaver, in conjunction with the Federated Labor Party local.⁴⁸ This was the first of a series of socialist and Theosophical summer camps that ran from 1924 to 1929, “to bring together students of all shades of progressive thought for mutual instruction, and to train teachers for the NEW ERA.”⁴⁹ These summer camps explicitly situated Theosophical ideas and discussion as part of the progressive universe of discourse inside the socialist movement. Although the attendance in 1924 was estimated in a hostile letter in the local weekly *Summerland Review* as “three dozen,” this was enough to encourage the organizers to continue.⁵⁰

Logie had already established himself as an important socialist in his region of British Columbia through his organizing efforts with the Federated Labor Party, the Arts League, and co-operatives. He had been a candidate for the Socialist Party of Canada in the 1907 provincial election and in 1924 for the Canadian Labor Party.⁵¹ He also was the driving force behind the Theosophical Society branch in Summerland, serving as its secretary, and he was a well-known public speaker throughout the region. He frequently

⁴⁷ Doyle, *Progressive Heritage*, 64.

⁴⁸“Among the Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist* 5, no.8 (1924), 123. Sydney Warren, “Odd Bits,” *Labor Statesman* September 1924; J. Butterfield, “The Common Round,” *Vancouver Province*, 9 September 1924, 6.

⁴⁹ “Summer School of Social Science – Under the Auspices of Summerland Local – Federated Labor Party,” *Labor Statesman*, 11 July 1924, 8. (emphasis in original)

⁵⁰ Autolycus, “Letter to the editor,” *Summerland Review*, undated, from Logie family papers.

⁵¹Information from www.elections.bc.ca/elections/electoral_history. Accessed 6 September 2003, 12 pm.

presented public lectures on the culture of the Okanagan First Nations, occult and metaphysical topics, and socialism, which were widely and appreciatively reported on in the local newspapers.⁵² The Theosophical Society was an important force in the intellectual life of the southern Okanagan, sponsoring regular lecturers and musical presentations. The lectures included Eugene W. Munson, a popular American lecturer, in 1920, Roy Mitchell on “The Crux of Occultism,” “Everyday Occultism,” and “The Theosophic Culture,” and B.P. Wadia, both in 1922, and A. M. Stephen, the socialist poet, who spoke on “New Ideals in Education” in 1924.⁵³

The Summerland camps were promoted enthusiastically in the BC Federation of Labor’s weekly newspaper, *Labor Statesman*. The 1924 syllabus was printed in full in *Labor Statesman* twice and announced that Rose Henderson of Montreal would deliver four lectures based on her recent trip to the Soviet Union. Topics included, “New Human Values,” “The Co-operative Commonwealth or Industrial serfdom – Which?,” “Russia, Yesterday and Today under a Workers’ Government,” and “Art and Education in Russia.”⁵⁴ *Labor Statesman* columnist Sydney Warren promoted the first camp in his “Odd Bits” column on 1 August and provided a substantial review on 5 September

⁵² George Weaver, “Fairies and Demons,” *Penticton Herald*, 31 January 1923, commenting on Logie’s recent lecture on fairies and the evidence for them; Autolycus, “In Fairyland,” *Penticton Herald*, 17 February, 1923. Autolycus is commenting on Logie’s lecture on fairies; “Labour Cause Presented by Speakers,” *Kelowna Courier*, 19 June 1924, 1; “Aboriginal Lore, Arts and Crafts,” *Kelowna Courier* 11 January 1924, 1; “Address to Vagabond Club,” *Summerland Review* 13 May 1927, 1 reports on Logie’s address on Theosophical ideas of social evolution; “Hidden Life of Masonry,” *Summerland Review* 18 June 1926, 1, reports on Logie’s talk on esoteric Masonry.

⁵³ “Official Notes,” *Canadian Theosophist* 1, no. 5 (1920), 73 for Munson’s visit; “Among the Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist* 3, no. 9 (1922), 137 for Mitchell’s visit; 2, no. 12 (1922), 192 for Wadia; and 5, no. 8 (1924), 123 for Stephen.

⁵⁴ *Labor Statesman*, 11 July, 1924, 8 and 15 August 1924, 5.

1924.⁵⁵ In the report in *Labor Statesman* there was very high praise of the first summer school but no mention of the less structured morning discussions,⁵⁶ while in his letter about the event to *Canadian Theosophist* Logie said that the students were eager to discuss Theosophy in the mornings and that “our influence keeps spreading all the time.”⁵⁷

Rose Henderson soon settled in BC and ran in the 1925 federal election as a Labor candidate in New Westminster.⁵⁸ She was a delegate to the founding meeting of the Independent Labor Party in September 1925 and active as a left wing “militant educationist and active co-worker with the Communist Party” until her death in 1937.⁵⁹ Henderson also was the Director of the 1924 and 1925 Social Issues Summer Camps.

Other main lectures in 1924 which stressed labour themes were “Building a Labour News Service” by C.B. Boardman and “Problems of the Farmer” by George F. Stirling. The program was rounded out with lectures on “The Relation of Greek Tragedy to Modern Drama” by Katherine Aikins and “Music as a Public Utility” by George W. Weaver. The 1924 camp was presented under the auspices of the Summerland local of the Federated Labor Party, and Henderson’s involvement the next year indicates a

⁵⁵ Sydney Warren, “Odd Bits,” *Labor Statesman*, 1 August 1924, 5 and 5 September 1924, 5.

⁵⁶ Sydney Weaver, “Odd Bits,” *Labor Statesman*, 5 September 1924, 5.

⁵⁷ “Among the Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 5, no. 8 (1924), 123.

⁵⁸ According to [www.parl.gc.ca / information/ about/ /process /house/ hfer](http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/hfer) accessed 15 January 2004 8,30 pm.

⁵⁹ William Bennett, *Builders of British Columbia* (Vancouver, Communist Party of Canada 1937), 146.

continued connection.⁶⁰ This mix of solidly left-wing topics and cultural discussion continued in 1925 with Henderson discussing religion and art in the socialist future as well as delivering a straightforward left analysis of capital and labour in the post-war era. The cultural and political, even the spiritual and political, seemed to fit together well for this one “militant educationist and co-worker with the Communist Party.”⁶¹ Her attitude was reflected in the general mix of topics discussed at the Social Issues Summer Camps – the church and social reform alongside discussion of Leon Trotsky, the present state of socialism, and the Theosophical world religion. A number of the others who presented or organized the camps were also active in the socialist political parties.

The camps attracted a number of prominent socialists, including J.S. Woodsworth M.P., who attended in 1924 and at later sessions along with his daughter Grace, later federal MP Grace McInnis.⁶² Woodsworth was familiar with the Theosophists, having previously lectured under the auspices of the Ottawa Lodge of the Society, as had his fellow Labour MP Reverend William Irvine.⁶³ Woodsworth, as a pioneer Labour Member of Parliament and later founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, was arguably the most important Canadian social democrat to participate in the Summerland

⁶⁰ *Labor Statesman*, 11 July 1924, 8 advertises the Summerland Social Issues Summer camp as “under the auspices of the Summerland local of the Federated Labor Party.”

⁶¹ Bennett, *Builders*, 146.

⁶² The syllabus to the 1924 camp, as published in *Labor Statesman* 15 August 1924, 5, does not mention Woodsworth. Logie is quoted in an undated clipping from his local newspaper in the Logie family collection as saying “Four years ago, Mr. Woodsworth, the Labour member from Winnipeg, discussed the idea with him [Logie] of establishing a Summer School, and the following year came here and lectured the first week.” And in a letter from H.V.S. Page to Mrs. Wright, of the Fiat Lux Theosophical Society Lodge, 15 December 1965, in the Logie family collection, “J.S. Woodsworth and his daughter, later Grace McInnis... it is possible that they were at the first session, and I certainly understood that they had both taken part ... they were both in attendance at the later sessions.”

camps. George F. Stirling, candidate for the Socialist Party of Canada in 1912⁶⁴ and later Co-operative Commonwealth Federation MLA for Salmon Arm in 1943-45,⁶⁵ spoke at the Summerland summer camp on “Problems of the Farmer” in 1924 and Socialist Party stalwart E. T. Kingsley spoke on “The Case of the Farmer” in 1925.⁶⁶ E.T. Kingsley was one of the most significant forces in the Socialist Party of Canada from its foundation to dissolution, a hard left Marxist and “impossibilist” who believed that reform measures were a distraction from the workers’ objective of replacing capitalism with socialism and his involvement in the camps indicates the range of left-wing currents represented there. Harry Neelands, Canadian Labor Party MLA for South Vancouver spoke on “Labour in Parliament” in 1925 and “Politics and the Workers” in 1926, while Angus McInnis spoke on “Empire Preference” in 1925, “The Present Status of Socialism” in 1926, “The Aims of Labour” in 1927 and “Labour in the New Age” in 1928.⁶⁷ Angus McInnis was a candidate for the Canadian Labor Party in the 1924 BC provincial election in Vancouver and again for the Independent Labor Party in 1928. He ran federally for the Independent Labor Party in 1930 in Vancouver South and was elected in Vancouver East for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1935, 1940, 1945, and 1949. He became the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation house leader in Ottawa and was a prominent

⁶³ “Among the Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 3, no. 11 (1923), 169.

⁶⁴ Information from www.elections.bc.ca/elections/electoral_history. Accessed 6 September 2003, 12 pm.

⁶⁵ “George F. Stirling Former MLA Dies,” *Victoria Colonist*, 9 November 1966, 14.

⁶⁶ Listed in 1925 Syllabus for Summer School of Social Science, in the Logie family collection and in appendix.

⁶⁷ Listed in Syllabus for Summer School of Social Science 16-30 August 1925 and Syllabus for Summer School Besant College 15-29 August 1926, 14 –28 August 1927, and 19 August –2 September 1928, all in the Logie family collection.

Canadian social democrat.⁶⁸ The continued presence of McInnis, in particular, is an indication of the importance of the camps as a forum for discussion among BC socialists, communists and social democrats and demonstrates the interplay between Theosophy and socialism.

As well as labour and socialist speakers and topics the main evening lectures over the years ranged quite widely from “The Religion of the New Democracy,” delivered by Rose Henderson, and “Thoreau, Philosopher and Revolutionist” by Jack Logie, both in 1925,⁶⁹ “The Present Status of Socialism” by Angus McInnis, “A World Religion” and “The Co-operative Movement” by Logie and “The Civilization of Tomorrow” and “What is Theosophy?” by Alice R. W. Hamaker (a Theosophist from Montreal and Secretary of the Montreal Lodge, who relocated to Vernon in 1926), all in 1926.⁷⁰ The following year saw lectures on “The Riddle of the Universe” by George Weaver, “The Religious Basis of Social Reform” by Rev. A.E.Whitehouse and “Canadian Ideals” by Walter MacRaye.⁷¹ In 1928, “Labour in the New Age” by Angus McInnis appeared beside “Theosophy and the Problems of Life” and “Why is Krishnamurti the World Teacher?” by Jack Logie.⁷² These topics reflect a wide-ranging search for insight into social problems and solutions, although with a distinct ethical and religious tone. Taken as a whole they demonstrate a

⁶⁸ The provincial candidacies are from www.elections.bc.ca/elections/electoral_history/toc.html Accessed 17 January 2002, 3 pm. The federal candidacies are from www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/hfer accessed 15 January 2004 8,30 pm.

⁶⁹ 1925 Syllabus for Summer School of Social Science.

⁷⁰ 1926 Syllabus Besant College. See page for an explanation of the name change.

⁷¹ 1927 Syllabus Besant College.

⁷² 1928 Syllabus Besant College.

cultural rather than economist approach to social issues, and the leading role in social critique and social change is given to artists and cultural figures rather than political figures.

Other Theosophists worked outside of politics and brought their own special skills to the camps. Katherine Aikins, for instance, who presented on “The Relation of Greek Tragedy to Modern Drama,” ran the Sunday school program for the Summerland Lodge and was the co-director of the Naramata Canadian Players Theatre and theatre school along with her husband Carroll. Both later moved to Toronto where Carroll took over direction of Hart House Theatre. The Home Theatre, a Canadian theatre with Canadian playwrights and actors, was built over the packing house on the Aikins’s orchard in Naramata, a few kilometres from Summerland. Aspiring theatre students came from Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton, and Calgary to study there, beginning in 1920 when Prime Minister Meighen presided over the formal opening of the theatre.⁷³ The Theosophical nationalism of Aikins was reflected in the founding statement of the theatre: “We may look for a Canadian literature to record Canadian achievements... for the service of beauty and for a true expression of the Canadian spirit.”⁷⁴ The rediscovery of Greek theatre was important for the occult movement at this time. Israel Regardie, who

⁷³ Katherine Aikins, cited in Betty Clough, “Carroll Aikins,” *42 Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, (Vernon BC, 1978), 119.

⁷⁴ Carroll Aikins, summer 1920, cited in Betty Clough op cit, 122 note 4. This statement resembles “What any nation owes to the world is a peculiar and unique accomplishment,” from the editorial “The T.S. in Canada,” *Canadian Theosophist* 4, no. 2 (1924), 162, “the creation of an idealistic national consciousness which is creative and which will inspire contributions of literature, art, philosophy and science to the world at large,” from F. B. Housser, “Some Thoughts on National Consciousness” *Canadian Theosophist* 8, no. 5 (1927), 82.

published the secret rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1937, also wrote about *The Bacchae* by Euripides as a ritual drama and a mystery play, in 1934.⁷⁵

There were also lectures delivered by prominent figures in other fields, in addition to the socialists and Theosophists. For example, Rev. A.E. Whitehouse, who spoke in 1926 on “The Church and Social Reform” and in 1927 on “The Religious Basis of Social Reform,” was a prominent United Church pastor who led the Penticton Methodist and Presbyterian church congregations into the United Church in 1925 and served as president of the BC Conference of the United Church in 1942;⁷⁶ Dr. Allen Harris, who discovered the 61st chemical element, illinium (now promethium), lectured in 1926 on his discovery and in 1927 on “Chemistry and Modern Civilization”; Walter MacRaye was a prominent Canadian poet and Theosophist who spoke on “Canadian Ideals” in 1927.

Topics for the morning discussion sessions included Trotsky and Annie Besant, public speaking, and handicrafts versus machine production, complete with demonstrations of weaving and pottery in 1928.⁷⁷

The broad range of intellectual and ideological influences that was considered at the summer school reflected an open and exploratory approach to socialism. This was a socialism that was cultural as well as material, spiritual yet without dogma, seeking the transformation of all of life, not only of the relations of production. The intellectual and political calibre of the people who presented at the camps, and those who are known to

⁷⁵ Israel Regardie, *Ceremonial Magic* (Wellingborough UK, The Aquarian Press, 1980), 85-108.

⁷⁶ “United Church pioneer pastor dies at age 94,” *Vancouver Sun*, 1 August 1978, A12.

⁷⁷ The complete syllabi are in the appendix.

have attended and participated in the discussions there over the years, was a measure of the significant linkages of these issues seen by the socialist intellectuals of the period.

Demonstrations of handicrafts during the camps reflected another significant thread to the socialism of the Theosophists, one which has survived to the present in the more lifestyle focused critical movements. Large-scale industrial processes were rejected in favour of local scale production and handicrafts. This tendency of Theosophy toward a socialism of cultural transformation is also in sharp contrast to the materialist and Marxist socialist preference for industrial organization, although it is in the continuous line of development from the ethical socialism of Edward Carpenter. Not coincidentally, Carpenter's writing was cited approvingly by some Theosophical socialists of this period, such as W.A. Deacon, the editor of *Saturday Night* magazine.⁷⁸

This theme in the work of the Okanagan Theosophical socialists preceded the summer camps. In 1921-2 Logie organized an arts co-operative and pottery studio to provide employment to his fellow socialists as a project of the Summerland Federated Labor Party local,⁷⁹ in the spirit of Carpenter and William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, an explicitly Marxist-influenced movement which took as its point of departure not the individual artist but the artisan. This current of thought looked beyond the structure of artistic production in capitalism to the element of artistic creation in all labour and the traditional arts of popular life, and beyond the commodity to the

⁷⁸ W. A. Deacon, "Edward Carpenter," *Canadian Theosophist* 1, no. 12 (1921), 182-3.

⁷⁹ "Arts and Craft Log Cabin is Opened June 1," *Summerland Review*, 9 June 1922, 1. "Development of Pottery and Other Handicraft Summerland Log Cabin," *Enderby Commoner*, 15 July 1937.

environment of everyday life.⁸⁰ This project was housed in the Log Cabin, which was built on land Logie donated, and which later came to be the meeting hall for the Summer School, affiliated with the Arts League of British Columbia. Logie's devotion to co-operative craft production was not simply aesthetic or limited to the practical purpose of providing seasonal employment during the winter months, although one of the objects of the Arts and Crafts League was to deal with winter unemployment.⁸¹ It was also based on his Theosophical principles, expressed in an unpublished essay in 1924 that argued that "according to Manu⁸² the use of large machines for private commercial purposes is to be condemned and discouraged" and "we have now reached the point in the machine age where its inherent contradictions are bringing about its collapse."⁸³ For Logie the crafts program represented both a rejection of the machine age and an act intended to help bring about its collapse.

Logie was not the only person involved in the Arts and Craft League who saw its purpose as expressing anti-mechanization and spiritual principles. At the opening of the Log Cabin as its headquarters, J. M. Robinson of Naramata said "present-day organizations were working diligently for the uplift of the race ... a form of religion for

⁸⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People, Resistance, Rebellion, and Jazz* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1998), 138.

⁸¹ "Arts and Craft..." *Summerland Review*, 9 June 1922, 4.

⁸² *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, John Bowker ed., (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), 615. Manu is the Hindu lawgiver to whom is attributed *Manusmṛiti*, the most authoritative Sanskrit legal text. Among other things, *Manusmṛiti* describes the caste system and the duties of each of the caste's members.

⁸³ Bhagavan Das, *The Science of Social Organization*, cited by J.W.S. Logie in "Social Sub-consciousness," (unpublished mss 1924) in Logie family collection, 10, 12.

the uplift of humanity, which expressed itself along these lines.”⁸⁴ Carroll Aikins was also involved in the Arts League branch.⁸⁵

Logie’s lecture on “The Civilization of Tomorrow,” delivered in May 1927 to the Vagabond Club of Penticton, probably patterned after Alice Hamaker’s lecture of that title delivered at the 1926 Besant College Summer School, is also illustrative of the way that his socialism was shaped by the occultist interests of the Theosophical Society. Logie argued that civilizations are shaped by the characteristics of the “races” which dominate them and that the rising and falling of sub-races accounts for social change. He argued that the “present sub-race is ... characterized by individualism, commercial competition, and the power of analysis. The sub-race of tomorrow will be co-operative, intuitional, and will synthesize instead of analyzing.”⁸⁶ He further argued that the increase in co-operative movements and the growth of socialism and the labour movements and other tendencies toward larger scale co-operation indicated this biological evolution was occurring and the new sub-race, with “finer physical and mental attributes” was emerging first on the West Coast of North America and in Australia. When challenged about what theory of evolution he based his ideas on, Logie responded with the Theosophical idea of progressive reincarnation: “the evolution of life as well as of form... a continual return to

⁸⁴ “Arts and Craft...” *Summerland Review*, 9 June 1922, , 4.

⁸⁵ “Unique Centre for Art League Is Provided By Summerland Friend,” 12 June 1922; “Form Branch B.C. Arts League,” undated (June 1922?) press clippings provided author from Logie’s scrapbook.

⁸⁶ “Address to Vagabond Club,” *Summerland Review*, 13 May 1927.

earth by the ego ... until the evolutionary course reaches the limit.”⁸⁷ This perspective is very similar to that of Annie Besant, cited earlier, and her associate B.P. Wadia.

Logie’s perspective here also demonstrates similar reasoning to Phillips Thompson’s statements in the 1903 article “Socialism and Theosophy” in the *Western Socialist*.⁸⁸ Like Thompson, Logie believed in the law of Karma, with the “group Karma” emphasis. This is one point at which the Marxist and occultist perspectives diverge – where the materialist perspective of the Marxist socialist sees socialism as implicit in the material progress of a society, the metaphysical ideals of Theosophy see society as a reflection of an otherworldly state. The fact Logie and others were able to continue to work for socialism while holding this view of social progress reinforces the polymorphous quality of socialism as an ideal. However, while Social Issues Summer Camps were aimed at bringing together disparate socialist activists and intellectuals for discussion, the joining of socialist and Theosophical influences was never seamless and it was developments in the Theosophical movement that ultimately determined the future of the camps.

In correspondence with *Canadian Theosophist* in 1926, Logie stressed the Theosophical content of the project and provided a clear statement of the way he saw Theosophy and socialism being linked:

The ancient school of Pythagoras at Crotona is being reincarnated in the World Theosophical University and Western Canada will have its branch at Besant College in Summerland BC. It will be an extension of the

⁸⁷ “Address,” 13 May 1927.

⁸⁸ Thompson, “Socialism and Theosophy,” 1.

Summer School... In its educational policy the College will attempt to apply the Ancient Wisdom to the problems of modern life. On the economic and material side this will mean the study of Socialism and various phases of the Labor Movement as these will be dominant factors in the coming subrace.⁸⁹

The synergy of Theosophy and socialism that Logie saw was not obvious to all of his fellow Theosophists. This letter produced a tart response from the Secretary of the Summerland branch of the Theosophical Society, who stated that “it should be understood that this movement is not sponsored by the Summerland Lodge.”⁹⁰ Due to political differences inside the Lodge, Logie, Weaver, and Edith Turner had resigned earlier that year to establish another Lodge, affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Theosophists.⁹¹ Their differences were also connected to divisions inside the international Theosophical movement between the supporters of Annie Besant, her more occultist form of Theosophy, and the messianic movement she was fostering around Jiddu Krishnamurti through the Order of the Eastern Star, which Logie endorsed, and the “back to Blavatsky” faction, dominant in the Canadian Theosophical Society, which embraced a more scholarly and less mystical and occultist approach.⁹²

In 1926, the Summerland School was renamed “Besant College,” to more clearly reflect the occultist leanings of Logie and Weaver, and affiliated with the Theosophical

⁸⁹ Jack Logie, “Jack Logie’s Proposal,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 7, no. 3 (1926), 53.

⁹⁰ *Canadian Theosophist*, 7, no. 5 (1926), 99.

⁹¹ “Among the Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 7, no. 2 (1926), 37.

⁹² “Back to Blavatsky” was the phrase current in the Theosophical Society of the time and the tension between these two factions of the movement informed developments internationally as well. The phrase is used, for instance, in a description of the General Executive of the Canadian Theosophical Society as part of the profile of “Mr Chalk,” *Canadian Theosophist* 1, no. 2 (1920), 27.

World University.⁹³ This also signalled a shift in direction toward a more directly Theosophical and less generally socialist discussion but prominent socialists continued to be involved in the activities of the Summer School. Although the Summerland Lodge of the Theosophical Society no longer sponsored the summer camps they continued, under Logie's direction, to be both Theosophical and socialist. The general tone of the camps shifted from 1924's strongly socialist emphasis, with six of the eight main lectures being recognizably left-wing, though many had a cultural tinge, to a roughly even balance in the next three years and a strong turn to a Theosophical emphasis in 1928 and 1929.⁹⁴

In 1926, Logie's lecture on "A World Religion" reflected the attempts of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater to turn the Liberal Catholic Church, an esoteric Christian church that was substantially a front group for the Theosophical Society, into a new unitarian world church.⁹⁵ This project was controversial in the international Theosophical movement and was rejected outright by the Canadian section of the Society.⁹⁶ The World University was to be affiliated with the "World Religion" and to be led by Jiddu Krishnamurti, the Messiah chosen and trained by Leadbeater and Besant. During the 1928 Besant College Summer Camp, Logie lectured on "Why is Krishnamurti the World Teacher?" and Rev. Arthur A. Anderson addressed "The Beginnings of A World University." By 1928 the socialist influence was considerably less strong with only Angus

⁹³ Jack Logie, "Jack Logie's Proposal," *Canadian Theosophist*, 7, no. 3 (1926), 53.

⁹⁴ The division of principal lectures between socialist and cultural topics - 1925 - six and six, 1926 - five and six, 1927- three and four, 1928 - one and eleven, 1929 - no explicit socialist content.

⁹⁵ Annie Besant and C. Jinarajadasa, "Circular Regarding the World Religion," *Canadian Theosophist*, 6, no. 9 (1925), 143-146.

⁹⁶ "Reply of the Canadian Secretary," *Canadian Theosophist*, 6, no. 9 (1925), 146-7.

McInnis, of twelve lectures, scheduled to deliver an explicitly socialist lecture, on “Labor in the New Age.” The report in the *Summerland Review* showed that the Theosophical, Platonic and mystical themes dominated the lectures by Whitehouse on Robert Browning’s poetry and philosophy, by Weaver on the origins of music, and Logie’s promotion of Krishnamurti.⁹⁷

In early 1929, Logie moved to Ojai, California to work with the Theosophical Order of the Star in the East and Krishnamurti, and he passed his Summer School along to George Weaver, his long-time collaborator. Weaver was at this point a more thorough Theosophist than socialist, although he later authored *Economics for Workers*, a series of lessons in basic Marxist economics published for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1942 and revised and reissued in 1949.⁹⁸ In 1929 the Summer School shifted from the original eclectic mixture of left-wing politics, art and cultural discussion, and a heavy dose of Theosophy, “to bring together students of all shades of progressive thought for mutual instruction and to train speakers and teachers for the New Era,”⁹⁹ to become a purely Theosophical summer school with a stated aim of “present[ing] a comprehensive view of human activities and destiny as taught by the great teachers of humanity in all ages, their teachings being known as the Ancient Wisdom.”¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁷ “Made Them All Think A Bit,” *Summerland Review*, 31 August 1928.

⁹⁸ Geo. W. Weaver, *Economics for Workers, An Analysis of Social Economy* (Vancouver, Boag Foundation, 1942).

⁹⁹ “Among the Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 8, no. 8 (1924), 123.

¹⁰⁰ “Theosophical Summer School, August 4-18, At Summerland,” undated newspaper report in Logie family collection.

syllabus now was heavy with topics like “The Ancient Wisdom,” “The Third Ray,” and the like, with no social issues or socialism included.¹⁰¹

In the same year that Logie moved to California, Krishnamurti decided to abdicate his position as Messiah and dissolve the Order of the Star in the East. His decision reflected his eloquently expressed belief that, “Truth is a pathless land and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever. ... Truth, being limitless ... cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path.”¹⁰² Krishnamurti’s decision disrupted the international Theosophical movement and encouraged the collapse of the World University, the Liberal Catholic Church, and the social issues summer camps in Summerland. Logie moved back to British Columbia and resettled in Victoria before 1932. The death of Annie Besant in 1933 led to her replacement as President of the International Theosophical Society by George Arundale. He reoriented the Society toward “straight Theosophy,” a more inward and self-transformative focus, and away from the political engagement that Besant had encouraged. The Society began to rapidly decline in members and influence, a decline that was accelerated due to the economic depression of the 1930s and the decline in the new middle class from which the Society drew many of its supporters.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ “School at Log Cabin Opening,” undated newspaper report in Logie family collection. This article outlines the syllabus, which for the first time includes highly structured morning discussions as well as evening lectures.

¹⁰² Jiddu Krishnamurti, “The Dissolution of the Order of the Star,” in Mary Cadogan, Alan Kishbaugh, Mark Lee and Ray McCoy eds., *Total Freedom, The Essential Krishnamurti* (Ojai CA, Krishnamurti Foundation of America, 1966), 1.

¹⁰³ Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 227-8.

When the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation began its series of Summer Schools in 1933, it drew extensively from the experience of Logie and the Summerland Federated Labor Party branch, particularly because many prominent members of the British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation had attended or presented at those camps in the past. They organized their camps according to the pattern used by Logie, including a discussion in the morning, hiking, swimming, or other recreation in the afternoon, and an evening lecture and discussion. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation camps began in 1934 and continued annually for twenty-one years, moving around the Strait of Georgia until settling into a permanent site on Gabriola Island in 1943.¹⁰⁴

Jack Logie continued to be active in the Theosophical spin-off movement centred on Krishnamurti, organizing Krishnamurti's visit to Victoria in 1932.¹⁰⁵ Logie was a founding member of the Victoria branch of the League for Social Reconstruction in 1932.¹⁰⁶ He remained active in socialist circles until his death in 1952. He authored "A Manifesto from Youth in Revolt" in 1932, which was adopted as the manifesto of the Young Socialist League, the radical youth wing of the Independent Labor Party /Socialist Party of Canada, which was absorbed into the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. This manifesto contained the Theosophically inspired Whitmanite phrase "the dear love of comrades" and invokes the vision of "young men and maidens as they sing lustily

¹⁰⁴ Judith Jane Carle, "Analysis of Member Education, A Study of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party in BC 1933-1961," unpublished MA thesis (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1982), 75-77.

¹⁰⁵ Jack Logie, "Krishnamurti's Appreciation," *Victoria Daily Times*, 11 August 1932, A4.

¹⁰⁶ Grantham, 209 note 13.

songs in the moonlight,” reflecting his continued ethical and idealist socialism grounded in Theosophy.¹⁰⁷ Ten years later, in 1943, Logie was the driving force behind the formation of the Victoria branch of the Provincial Civil Servants Association and served as its first president.¹⁰⁸ It was through Logie’s efforts that the Government Employees Associations around the province were formed into a larger umbrella organization in 1943.¹⁰⁹ He was awarded a life membership in the union in 1950, two years prior to his death.¹¹⁰

Theosophical socialist influence within the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation was also substantial through the League for Social Reconstruction, a Fabian socialist intellectual think tank with a number of prominent Theosophists as members or leaders. The early Fabian connections to Theosophy were very clear – Annie Besant was a prominent British Fabian in the 1890s and later the President of the Theosophical Society internationally, and the Theosophical Social Reconstruction clubs in Canada were the predecessor to the League that was so significant in the early Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. In British Columbia, James Taylor, president of the Vancouver Theosophical Society branch in 1920,¹¹¹ was also Secretary of the Vancouver

¹⁰⁷ Ronald Grantham, *Some Aspects of the Socialist Movement in British Columbia 1898- 1933*, unpublished MA thesis (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1942), 177-8. The full text is his appendix 5.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Maclean, *A Union Amongst Government Employees, A History of the B.C. Government Employees Union 1919-1979* (Vancouver, BCGEU, 1979), 30.

¹⁰⁹ Maclean, *A Union*, 39.

¹¹⁰ Maclean, *A Union*, 160.

¹¹¹ “The Canadian Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist* 1, no. 1 (1920), 16.

League for Social Reconstruction branch and later a candidate for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and Member of Parliament.¹¹²

Other British Columbia Theosophists in the early Co-operative Commonwealth Federation were Vancouver barrister E. A. Lucas, in 1945 a prominent member and candidate, who had been one of the Brother XII's followers and an active Theosophist both before and after his involvement with the Aquarian Foundation,¹¹³ Helena Gutteridge, the first female Vancouver alderman, and poet A. M. Stephen, President of Julian Lodge of the Society from 1920-1925, who was a member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation until he was expelled in 1937 for involvement with the League Against War and Fascism, a Communist Party front group.¹¹⁴

The ethically based idealist socialism of the Theosophical movement had a continuous presence and voice within the debates and organizations of the Canadian and British Columbian political left. The Social Issues Summer Camps represented a significant coming together of prominent intellectuals in the British Columbia left under the sponsorship of the Theosophical Society and the Federated Labor Party during the period leading up to the founding of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. The Theosophical movement was a factor in the early stages of the Federation, through the

¹¹² Grantham, *Some Aspects*, Appendix 15.

¹¹³ A.E. Lucas' was a candidate for the Executive of the Theosophical Society in Canada in 1920 ("Organizing the TS in Canada," *Canadian Theosophist* 1, no. 1 (1920), 11) and is mentioned in passing numerous times in *Canadian Theosophist*. His involvement in the Brother XII's Aquarian Foundation is treated in depth in John Oliphant, *Brother Twelve, The Incredible Story of Canada's False Prophet* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1991). His candidacy for the Co-operative Commonwealth Foundation is according to www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/hfer accessed 15 January 2004 8,30 pm.

¹¹⁴ Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, 70.

involvement of Theosophists in several of the organizations that came together to form it, particularly the Federated Labor Party and the League for Social Reconstruction. The continuing involvement and importance of several of the principals of the Summer camps in the BC left and labour movements, particularly Jack Logie and George Weaver, points to the continued relevance and importance of Theosophy on the left for at least a further twenty years after the camps' demise. Finally, these camps provided a model for the summer camps sponsored by the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, used in their internal political education until the mid-1950s.

Theosophical occultism and Theosophical socialism played a key role in British Columbia's political left during the 1920s and 1930s. They continued a strain of ethical and cultural socialism from Edward Carpenter, William Morris, and the arts and crafts movement in the British left. The story of the British Columbia left which speaks only of the materialist currents of socialism is incomplete. Further work on the intellectual history of the British Columbia left is needed to fully appreciate the Theosophical contribution, but it has been demonstrated to be significant.

APPENDICES

Syllabi of Social Issues Summer Camps / Besant College

The Syllabus for the 1924 Social Issues Summer Camp was printed in *Labor Statesman* 15 August 1924:5. The Syllabi for the 1925 through 1928 Camps were provided to the author by the Logie family as part of a collection of personal papers and newspaper clippings. The 1929 syllabus was printed in "School at Log Cabin Opening," an undated newspaper report in the Logie family collection.

Topics of the main lectures were:

In 1924 (Sunday, 24 August to Sunday, 31 August), "New Human Values" (Sunday, 24 August), "The Co-operative Commonwealth or Industrial serfdom – Which?" (Monday, 25 August), "Russia, Yesterday and Today under a Workers' Government" (Saturday, 30 August) and "Art and Education in Russia" (Sunday, 31 August) by Rose Henderson, "Building a Labour News Service" (Tuesday, 26 August) by C.B. Boardman, "Problems of the Farmer" (Wednesday, 27 August) by George F. Stirling, "The Relation of Greek Tragedy to Modern Drama" (Thursday, 28 August) by Katherine Aikins, and "Music as a Public Utility" (Friday, 29 August) by George W. Weaver. Classes in economics, social welfare and other topics at 10 am daily, children's story hour at 3 p.m., main lectures at 8 pm.

In 1925 (Sunday, 16 August to Sunday, 30 August), "The Religion of the New Democracy" (Sunday, 16 August), "The Art of the Future" (Thursday, 20 August) and "Postwar Conditions of Capital & Labour" (Thursday, 27 August) by Rose Henderson, "The Evolution of Man" (Wednesday, 19 August) and "The Poets of Revolt" (Sunday, 23 August) by Dr. W.J. Curry, "Ghandi or Ford" (Tuesday, 18 August) and "Thoreau, Philosopher and Revolutionist" (Tuesday, 25 August) by Jack Logie, "Labour in Parliament" (Monday, 17 August) by Harry Neelands MLA, "The Human Voice as the Basis of Music" (Friday, 21 August) by Geo. W. Weaver, "The Art of Public Speaking" (Monday, 24 August) by C.B. Boardman, "The Case of the Farmer" (Wednesday, 26 August) by E.T. Kingsley, and "Empire Preference" (Friday, 28 August) by Angus McInnis. "Impressions of the Summer School" was a symposium on the last evening, Sunday, 30 August. Morning discussion topics at 10 am: Marx or MacDonald; Annie Besant's "Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys"; Geley's "From the Unconscious to the Conscious"; Modern Drama; Woman in Modern Society; Irish Literature; Russell

and Stevens; George Bernard Shaw's "Back to Methuselah"; Latzko's "Man and War"; The Child in Modern Civilization; Leon Trotsky's "Revolution and Literature"; The Art of Public Speaking.

In 1926 (Sunday, 15 August to Sunday, 29 August), "A World Religion" (Sunday, 15 August), "Evolution Up-to-Date" (Wednesday, 18 August) and "The Co-operative Movement" (Thursday, 26 August) by Logie, "The Civilization of Tomorrow" (Sunday, 22 August) and "What is Theosophy?" (Wednesday, 25 August) by Mrs. Alice R. W. Hamaker, "Music as a Science" (Tuesday, 17 August) and "New Ideals in Education" (Monday, 23 August) by Weaver, "Element 61, Illinium" (Monday, 16 August) by Dr. J. Allen Harris, "Politics and the Workers" (Friday, 20 August) by Harry Neelands, "The Church and Social Reform" (Tuesday, 24 August) by Reverend A.E. Whitehouse, and "The Present State of Socialism" (Friday, 27 August) by McInnis. "The Future of Besant College" as a round table discussion, on Sunday 29 August. Morning Discussion topics: The Art of Public Speaking; Direct Exchange; The Political Situation in Canada; Industrial History; Tendencies of Tomorrow; Internationalism; Handicraft or Machine; Modern Drama; Annie Besant's "Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys"; Psychology of Labour.

In 1927 (Sunday, 14 August to Sunday, 28 August), "John Brown's Body" (Sunday, August 14) by Logie, "The Religious Basis of Social Reform" (Monday, 15 August) by Whitehouse, "Canadian Ideals" (Tuesday, 16 August) by Walter MacRaye, "Chemistry and Modern Civilization" (Wednesday, 17 August) by Harris, "The Aims of Labour" (Thursday, 18 August) by McInnis, "Inorganic Evolution" (Friday, 19 August) by T. Priest, and "The Riddle of the Universe" (Sunday, 21 August) by Weaver. . Morning Discussion topics: The Art of Public Speaking; Direct Exchange; The Political Situation in Canada; Industrial History; Tendencies of Tomorrow; Internationalism; Handicraft or Machine; Modern Drama; Annie Besant's "Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys"; Psychology of Labour. The collection only contained a partial syllabus, which announced that "either Prof. W.E. Duckering of Vancouver or Fritz Kunz of Los Angeles will be present, and other prominent speakers are expected."

In 1928 (Sunday, 19 August to Sunday, 2 September), "Theosophy and the Problems of Life" (Sunday, 19 August) and "Why is Krishnamurti the World Teacher?" (Sunday, 26 August) by Logie, "What is Music and Why?" (Friday, August 24) and "The God with Clay Feet" (Saturday, 1 September) by Weaver, "Labour in the New Age" (Monday, 20 August) by McInnis, "The Poetry of Canada" (Tuesday, 21 August) by MacRaye, "The Beginnings of a World University" (Wednesday, 22 August) by Rev. Arthur D. Anderson, "Robert Browning; Poet, Musician and Philosopher" (Thursday, 23 August) by Whitehouse, "War and Peace" (Monday, 27 August) by Russell Munn, "Community Life" (Tuesday, 28 August) by Adolf Schwenk, "Is an Ideal Religion Practicable?" (Wednesday, 29 August) by Jas. Butterfield, "Doukhobours – Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood" (Thursday, 30 August) by a member of the community and "The Problem of Youth" (Friday, 31 August) by Mrs. Betty Hampton. "The Future of Besant College" as a round table discussion on Sunday, 2 September. Morning discussion

topics included “The problem of statesmanship,” “world peace,” “The economics of Labour,” “theories of community life,” “the two paths, mysticism and occultism,” “modern phases of literature and the drama,” “the place of music in society,” “latest tendencies in poetry,” “new ideals in education,” “public speaking,” “common sense in healing and diet”.

In 1929 (Sunday, 4 August to Sunday, 18 August), Ancient Wisdom (Sunday, 4 August); Physical Man (Monday, 5 August); Emotional Man (Tuesday, 6 August); Spiritual Man (Wednesday, 7 August); Superman (Friday, 9 August); The Third Ray (Sunday, 11 August); Education (Monday, 12 August); Science (Tuesday, 13 August); Music and Drama (Wednesday, 14 August); Poetry and Literature (Thursday, 15 August); Philosophy (Friday, 16 August); and God and Man (Sunday, 18 August). The morning sessions were highly structured for the first time and the topics were: Natural Diet (Monday, 5 August); Handicrafts (Tuesday, 6 August); Psychology (Wednesday, 7 August); Nature Worship (Thursday, 8 August); Myth and Legend (Friday, 9 August); Evolution (Monday, 12 August); The Coming Race (Tuesday, 13 August); Bach and Wagner (Wednesday, 14 August); Whitman and Emerson (Thursday, 15 August); and Plato and Einstein (Friday, 16 August). Although the speakers were not credited in the printed syllabus, they were to include Mrs. Hampson, Miss Vickary, Miss Turner, Reverend A. E. Whitehouse, Geoffrey Riddehough, Russell Munn, Adolph Schwenk and George W. Weaver. The committee organizing it was Mrs. Vicary, J. W. S. Logie, R. Howson, and W. Simpson, principal G.W. Weaver and Secretary Miss M. Vicary.

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