

**SHARED DESTINY: UNDERSTANDING THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND  
CANADIAN MEDICARE.**

by

J.Z. Garrod  
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# APPROVAL

**Name:** J.Z. Garrod  
**Degree:** Master of Arts  
**Title of Thesis:** Shared Destiny: Understanding the Relationship  
Between National Identity and Canadian Medicare.

**Examining Committee:**

**Chair:** **Gerardo Otero**  
Professor of Sociology, Simon Fraser University

---

**Gary Teeple**  
Senior Supervisor  
Professor of Sociology, Simon Fraser University

---

**Karl Froschauer**  
Supervisor  
Associate Professor of Sociology, Simon Fraser  
University

---

**John Calvert**  
External Examiner  
Associate Professor of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser  
University

**Date Defended/Approved:** November 5 2010



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## **ABSTRACT**

How has Canadian Medicare become associated with Canadian national identity? Understanding the modern nation-state as a 'political community' structured to legitimate private property relations and understanding Canadian Medicare as nationally shared property, this study aims to reveal how Medicare has become the most emblematic symbol of Canadian national identity. By first providing (1) a review of perspectives and concepts for understanding the modern nation-state and modern nationalism, then, (2) an examination of the roots of Canadian national identity and the origins of public health care in Canada, this study argues that forms of shared property, such as Medicare, have the ability to provide a shared national consciousness that is above the otherwise private interests of disparate individuals within the liberal democratic nation-state.

**Keywords:** Canada; Canadian identity; Nationalism; National Identity; Nation; Medicare; Property; Capitalism; Health Care.

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, for planting in me the seeds of critical thought.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus:*

- 1. What am I trying to say?*
- 2. What words will express it?*
- 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer?*
- 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?*

**George Orwell**

There are few writers that produce anything of value without asking these four questions. Of course, these questions aren't always asked by the writers themselves, but are instead brought up by others; and they make an otherwise unreadable, and incomprehensible piece of work into something that, at the very least, makes some sort of tangible sense. To my thesis supervisor, Dr. Gary Teeple, who consistently asked the question, 'What are you trying to say?' I offer my humble gratitude. His unwavering patience with me as I struggled through the various concepts that appear in this thesis was of immeasurable value. As well, I thank my Thesis Defense Committee Members, Chair Dr. Gerardo Otero, Dr. Karl Froschauer, and Dr. John Calvert for their guidance, support, and interest in my topic.

To my parents, I thank you for all of your generosity and kindness during this process. It was you that – whether you knew it or not – kindled my original interest in understanding the world we live in, and for that I love you more than words can profess. To everyone else who lent a kind word, a shoulder to cry on, or simply a knowing glance during this sometimes-arduous process, I thank you.

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# 1: OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

Healthcare systems are the product of specific historical and socio-economic circumstances; they evolve, rooted in each country's political culture, in its value system. In that sense, healthcare systems are not easily exportable (Monique Bégin as cited in Kaplan, 2004, p. 23).

## 1.1 Introduction

In what appears to be the only *direct* engagement with the subject of Canadian Medicare and national identity, Michael Bliss (2002) begins with the following questions:

How deeply embedded is universal Medicare in the Canadian experience?

Does it express our core values as a society? To what extent does it flow from or shape our identity? How malleable has it been? How malleable can it be? (p. 32).

These questions are a good place to begin an analysis of something that has, at various times, been referred to as “the most cherished expression of what it means to be Canadian” (Romanow, 2007, p. 364), “the defining characteristic of [Canadian] society” (Lewis, 2007, p. 27), and “an evocation of the soul of the country” (John Ralston Saul as cited in Evans, 2003, p. 21).

Defined as “shorthand for the terms and conditions under which Canadians receive a defined basket of health services” (Campbell & Marchildon, 2007, p. 9), Medicare has somehow become a “veritable Canadian icon” (Resnick, 2005, p. 49), since the beginning of “two major experiments with

universal health insurance for Canadians: the plan initiated by the Pearson government in the mid-1960s and the Canada Health Act system put in place by the Trudeau government in 1984” (Bliss, 2002, p. 32).

The difficulty so far, however, has been accounting for Medicare’s prominent position within national identity discourse in Canada, given that most authors are simply content to assert this connection as fact, without analyzing it in any great detail (Angus, 1997; Cohen, 2007; Gregg, 2006; Resnick, 2005). While Bliss (2002; 2004), has provided a brief historical overview of the relationship between the two, he only digs deep enough to surmise “that the country’s approach to Medicare grew out of a set of particular historical circumstances relating to the evolution of our approaches to health care and the welfare state” (p. 32). Similarly, in describing the role of the Canadian state in “developing a shared national identity”, Tracy Raney (2009) includes Medicare as one of a number of attempts at “creating a pan-Canadian identity that could be universally shared” (p. 9). Such conclusions are certainly not incorrect, however, they provide little explanation as to *why* or *how* Medicare has become so strongly associated with Canadian national identity.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to expand on the general questions asked by Bliss (2002, p. 32): to understand *why* Medicare has become associated with Canadian national identity, and *how* this has occurred. Understanding that modern nationalism originated from the need to legitimate private property relations, I argue that shared property, in the form of national programs or services – in this case, Medicare – has the ability to provide a

shared national consciousness that is above the otherwise private interests of disparate individuals within the liberal democratic nation-state.

## 1.2 Method of Inquiry

In an attempt to avoid the pitfalls that are commonly associated with the study of such contested concepts as nation and nationalism (Verdery, 1996, pp. 227-228), I situate my analysis within the realm of political economy. While there exists debate about the general definition of political economy – with some examples being: “a holistic approach to understanding society from a materialist perspective” (Clement, 1997, p. 3), “the study of *the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources*” (Moscoe, 1996, p. 25), or “*the study of control and survival in social life*” (p. 26) – it generally gives priority to, by way of its characteristics, “understanding *social change and historical transformation*” (p. 27). This basic definition means that political economy encompasses the work of a wide range of individuals, from classical theorists like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill who focused more exclusively on “the upheaval that transformed societies based primarily on agricultural labour into commercial manufacturing, and ultimately, industrial societies” (p. 27), to critical political economists like Karl Marx who examined “the dynamic forces in capitalism responsible for its growth and change” (p. 27).

Political economy, then, as a field of study, varies considerably in its approach to subject matter. In order to come to terms with both the rise of nationalism in general, and its specific relation to Medicare in Canada, I employ

the materialist conception of history (also termed historical materialism) as set out by Marx (1994) in the preface to, *A Contribution on the Critique of Political Economy*:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness....The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life,

from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production” (p. 211).

This methodological framework, then, – referred to by Marx (1994) as a “guiding principle” (p. 211) – seeks to provide the historical context by which particular social phenomena (defined as superstructure) emerge by locating them within the conditions and contradictions that exist within the mode of production of a particular stage of human development (defined as base).

Although the conceptual distinction between base and superstructure remains a point of contention among Marxist scholars (Callinicos, 1987, pp. 199-207; see also Mills, 1971, p. 106; Williams, 1973), it is particularly effective as an analytical tool because, as Louis Althusser (1971) has written:

Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes some thing visible. What? Precisely this: that the upper floors could not ‘stay up’ (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base....Thus the object of the metaphor of the edifice is to represent above all the ‘determination in the last instance’ by the economic base. The effect of this spatial metaphor is to endow the base with an index of effectivity known by the famous terms: the determination in the last instance of what happens in the upper ‘floors’ (of the superstructure) by what happens in the economic base (Infrastructure and Superstructure, para. 38-39).

From a particular economic base (“the ‘unity’ of the productive forces and the relations of production” [Infrastructure and Superstructure, para. 36]), then, rises a particular “*superstructure*, which itself contains two ‘levels’ or ‘instances’: the

politico-legal (law and State) and ideology (the different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.)” (Infrastructure and Superstructure, para. 36), although the latter is perhaps better expressed simply as social consciousness (Larrain, 1991, p. 45).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, within this conception, the class relations that exist between people (“the sum total of production relations entered into by men” [Larrain, 1991, p. 45]) condition the forms of social consciousness that arise:

It is always the direct relation of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers – a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity – which reveals the innermost secret, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state (Karl Marx as cited in Larrain, 1991, p. 45).

As mentioned previously, however, these productive relationships (and thus, class relations) are determined by the predominant mode of production that exists within a social formation. Generally speaking, the mode of production of a particular stage of development refers to “broadly coherent systems – that is, communal, Asiatic, slave, feudal, or capitalist” (Teeple, 2000, p. 176) that are defined by their predominant form of property relations and their corresponding means of production (technologies, tools, materials, for example).

While it is common to treat property as things, the term is used here to refer “to a *relationship* to a thing; in this sense property refers to a right or claim

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted here that the superstructure itself is not “a mere passive reflection but it is capable of some effectivity” (Larrain, 1991, p. 46).

to the use and disposal of goods and services. This meaning of property, then, becomes synonymous with the meaning of right” (Teeple, 2005, p. 33; see also Armen & Demsetz, 1973, p. 17). Property, however, “is not a natural right but a deliberate construction by society” (Reich, 1964, p. 771). Thus, “any given system of property is a system of rights of each person in relation to other persons” (Macpherson, 1983, p. 3). As Teeple (2005) notes:

The set of rights or property relations that characterize a social formation find their source in the social division of labour. They reflect the ways in which people produce and distribute the means of their subsistence. The inequalities inherent in a social formation and the social conflict that arises from the division of labour, as well as the attendant power relations are reflected in the nature and structure of the system of rights (p. 33).

Property, then, as *rights*, “implies a power relationship between people, since the claims determine who may benefit and who may be excluded” (Marchak, 1988, p. 4).

These rights may exist in varying forms, either as private property, “an *exclusive* individual right” (Macpherson, 1983, p. 2); state property – or in Canada’s case, Crown property – that “consists of rights which the state has not only created but has kept for itself or has taken over from private individuals or corporations” (p. 5); or shared property, “the guarantee to each individual that [they] will not be excluded from the use or benefit of something” (Macpherson, 1983, p. 5).<sup>2</sup> In all cases, however, property delineates between who (whether an

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<sup>2</sup> In this thesis I use the term shared property interchangeably with common, collective, or social property.

individual or a group) may be entitled to the use or disposal of *something*, and thus, “the structure of rights (property) has important consequences for the allocation of resources, and the particular inequalities that may exist within a society” (Armen & Demsetz, 1973, p. 17).

Following this understanding of property as *rights*, and using the materialist conception of history as a guiding principle, my analysis of modern nationalism – defined here as an ideological form; a social consciousness or awareness of the relationship between the modern state and the group of people that comprise the nation (in other words, a collective awareness of the nation) (Smith, 2001, pp. 223-225)<sup>3</sup> – consists of library-based research of the empirical transformations to the economic base (the social relations of production) to which it corresponds in order to provide “the historical contexts within which [these] apparently universal or eternal social forms...[are] located” (Scott & Marshall, 2005, p. 270). The result of this analysis is the argument put forth in the second chapter of this thesis: that modern nationalism could only prevail within the material conditions and class contradictions unique to the predominant system of property relations that exists within the capitalist mode of production.

Similarly, this method is also used to explain both the emergence of Medicare, as health policy, and its relation to Canadian national identity that follows in the third chapter. By providing, again, an empirical analysis of the contradictory class relations that led to the emergence of health insurance in

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<sup>3</sup> Also, see the section ‘National Identity’ by John Hutchinson in the *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism* (Leoussi, 2001, pp. 215-217). There is a wide variety of overlap between definitions of nationalism and national identity, and thus, I use the term nationalism simply as a consciousness of the nation, as such, whereby national identity, as the identity that individuals come to associate with themselves, is a notion of this more general form of consciousness.

Canada, as part of the “newly legislated entitlements to government goods and services” (Teeple, 2005, p. 33) that accompanied the rise of the welfare state, I argue that Medicare, as a form of common property, has created a shared consciousness that is above the otherwise individual interests that define social life within the modern liberal democratic nation-state.

## 2: ON NATION AND NATIONALISM

Concepts that have proven useful in ordering things easily achieve such authority over us that we forget their earthly origins and accept them as unalterable givens. Thus they come to be stamped as ‘necessities of thought,’ ‘a priori givens,’ etc. The path of scientific progress is often made impassable for a long time by such errors. Therefore it is by no means an idle game if we become practiced in analyzing long-held commonplace concepts and showing the circumstances on which their justification and usefulness depend, and how they have grown up, individually, out of the givens of experience (Albert Einstein as cited in Goldsmith & Bartusiak, 2006, p. 69).

One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing’s nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it (Ludwig Wittgenstein as cited in Kitching, 2003, p. 196).

Concepts are social creations. As such, they are malleable, contested, and constantly changing – and more importantly, they have *histories*. The problem with studying concepts then, is that one must attempt to sort through the various referents that a concept may have; between different periods of history, modes of production, or multiple referents that exist within a single historical moment. This is certainly no easy task, given that definitions are often unclear or imprecise – used, say, for ideological purposes or movements, and therefore left purposefully vague – let alone that there may exist ‘new’ referents that attach themselves to ‘old’ concepts, meaning that one must pinpoint not only the historical point of transformation, but also the fundamental reasons why this was to occur.

Nation is undoubtedly one such concept that has proven troublesome for scholars because its meaning, “varies across time and context” (Verdery, 1996, p. 226).<sup>4</sup> Although “the origin of the term... can be traced back to the Latin word ‘*natio*,’ derived from the verb ‘*nascor*,’ I am born” (Hroch & Malečková, 2001, p. 203) – used in Ancient Rome to distinguish groups “sharing a common origin, a kind or a race” (p. 203) – its modern form currently represents two distinct relations:

A relation known as citizenship, in which the nation consists of collective sovereignty based in common political participation, and a relation known as ethnicity, in which the nation comprises all those of supposedly common language, history, or broader cultural identity (Verdery, 1996, p. 227).

These relations, however, are not the same thing, even though they are commonly treated as such. One refers to a form of political participation that is specific to the modern nation-state, while the other refers to a social group distinguished by various ethnic or cultural characteristics – one that has remained relatively unchanged for centuries (Habermas, 1996, p. 282). For a variety of reasons, however, this distinction has often been lost on scholars of nation and nationalism, and thus, there exists a wide amount of confusion over the historical relationship between the concept of nation and ethnic nationalism (modern political movements grounded in ethnicity), ethnicity, and the reconfiguration of the world into a complex of nation-states.

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<sup>4</sup> As Katherine Verdery (1996) notes, the term has “been employed in reference to guilds, corporations, units within ancient universities, feudal estates, congeries of citizens, and groupings based ostensibly in common culture and history” (p. 226).

The result is that nation is often used in an unclear, imprecise, and confused manner – with little attention paid to the origin of its different referents and the historical and social conditions in which they emerge (Verdery, 1996, pp. 227-228). In fact, we only need to look as far as the long-standing debate between perennialists and modernists<sup>5</sup> to note the vast confusion surrounding terminology:

is the sense of ethnicity, the identification with a ‘nation,’ and the political expression of this passionate identification, something old and present throughout history, or is it, on the contrary, something modern and a corollary of the distinctive feature of our recent world (Gellner, 1997, p. 90)?

What this debate seems to miss is the fact that both sides are arguing about the origins of entirely different phenomena. Instead of debating the origins of nationalism as ethnic consciousness, or the origins of nationalism as it relates to the introduction of the modern state (which itself may be grounded in ethnicity or language or religion, for example), scholars tend to treat both as the same thing, rather than two different phenomena that share the same base concept (nation). While it would be unwise, considering the evidence, to suggest that ethnic consciousness is specific to the modern era, it would be just as foolish to suggest that the concept of nation – and thus, the relations that it suggests – has

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<sup>5</sup> This refers to the largest debate surrounding nation and nationalism, the ‘ideal type’ dichotomy between perennialists (Connor, 1994; Horowitz, 1985; Ward, 1965) and modernists (Anderson, 2006; Deutsch, 1966; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1993; Nairn, 1977) as noted in Anthony D. Smith’s (1998) *Nationalism and Modernism*. Roughly speaking, perennialists regard the nation as a cultural community that is based in an immemorially rooted, popular-based ancestral past, while modernists view the nation as a political community that is intrinsically tied to modernity, constructed by elites through state formation and communicatory technologies (Smith, 1998, p. 23).

remained the same throughout history. Indeed, it is this very problem that has led Benedict Anderson (1996) to write that most scholars studying the nation are, “more often with their backs to one another, staring out at different obscure horizons, than engaged in orderly hand-to-hand combat” (p. 1).

Attempts to define nation, then, tend to be either vague as to what they refer, or so all-encompassing as to include a number of characteristics that could refer to multiple social phenomena at once – as evidenced by the list provided by Craig Calhoun (1997):

1. Boundaries, of territory, population, or both.
2. Indivisibility – the notion that the nation is an integral unit.
3. Sovereignty, or at least the aspiration to sovereignty, and thus formal equality with other nations, usually as an autonomous and putative self-sufficient state.
4. An ‘ascending’ notion of legitimacy – i.e. the idea that government is just only when supported by popular will or at least when it serves the interests of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’.
5. Popular participation in collective affairs – a population mobilized on the basis of national membership (whether for war or civic activities).
6. Direct membership, in which each individual is understood to be immediately a part of the nation and in that respect categorically equivalent to other members.
7. Culture, including some combination of language, shared beliefs and values, habitual practices.

8. Temporal depth – a notion of the nation as such existing through time, including past and future generations, and having a history.
9. Common descent or racial characteristics.
10. Special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory (p. 5).

If all concepts are only as clear as their definition and use, then from this list we can see the primary difficulty in analyzing nation and nationalism. The wide use of a variety of different characteristics – common to all definitions in some measure (Smith, 1998, p. 20; see also Anderson, 2006, p. 6; Breuilly, 1993, p. 2; Gellner, 1983, p. 7; Giddens, 1985, p. 121; Guibernau, 2004, p. 132) – leaves little chance for us to distinguish between the different phenomena nation refers to, nor the historical and social conditions in which each came to exist.

If we wish to analyze and understand nationalism, then, it seems necessary to first examine the origins of the modern nation-state given that this political system has so confused our understanding of the concept in the modern era. What one finds, however, is that regardless of the particularities of assorted models – giving primacy to communication (Anderson, 2006; Deutsch, 1966; Hroch, 2006), industrialism (Gellner, 1983), politics (Hobsbawm, 1993, p. 80), militarism (Tilly, 1975), modernization (Giddens, 1985; Greenfeld, 2004), class and uneven development (Hechter, 1975; Nairn, 1977) – the origins of the nation, are seen through the prism of one or another theory of ‘modernity’ or ‘rationalization’, according to which certain ‘modern’ or ‘rational’ economic, political and cultural forms have developed more or less in tandem,

combining a process of urbanization and commercialization with the formation of a 'rational' state" (Wood, 2002, p. 166).

The problem with this general explanatory approach, however, is that it either follows a functionalist logic towards explanatory factors (O'Leary, 1997), or neglects to reflect on the essential transformation that characterizes the transition to modernity, and thus to the modern nation-state – to a wholly new understanding of the concept of nation, distinct from previous (but still in use today) forms of ethnic consciousness.

Even if one follows any number of Marxist interpretations of the origins of modern nationalism, the result tends to follow a similar functionalist logic; national consciousness is created by the rise of the capitalist class, its control of the state, and its various attempts to produce and secure capital. This may follow from different explanatory factors – the rise of print-capitalism (Anderson, 2006), uneven capitalist development (Nairn, 1977), or urbanization (Bauer, 1996, p. 44), among others (Bloom, 1967; Davis, 1967; Glenn, 1997; Hechter, 1975) – and it is not necessarily incorrect. The problem with such models, however, is that they have not adequately examined why the capitalist mode of production would necessitate modern nationalism; they have not grasped the fundamental changes that led to the rise of the bourgeoisie and why, after this abrupt transition to modernity, groups of individuals should come to identify, or feel associated, with this particular type of state.

If we wish to adequately account for the source of modern nationalism we must first explore the origins of the modern nation-state and those things that

characterized the transition from pre-modern forms of social life to what is commonly referred to as modernity:

The profound transformations that began to emerge in every respect at the end of the Middle Ages produced severe dislocation, an authentic revolution in the social structure. There were the first inklings of what would later become the twin pillars on which modern society would rest, namely, the individual as an isolate and the state as a body politic, which encompasses each and every individual (Bereciartu, 1994, p. 17).

If modernity is characterized by (1) an understanding of the individual “as the locus of indissoluble identity” (Calhoun, 1997, p. 44), and (2) the relationship between civil society and the state,<sup>6</sup> it seems prudent to ask why and how these characteristics are related to a distinctly different understanding of the modern nation, given that they are commonly evoked as part of many explanatory models (Smith, 2002, p. 6).

What has been missing, however, is an analysis of the transformation of property relations that characterized the bourgeois revolutions. If “changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure” (Marx, 1994, p. 211), then why should the capitalist mode of production (commonly, albeit loosely, characterized as modernity) necessitate modern nationalism, as opposed to other, pre-capitalist modes of

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<sup>6</sup> I define civil society as the system of social relations characterized by the association of people independent of the family or the state, which itself may be defined simply as the totality of the “formal elected apparatus of government, the appointed officials, the state bureaucracy, the judiciary, police and military, and national and international agencies” (Samuelson & Antony, 2003, p.39)

production? By examining the differences between the feudal and capitalist modes of production, it should be clear not only how modern private property relations have created a “human defined as isolated individual, as whole unto itself, as singularity, as an unrelated atom” (Teeple, 2005, p. 21), but why this particular transformation of the self necessitated the creation of a new consciousness in the form of modern nationalism.

## **2.1 Property, Revolution, and the Individual.**

Although Calhoun (1997) believes “it is a fruitless exercise to try to ‘explain’ nationalism (and cognate ideas like nation and national identity) by searching for the first example and then studying the spread of terminology and practices” (p. 9), there is certainly enough evidence to suggest that modern nationalism – and similarly, modernity itself – is a result of those various bourgeois revolutions that brought the liberal democratic state into being.<sup>7</sup> When Eric Hobsbawm (1975) writes in the *Age of Capital* an entire chapter called “Building Nations,” he is referring to the creation, in all the cases he cites, of the liberal democratic state. Similarly, Bernard Yack (2003) writes:

The age of liberal democracy is also the age of nationalism. Every great landmark in the rise and spread of the liberal democratic state – the

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<sup>7</sup> Maurice Parmelee (1934) provides a brief definition: “The liberal democratic state, in its economic aspect, is based upon the private ownership of the means of production and free private business enterprise. In its economic organization it is a form of capitalism. In its political aspect it is based upon the party system and parliamentarism. These involve the popular election of representatives and the control of the executive by the legislative and judiciary branches of the government... Liberal democracy postulates, in theory at least, the equality of all citizens before the law. Certain civil liberties are recognized and to some extent safeguarded. Among them are freedom of speech, of publication, and of assembly. The police powers and economic functions of the state are limited, while the rights of the individual are expanded (pp. 2-3).

Glorious Revolution in 1688, the North and South American wars of independence, the great French Revolution of 1789, the 'springtime of peoples' in 1848, the collapse of European and colonial empires in the twentieth century – looms large in the history of nationalism as well (p. 29).

The coterminous nature of modern nationalism and the liberal democratic state is significant because it provides a historical point of reference for the transformation of the term nation, and thus a point at which to begin our analysis. This is, of course, not to suggest that all nation-states are liberal democratic states, or that the only 'legitimate' nation-state is a liberal democratic state, only that the first nation-states emerged as such as a result of those various bourgeois revolutions, creating in their wake a new form of consciousness that has since spread worldwide, subsequently attaching itself to various types of political movements. As Anderson (2006) notes: "since World War II, every successful revolution [whether socialist, fascist, or otherwise] has defined itself in *national terms*" (p. 2).

Of course, it should also be mentioned that each bourgeois revolution emerged from unique historical circumstances, and the character of each as it relates to the development of capitalist property relations was strikingly different (Wood, 2002, p. 63). Ellen Meiksins Wood (2002) makes an excellent point that "*bourgeois (or burgher or city)*" (p. 63), does not necessarily identify one as being a *capitalist* given the varying structure of feudal property relations in different regions (pp. 118-119), along with the stark differences between the English,

French, and American Revolutions. My use of the phrase ‘bourgeois revolution,’ then, simply refers to the various movements that displaced the *ancien régime* and its general forms of property relations given its common usage in this manner (Wood, 2002, p. 14).

The reason, in particular, that it is important to begin such a study in this manner is due to the transformative nature of property itself – to understand why, among all the differences between each bourgeois revolution, they led to a common result in the emergence of various systems of private property relations in the form of a nation-state. Given the metaphor of the base and superstructure made by Karl Marx (1994) in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and thus, the notion that “the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material relationships of men” (p. 111), it seems necessary to examine why a change in the economic base – from a feudal mode of production to a capitalist mode of production – necessitated the creation of a new type of consciousness in the form of modern nationalism.<sup>8</sup>

If we begin by briefly examining the history of productive relationships we see that, “for millennia, human beings have provided for their material needs by working the land” (Wood, 2002, p. 95). This has usually taken form as a “division between appropriators and producers” (Wood, 2002, p. 95) based on “‘extra-economic’ means – that is, by means of direct coercion by landlords or states

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<sup>8</sup> This is particularly important if we take into account Raymond Williams’ (1973) contribution to the debate on the relationship between base and superstructure: “These laws, constitutions, theories, ideologies, which are claimed as natural, or having universal validity or significance, simply have to be seen as expressing and ratifying the domination of a particular class” (p. 7).

employing their superior force, their privileged access to military, judicial, and political power” (Wood, 2002, p. 95). While the feudal mode of production was marked by such ‘extra-economic’ means of expropriation, this occurred in varying forms, such as in the regions of France, “where production was dominated by peasant owner/occupiers, [and] appropriation took the classic pre-capitalist form of politically constituted property, eventually giving rise not to capitalism but to the ‘tax/office’ structure of absolutism” (Wood, 2002, p. 96). For the most part, however, dominant elites did not require the loyalty of commoners given the structure of this economic system. As noted by Michael Mann (1996): “whole swathes of social life were not penetrated by states or indeed by any political agency” (p. 296), as they were unnecessary for the reproduction of the feudal mode of production.

Thus, we are confronted with a primary dilemma: why did the capitalist mode of production transform nationalism from a primarily ethnic form of consciousness, to one that also signifies the relationship between the modern state and its citizens? How did the political system go “from being fairly insignificant... in the lives of their subjects” to arousing the masses “out of their historic political indifference” (Mann, 1996, p. 297)? The most significant aspect in this regard has its beginnings in sixteenth century England. The enclosure movement, whereby, “larger landowners sought to drive commoners off lands that could be profitably put to use as pasture for increasingly lucrative sheep farming” (Wood, 2002, p. 108), meant that peasants began to be forcefully removed from land that had previously provided the collective means of their own

reproduction: “By 1876, the ‘New Domesday Book’ calculated that about 2250 people owned half the agricultural land in England and Wales, and that 0.6 per cent of the population owned 98.5 per cent of it” (Ecologist, 1993, p. 25). Thomas More, an encloser himself, “described the practice as ‘sheep devouring men’” (Wood, 2002, p. 109).

This process toward more economic means of expropriation and agricultural ‘improvement’ (Wood, 2002, p. 106), allowed England to transition more easily to capitalist property relations (modernity),<sup>9</sup> where the “dominant mode of appropriation [is] based on the complete dispossession of direct producers, who (unlike chattel slaves) are legally free and whose surplus labour is appropriated by purely ‘economic’ means” (Wood, 2002, p. 96). Unlike previous forms of social life, where “there existed common lands, on which members of the community might have grazing rights or the right to collect firewood” (Wood, 2002, p. 107) – in other words, forms of shared or collective property (rights) to the means of production – the creation of a system of private property meant that direct producers (themselves disassociated from the means of production) had to sell their labour in a system mediated by the market just to survive.

While this movement had the direct result of creating “vagabonds, those ‘masterless men’ who wandered the countryside and threatened social order” (Wood, 2002, p. 108), it also produced a number of ‘enclosure riots’ among the

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<sup>9</sup> It is, perhaps, also important to note “the word ‘modern’ appeared first in English towards the end of the sixteenth century” (Gray, 2003, p. 101), relatively coterminous with the introduction of the capitalist mode of production.

dispossessed peasantry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it was a continual site of conflict (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 397). Although enclosure was originally “resisted by the monarchic state, if only because of the threat to public order” (Wood, 2002, p. 109), the subsequent English “revolution of 1649-1660 brought to power the very class of landowners that benefitted from enclosure and the process recommenced in earnest” (Ecologist, 1993, p. 25). From this period on there emerged, “a new kind of enclosure movement... the so-called ‘Parliamentary enclosures’” (Wood, 2002, p. 109).

This transformation was not unique to England alone, however, even though it occurred there first. France was similarly agrarian in nature before the 1789 Revolution, and property existed in a typically pre-modern variety:

Land was generally held or ‘owned’ subject to a set of understood limitations on its free use or disposal and the acceptance that others, indeed the whole village community, might have rights over it for which other valued rights were obtained in return over the ‘property’ of others (Kemp, 1971, p. 17).

While the French Revolution was a very different response to “a dominant non-capitalist class” (Wood, 2002, p. 119) in comparison to the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution which simply consolidated the power of the landed classes, the “years after 1789 were to be the great crucible for change. The nature of the land settlement which then took place was to have great formative significance for the whole of subsequent economic development” (Kemp, 1971, p. 10).

Although the circumstances were quite different, by abolishing feudal property

relations – smashing “the status and legal privileges of the nobles... [reconstructing] the social structure in accordance with bourgeois interests in an extended free market and a redistribution of tax burdens” (Mills, 1971, p. 116) – the French bourgeoisie had, in effect, begun the same process achieved earlier in England: the introduction of capitalist property relations.

What then is specific to this transformation of property relations that should be directly related to the emergence of modern nationalism? While customary land-use rights had historically given rise to “commonality of blood, language, customs” (Marx as cited in Glenn, 1997, p. 82) – those things, which, as we will see, were the basis of pre-modern forms of ethnic consciousness – “between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, there was growing pressure to extinguish customary rights that interfered with capitalist accumulation” (Wood, 2002, p. 10). This was furthered by the creation of a number of theoretical treatises on the nature of property from those in the ruling classes “like the first Earl of Shaftesbury, mentor of the philosopher John Locke, and Locke himself” (Wood, 2002, p. 107), whose theories were immensely influential of both the French and American Revolutions.<sup>10</sup> In a relatively famous passage, Locke wrote: “the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg’d in any place where I have a right to them in common with others,

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Musgrave (2002) notes: “The philosophy of Locke and his contemporaries inspired the philosophers of the French Enlightenment, and an admiration for English government became the basis of French Liberalism. Montesquieu, for example, wrote extensively about English representative government, which he considered to be a model of political liberty... The concepts of liberty, representative government, and popular sovereignty also influenced American thinkers during the eighteenth century... Thomas Jefferson declared that the principles of the American government were based on the ‘freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason’” (pp. 3-4).

become my *Property*” (as cited in Wood, 2002, p. 112). What this passage effectively declares is that, “since man has an original property in his own person, his labour belongs to himself” (Plamenatz, 1970, p. 219).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, given that direct producers were being removed from the means of production through enclosure, they also were becoming a commodity in and of themselves in so far as their labour was their only property; thus, they became the embodiment of private property, as whole unto themselves.

C.B. Macpherson (1962) has suggested that this form of ‘possessive individualism’ is at the root of all liberal democratic theory:

Its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself...Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors. Political society becomes a calculated device for the protection of this property and for the maintenance of an orderly relation of exchange (p. 3).

The conception of the individual as an atomized unit of production, then, – one of the pillars of modernity (Calhoun, 1997, p. 44) – emerges quite clearly as it exists

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<sup>11</sup> It may be important to mention here, that Locke’s passage “means not only that I, the master, have appropriated the labour of my servant, but also that this appropriation is in principle no different from the servant’s labouring activity itself” (Woods, 2002, p. 112).

within a system of private property relations, where “all goods are assumed to be separate from each other, and so are their owners” (Tönnies, 2001, p. 53).<sup>12</sup>

This concept of the individual as private property, the revolutionary transformation of not only legal rights as they refer to ‘things,’ but also as they refer to the individual as whole unto itself, materially disassociated from previous forms of social property relations (Foucault, 1995, pp. 85-87), is important not just in terms of clarifying one of the primary features of modernity (and indeed, the revolutionary liberal democratic state), but also because it is

the basis for the central notion that individuals are directly members of the nation, that it marks each of them as having intrinsic identity and that they commune with it immediately and as a whole...Nationality is understood precisely as an attribute of the individual, not of the intermediate associations (Calhoun, 1997, p. 46).

If “it is no accident that the modern notion of the nation arises in tandem with modern ideas of the ‘punctual self’ or individual” (Calhoun, 1997, p. 44), the key question remains, why? What aspect of the transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode of production would necessitate the creation of such a distinct form of consciousness?

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<sup>12</sup> If one examines the founding documents of the French and American states, one finds similar evidence. As Teeple (2005) notes: “Those documents laid out the fundamentals, casting human rights as individual claims resting on private property. Indeed, the individual right to private property was pre-eminent. It was a right that informed the principles and practice of all other rights: to freedom of speech, assembly, and religion, to the vote and election, to security and protection under law, to the rule of law, and even to life” (p. 3).

## 2.2 The National Citizen.

While, “many of the conceptions most commonly used in social science have to do with the historical transition from the rural community of feudal times to the urban society of the modern age” (Mills, 1969, p. 152; see also Billig, 1995, p. 62; Calhoun, 1997, p. 43; Guibernau, 2007, p. 9) there has been little attention paid to the role of collective property and its relation to pre-modern self-identification, and its contrast as it exists in terms of modern nation and nationalism. In his description of ‘*Gemeinschaft*’ (Community), Ferdinand Tönnies (1957) wrote:

In *Gemeinschaft* of locality such a common relation is established through collective ownership of land...Neighbourhood describes the general character of living together in the rural village. The proximity of dwellings, the communal fields, and even the mere contiguity of holdings necessitate many contacts of human beings and cause inurement to and intimate knowledge of one another (pp. 42-43).

Common property, then, as a shared *right* or entitlement to the use and disposal of land or other resources, distinguishes pre-modern forms of collective identity. Within such localized forms of collective property relations, various cultural practices, dialects and languages emerged among populations (small, and rural as they were) that provided the basis for what we may today consider an ethnic or cultural community – an “*ethnie*” (Smith, 1991, p. 20) – but what was, for such individuals, simply the basis of their local social life.

As Hobsbawm (1993) notes:

The word 'Estonian' came into use only in the 1860s. Before then the peasants had simply called themselves 'maarahvas,' i.e. 'country people'...the word *saks* (Saxon) had the *dominant* meaning 'lord' or 'master' and only the secondary meaning 'German.' It has been plausibly argued (by an eminent Estonian historian) that where (German) literates read references in documents as 'German,' the peasants had most probably simply meant 'lord' or 'master' (pp. 48-49).

From this, we see that the particular way in which groups of individuals identified themselves within the feudal mode of production was quite different from how individuals would come to identify themselves within the capitalist mode of production. Prior to the emergence of the nation-state, "community life [meant] *mutual* possession and enjoyment, and possession and enjoyment of goods held *in common*" (Tönnies, 2001, p. 36). Therefore, these pre-modern forms of group identity were different because they were not based on any sort of *individual* relationship (mainly because the individual didn't yet exist in its modern form), but rather, to the social relations that existed in the form of common property within their own regional communities and other aspects of their material, agrarian existence (Benda-Beckmann, Benda-Beckmann, & Wiber, 2006, p. 1; see also Billig, 1995, p. 62; Bollier, 2002, p. 5; Slater, 1968, p. 2).<sup>13</sup>

The loss of common property in the means of production (through the abolition of the feudal mode of production) similarly meant a loss of the particular

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<sup>13</sup> As Émile Durkheim reminds us: "The 'individual', in a certain sense, did not exist in traditional cultures, and individuality was not prized" (as cited in Guibernau, 2007, p. 9).

and unique set of loyalties and forms of self-identification that existed within these small local communities (Tönnies, 2001). As a result, it became necessary for the ruling classes to establish a new collective identity (characterized often by the phrase 'political community,' and expressed materially as citizenship)<sup>14</sup> given the inequality and class contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production (Bereciartu, 1994, p. 35; see also Carnoy, 1984, p. 11; Poulantzas, 1976, p. 188). Indeed, "the capacity of 'the people' (or rather, large numbers of people acting on behalf of the whole people) to overthrow regimes was fundamentally new" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 71), and not far from the minds of the bourgeoisie when creating new social structures. It is important to remember that regardless of the particular arrangement of power relations, those who have it want to keep it:

Those in authority within institutions and social structures attempt to justify their rule by linking it, as if it were a necessary consequence, with moral symbols, sacred emblems, or legal formulae which are widely believed and deeply internalized. These central conceptions may refer to a god or gods, the 'votes of the majority,' the 'will of the people,' the 'aristocracy of talents or wealth,' to the 'divine right of kings' or to the alleged extraordinary endowment of the person of the ruler himself (Mills, 1969, p. 36).

The creation of some form of collective identity, then, – the nation as a political *community* – became all the more important after the various monarchic regimes

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<sup>14</sup> I define national citizenship simply as a bundle of political rights and responsibilities.

had been displaced, and prior loyalties (to the king, and land) had to be shifted to ensure the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.<sup>15</sup>

Two distinct, but related forms were used to invoke this new collective identity and they are commonly brought up in the literature: (1) the creation of national citizenship, and (2) the creation and use of a number of different symbols, languages, flags, anthems, and so on, that symbolize the individual's newfound relationship to the nation. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) writes:

Shared nationhood was to play a crucial legitimizing role in the political unification of the state, and the invocation of common roots and a common character was to be the major tool of ideological mobilization – the production of patriotic loyalty and obedience (p. 91).

Of course, it is an interesting trick of history that it is so often forgotten that national citizenship, as it existed in those first liberal democratic states, was originally limited exclusively to propertied men to “permit the possibility of power struggles among different fractions of the bourgeoisie” (Carnoy, 1984, p. 118). Through various social conflict and struggle for political rights – seen first in the 1848, ‘Spring of Nations’ – citizenship was extended to other populations (male workers, women, and other minorities) and it effectively became a juridical means of creating social stability among the working classes by signifying entry or

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<sup>15</sup> As Uffe Østergaard (2000) notes: “Nation-building in Western Europe became a strategy for the dominant elites, aimed at forging direct links between the territorial state and its individual subjects. This required that dominant local bonds of solidarity be broken down via the development of universal citizenship and its complex of rights and obligations” (p. 457).

membership into the national *community* (however it may be defined), as equal members of the political process (Carnoy, 1984, p. 118).<sup>16</sup>

By grouping individuals by national citizenship, it then became possible not only for a struggle between disparate groups and classes over the state apparatus – as opposed to a struggle over property<sup>17</sup> – but also the creation of a national consciousness among both ruling and working classes, as being members of the same *community*. This is the primary reason why the nation is symbolized as a relationship between the “political community” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6) – whether grounded in culture or language or religion or civic principles, and son – and the state. It is the expression of the common liberal ideology that treats the state as the expression of collective sovereignty among groups of individuals (Hobsbawm, 1993, p. 18). Citizenship is therefore an important stabilizing aspect of the state “because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 2006, p. 7); people who, within capitalist civil society, exist as private, atomized individuals without any common relation to one another.

This is particularly significant if we remember that prior to the introduction of the national state, there existed a wide diversity of languages, and cultural

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that nationalism, as a term, “did not come into general usage until the mid-nineteenth century” (Smith, 2001, p. 222); a result of the struggle between classes for the access to particular rights.

<sup>17</sup> “Law displaces the class struggle from the economic to the political arena by defining the rules of conflict away from a struggle over property to a struggle over the State apparatus” (Carnoy, 1984, p. 118).

traditions in the regions that now make up the complex of nation-states (Gray, 2003, p. 19). Being a citizen, then, meant speaking an 'official' language,<sup>18</sup> and partaking in the various aspects of national culture (implicit or explicit) that coincided with citizenship. Dominique Schnapper (1995) writes:

The nation is best defined by its aim, which is to *transcend through citizenship particularities*, whether they be biological (or perceived as such), historical, economic, social, religious, or cultural; to define the citizen as an abstract individual, without particular identification or label, below and beyond his concrete characteristics (p. 184).

The means to promote these particularities can be seen all around us today; what Michael Billig (1995) terms 'banal nationalism,' the "continual 'flagging,' or reminding, of nationhood" (p. 8). The existence of national flags (whether used in national political movements, or hanging limp on the side of a building), songs, anthems, languages, sports teams, and symbols is testament to the need to reinforce the nation as an integral unit, to differentiate one political community of citizens from another (Hobsbawm, 1993, p. 142); to symbolize both a sense of commonality and difference (from other nations) for the purposes of social stability and reproduction within the confines of the territorial state.

While most national symbols, or representations of the nation in the form of anthems, songs, flags, and so on, are to some extent unconscious reproductions of a political system which is often taken for granted, and as such,

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<sup>18</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (2003) notes: "Only when the making of the 'nation', an entirely abstract group based on law, creates new usages and functions, does it become indispensable to forge a *standard* language, impersonal and anonymous like the official uses it has to serve" (p. 48).

relatively commonplace today, much of the earlier attempts to produce some form of commonality were unabashed attempts at destroying localized forms of loyalty. For example, in France:

The French peasantry's dual fidelity to king and one's own land were two of the most important obstacles to the consolidation of the new nation; thus, it was necessary to establish an alternative system of loyalties that made it possible to transcend the earlier ones. Substituting of the old mythical image of the king with the new, no less mythical image of the nation was in reality of urgent necessity. In this fashion a cult of nation was born with near-religious fervors. In orbit around it there was generated a whole new value system, mythified in terms of a complex of symbols: a new flag – the tricolor – a national anthem – the “Marseillaise” – the annual celebration of Bastille Day, the patriotic emblems – the liberty caps, the Phrygian ones, and so on – the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen as an obligatory national catechism, the altars to the homeland, the cult of the Supreme Being, the *mort pour la Patrie*, and the like (Bereciartu, 1994, p. 41).

Hobsbawm (1993) provides a similar example from his childhood in the newly formed Austrian state:

The present writer recalls being submitted to such a piece of (unsuccessful) political invention in an Austrian primary school of the middle 1920s, in the form of a new national anthem desperately attempting to convince children that a few provinces left over when the

rest of a large Hapsburg empire seceded or was torn from them, formed a coherent whole, deserving love and patriotic devotion; a task not made any easier by the fact that the only thing they had in common was what made the overwhelming majority of their inhabitants want to join Germany (p. 92).

These attempts, whether consciously manipulated by the state, promoted by various groups from 'below,' or promoted from 'above' by the corporate sector, reflect the necessity to create a collective identity for the purposes of social stability, given the various divisive aspects inherent within the capitalist mode of production.

Modern nationalism, then, corresponds "with modern ideas of the...individual" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 44) because its origins are bound up within the same relations of production, the same legal frameworks in which private property became embodied by individuals as the "personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class-relations and interests" (Marx, 1994, p. 219). While national citizenship in all nation-states (whether capitalist or not), is an effective means of creating a shared sense of nationhood (whether expressed in terms of 'popular participation', or 'direct membership'), this particular type of relation only became possible by virtue of the private property relations (and thus, the contradictory class interests) that define the capitalist mode of production; without this, we would be missing a crucial determining factor in the creation of modern nationalism, and indeed, the necessity to create a collective identity amongst disparate individuals that have no common relation.

### 2.3 Industrial Capitalism and Nation.

In a similar fashion, the industrial revolution is commonly promoted as one of the determining factors of the emergence of modern nationalism, coinciding as it does, more or less, with the introduction of national citizenship and the growth of national movements. As Hobsbawm (1996), in his book *Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, makes clear, however, the age of bourgeois revolution was also the age of the industrial revolution. The introduction of legally codified private property relations in England and the subsequent countries that followed meant that productive activities “became capable of the constant, rapid and up to the present limitless multiplication of men, goods, and services” (Hobsbawm, 1996, p. 28). This revolution, which was made manifest in a number of different technological and social advances, also had a large effect on social organization and the transmission of information.

While this increase in productive capabilities generally underscores communication theories of nationalism,<sup>19</sup> found in the work of Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Jürgen Habermas (Schlesinger, 2003, p. 26), it does not explain why modern nationalism is necessary for this type of political system. As these works have shown, the transformation of communicative technology was an important process in the creation of national sentiment: “Technology has enabled communication to occur on a more frequent and more regular basis bringing into contact previously separate and possibly disparate social groups” (Glenn, 1997, p. 88). Yet, it would be a mistake to take

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<sup>19</sup> Communication theories of nationalism attempt to explain the rise of national consciousness and national movements through various transformations in communicative technology.

the transformations that occurred in communicative technology (themselves a result of the productive requirements of an industrial economy) as an explanatory model without understanding first why such groups of people would need to be unified in this manner in the first place.

This point is particularly salient if we recall the metaphor of base and superstructure and relate it to communication theories of nationalism. If we take the example that Anderson (2006) provides as the origin of national consciousness: “a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity” (p. 43), we see that while the independent variables of communication, and linguistic diversity are interchangeable with other phenomenon in related models, they all share, more or less, the dependent variable of capitalist productive relationships. Generally, this produces an explanatory model that exists, as such:

The centralizing tendencies associated with industrialization create a ‘social updraft’ of the population, the mass migration of the individuals from their rural surroundings into the industrial heartlands – the cities. Individuals are therefore uprooted from their local environment and local community in which bonds of affection, kinship and a sense of belonging prevailed. The breakdown of these ties of affection and the increasing pervasiveness of the dominant culture is said to eventually lead to the homogenization of culture throughout the realm and a sense of belong to a greater community – the nation (Glenn, 1997, pp. 88-89).

In suggesting this, however, most models have taken for granted the particular ways in which the capitalist mode of production not only destroyed the collective forms of property relations that provided the basis for cultural identification (systems of kinship, tradition, and so on), but also transformed the individual into the embodiment of private property, necessitating the creation of modern nationalism to promote a sense of commonality that would otherwise not exist among disparate individuals and classes.

This is not to suggest that industrial capitalism and the subsequent growth of various communicative technologies are not an important aspect of the particular type or style of nationalism that exists within the nation-state, however. If one examines the dominant or prevailing form of capital within a country, it seems rather clear that this conditions the strength, variety, and type of nationalism that prevails. For instance, Canada, “whose ruling class is founded in commercial wealth...is relegated to a subordinate role” (Teeple, 1979, p. xi), and

because the main ideas of a ruling class are those that prevail, the effects of this mentality are reflected in the rest of society. Canadians of other classes, therefore, have been marked by a poorly developed awareness of being members of a nation. Other than the Québécois, Canadians have typically drawn a sense of identity from their European origins. The lack of a strong national consciousness, then, likely derives from the dependent nature of the Canadian bourgeoisie and its influence on the political and social life of the country (p. xii).

Not only does the type of dominant capital condition the strength or 'variety' of nationalism one witnesses, it also conditions the images that tend to appear as symbols of this relation:

The economic foundations of the new Dominion rested on its primary resources and the extractive industries based upon them, the forest, the fisheries and the farm. Of these, the forest from the beginning had been the mainstay of the country and was only then beginning to be surpassed by agriculture. The country had a forest flavour to a degree now hard to appreciate. Rafts of timber or booms of logs floated on every bit of navigable water, mills were everywhere, the smell of wood constantly in the air. New railways were built to tap new forests and new towns were springing up as saw-mill centres. The characteristic Canadian figure was the lumberjack or raftsmen. He and his songs and his brawls gave the country a local colour of its own, a 'folk' element that no other class of men supplied (Lower, 1947, p. 339).

While a comprehensive worldwide analysis of this relationship is not possible here (to be sure, an immense undertaking), it should be clear from the Canadian example that the prevailing form of capital, and the history of its formation provides the strength and type of nationalism that exists, given that this will reflect the particular industries and trade relations between and among nations (not to mention the growth of particular regions, immigration, communication networks, style of architecture, transportation, city planning, and so on that may condition consciousness on a personal, everyday basis).

This only occurs, however, as a result of those first bourgeois revolutions that brought the capitalist mode of production into being. While various forms of propaganda, indoctrination, social discipline and socialization (Chomsky, 2003, pp. 6-7) are effective means of creating a strong national consciousness they cannot be used as explanatory models for the emergence of such a consciousness in the first place. They are not the reason that these identities exist, or appear self-evident, but rather a method or means of ensuring their continual existence and function – an important, but secondary effect that tends to influence social practices, and behaviours, depending on the particular nation in question. In nations where there exists little ethnic commonality, for instance, we might find a more pronounced system of propaganda promoting the civic principles of the nation. Therefore, in creating explanatory models of modern nationalism, it seems necessary to understand how communities are defined by the structure of their rights, and thus, how the contradictions within the capitalist mode of production made it possible for modern nationalism to emerge as such, as it did within, and related to, those first liberal democratic nation-states.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

While explanatory models of modern nationalism tend to focus on the transition to modernity, and thus, the capitalist mode of production (whether they use such terms), they have not adequately theorized *why* modern nationalism exists or why it became necessary to unify individuals in a manner that had never previously existed prior to this particular mode of production. Thus, only in understanding the underlying phenomena that brought the modern nation-state

into existence can we begin to comprehend the origins of modern nationalism and its legitimating function within a system of private property relations:

The nation, as developed in the capitalist State, together with its territory, tradition, and language, is a form of unification of people divided by capitalist production into classes – segmented, separated, individualized and isolated – into a new concept of space and time, a concept that is intended to keep the dominated class from realizing who and why it is. Instead, members of that class focus on the new individual's consciousness, on the commonality each has (under the State) with other members of the people-nation; he or she is *inside* the same territory, has the same historical goals, and is engaged in the same process of change as all other members of the people-nation (Carnoy, 1984, p. 121).

Whether one is discussing the emergence of modernity, the rational state, or the individual self, private property relations are the basic component of such a transformation; one that not only brings a cohesive focus to the various theories of nation and nationalism that are so common amongst all of its different interpretations, but adequately provides a relationship between the theoretical and material explanatory models that attempt to explain *why* modern nationalism emerged as such in contradistinction to more traditional ethnic conceptions of the nation.

Of course, if we extend this argument to questions of Canadian nationalism, we see results that confirm this general process. As British capital and influence waned in the post-World War II era (as a result of various world

events and transformations to the labour process), the Canadian state sought to create a 'new' Canadian nationalism that was drawn less from its traditionally European origins, and more from a sense that Canada had a distinct, unified culture:

Since the postwar era, the Canadian state has played an active role in crafting social and economic policies with the intent of developing a shared, national identity. Canada's first *Citizenship Act* (1947), the *Canadian Bill of Rights* (1960), the inauguration of the maple leaf as Canada's flag (1965), and the development of social programs like Medicare (1966) highlight the assertiveness of the federal government in creating a pan-Canadian identity that could be universally shared (Raney, 2009, p. 9).

This 'new' nationalism, then, can be seen as part of the same general process expanded on earlier: an attempt by the state to create some form of national unity for the purposes of social stability and reproduction amongst individuals (and in this case, cultural groups as well if we include Quebec) that have little or no common relation with each other. Some significant questions still remain, however: why is Medicare so often associated with this process of 'nation-building,' and why has it remained the most potent symbol of a pan-Canadian nationalism?

### **3: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CANADIAN MEDICARE**

To reassert in our national policies that Canada is one country which must be capable of moving with unity of spirit and purpose towards shared goals. If Canada is indeed to be a nation, there must be a national will which is something more than the lowest common denominator among the desires of the provincial governments (Pierre Trudeau as cited in McRoberts, 2004, pp. 396-397).

In Canada, the time has come to address a centrally important question. If what we have in common is our diversity, do we really have anything in common at all (Bibby, 1990, pp. 91-92)?

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The concept of “a distinctly *Canadian* national identity (as opposed to *Québécois* or Aboriginal)” (Raney, 2009, p. 5) has been historically difficult to pin down, not least because “it has been customary to describe Canada not as one society but as two: French-Canadian and English Canadian” (Hiller, 2006, p. 2; see also Stasiulis, 1997, p. 144). While this is certainly a reflection of the difficulties wrought by Canada’s dependent colonial past – that English Canada is synonymous with Canada (McNaught, 1966, p. 61) – it has since led to “the notion that the Canadian identity is impossible to define” (Raney, 2009, p. 5; see also Adams, 1998; Gwyn, 1995, Resnick, 2005), given the now multicultural character of Canada; existing as a “faceless commonality in a postmodernist age of radical variation and pluralism” (Bliss, 2006, p. 4).

While such vague conceptions may help us avoid rigorous examination of a

national identity that is, more often than not, confusing and unclear – a result of being “a creation of Britain, a neighbour of the United States, and a nation peopled by groups that somehow had never developed many unifying bonds” (Schwartz, 1967, p. ix) – they do little to help us understand why various things figure prominently within Canadian national consciousness. “Although national identity is not immutable and unchanging nor even evolving towards a fixed form, and although there are many different versions of what it means to be a Canadian” (Hiller, 2006, p. 278), there do exist consistent symbols that represent the nation, that “help create the boundaries and coherence of a society as a people, rather than a collection of individuals” (p. 287).

Medicare is one such institution that has since become a symbol of Canadian national identity, commonly expressed as “the embodiment of distinctly Canadian values” (Henderson & McEwen, 2005, p. 174). While Bliss (2004) believes “this equation of health care with the Canadian identity is unhistorical and untrue” (p. A1) – the result of “ideological rigidity of those who see the Canada Health Act as set in Canadian stone” (Bliss, 2002, p. 33) – his conclusions do not explain why “all Canadian politicians represent themselves as defenders of this sacred trust” (Armstrong, Armstrong & Fegan, 1998, p. 1; see also Stephen Harper as cited in CTV, 2004; Jean Chrétien as cited in Henderson & McEwen, 2005, p. 179; Martin, 2008, p. 99, 104, 248, 267, 290),<sup>20</sup> or why opinion polls consistently find that, “at the *symbolic level*, Canadians are highly attached to the Canadian universal health care system, believe it is part of the

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<sup>20</sup> The phrase, ‘sacred trust,’ refers to former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, stating: “As far as the Conservative Party is concerned, Medicare is a sacred trust which we will preserve” (cited in Taylor, 1987, p. 443).

Canadian identity, and resist changes that would destroy this symbol”

(Mendelsohn, 2002a, p.2; see also Lewis, 2007, p. 27; Mendelsohn, 2002b, p. 14; Nanos, 2009; Soroka, 2007).<sup>21</sup>

Given that “Canadians have become more attached to their country over the past two decades, more likely to describe themselves as ‘Canadian first,’ and less likely to feel a primary identification with their province” (Mendelsohn, 2002b, p. v; Raney, 2009), how might we account for survey results that tell us that Medicare is the strongest aspect that “ties us together” (Dwyer, 1994, p. 4)? Or why Tommy Douglas – “rightly seen by Canadians as the Father of Medicare” (Campbell & Marchildon, 2007, p. 11) – was voted the ‘greatest Canadian’ in a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) (2004) poll, beating out such other notables as Pierre Trudeau, David Suzuki, Don Cherry, and even Wayne Gretzky?

The most common suggestion is that Medicare provides a point of difference that helps “distinguish the country from market-oriented, anti-communist, world-dominating America” (Bliss, 2002, p. 36; see also Armstrong et al., 1998, p. 1; Resnick, 2005, p. 49). Indeed, part of Canada’s fragile national identity may be blamed primarily on the fact that Canada has always relied – perhaps, uneasily at times – on other nations for its own existence, given the dependent nature of its prevailing forms of capital (Easterbrook & Aitken, 1988, pp. 21-22; see also Clement & Williams, 1997; Marr & Paterson, 1980; Schwartz, 1967, p. 29; Watkins, 1997). With the vast increase in American investment

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<sup>21</sup> Similarly, an Environics Research survey found that Medicare “outstrips the flag, the national anthem, the Charter, even hockey,” as an “institution of symbolic importance to Canada” (Globe & Mail, 2003).

during the post- World War II period – furthered more recently by various free-trade agreements (Angus, 1997) – the most emblematic symbols of Canadian nationalism have been those that provide a mark of difference from the United States; that being Canadian means decidedly, *not American* (Adams, 1998, p. xvii). Medicare, it is claimed, exists as the most significant point of difference, as something that expresses “‘fundamentally Canadian’ values” (Mathews, 1998, p. 2), as opposed to something that could be confused with more individualistic American values or identity, given the relative cultural similarities.

Yet, such conclusions seem relatively weak. While nationalism certainly functions by virtue of difference – designating through the use of symbols and other means, one community of national citizens from another – there are many things that distinguish Canada from America, and such an inference doesn’t explain why Medicare should be more emblematic of Canada than “the flag, the national anthem, the Charter, even hockey” (Armstrong as cited in *Globe & Mail*, 2003), as an “institution of symbolic importance to Canada” (*Globe & Mail*, 2003), nor why it should exist as a symbol of national unity within a country historically “divided...by regional, ethnic, and religious loyalties” (Swartz, 1967, p. ix).

Rather than simply asserting this connection as a historical fact, as is common amongst the literature (Angus, 1997, p. 20; see also Armstrong, et al., 1994, 1998, 2001; Bliss, 2002; Browne, 2000; Campbell & Marchildon, 2007; *Christian Science Monitor*, 2005; Evans, 2003, p. 21; Forget, 2002; Gregg, 2006; Jaworski, 2005; Kaplan, 2004; McFarlane & Prado, 2002; Quesnel-Valle, 2006; Raney, 2009; Redden, 2002; Resnick, 2005, p. 49; ter Weeme, 2008), I argue

that the predominant factor in this relationship is Medicare's form as a shared property. Within a society where individuals are "bound to others only through the competitive market and nothing more" (Burkitt, 2008, p. 2), Medicare provides a valuable common interest that is shared amongst the entire population.

Simply stating that Medicare exists as collective property does not make it so, however, let alone provide the necessary evidence that such property has the power to create a social consciousness among discrete individuals. To substantiate this claim, it is necessary to (1) briefly examine the origins of health insurance in Canada, (2) clarify the particular means by which we may classify Medicare as a shared property, and (3) examine the relationship between shared property and national consciousness within the liberal democratic state. This line of analysis should make it clear how shared property, in the form of Medicare, has provided a significant point of commonality amongst individuals within the Canadian nation-state, and the potential consequences – both in Canada, and the rest of the world – when such shared properties are diminished.

### **3.2 History, Health Insurance, and Canadian Values.**

To begin with, we must first lay to rest the common claim that Medicare is somehow indicative of a particular set of historical and inherent Canadian values, as part of some narrative that expresses our "shared destiny," as put by Roy Romanow (2007, p. 352). This is important because, as Heather Whiteside (2009) notes: "a policy that aims to provide free and universal public health care to all citizens is not one that operates in a vacuum, as it is intimately bound up with the prevailing social relations of power and thus with developments

occurring within capitalism itself” (p. 79). Without attempting to analyze and understand these relations, then, we make the mistake of giving such symbols their own consciousness; they somehow become ‘self-determining.’ By providing a chronology that puts its brief history into context,<sup>22</sup> however, we may avoid this pitfall and instead attempt to understand the “specific historical and socio-economic circumstances” (Monique Bégin as cited in Kaplan, 2004, p. 23) that gave rise to public health insurance in Canada (in other words, the dynamic of class struggle and the economic factors that gave rise to the welfare state). In doing this, it should become clear how claims touting Medicare as an expression of Canadian values are misinformed and relatively misleading.

This point is particularly significant if we recall that forms of health insurance in Canada began much earlier than the medical insurance scheme created by Tommy Douglas and his Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) party in Saskatchewan (Taylor, 1973, p. 31). As Colleen Fuller (1998) explains:

The birth of medicare was constrained and influenced by a number of factors unique to Canada. The constitutional arrangements in Canada’s federated system seemed to conflict with the idea of and the demand for a national health care program. To this day there are no constitutional answers to the question: ‘Which level of government has jurisdiction over health and health care?’ The British North America Act, Canada’s

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<sup>22</sup> It is not my intention to provide a systematic overview of the development of health care in Canada, but there are many studies that do just that (Armstrong, et al., 1998; Burke & Stevenson, 1998; Crichton & Hsu, 1990; Evans & Stoddart, 1989; LeClair, 1975; Naylor, 1987; Soderstrom, 1978; Taylor, 1987).

constitution at the time, did not allocate explicit legislative authority over health care to any level of government, noting only that Ottawa was responsible for 'quarantine and the establishment and maintenance of marine hospitals,' while provinces were to establish, maintain, and manage 'hospitals, asylums, charities and eleemosynary [charitable] institutions (p. 13).

With no legal provisions for who (in the sense of which government body) was responsible for health care in Canada, the earliest formal arrangement of health insurance began not with the provincial or federal government, but rather with the "Nova Scotia's Provincial Workers' Association, representing miners in the Glace Bay colliery, that won the first formal agreement with an employer in 1883 for a 'medical check-off' system that allowed workers to use physician and hospital services of their choosing" (Fuller, 1998, p. 17). Due to increased pressure from workers and workers' associations, "this method was later adopted in other mining and logging communities across the country, notably in Timmins, Ontario, and in Trail, Nanaimo, Chemainus, and Port Alberni, British Columbia" (p. 17).

As Donald Swartz (1979) notes, the origins of medicare are rooted far more in class struggle than some deep-rooted aspect of Canadian identity:

In Canada, as in other capitalist countries, the idea of health insurance grew out of the problems industrial workers experienced in gaining access to medical care. Unions or friendly societies either set up insurance funds for their members themselves, or did so through an arrangement with employers; in some cases employers themselves made payments into

such funds as a 'fringe-benefit'. More typically, employers set up welfare provisions of their own (p. 316).

While "these efforts protected workers from some of the consequences of job-related injuries and illness" (Fuller, 1998, p. 18), they were also problematic in that they "faced serious limitations in that they were based on the [company] as the unit of organization" (Swartz, 1979, p. 317). Originally "designed to combat employee discontent by offering benefits to 'loyal' employees, and so blunt the tendencies of workers to organize and/or turn to socialism in an effort to realize their own interests" (Swartz, 1979, p. 317), these local arrangements were scarcely adequate, and the nature of the capitalist mode of production meant that employer-run plans were constrained by the limits of profit margins.

The inadequacy of these systems to cover the wide range of health problems that workers faced (as well as the related secondary effects) led trade unions to demand "a system of workers' compensation with wage replacement during convalescence, as well as health benefits covering physician services and hospitalization for workers and their dependents regardless of where an illness originated" (Fuller, 1998, p. 18) due to the dangerous and potentially lethal conditions "of work, particularly in the logging, railway, and mining industries" (p. 18). While these concessions were not granted, there was increased pressure from the working classes "for safe workplaces and a system of workers' compensation that would adequately protect the casualties on the front-lines of production" (p. 18) as well as "demands for a public scheme to cover the costs of health care associated with sickness – whether work related or not" (p. 18).

Similarly, as a result of “poverty and low farm incomes” (p. 19), the Prairie Provinces began “to experiment with prepaid hospital services before the turn of the century” (p. 19). Fuller (1998) writes: “by 1914 several medical and hospital programs had emerged in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The first was the municipal hospital care system for indigents, financed by general tax revenue” (p. 19). Difficulty attracting doctors to rural areas also “gave rise to the municipal doctor system in the three provinces, which offered rural physicians an annual salary in exchange for medical services” (p. 19). Combined with the union hospital system, whereby “towns, villages, and rural municipalities combined in districts to build, administer, and manage ‘Union Hospitals’ during World War I” (p. 19), these early programs sparked intense provincial and national debate about the future of public health insurance in Canada with support coming generally from workers, farmers, and the poor against an organized resistance that “included some of the most powerful organizations in the country – chambers of commerce and boards of trade, manufacturers, industrialists, and organized physicians, among others” (p. 19).

This pressure only increased as a result of the depression that followed the stock market crash of 1929. With the growth of the unemployed poor who were unable to pay for physicians’ services (either those already rendered, or current services), as well as complaints, and even strikes by doctors who found themselves providing charity service on an increasing basis with little or no financial remittance, provincial governments were forced to examine various

systems of public health insurance to quell social unrest – primarily from doctors whose salaries had plummeted (p. 20).

Given that the issue of health insurance has always been part of the struggle of the working classes, it is perhaps not surprising that the first attempt at a system of public health insurance “occurred in British Columbia in 1936” (p. 19), where there existed “a long history of industrial militancy, and a degree of communist and socialist strength in the labour movement” (Swartz, 1979, p. 318; see also Naylor, 1986, p. 60). Pressure from the working-class supported Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which “now sat on the Opposition benches of the B.C. legislature” (Fuller, 1998, p. 22), as well as the findings of a Royal Commission that “proposed a provincial plan that would cover all medical services, hospitalization, drugs, and appliances, and eventually dental care” (p. 19), led the government to introduce legislation that would provide the first public health insurance scheme in Canada. Strongly opposed by an organized group of “wealthy businessmen who opposed any progressive social reform that might increase the deficit” (p. 19), however, the plan was never formally introduced. Instead, it was consigned “to a limbo where it remained for nearly twenty years” (p. 19).

While the British Columbia plan was never formally introduced, “the obvious conclusion from the BC experience – that federal action was necessary – was not missed by the proponents of social reform” (Swartz, 1979, p. 319; see also Taylor, 1973, p. 32). As a means to contain rising provincial health costs (and thus further provincial-federal discord) and mitigate the so-called rise of

socialism in Canada (in other words, the mobilization of working classes), members of the federal Liberal government – particularly Ian Mackenzie, the minister of Pensions and National Health (Swartz, 1979, p. 319) – “tried to initiate a national program [of hospital insurance] right after the Second World War” (Armstrong et al., 1998, p. 11), as a “peace formula” (Offe, 1984, p. 147), that would allow for the reproduction of private property relations as such, and thus, a level of security for not only capital, in general, but also those political parties that were its representative, while granting (or exchanging) a measure of security to those classes endangered by the capital accumulation process (Finkel, 1979, p. 345; see also Fuller, 1998, p. 30).

While the program was abandoned after “the provinces could not reach an agreement” (Armstrong et al., 1998, p. 11), the federal government did get involved to some extent by providing funding “under the National Health Programme of 1948...[to encourage] hospital construction to address what was perceived to be a marked shortage of hospital beds” (Burke & Stevenson, 1998, p. 600). It would be Saskatchewan’s CCF-created hospital insurance scheme enacted a year earlier in 1947, however, that would provide the foundation for all future of federal health programs. Led by Tommy Douglas, the Saskatchewan CCF party introduced a hospital insurance scheme in 1947 under the premise that people should be able to receive “health services just as they are able to get educational services, as an inalienable right of being a citizen” (as cited in Fuller, 1998, p. 38). Due to the unique “social and economic characteristics of the province and the people of Saskatchewan, and the special problems attendant

upon pioneering the flat prairie lands to develop a one-crop or 'wheat economy' (Taylor, 1987, p. 69), Saskatchewan's working classes were more accustomed to collective forms of organization. As noted by Malcolm Taylor (1987):

In 1946, sixty percent of the population was rural, scattered over vast distances, with an average population density of three people per square mile.

The sparse population, the limited resources, and the high risk and uncertainty of a single export agricultural commodity inspired the pioneers to group action both in the development of efficient agencies for the marketing of their wheat and in providing essential social services. As a result the cooperative movement flourished in Saskatchewan on a scale unknown in other Canadian provinces. Professor S.M. Lipsett reported that in 1945 the average farmer belonged to four or five cooperatives (pp. 69-70).

These unique characteristics led the CCF to opt for a hospital insurance program that was universal for all residents of the province, with funding provided by general tax revenue. The subsequent success of the program – both in terms of popular support, and efficiency – led the British Columbia government to follow suit and introduce a similar plan in 1949. "With continued public interest in a national health plan, and growing provincial interest spurred by the experiments with hospital insurance in B.C. and Saskatchewan, the federal government tabled proposals for a national health insurance program late in 1955" (Fuller, 1998, p. 39).

Within the context of the general movement toward welfare provisions within the developed capitalist economies of the West (themselves, “an economic concession to the working class in order to realize better the long-run political and economic interests of the capitalist class” [Swartz, 1979, p. 335]), the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act (HIDS), was passed unanimously in 1957. It sought to extend the type of coverage provided by provincial hospital insurance plans by virtue of a payment scheme in which “hospitals had a guarantee of payment” (Armstrong et al., 1998, p. 13) from the federal government for services rendered. In this way, just like Saskatchewan, no Canadian citizen could be denied access to medically necessary hospital services, and some financial relief was given to provincial governments struggling to enact programs of their own.

Of course, just like previous endeavours, there was opposition from doctors’ groups and the corporate sector. Calling “public hospital insurance a ‘Trojan Horse’ that would ‘destroy...freedom of choice’ because people – in particular healthy high income earners, the industry’s target consumer – would no longer be able to choose from among dozens of insurance policies and instead would be forced onto public health plans” (Fuller, 1998, p. 40), this opposition fought heavily to stop the introduction of the HIDS Act. While unsuccessful, it wouldn’t be long until this opposition could mobilize again; this time, against the introduction of a universal health insurance plan in Saskatchewan.

As noted by Fuller (1998):

When Douglas announced the government's plan for a 'complete transfer of medicare expenditures from the private to the public sector,' the reaction of the province's physicians, newspapers, and business community was immediate, ferocious, and uniformly hostile to the government's proposals. The public, on the other hand, had expected the CCF government to fulfil its longstanding promise to introduce universal public hospital and physician insurance, and were well disposed towards the idea (p. 42).

Afraid that further "state-aided health insurance" (p. 43) would "erode their almost total control they exercised over the public's use of medical services" (p. 43), the Saskatchewan College of Physicians' (SPCS) "solidified its links with the business community, the opposition Liberals, drug companies, the Dental Association, and the Sifton family newspaper chain" (p. 43). When the program finally launched on July 1, 1962, "over 90 percent of the province's doctors went on strike, refusing to see patients even in an emergency" (Rachlis, 2007, p. 224). The subsequent result of this concerted effort at opposing public-supported health reform was a number of different government concessions that affected the way in which health insurance was to be provided. While still financed from the government, these concessions meant that services were

'planned, organized [and] administered' by the private, and, at the time, mainly nonprofit sector. It was an important and defining moment in Canada's slow progress toward a national health program, setting a

precedent that would be followed in federal legislation five years later (Fuller, 1998, p. 45).

Although this precedent would have significant implications for the future of Medicare in Canada – particularly in the sense that “the control by the physicians of the production, distribution, and price of health services was untouched” (Swartz, 1979, p. 329) – the introduction of a medical insurance plan in Saskatchewan was nothing else but a victory for the working classes, and one that “fired the imagination of Canadians and made the idea of a full, national, public health program a tangible thing, a realistic goal rather than a dream” (Fuller, 1998, pp. 45-46; see also Swartz, 1979, p. 326).

Public support for a national system of health insurance began to gain steam and the 1964 Royal Commission on Health Services, “headed by Emmett Hall, chief justice of Saskatchewan” (p. 47), only furthered this support. While the intervening years between the introduction of Saskatchewan’s plan, and the report of the Hall Commission saw “the establishment of a political and ideological alliance between the CMA [Canadian Medical Association] and the newly founded Canadian Health Insurance Association (CHIA)” (pp. 47-48) that sought to destabilize existing and future public health insurance programs, the report of the Hall Commission found that “the achievement of the highest possible health standards for all our people...can best be achieved through a comprehensive, universal Health Services Programme” (Canada, 1964, p. 11). Much to the chagrin of its detractors, this conclusion, reached after “hearings across the country” (Fuller, 1998, p. 51), as well as an analysis of “the

programmes and practices in other countries including the United Kingdom, France, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, the United States, the U.S.S.R., Australia, and New Zealand” (Royal Commission on Health Services, 1964, p. xix), led the federal Liberal party to table Bill C-227, the Medical Care Insurance Act in July of 1966. It was

identical to the earlier hospital insurance bill. The federal government offered to split the costs of physicians’ services with any province adopting an acceptable plan. Such a plan would have to be universal, portable from province to province, cover all physicians’ services, with the insurance fund administered on a non-profit basis (Swartz, 1979, p. 325).

Regardless of its similarity to the earlier hospital insurance bill, however, it was still opposed by doctors’ groups who “realized that if the plan was universal, their fee schedule would have to be set in negotiation with the provinces (Swartz, 1979, pp. 325-326; see also Armstrong et al., 1998, p. 27), as well as insurance companies that were essentially pre-empted from the marketplace.

Perhaps surprisingly (if we are to accept the notion that Medicare is an ‘essential’ expression of being Canadian), there was also opposition from provinces who “were moving defiantly against what they considered to be a federal intrusion into ‘their’ jurisdictions to ensure national criteria were properly applied” (Fuller, 1998, p. 62). “Pressure from the provincial medical associations and insurance companies... [as well as] their governments’ commitment to keeping their provinces attractive (that is, cheap) to manufacturing industries” (Swartz, 1979, p. 326), led many provinces (primarily Ontario and Quebec) to

initially oppose Medicare. In response, the federal government created “a social development tax of two percent which, despite official denials, was essentially a medicare tax. For Ontario and Quebec this meant they were going to contribute to Medicare whether they got any federal monies back or not” (p. 326). Needless to say, Ontario and Quebec agreed to the program shortly after, and, “by 1971 all provinces in Canada had established a system of public health insurance” (Fuller, 1998, p. 69).

This is not to suggest, however, that opposition groups did not have their say in the eventual makeup of the Medical Care Insurance Act. As Fuller (1998) notes:

When Bill C-227, the Medical Care Insurance Act, was tabled in the House of Commons on July 12, 1966, it was obvious that the federal government had got the message, not from the Canadian people, but from the medical profession and the insurance industry. The legislation captured the four principles enunciated by the prime minister a year earlier, plus several new details. Most important among these was a redefinition of the term ‘publicly administered,’ which now allowed provincial governments to contract private insurers to provide coverage on a nonprofit basis, and a clause allowing doctors to opt out and directly bill their patients. The principle of universality – at least in theory – would be protected in provincial health plans. Patients would be reimbursed for the publicly insured portion of the services they obtained (p. 63).

While both issues (the redefinition of 'publicly administered,' and the ability for doctors to opt out) were significant developments that would come to have an incredible effect on the future of health insurance in Canada (and indeed show the strength of an organized opposition), it was the Established Programs Financing Act of 1977 that would begin the erosion of "Canada's 'most cherished social program'" (Fuller, 1998, p. 70).

This was indeed a sticky situation for governments to undertake, however, given the immense public support for public health insurance. Prompted by the economic recession of the 1970s, and "the demands of the bourgeoisie for increased profits in the context of a stagnant economy meant that state expenditures for services to the working class had to be redirected into profits" (Swartz, 1979, p. 334; see also Evans, 1984, p. 8), "governments began to contain and then erode Canada's publicly funded and largely nonprofit health-care system" (Fuller, 1998, p. 71). The EPF changed "the 50-50 cost-sharing formula used to fund health care... [and] also ended federal responsibility to contribute a fixed percentage to provincial health spending, signalling a decreased role for Ottawa in health-care matters" (p. 71; see also Armstrong et al., 1998, pp. 28-29). The eventual result was less federal money for provinces ("a key feature of the viability of Medicare" [Whiteside, 2009, p. 89]), as well as the ability for provincial governments to "set funding levels for health services without federal interference" (Fuller, 1998, p. 71). This essentially meant that the federal government now had a weakened ability to "enforce national standards" (p. 71).

As Fuller (1998) notes: “the move sparked protests led by unions and public-health-care advocates. Activists formed the Canadian Health Coalition to fight further attacks on the health system, drawing inspiration from the earlier struggles to establish Medicare” (p. 71). And while the government was pleased with the EPF Act because it greatly reduced federal spending on health care – crafting health spending as a “budgetary process instead of a public policy approach that required lengthy, not to mention public, negotiations with the provinces” (p. 71) – it’s reduced ability to “enforce national standards” (p. 71) allowed doctors to “extra bill patients to increase their incomes” (p. 72), inciting public demand over questions of accessibility.<sup>23</sup> As a means to both regain control over provincial standards, and placate rising public anger over the process, the Liberal Trudeau government introduced the Canada Health Act to the House of Commons in 1983, which “basically repeated the definitions and five conditions of the old Acts – keeping the same rules of the game – but...with an enforcement mechanism and penalties in case of breaches” (Bégin, 2007, pp. 47-48). A year later in 1984, the “Act was passed unanimously” (Fuller, 1998, p. 72).

Five basic principles comprise the Canada Health Act (1985), and they had to be met in order for payment to be made under the EPF:

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<sup>23</sup> As Bégin (2007) notes: “In September 1980, [Justice Hall] reported to me that our Canadian Medicare system ranked among the best in the world, but warned me that extra-billing by doctors and user fees levied by hospitals were creating a two-tiered system that threatened the accessibility of care” (p. 47).

1. *Public administration*: the administration of the health care insurance plan of a province or territory must be carried out on a non-profit basis by a public authority;
2. *Comprehensiveness*: all medically necessary services provided by hospitals and doctors must be insured;
3. *Universality*: all persons in the province or territory must be entitled to public health insurance coverage on uniform terms and conditions;
4. *Portability*: coverage for insured services must be maintained when an insured person moves or travels within Canada or travels outside the country; and
5. *Accessibility*: reasonable access by insured persons to medically necessary hospital and physician services must be unimpeded by financial or other barriers (p. 5).

As Fuller (1998) has noted, however, these criteria, while solidifying the primary aspects of public health insurance, were relatively loose and subject to interpretation:

The lack of definitions in the Act regarding the nature of an insured service created a new line of business for the consulting industry in Canada. Along with hospitals and health corporations, consultants have tried to define the term 'medically necessary services,' which was inserted but not explained in the legislation. The term has been at the centre of debates about what is and what is not insurable. For example, dental services

were included in the 1984 criteria, as well as, 'where permitted, services rendered by other health practitioners,' for example, rehabilitation services delivered by a physiotherapist in private practice. Few provinces have ever covered dental care, while coverage for physiotherapy delivered in private practice is uneven across the country (p. 73).

While these debates remain central to the difficulties inherent in keeping Medicare public today, the Canada Health Act solidified "the legal framework within which the health sector functions," and thus, by virtue, "the overriding belief among Canadians that everyone should have equal access to medical services" (p. 74). Although the Canada Health Act should probably be viewed more as a means to regain control over provincial governments through the enforcement of national standards, it was nonetheless a victory for the working class.

This victory would not last long, however. If the EPF signalled the beginning of efforts to discreetly dismantle Medicare (regardless of the introduction of the Canada Health Act), the actions of subsequent governments were much more brash. With the election of Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives in 1984 there began

a series of cuts in EPF transfer payments to the provinces for health and post-secondary education in 1985, 1990, and 1991. The cumulative loss of revenue to provincial coffers during the Mulroney years amount to \$30 billion for health care alone, with another \$6.5 billion drawn out of the system by the Chrétien Liberals (Fuller, 1998, p. 75).

These changes mirrored the problems associated with the introduction of the EPF; the loss of federal funding meant that provinces were far less likely to comply with the criteria set out in the Canada Health Act. In this case, however, “it is hard to imagine that the Mulroney government did not anticipate this response” (Fuller, 1998, p. 75), with cuts brought in as part of a general process of neoliberal reform to minimize the role of government to “meet the new ‘global economy’s’ demands” (p. 75). The cumulative effect was a drop from 76.4 percent public funding for health insurance in 1975, to 68 percent in 1997.

As noted by Whiteside (2009),

federal spending on health care would further deteriorate when the 1995 budget announced that the EPF would be merged with the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP, the fund for social assistance and welfare) into a new block fund, to be called the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) (p. 90).

These changes, which were developed without public consultation, significantly reduced the amount that provinces “would have received under the former CAP and EPF programs...with 1996-98 cash transfers to the provinces alone declining by 33 percent (\$6 billion)” (p. 90). Despite commitments from the National Forum on Health “intended to improve the health of Canadians and to ensure that the health care system is equipped for the challenges of the future” (Canada, 1997, para. 6), these were secondary to issues of health care financing and external economic factors.

Similar to the 1997 National Forum on Health that coincided with an election campaign for the federal Liberal government, the 2002 Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada (also known as The Romanow Report) sought once again to provide transformative solutions to “Canada’s best-loved social program” (Armstrong et al., 1998, p. 1). While many of these suggestions were part of an “incremental strategy to achieve significant change” (Marchildon, 2007a, p. 270), they were, much like the 1997 National Forum on Health, hamstrung by a neoliberal political ideology that sought to minimize government involvement in social programs, and thus, a strong emphasis at both the provincial and federal levels towards ‘cost-shifting.’ As a result, in 2004, the CHST was decoupled into the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and the Canada Social Transfer (CST) to provide further provincial accountability for health care spending, given the “growing public concern over long waiting lists and understaffed/overcrowded facilities” (Whiteside, 2009, p. 91). The net result of this change, however, was a shift in focus away from the issue of funding to issues of provincial financial management, essentially leaving the federal government able to blame poor provincial health practices for what are, in essence, funding shortfalls.

Given the high level of support that Medicare receives among the Canadian public, however, it should be no surprise that efforts to dismantle Medicare have been of the variety of ‘death by a thousand cuts.’ As Fuller (1998) has noted, efforts to combat this reconfiguration have been difficult, primarily because

few Canadians understand how the funding system works – or can work. And because the changes during the last two decades have been so complex and arcane, it has been hard to generate an organized and broad-based outcry against them. From the perspective of many politicians, the less Canadians know about how the health-care system works, the better (p. 72).

There is little to suggest that this is changing anytime soon. As I've demonstrated, opposition to Medicare has existed throughout its entire history, from the earliest debates to present day (Gibson & Fuller, 2006, p. 21). This is "because, as a policy, Medicare is highly redistributive. Every minute of every day it redistributes resources from wealthier and healthier Canadians to poorer and sicker Canadians" (Marchildon, 2007b, p. 40). Medicare, then, did not come to exist as the expression of some form of intrinsic Canadian value-system (for this to occur, the signifier Canadian would have to point to something natural, rather than a socially constructed group of citizens), but rather, as the eventual outcome of class struggle, the threat of social unrest, and the particular contradictions within the capitalist mode of production that gave rise to the welfare state. If Medicare was somehow indicative of Canadian values or an essential identity, it stands to reason that public health insurance (or other forms of social insurance) would have emerged in *Canada* first – rather than Germany or Britain, or even Saskatchewan – and without all the conflict surrounding its various iterations, or the continual retrenchment of programs and services (Armstrong et al., 2000). Yet this doesn't in any way diminish the notion that

Medicare remains the most emblematic symbol of Canadian nationalism. Instead of taking this conception at face value, then, how might the particular form of Medicare as common property contribute to its prominent role within Canadian national consciousness?

### **3.3 Canadian Medicare, Common Property, and National Identity.**

If we recall that term property is used in this thesis to refer “to a *relationship* to a thing...a right or claim or entitlement to the use and disposal of goods and services” (Teeple, 2005, p. 33), then the

meaning of property...becomes synonymous with the meaning of right. That is why, for instance, with the advent of the welfare state after World War II legal circles engaged in discussion about the ‘new property,’ which was a reference to newly legislated entitlements to government goods and services, in the form of housing, pensions, medicare, social assistance, and so on (p. 33; see also Allet, 1987; Levy, 1983; Reich, 1964).

If common property is “created by the guarantee to each individual that he will not be excluded from the use or benefit of something” (Macpherson, 1983, p. 5), then Canadian Medicare – as part of the ‘new property’ of the post-World War II era – can be defined in this manner because of the universal provision in the Canada Health Act (1985) that states: “all persons in the province or territory must be entitled to public health insurance coverage on uniform terms and

conditions” (p. 5).<sup>24</sup> In other words, no Canadian may be excluded from receiving health care services.

But why should Medicare as common property provoke national sentiment? That is to say, why are social rights significant in this regard? To understand this, we must return to the discussion of the previous chapter about the origins of modern nationalism and its relationship to the capitalist mode of production. Modern nationalism, if we remember, was the means by which the bourgeoisie legitimized their rule. In the process of abolishing the feudal mode of production, it became necessary to provide a sense of the nation as an integral unit, given that these revolutions dispossessed the majority of the population from their means of production – creating, in the process, a legal framework in which the individual was defined as the embodiment of private property. While this belief (that one has a pre-imminent *right* to one’s self) simply reflected the interests of the ascending bourgeoisie, it explains why today

the citizens of liberal democracies are easily convinced that the concept of human being is simply a matter of self-relatedness because it reflects the central elements of their reality. That is, the principles of their daily lives are based on contractual, self-interested relations that define the system in which they live and that must be followed if they are to maintain their material existence. The concept merely takes as human the character of exchange relations in capitalist society (Teeple, 2005, p. 21).

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<sup>24</sup> This provision is common to every federal act as far back as the HIDS Act.

While the nation is commonly expressed as a community, it is simply an invented *sense* of community, an agglomeration of individuals as they exist within a market society: “bound to others only through the competitive market and nothing more” (Burkitt, 2008, p. 2). Indeed, “people born into capitalist societies are made over in this image and live in a society that reinforces such relations. They are socialized to believe in the truth of a notion of human that belies the process of socialization itself” (Teeple, 2005, p. 22). In other words, because the true nature of our consciousness is social, we simply reflect the system of rights that defines our social formation. Within a system of private property, then, we are left with an image of ourselves as isolated, separate, and self-contained.

It stands to reason, then, that if private property produces “the human defined as isolated individual, as whole unto itself, as singularity, as unrelated atom” (Teeple, 2005, p. 21), that common property (social rights) produces the inverse; a human defined instead as a social being, “the product of social relations, whose chief characteristic is a relation to others” (p. 21). Recalling the examples provided by Tönnies (1957) and Hobsbawm (1993) of communities as they existed prior to the modern nation-state, we see that an individuals awareness of themselves and their relation to their community was reflected in their system of property relations. In both examples, common property in the means of production provided a sense of self that was connected to their shared material existence. Thus, individuals identified themselves as being part of this or that village, dependent on the common property that such groups shared, where it was necessary “to share work, organization and forms of administration”

(Tönnies, 2001, p. 28). There was an awareness not of the self as an atomized, 'rational,' individual who engages in contractual, market relations, but as a component part of a much wider system of relations that were based in a common property in the means of production.

Medicare, then, as common property, as a *social* right, similarly produces a consciousness of the relation to others. As Teeple (2005) notes: "social rights arise as a counter to prevailing corporate private rights, as demands for the alleviation of the worst effects of capitalism or as a product of 'market failure' or incapacity of some sort" (Teeple, 2005, p. 23). In a system of private property which exists to protect the exclusive interests of individual citizens, then, forms of collective or shared property go a long way to creating a sense of something grander than individual interests. This is why, when people speak or write about Medicare, they express the notion that Medicare is the embodiment of Canadian values or "a defining characteristic of being Canadian" (McFarlane & Prado, 2002, p. ix). In doing so, they are conveying that common property, by virtue of its *social* nature, exists only in relation to others, and in relation to a very significant shared need – a notion that is counter to our prevailing system of private property. In this way, it produces a consciousness of the significant common interest that exists among the vast majority of working Canadians: a "communality of interest and concern – a communality that is not mechanistic or numerical but which is organic" (Thomas, 2010, p. 260), based as it is in the need for medical services which all humans share. Medicare figures prominently

within the national consciousness of Canadians, then, because of the immense value that it has for the working classes, and the long struggle to position it outside of the marketplace, as national social right, that is counter to the individual nature of private property.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This thesis does not mean to suggest, however, that shared property, in the form of Medicare, has created a strong Canadian nationalism, nor that it supersedes other conceptions of national identity in Canada (as say, *Québécois* or Aboriginal). One only has to look at the United States to see a much stronger form of nationalism centred on the civil 'liberties' that the market society affords, without regard to the social aspect of our existence. And while Medicare's form as common property provides a mark of distinction from the United States where little common property exists and "health is a market commodity" (Bégin, 2007, p. 48), this consciousness only exists in individuals because of the common interest it provides amongst all citizens – regardless of age, sex, race, or any other distinguishing feature; and all this, without the usual propaganda or indoctrination that usually accompanies modern nationalism. In this way, Medicare has become a beacon that signals that struggle, and resistance to private property is possible; that it is not only conceivable or imaginable, but that it can be a practical and significant aspect in the daily lives of working Canadians that provides an organic relation, or sense of community, amongst otherwise disparate individuals.

This point is significant, given that successive governments since the Trudeau administration have sought to dismantle Medicare (McBride & Shields, 1997, p. 88). Not only has globalization changed the nature of Canada's various political and economic relationships – particularly a “greater economic and cultural integration with the United States” (Raney, 2009, p. 21) – but it has also greatly transformed the interior structure of Canada's social programs (Sinclair, 2007, p. 99; see also Grinspun, 2007, p. 401; Teeple, 2000). Raney (2009) notes:

In Canada, the adoption of neo-liberal policies by the federal government throughout the 1990s meant that programs once tied to the pan-Canadian identity – mainly social welfare programs – were placed lower in the priority pile below those of economic and security concerns. This shift bore consequences not only for the individuals and groups who were the recipients of these programs, but presumably also for the version of Canada's national identity that was once defined by a strong welfare, interventionist state. The rebranding of Canada's new ‘entrepreneurial’ identity as an economic player on the world stage stands in contrast to the nation-building strategies from previous generations that promoted principles of collectivism and social equality. In effect, the message sent to potential trading partners – and to Canadians – of what ‘being Canadian’ means has shifted from one of being a ‘sharing, caring society’ to one of a nation open to the global economy (pp. 19-20).

There is certainly little doubt that this shift has had dire consequences for working Canadians. Changes to the global economy, and the labour process within the past thirty years have brought immense structural changes in the form of neo-liberal reform, and thus, the movement of social problems from the public sphere, to the private – an area that the corporate sector is more than happy to indulge in its search for new markets worldwide. And while previous neo-liberal regimes demonstrated a conscious effort to “undermine, retrench, or eliminate long-standing social welfare programs and regulatory agencies” (Teeple, 2000, p. 9), so too has the current economic crisis brought another round of ‘austerity measures’ – further cuts to public services, an increase in privatization, and thus, an effort to diminish (at least, by funding, if not outright retraction) many social rights that remain within developed capitalist countries (BBC, 2010; see also Al Jazeera, 2010).

It is important, then, to recognize the reasons why working Canadians’ hold Medicare in such high esteem, as part of their national identity; to oppose those, such as Bliss (2002) who suggest that this connection is insignificant, and simply part of the “ideological rigidity of those who see the Canada Health Act as set in Canadian stone” (p. 33). In making such claims, Bliss (2002) and others like him, are missing the class dynamic that elevates Medicare to such a prominent position within our national consciousness. Shared property is not something that the ruling classes are interested in or need and usually agree to out of necessity, but it is something of enormous benefit to the working classes – which is, of course, the vast majority of the Canadian population. In suggesting

that “it defies rationality to equate a particular set of Canada Health Act constraints imposed by Ottawa with the preservation of the Canadian identity” (Bliss, 2002, p. 33), Bliss is forgetting that the Canada Health Act is the eventual result of a long struggle by working class Canadians, beginning with the “miners in the Glace Bay colliery, that won the first formal agreement with an employer in 1883 for a ‘medical check-off’ system” (Fuller, 1998, p. 17). His suggestion also ignores the fact that governments have been trying to dismantle (rather than impose) this set of principles ever since they were enforced by law. The Canada Health Act, then, far from being a set of constraints imposed by the state, represents the culmination of a century’s worth of efforts to recognize the common need for health services that all humans share. It figures prominently within the national consciousness of Canadians, then, not because of propaganda or indoctrination, but rather because of social nature of such property, and thus, its immense benefit to working classes.

Without recognizing the social and class dynamic through which Medicare functions, then, we fall prey to ideologies that suggest that forms of common property are inefficient means of providing for our material needs; that they are past their historical significance, and are unnatural for humans that exist as the embodiment of private property. As global capital transcends the nation-state, creating a push for “common economic interests that supersede traditional political boundaries” (Hiller, 2006, p. 307), corporate private rights only seek to further the notion of “the individual defined as economic maximizer and to social relations conceived as rational choices” (Teeple, 2000, p. 167).

Besides an obvious increase in social and economic inequality, the downgrading of Medicare has serious implications for the future of Canada. If the most prominent national symbol is Medicare (a form of common property), and thus, an institution that embodies the social relations that define it, then the loss of such property signals the triumph of corporate private rights that seek to create a world market of individual consumers, disassociated from our relations with others. Therefore, if we are to avoid further individualization – to avoid being transformed further and further toward, what is essentially a human conceived as rational robot – we must recognize the ways in which shared property is inherently social, and thus, able to provide a common identity that goes beyond the private interests of individuals. Indeed, such property is, by its very nature, an acknowledgment that we have shared needs as humans, and that these are, in fact, the only empirical commonality among us. Only by understanding this, however, can we begin to reframe the struggle to keep Medicare alive in its current form and resist the movement toward further individualization of common problems, moving instead, towards a more collective means of providing for the benefit of all.

## 4: CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are much wider implications for this study than just the future of Canadian nationalism and Medicare. If Medicare has the ability to provide a point of common interest among disparate individuals within the Canadian state, it certainly stands to reason that other shared property could do the same. While Hollywood films continue to promote the notion that humanity can only band together to fight a fantastical external threat – aliens, comets, and so on – it seems clear that this could be achieved far more easily through shared property, for the purposes of fighting real threats: disease, hunger, lack of shelter and education, and so on.

Whether that is a real alternative on the national level is yet to be seen, however, given that such property – Medicare, included – has been steadily in decline since the 1970s as a result of the requirements of global capital (McBride & Shields, 1997, p. 88; see also Teeple, 2000, p. 195). With further individualization, comes the notion that there do not need to be shared solutions to common problems, but rather, “biographical solution[s] to systematic contradictions... individual salvation from shared troubles” (Bauman, 2000, p. 144). Indeed, “the *pensée unique* of our deregulated market society forgoes these tasks and openly proclaims them to be counterproductive” (Bauman, 2000, p. 149). It takes what is, the existing state of affairs, and proclaims it as the essence or truth of what it means to be human. The human being is

subsequently presented as a robot, an entity that exists outside the sphere of social relations, treating them as unnecessary and of little consequence.

If we instead recognize that the only things that are empirically common to humans are shared needs (for food, shelter, and so on), and that these needs can only be adequately met through common property – the guarantee that no one will be excluded from the entitlement to such resources – it becomes possible to resist economic systems that seek to tear us apart, to deny us our humanity. We can then move toward alternatives that would create amongst individuals an actual community, a social consciousness of others, as opposed to the institution of private property that, by its very definition, divides us and keeps our shared concerns private. This can only happen, however, when property is shared amongst all subordinate classes. The hope is, of course, not that this happens, but that it happens sooner, rather than later.

#### **4.1.1 Copyright statement**

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