HAROLD A. INNIS
A STUDY OF CREATIVE INTELLECT

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the maturation of the thought of Harold A. Innis about problems he considered to be of fundamental importance to the maintenance of a humanist tradition, and as such, it is principally a study in the history of ideas. In order to clarify the intent of his often scattered writings, the study is organized thematically into four chapters. This approach demonstrates both the related nature of his ideas and emphasizes the course of Innis' intellectual development.

The first chapter, although chronologically organized to indicate the temporal frame work and formative intellectual influences, stresses Innis' conception of the role of humanist dissent in the academic community and the humanist's responsibility to society. The second theme examines Innis' scholarly task, which he inherited from Adam Smith and Thorstein Veblen, of dissent from economic and methodological orthodoxy. His philosophical and historical approach rejected the simplicity of the price theories of economics and led him to criticize knowledge derived solely by the scientific method. Having argued that Innis early held a skeptical attitude towards the scientific method, the chapter concludes with the crystallization of his position in the mid-thirties and the implications of this position in the cold war.

The third chapter analyzes Innis' treatment of technology. Through his exploration of the social significance of technology, suggested in the work of Karl Marx and Thorstein

Veblen, Innis gradually shifted his interest from the study of the effects of technology on social organization when applied to transportation to its role in shaping society through the media of communication. In his view, workmanship, and thereby technology, had been corrupted by the price system. This shift of interest from transportation to communication institutions was facilitated by his staple thesis of Canadian social growth which provided him with a physical medium to demonstrate the impact of technology.

In the fourth chapter, Innis' assessment of monopolies combines his critique of scientific knowledge and his theory of historical change. His approach to monopoly institutions, first in relation to commodities and secondly in relation to information, exemplifies the creative exposition of political economy untrammelled by the myopic questions examined in Political Science and Economics.

While no attempt has been made to encompass all of Innis' published and unpublished work, the first chapter does rely heavily on the Innis Papers and all of his strategically important articles have been cited.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Harold A. Innis was a humanist scholar in the critical tradition established by Adam Smith. In the following study the development of Innis' thought will be analyzed and related to many of his publications through the study of three recurrent themes. His gradual rejection of the use of the quantitative methods of the natural sciences in the social sciences and humanities can be traced throughout his review articles of the 1930's. His sceptical view of scientific knowledge provides both the first theme and the reasons for Innis' fear of the bias or view point of western communication. In his view, communication suffered from ethnocentricism since it carried the bias of the values and knowledge of its culture. The second unifying aspect of his work is his examination of the social implications of technology which he believed perpetuated the scientific bias of communication by selecting a media suitable to itself for communication. The third element providing an avenue to all of Innis' work was his study of the role of economic and later information monopolies. He concluded that the monopoly of knowledge built around the modern media of communication threatened creativity and thereby humanism.

The object of this study is to illustrate his originality in relation to the problems offered by his intellectual environment, and not to explain away his achievement by the device of emotional or instinctual reductionism. Innis noted that the:

> danger of history of ideas and concern with

> furniture [intellectual symetry] is apt to distract attention from the basic problems of inadequacy to meet problems of lack of contact between abstract ideas and technological development.1

Nevertheless it is hoped that this analysis in the history of ideas will provide a basis for relating technology to abstract ideas. Innis' influence will also be suggested although such influence as he may have had is not a justification for this study, since Innis himself quipped that, "I have long since escaped from the illusion that people read my books."[2] He also doubted the ability of the psychoanalytic approach to assess intentions, in his reflection that:

> Alert to --- the prospect of being exposed to the psychoanalyst --- who will point --- to these 'further considerations' as representative of youth and immaturity searching for hope where none exists, and as a further affect of the War, the depression, and the winter season ---.[3]

Innis wrote a prodigious number of articles, reviews, editorial introductions, and monographs in thirty-five years of academic life. The quality and quantity of his work suggests that his research and writing were the fulfilment of a compulsive mission. Certainly his emotional make-up gave him the capacity for such a monumental accomplishment, but the limitations to this study's approach are imposed not only by the subject's prejudices, but also by the nature of the material available. Innis' early background and career, combined with the intellectual environment of the post World War I period, stimulated the direction and growth of his thought. Thus a thorough

understanding of Innis' conclusions and ideas must be prefaced by a biographical sketch of his early life and career.

REFERENCE: INTRODUCTION

[1]University of Toronto Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, Innis Papers, foot 34, Idea File, p.137.

[2]Innis Papers, foot 1, H.A. Innis to Hon W.M. Dickson, Minister of Labour (Ottawa), 1 December, 1937.

[3]H.A. Innis, "The Role of Intelligence: Some Further Notes", Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science, (hereafter cited as CJEPS), vol. 1, (1936), p.280.

CHAPTER I

AN INTELLECTUAL PROFILE

PART I: EARLY LIFE

Harold Adams Innis was an extremely personable figure who was generally known for his capacity to work and the sense of dedication that inspired his research. His flexible administration of academic responsibilities did not spring from a pliant character; he often stood stubbornly on principle to the embarrassment of his friends and colleagues. In devotion to academic life, he spent an incredible amount of physical energy in ceaseless research; to protect his investment, Innis was always alert to any governmental or other influence which would curtail or compromise scholastic endeavor. This trait was particularly evident during World War II in his founding of the Canadian Social Science Research Council. His intransigent defence of principles was not entirely altruistic, as often his criticism furthered his own career, which he believed coincided with his profession's, and Canada's best interests.

During his childhood, Innis developed his most obvious quality, his capacity for work, partially because his early labours were reinforced by success. Harold Adams Innis was born on November fifth, 1894, on a farm near Otterville, Oxford County, Ontario. His father, William Anson Innis, of the fourth generation of his family in Canada, was an extremely able farmer. The eldest son, Harold received continuous

schooling from the turn of the century with the exception of one year. He first attended number one South Norwich school, a one room building conveniently located half a mile from his family's farm. His mother had ambitions for Harold. After the birth of a second son, Samuel--who assured the retention of the farm in the family, should the eldest leave the household--she supported the continuation of Harold's education. Encouraged by Harold's progress, the prospering livestock markets, and the birth of a second son his parents decided to sacrifice the aid of a full-time pair of hands in the hope that Harold would become a preacher or a teacher. Otterville High School, two miles away, lacked the senior secondary programme, causing Innis to attend the Collegiate Institute in Woodstock from 1908 to 1911. His parents provided Harold with the commuting fare on the Grand Trunk to Woodstock, twenty miles further west. Harold contributed the small earnings gained by working in his uncle's store in Norwich and from trapping muskrat. The enormous work that he would tackle in his later career was foreshadowed in his decision to complete the two years necessary for entrance to 'Normal school' in one. During the examinations, he remained in Woodstock, and although he contracted the German measles at this time, he passed. In his early life, continuous work brought success to Harold personally, in his academic pursuits, and to the family in the hard-earned prosperity of the farm. The habit of work remained an integral part of his character and partially explains his later success.

The fundamentalist Baptist church, in which he was raised, sanctified the routine of farm labour; this puritanical code held a lasting influence on his character. His religious background accentuated his sober and industrious traits, but equally significant was the development of his sense of mission and passion for people and later their cultures. His mother's early hope that Harold would become a minister were not altogether ill-founded, in view of the sermonizing in Innis' final publications. Innis, however, elaborated a broader humanism which could encompass a more varied human heritage than that of the fundamentalist church.

Innis allowed his education to lapse for a year in order to accumulate the tuition, required at the Baptist-sponsored McMaster University; during that year he taught for a term at the local school and worked on the farm. In Toronto, during the autumn of 1913, he spent an unpleasant first term and returned to McMaster after Christmas only at the urging of his maternal uncle. His modest and isolated background had ill prepared him for the anonymity of the large city.

Canada and Harold Innis were urbanized during the First World war. After shaky beginnings, he excelled at McMaster, receiving in 1915 a first in history, the philosophy prize, and the A.B. Thomson scholarship in political economy. To overcome his shyness and prepare for a law career, Innis had also mastered oratory. In a debate between Trinity College and McMast-

er, Innis analyzed the interdependence of the world's trade and argued that "commercial prosperity is not necessarily the cause of war; it is the only panacea for peace."[1] While his interest in economic history had been stimulated by W.S. Wallace's lectures, his search for financial independence sent him to Alberta to teach in a one room school in May of 1915. His graduation in May 1916 found him undecided upon a vocation. Partially to avoid his family's pressure to join the ministry and the humiliation of being young, male, and idle, he enlisted in the Canadian Corps and was overseas by the end of July 1916.[2]

Perhaps, his intellectual honesty and sensitivity to his family's feelings required this escape. The Baptist church demanded an adult make a public profession of faith. But Innis had quietly become an agnostic. Innis reassured his family that by volunteering, he could select a position the least exposed to death. He chose to become a signaler and ironically found himself in the front ranks of the Canadian Corps participating in the attack on Vimy Ridge in the spring of 1917. After he recovered from the initial onslaught at Vimy Ridge, the routine of rats and mud grew intolerable. To keep busy, he volunteered for double scouting duty on July 7. Luckily, perhaps, Innis sustained a leg wound while on this patrol and because the first medical attention he received had been inadequate he eventually retired to the Canadian Army hospital in London for a rather long convalescence. Innis did not return

to the front again; he could walk only with the aid of a cane. Soon fretful with hospital routine, his need for activity drove him to prepare himself for an M.A. degree from McMaster. Upon returning to Canada in the spring of 1918, he received his discharge and his M.A. as well.

His Master's thesis, "The Economic Problems of Army Life," underlined the emotional significance the war had upon him. A foretaste of the future generalization Innis arrived at, is glimpsed in the topical observation that "one of these /problems of the war/ pressing for solution is the economic reconstruction of the world," a statement which leaves little doubt that he felt his generation had been betrayed because of faulty political economy.[3] His war experience focused his sense of mission on discovering the effects of technology upon cultural values and on assessing the role that academic research ought to fulfill in avoiding war.[4]

PART II: ACADEMIC CAREER

Until Innis entered graduate school at Chicago, not only were the events of his life common to his generation but he was lacking in the intellectual direction which was so marked in the rest of his life. Innis' appearance at the Chicago summer session of 1918 was purely fortuitous. He intended to return to Toronto in the fall to pursue law at Osgoode Hall, but his curiosity led him to spend his army savings broadening his knowledge of economics. Intending to only sample Chicago's economic thought, he struck such a stimulating relationship with the head of the department of economics, Chester Whitney Wright, that he remained for two years, from the summer of 1918 to the summer of 1920. In the summer of 1920, aided by the university's graduate assistance program, Innis completed his examinations, doctoral thesis, and defence. In the autumn of 1918, he read and marked papers for C.W. Wright. Wright also supervised Innis' instruction of an elementary course in economics for the winter of 1919, the autumn of 1919, and the winter and spring quarters of 1920. During the spring and summer of 1919, he had researched his thesis at Chicago and the Ottawa archives; his appointment as a don for Snell House in the summer of 1920 eased the completion of his thesis.

The academic experiences at Chicago strengthened his historical approach and reaffirmed his desire to project his work in terms of moral social goals. The academic tools introduced to Innis at Chicago remained the basis of his intel-

lectual conceptions. He reflected on "my enormous debt to... /C.W. Wright/ and to other members of the staff of the university of Chicago, particularly when I was a graduate student, and at other times."[5] Professor Chester Whitney Wright was the most important personal influence in persuading Innis to go into academic life in the field of economic history. Besides offering Innis teaching and marking assignments, Wright also suggested his thesis topic, "The Canadian Pacific Railway," which became Innis' first major publication. Intellectually, Innis owed less to Wright's influence than to other members of the Chicago community; but to the extent that Innis was an economic historian, Wright's role was decisive in determining Innis' professional career.

Frank H. Knight, who taught Innis economic theory and John Maurice Clark, who lectured on overhead costs, both assumed that the economic system was an integral part of social values. Knight's warning that:

> Those problems of price mechanics unfortunately tend to get separated from the real issues of the way in which the price system organizes production and distributes the result,[6]

is readily evident in Innis' A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In asking whether the road's influence in increasing productive capacity had "contributed more to the welfare of humanity," Innis concerned himself with the C.P.R. as an example of the impact of industrialism on society, rather than soley discussing the internal efficiency of a particular

railing corporation.[7] John Maurice Clark developed a theory of overhead costs which to him "are seen to be a universal fact." He stressed that studying overhead costs formed part of:

> a search for the laws of economic efficiency in the large, rather than of that narrow commercial efficiency which breeds the convulsions that sap the strength of business as a whole.

Clark encouraged Innis to use overhead costs creatively, as would be found in Innis' interpretation of the importance of overhead costs in increasing pulp and newsprint production. Of greater significance was his proposition that "there are other features of the human costs of labor corresponding to some of the particular phases of overhead costs."[8] Clark construed overhead costs as partially social. In his study of the C.P.R. Innis adopted Clark's tool in his conclusion that "the pressure of overhead charges---, intensified the necessity for the development of local mainline and branch line traffic."[9]

Innis acquired a further specific tool from C.S. Duncan, who stressed the relationship between a commodity and the organization designed to exploit it. He transformed Duncan's ideas about marketing into a theory of Canadian social and institutional development arising from the export of staple commodities. Innis' academic success rested at least in part upon his imaginative use of the concepts he acquired a Chicago.

Professionally, Innis' teaching assignments at Chicago had been valuable experience. Personally, his interest was engag-

ed by an American student, Mary Quayle, during the winter session of 1919. At this time, his future wife was completing her B.A. requirements, after a short clerical interlude in Washington during the war years. When he was researching the ramifications of the C.P.R. in Ottawa that September, he wrote to Mary Quayle that "Both of us can move mountains," if only paper mountains.[10] After their marriage in May 1921, at Willmette near Chicago, they combined their energies to research the Canadian cultural heritage. The Innises were well aware of the social problems of overhead costs and consequently waited until Harold's career was established before having their three children, Mary Elan (1927), Hugh (1930), and Anne (1933). Mrs. Innis participated in Harold's academic career and intellectual life, and in her own right, is a noted Canadian authoress.

Combining the emotional and intellectual influences of World War I and Chicago, Innis produced a critique which, by rejecting the naivety of mechanistic social philosophy and the belief in inevitable progress, exemplified the humanist intellectual ferment of his period. His work epitomizes the modern predicament of reconciling technology with a special motive for researching the question of whether man created his own destiny or whether inhuman technological development was man's destination. Throughout his career, Innis attempted to resolve this dilemma between deterministic and creative interpretations

by insisting that social values always motivated the application of technology. Since he believed that his historical-philosophical approach transcended the split between deterministic and creative interpretations, this apparent dualism becomes more important to reviewers of his work than to Innis himself.

In the summer of 1920, Innis received congratulations on his engagement, the completion of his doctorate, and his appointment as lecturer in economics in the department of political economy at the University of Toronto. Before Toronto's offer of May 11, Innis had agonized over his refusals of other posts, but he had set his ambition on being part of English speaking Canada's main university. Although there was little time to devote to his future lectures in the summer of 1920, Innis had written to James Mavor, then the departmental head "to find out if possible the nature of the courses which you wish me to teach next year."[11] Initially, Innis taught an introductory course in the elements of commerce, a second course on the economic history and theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and a third senior course of economic theory, but he had selected Canadian economic history as his field of research and began his Canadian lectures in 1921-22. Also during the early 1920's, the department of political economy was reorganized and restaffed. These changes offered Innis, a rather junior member, scope to participate in establishing new courses and trends in the department. His contribution

was felt most in the commerce course in which he later hoped for "the maintenance and consolidation of an Arts tradition."[12] These opportunities suited Innis' aspirations admirably.

His task of creating courses in Canadian economic history was wrought with difficulty since only Adam Shortt has published suitable material. However, the students benefited by participating in Innis' newest discoveries and interpretations. Before he and his wife toured Europe in the summer of 1922, they began an intensive regime of travel and research throughout Canada. In 1923, they surveyed Canadian libraries and archives; the following summer Innis travelled down the Peace and Mackenzie Rivers (ironically, the exertion repaired his limp and he no longer needed a cane). During 1925, he delved into the Ottawa archives and uncovered extensive material on the fur trade. His two volume, Select Documents in Canadian Economic History, one written in joint editorship with A.R.M. Lower, also emerged from these rigorous summers. It is no coincedence that the two most original expressions of Canadianism in the 1920's, Innis and the members of the "Group of Seven", both travelled throughout Canada, often using primitive means of transport. Innis knew of the contribution of the younger Canadian artists since he noted in his travel notes that "George Thomson - nephew of Tom Thomson - has several of his uncle's sketches."[13]

With many Canadian artists, intellectuals, and politicians of the 1920's, he shared the self-assumed task of redefining the Canadian identity, and in effect produced an

English-speaking Canadian synthesis of British and American influences. The First World War had demonstrated to Canadians the cost of British traditions and imperialism. During the 1920's, many Canadian intellectuals regarded Canada's coming out during the First World War and after, as the culmination of Canada's political development. Political nationhood satisfied some isolationist and autonomist tendencies, but it did not equal the United States' pretension of 'North American purity,' unsullied by the corruptions of Europe. Canadian intellectuals supplied this element by interpreting Canadian social and political development with reference to the physical and economic environment of North America. While the American environmentalist school, dominated by Frederick Jackson Turner, reinforced isolationism, Innis applied environmentalism to emphasize internationalism. Turner's thesis supported isolationist policies through stress on the role of American geography in shaping the individualistic frontier farmer, the alleged core of American culture; in contrast, Innis' environmental interpretation emphasized the effect of the commercial values of metropolitan Europe on the Laurentian watershed. His contribution of the Laurentian thesis was a reinterpretation which argued that the Canadian geographical axis ran east-west along the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes system as distinct from the common Turnarian assumption of north-south divisions suggested by the Appalacian, Rocky Mountains, and Mississippi River system. The strategic

importance of the St. Lawrence valley lay in its piercing of the continent and comparative proximity to metropolitan Europe. Innis did not indulge in the piety of the North American purity school; rather, he forcefully emphasized Canada's intimate relationship with Europe.[1] While his interpretation of the Canadian heritage ridiculed the dominant liberal political viewpoint of Canada's titanic struggle for independence, the purpose of Innis' research "all leads up to a study of Canadian cultural growth."[14] Canada was a part of European culture and to foster a balanced cultural life, Canada must retain her historically integrated relationship with Europe, the parent culture.

Innis had committed his life to the academic profession with missionary zeal. He gradually acquired a taste for dissent which became to him an integral part of the university's academic tradition. In part, he sought power to push academic thought into critical channels, and in part, to reclaim Canadian academic chairs, held largely by Britains, for Canadians. In 1927 when Innis was an assistant professor, he resigned in protest to the promotion of a more junior British colleague by the British head of the department, E.J. Urwick. The university changed its policy and Innis became an associate professor. His remarkable gall enabled him to affirm his own interests and his patriotism at a single stroke.

Early in his career Innis involved himself in the profesional associations of Canadian academics. The rebirth

of the Canadian Political Science Association in 1929 occurred largely because of the interest he stimulated in his various Canadian trips. The association's journal appeared in 1935; Innis was an early member of the editorial board and delivered his Presidential address in May of 1938. His association with the Royal Society of Canada began in 1931 when Chester Martin delivered one of his papers, as Innis did not become a fellow until 1934.[15] In April of 1939, Innis resigned his fellowship and position as secretary of Section Two. He thought that the Society's award for literature was given merely to sooth French and English relations and not for literary merit; however, the Society revised its regulations the following year and Innis was reinstated. Evidently the estrangement was short lived. In 1946 Innis became president of the Society and delivered his address in May of 1947 at Quebec city. Innis exhibited his intransigent nature when ever he felt academic principles were being compromised, both in public and the more private committee meetings of his department.

Of greater significance to Canadian academic life were two series of the 1930's---The Canadian Frontiers of Settlement and The Relations of Canada and the United States. To the former collection, Innis contributed Settlement and the Mining Frontier. He was more deeply involved with the second series, editing the Canadian volumes and contributing The Cod Fisheries. Through his position in the series, Innis not only directed the large allotment of fuhds granted by the Carnegie Foundation

but he insured the independence of Canadian authors from American guidance, and consequently, many of the volumes have only a tenuous connection to the theme of peace in Canadian-American relations. Apparently Innis also involved himself with the scholarship pursued through the series in American universities. John Bartlet Brebner who had the original conception for such a series, wrote to Innis that "although I cannot read all of them your suggestions for the geographical introduction click very neatly as solutions of some previous bafflements of my own."[16] Innis' growing eminence was further acknowledged by his appointment as Professor of Political Economy in 1937 and as head of the department in July of 1937.

His official positions and responsibilities continued to swell. Much of his administrative work was routine, such as the signing of twenty-seven memos for keys in 1946; however, his reward was the strategic position he secured in the formulation of Canadian academic policies. The objective of his policies rested on the assumption that academic integrity would allow the social scientist to be an independent social critic of benefit to his country. In 1943, Innis protested to G.S. Brett, at this time dean of Toronto's graduate school, that:

> A general regulation /the suggestion that all Canadian academics do post graduate study in either the U.S.A. or England/ such as your letter suggests would do untold damage to the cultural life and to the unity of this university and would have the effect of continuing the position of servility which this country

has occupied in relation to Great Britain and the United States.[17]

Upon his appointment as the first Dean of Toronto's reconstituted graduate school in 1947, Innis was able to implement his policy. The Report of the President's committee on Graduate Studies of March 1947, of which Innis was the chairman, stressed three points: that to be a national institution, "the School must inevitable take its place in the international scene;" secondly, that "the human factor far outweighs every other and freedom to pursue the life of a scholar is more important than any amount of machinery;" and finally, that "The Dean should be a scholar, actively engaged in research..."[18]

The formulation of national academic policies was carried out by the Canadian Social Science Research Council which Innis and G. Trotter brought to life in September of 1940. They also supported, on the recommendation of the independent authority, J.B. Brebner, the founding of a Humanities Research Council of Canada (1944). While chairman of the Canadian Social Sciences Research Council, Innis wrote to the Federal Minister of Finance that "it should be said that the Council has scrupulously avoided a request for government aid--since it cannot afford the implications that it is an instrument of government."[19] In Innis' conception, academics ought to control their own institutions. He feared that business and government entanglements might compromise academic independence. He protested to B.S. Keirstead that "I was a little distressed to

learn that Wainer will probably be the next chairman as we had tried to build up a tradition that administrators should not have a place on the council." Previously, in a letter to B.S. Keirstead, Innis had complained that commercial interests had tried to slant the composition of the university in his revelation that "Bladen has been compelled to use a great deal of tact, finness, and down right bull-headedness to get the board to accept his summer school arrangements which include a Canadian Congress of Labour official."[20]

Innis himself was not entirely successful in avoiding outside influence. When he agreed to edit the Diary of Alexander James McPhail, he had been "given an absolutely free hand," but the blanks in the volume represent the names of those alive deleted by the co-operative executive before publication.[21] In general, "the problem, of course is that of security sufficient independence in the universities to make criticism of governmental departments effective."[22] The universities had inherited the tradition and trust of judicious dissent in the ilk of Adam Smith. Recently, the danger had arisen that "social scientists are on the way to becoming the number one fakers in western civilization."[23] Arthur R.M. Lower acknowledged the important role Innis played in formulating and carrying out academic policies in his observation that "no one has exerted stronger influence in the growth and direction of Canadian social studies."[24]

During the social turmoil of the nineteen thirties,

Innis' plea for academic independence placed him in an ambivalent position, since he decried political involvement by academics, yet believed, as previously noted, that the university was a center of social criticism. Certainly his publication of the Problems of Staple Production in Canada (1933) illustrated his belief that academics should only comment on public policies through the medium of scholarly studies, but his appearance at the Liberal-Conservative Summer School at Newmarket in September of 1933 exemplified the difficulty of following his own rules. While directing his paper towards a consideration of "the place of an economist in political life," he lashed out at the high Canadian tariff and emphasized "the inevitability of planning in Canada" because of the nationalization of the railways in 1919 by the Conservatives.[25] Innis' innocence was further destroyed by three Royal Commissions on which he served: the Provincial Economy Inquiry of the Province of Nova Scotia (1934); the Manitoba Royal Commission on Adult Education (1947); and the federal Royal Commission on Transportation (1951). His conclusion, in his Complementary Report to the Nova Scotia commission that "irresponsible government in which funds collected from the Province may be spent in a manner beyond the control of the Province must be replaced by responsible government," struck a political chord that runs throughout much of Canadian history.[26] However, he directed his plea, for academic abstinence from politics, towards the abuse of academic prestige for political ends.

It was evident to Innis that the involvement of scholars in politics encouraged politicians to interfere with universities. An even greater danger was the impression given the public that the social sciences could provide the final solution to social problems. While his comment that "a tyranny of talk has ominous possibilities," raised many a liberal eyebrow, his warning that "intellectuals in large numbers will sink the raft of any party and if allowed to write a programme, will kill it" caused consternation among the members of the League for Social Reconstruction.[27] Innis laid the blame for tarnishing academic life at the feet of the C.C.F. intellectuals who had been active in the "development of the ideology of the class struggle."[28] By criticizing the tendency of his fellow academics to become engrossed in politics through blunt statements, Innis obviously involved himself in political controversy. In rebuttal to Innis' allegations, Frank H. Underhill argued that:

> The intrusion of professors into politics is, as a matter of fact, an old-established British institution. And this should be pointed out repeatedly in such communities as Toronto, which are always boasting of their devotion to British precedents.

Shifting to an ad hominem argument, Underhill pointed out that "all Canadian economists are divided into two classes; there are firstly, those who have already served on Royal commissions; and there are secondly, those who are still hoping to do so. Now to serve on a Royal Commission one must have achieved a reputation for respectability."[29] However, Innis' chief concern

was to protect academic institutions from "the unfortunate results of politics which are shown most clearly in Section Two of the Royal Society which exists as the chief organization of the humanities."[30] If the task of the academic enquiry involved critical review of political assumptions and policies, it could lead only to involvement in party issues. The line between independent academic criticism and the abuse of scholastic pretige for party ends is too fine a line to draw once the premise of academic iconoclasm is accepted.

His attitude to academic criticism was ambivalent because, while he encouraged judicious dissent, he feared that during excessive political debate an interest in principles and solutions displaced concern for humanity. His comment that Western Civilization has "not realized that the Greeks were fundamentally concerned with the training of character," points to the value he placed on the individual.[31] In Innis' mind, historical research was devoted to the preservation and cultivation of humanism. John Bartlet Brebner has characterized Harold Innis' approach to history as a task which:

> Man could work for his redemption only by recalling from the past its beautiful and good inspiration and by nourishing renewing, and modulating these strains through the present into the future.[32]

Innis incorporated into the purpose of his research the dictum of Frederick Nietzsche that "knowledge of the past is at all times needed only to serve the present and the future, not to enfeeble the present nor to tear the roots out of the vig-

orous powers of life for the future." His analysis of historical development illuminated cultural continuity, and indicated future possibilities without constricting future variations "by the words 'all history proves'."[33] William N. Parker once observed that "Innis' concerns appear to me to have been fundamentally those of the moral historian, in the best tradition of Scottish humanism whence political economy sprang."[34] Parker's comment suggests the importance that Adam Smith's legacy had upon Innis' work. He has also noted the difficulty of categorizing Innis' publications and underlined the moral motivation and implication of his conclusions. Innis supported dissent, but in keeping with the tradition of Greek humanism, he asked that nothing, including criticism, be done in excess.

Although dissent and historical research are fundamental elements of Innis' humanism, the breadth of his compassionate interest in mankind can be seen in his general attitude to education and his other intellectual interests. He involved himself in the quality of undergraduate instruction. In a staff meeting of the department of political economy (on October 23, 1942), "Dr. Innis suggested a change in policy emphasizing more detailed subjects rather than the 'mass' treatment of last year,"[25] and the making of options more flexible. In his position as department head, Innis received many enquiries about his department's educational approach. Innis emphasized as much as possible, "the over-

all academic record of a student rather than the short-run attitude which is characteristic of tests;""and he caustically added that "we have been rather more concerned with the problem of testing members of the staff than with testing students."[36] The scope of his educational interests was not confined to the formal university structure. Since 1920, he had involved himself with the Worker's Educational Association and during his younger years commuted to Hamilton to deliver a night course.

His compassionate nature expressed itself in other intellectual pursuits as well. He was a member of the Canadian Committee of Intellectual Co-operation and during the Second World War wondered "whether a solution can be found at San Francisco."[37] That he thought the diplomats failed is evident in his involvement with the Committee to Frame a World Constitution which published a Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution in 1948. His concern over the state of international politics recalls the deep wound he suffered in the First World War. His later writings took on a journalistic flavor not dissimilar in tone to those of Thorstein Veblen. Innis' remark that:

> Some such approach /a broad philosophical approach/ is necessary at an early date lest the importance of his contributions should be obscured by the violence of the controversies which have raged about them[38]

might well refer to himself. However, the sense of immediacy permeating his final works evoked not only by international tensions but also by his impending death from cancer and

perhaps overwork.

The University of Chicago's offer to Innis of the chairmanship of the departmant of economics in 1943 marks the beginning of the phade of international recognition of his worthy contributions. Donald G. Creighton has suggested that "he did not believe his mother would ever forgive him if he deserted Canada."[39] But Innis undoubtedly turned down the attractive and flattering offer because he feared that the growing American militarism may not have been conducive to independent thought.[40] Innis was involved in American academic life as a member of the committee on Research in Economic History of the Social Sciences Research Council of the United States, and as the second president of the Economic History Association and, in the year of his death, as president of the American Economic Association. He remarked on this final honour that:

> My appointment is a tribute to the toleration of the social sciences--a recognition of the capacity of a subject to overlook regions and nationalities and bifurcations with the social science even to the lowest stratum of the economic historian.[41]

Nevertheless, Innis received his greatest recognition in the United Kingdom and delivered his most important final ideas while on lecture tours there. In 1948, he delivered the Beit Lectures in the Trinity term at Oxford, and in these six lectures outlined his theory of historical change, published in 1950 as Empire and Communications. Innis also presented 'Stamp Memorial Lecture' of the University of London, the

Cust Foundation Lecture at the University of Nottingham and received an honourary degree from the University of Glasgow in 1947. Recognition had not been sparce at home either; he received honourary degrees in 1947 from Laval and the University of Manitoba and delivered two lectures at the University of New Brunswick on communication propaganda and culture. To conclude that "the place he had made for himself was unigue" is surely an understatement.[42] Even though Innis received many honours before his death in December of 1952, the greatest tribute to him was the posthumous creation of Innis College, part of the University of Toronto.

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CHAPTER II

THE BIAS OF SCIENCE

Harold Innis assumed that human values determined the operation of economic forces. His economic humanism, apparent in his castigation of price-system studies, led him to a more general humanist critique of the scientific method. This methodological criticism fulfilled his conception of the best tradition of humanist dissent. Because he believed that the critiques of Thorstein Veblen and Adam Smith could be used to expose economic myths, Innis patterned his work on their methods. His iconoclasm was not solely negative; towards the end of his career, Innis proposed a methodological solution to the limitations he believed to be inherent in the scientific viewpoint or bias of western culture.

To Innis, a critical methodology was the essential ingredient in the tradition of intellectual dissent. He chose Veblen and Smith as particular models because their approaches stressed skepticism towards economic orthodoxy, employment of an evolutionary or historical approach, and inquiry into philosophical problems. Although Veblen was no longer present at Chicago during Innis' postgraduate stay, his satiric influence is evident in Innis' suggestion that "the effectiveness of the price system within the state is evident in the attempts to reinforce pecuniary by political values."[1] In reference to Veblen's discussion of the evolution of behavioral patterns, Innis emphasized that "it is the method of approach which must be stressed, and not the final conclusion." Veblen's scholar-

ship rested upon his "background of philosophy," a frame of reference which Innis found congenial, consequently the lasting value of Veblen's thought lay in his discussion of fundamental values and ideas. He admired Veblen's attempt to dramatize the "clash between the viewpoint of the German historical school with its stress on the evolution of institutions and classic theory," since such an approach focused upon basic assumptions. Comparing Veblen to Smith, Innis remarked that Veblen "has been the first to attempt a general stocktaking of general tendencies in a dynamic society saddled with machine industry; just as Adam Smith was the first to present a general stocktaking before machine industry came in." Innis conceived his mission to be an extension of Veblen's attempts.[2]

Innis praised the same basic elements in Adam Smith's work as he had in Veblen's. Adam Smith had been the first economist to establish the modern tradition of creative iconoclasm by leading a "savage attack on philosophy, [in which he had attempted] to clear away myths and to favour the spread of science and industry..."[3] Innis did not support either men's efforts to promote science; rather he emphasized solely their critical practice of examining economic conceptions. Equally important, as the criticism of economic concepts, was the historical perspective of the "classical tradition laid down by Adam Smith in being concerned with trends over centuries."[4] The dean of Scottish humanism had presented a cultural synthesis of his period with interpretive balance provided by

historical analysis. In particular Innis admired Smith whom he viewed as "a distinquished representative of a century in which all knowledge was taken as a field," the quintessence of the educated 'Renaissance' man.[5]

Though Innis took his lead from the philosophical attitudes of Veblen and Smith, he was not concerned with the distribution of wealth nor with the price and wage theorems of liberal economics. Innis did not consider their promotion of a more equitable consumerism by the rational use of science the fundamental problem, and therefore he rejected their most widely regarded contributions.

In his view, Veblen inadvertantly perpetuated the fallacies of price studies. Because price system studies tried to understand the fluctuations in the market value of commodities, these studies implicitly supported the value of consumer goods to the neglect of humanist values. He criticised Veblen on the grounds that "the pecuniary slant of economics is as evident in Veblen's elaboration of the pecuniary economy of North America as in the discussion by monetary theorists of liquidity preference."[6] Innis believed that Veblen by immersing himself in the problems of who consumes, reinforced the American fixation with consumer prices and thus denied only upper class "conspicuous consumption," rather than the basic idea of consumption itself. Innis suggested what was for him the more fundamental question when he observed that "the enormous capacity of Western European civilization to loot has left little opportunity for consideration of the problems which follow ex-

haustion of material to be looted."[7]

Innis criticized Adam Smith's theory of the division of labour, because he felt Smith had ignored the anti-humanitarian effects of this phenomenon. He argued that "it was the supreme tragedy" of Adam Smith's work "that part of his contribution namely The Wealth of Nations, developed around the principle of division of labour, and was ideally adapted to the industrial revolution."[8] The mechanical revolution used up "biological time or energy," which resulted in the "necessity of the state intervening to prevent abuse by technology and business."[9] From these conditions Innis concluded that labour specialization caused by industrialism posed enormous social dangers. For Innis, the raison d'etre of society was to develop the human potential; in this instance, industrial capitalism monopolized the time and strength an individual needed to broaden his capabilities; consequently, society must rely on government intervention as a "means of protecting itself against the more vicious abuses following the introduction of capitalism."[10] John U. Nef, a noted economic historian, concluded that "in the light of Innis' studies, it can no longer be seriously contended, I think, that even the multiplication of industrial output leads necessarily to human improvement, to human progress as it is so widely taken for granted today."[11]

Innis felt that the limitations of Veblen and Smith, left the task of maintaining the tradition of economic dissent and of undermining the influence of the studies of the price system to

him. Drawing upon the spirit of his iconoclastic models, Innis emphasized that price studies lacked historical perspective and ignored the philosophical implications of economic concepts and quantitative methods. In a review of 1925, he objected to indiscriminate quantitative methods, noting that "statistics often are misinterpreted and extravagant."[12] In his remark that "one cannot fail to note the lack of dates and the bewildering masses of figures,"[13] Innis correlated the lack of historical perspective with the presence of mathematical techniques. In 1927 his attack on one of the few Canadian economic historians, Dr. Adam Short, whose alignment "with the price economists raises more problems than it solves," indicated he was preparing to establish his historical approach to the economic interpretation of Canadian development.[14] Alarmed by the obsession in the 1930's for national statistics, he warned that "already mathematics and quantitative studies have gone far in contributing to the mechanization of economics."[15] Humanity, the only reason for price studies, was being squeezed out of economics by massive statistical techniques which were both inflexible and blinding.

One of his most strident protests appeared in his department's Commerce Journal of 1938. After pointing out that he had been asked to write something practical to interest businessmen, Innis said that this request was the result of the young economists' inability "to go beyond the minutiae of the mathematical foundations."[16] He lamented that he lived in "the period since statistics began to leave its impression on

economics and reached that stage, fatal to economics when it came of age."[17] In criticising his work because "it led him to develop a theory of values outside the concepts of price economics, but it did not lead him to substitute for price economics itself," Robert F. Neill ignores the thrust of Innis' argument that price studies detach economics from the examination of human problems.[18] Repeatedly, Innis emphasized that "the leisure essential to intensive and sustained thought has been lost to the productivity of erudition at the expense of the essential broad philosophical approach."[19]

Innis feared that by using quantitative procedures, economists were trapped into answering the riddles of the price system. Noting that the "limitations of the price system are seen in the necessity for corruption at top levels," he hoped that the infection would not change academic life by insidiously channeling inquiry.[20] Price economics ignored the obviously important question of "the economics of failure and conservation." Because "the character...of the cultural characteristics in social and political institutions and of the changes which accompany technological advance... tends to be neglected in the emphasis in price statistics," in his approach to economics, Innis combined economic, technological, geographical, and institutional factors through historical analysis.[21]

In The Fur Trade in Canada and The Cod Fisheries, Innis avoided the pitfalls of price system studies by adopting a broad evolutionary perspective. The analytical model he used in these volumes explicitly rejected economic and histor-

ical orthodoxy. By arguing that "fundamentally the civilization of North America is the civilization of Europe and the interest of this volume is primarily in the effects of a vast new land area on European civilization," Innis rejected the Turnerian frontier assumption that North America is primarily American, while he related European economic expansion to culture.[22] Innis assumed that the transference of European culture to North America reflected the influence of the pecuniary values of metropolises.

Noting in The Fur Trade of Canada (1927) that "the demand for furs is located primarily in centers of population which support a large leisure class," Innis had combined the 'Veblenesque' conspicuous consumption with the role of the metropolis.[23] Because "the fur trade developed in close connection with both green and dry fishing, as prosecuted by vessels from the Channel ports, and in response to the metropolitan demands of Paris," the initial economic penetration of North America rested upon the power of the commercial values of metropolitan France.[24] Although Innis' contribution did not go unnoticed, even C.R. Fay, who had known Innis during his stay in Toronto in the early twenties, missed Innis' humanist assumption. While Fay noted that "the philosophy of the school is as distinctive as the method," he believed Innis' philosophy to be "objective" and "materialistic" and completely overlooked Innis' basic assumption that commodities (i.e. materialism) were exported to Europe because of "metropolitan" social demands.[25]

[Over a period of nearly two decades, Innis generalized

his criticism of price economics to include all of the social sciences. These criticisms were levelled at the attempt to maintain scientific objectivity through the use of methods imported from the natural sciences. His position coincided with the academic criticism levelled at positivistic historiography. Paralleling the conclusions reached by Carl Becker ("Every Man his Own Historian"), and Charles Beard ("Written History as an Act of Faith"), Innis stressed that in fact the scientific bias of social scientists made their findings tentative and ethnocentric.[26] Tracing Innis' attitude towards the claim of objectivity by the scientific method, we see a shift from an ambivalent attitude to complete skepticism. In his first monograph, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway (1923), Innis affected a noncommittal attitude. "In this study," he wrote, "an attempt has been made to trace the history of the Canadian Pacific Railway from an evolutionary and scientific point of view;" however, he significantly added that "No claim is made as to the merits or demerits of this method of approach."[27] Innis regarded the scientific method as simply a "point of view," and not necessarily the truth. His scrutiny of the continuous claims of truth by academic studies in the 1930's led him to differentiate between the natural and social sciences; "the Natural scientist, of course, cannot be criticized as he has not had a training intended to make him aware of the fallacies of his statements," but by implication, the social scientist ought to be aware of his limitations. The attempt to be objective or scientific assumes a viewpoint and

this defeats its purpose; science is a selective methodology which concentrates on a logical gestalt, but does not do away with a viewpoint. According to Innis, since a "social scientist cannot be 'scientific' or 'objective' because of the contradiction in terms, but he can learn of his numerous limitations," he reasoned that the limitations imposed by the cultural meaning of concepts made the findings of the social sciences relative.[28]

Keeping in mind the limitations of the social sciences, Innis thought that intelligent, if necessarily modest, study of human social life was still possible because "the never ending shell of life suggested in the persistent character of bias [recurrent personal and institutional traits] provided possibilities of intensive study of the limitations of life and its probable direction."[29] Though he recognized, in his preface to The Cod Fisheries (1940), that "these documents are essentially instruments of offence and defence and their limitations are inevitable," yet he believed that these sources indicated a human pattern. However, he approached these documents with caution since "it would be dangerous to suggest that the number of documents extant is an index of the importance of the fishery but such an index would point to the development of an important French fishery."[30] His methodological question did not prevent Innis from drawing conclusions; rather, they qualified the universality and finality of his findings.

Innis' agnostic view of scientific truth stemmed in large measure from his awareness of the problem of ethnocentricism. He hoped academics would be honest to themselves and the

public by indicating "their limitations in their cultural setting."[31] The use of western research methods distorted the values of other cultures since "we are apt to see nothing in other cultures but virtues of our own." Appreciation of the dangers of ethnocentricism led Innis to the extreme quandry that "we all must be aware of the extraordinary, perhaps insuperable difficulty of assessing the quality of a culture of which we are a part or of assessing the quality of a culture of which we are not a part."[32] Because our methods of research warped our profile of other cultures, he questioned the universality of the findings of the social sciences.

After the Second World War, Innis concluded that research in western civilization suffered from ethnocentricism because the western method of communicating imposed on other cultures scientific values; whereas, the methods of communicating in other cultures carried different values. The first task of a social scientist was "to break through the chains of modern civilization which have been created by modern science."[33] The bonds of the scientific slant of modern communication could be broken by analyzing societies not dominated by mass communication. Since archeology sensitizes researchers to pre-modern methods of communicating symbols, it "has profound implications for the social sciences in that it compels a skepticism towards an obsession with literacy." He assumed that "the economic historian must be certainly aware of the limitations of the archives and library."[34] Although academic communication was dependent upon the written word, scholars must be careful not to impose

the bias of this method of communication on other cultures; the documentary material must be treated cautiously "as instruments of offence and defence" since their limitations are inevitable.[35] Innis' solution to his final position, that western communications perpetuated a corrupting bias, was to study societies influenced by different methods of communication.

Throughout his career, Innis travelled to the areas he studied, at first to offset the bias of exclusive reliance on documents, and later to avoid the ethnocentricism carried by communication. Although he travelled to avoid the limitations of academic research, his early travel notes suggest that his intellectual conceptions imposed a viewpoint on what he observed; consequently, it was not until later in his career that he used travel to circumvent the scientific viewpoint of western communication. In his field notes of 1929, the influence of his ideas was evident in Innis' observation that "a mine is an economic explosive, developing in its train, lumbering, agriculture, hunting, industry, transport facilities in a remarkably short period of time."[36] Nearly a decade later, in Settlement and the Mining Frontier (1936), he elaborated this succinct conclusion. Gradually he became more sensitive to the myopic effect his own theories had upon him. After developing his Laurentian thesis, in which he argued that the St. Lawrence drainage area formed an east-west geographical axis, Innis studied the cod fisheries of the Maritime region and he hoped that "he overcame it [his Laurentian bias] during

the past decade by visiting a substantial portion of regions directed to the industry."[37] His early travels had created a counter-bias to documentary research, but it was not until Innis embarked upon a comparative analysis of communication that he felt he had solved the problem of ethnocentricism because this interest involved the study of other cultures. When applying in 1948 to the Rockefeller Foundation for a travel grant, he wrote:

> I am becoming very enthusiastic about developments in the work in communication and in particular on the whole place of the oral tradition. I have come to feel that we have completely overlooked its enormous significance, and I would like for that reason to get a clear picture of such countries as India where it is still extremely important.[38]

Innis concluded that the only way to avoid the cultural bias of the western world was to study cultures not dependent upon modern communication. That is, Innis believed it was impossible to counter the scientific bias of western culture unless one studied a culture not yet dominated by western values.

Although he undoubtedly valued his own methodological arguments, his position was even more basically derived from his humanistic revulsion at the implications of the objective point of view. He argued that "a continued effort to find the answer must be accompanied by a realization that there is no answer...that the social sciences in a democratic society are concerned with biological and human phenomena."[39] Since humanity was the raison d'etre of the social sciences, there was

no final solution, such as that suggested by the masterpiece of carnage, of the natural sciences:

> The average reader had been impressed by the miraculous, and the high priests of science, or perhaps it would be fair to say the pseudo-priests of sicence, have been extremely effective in developing all sorts of fantastic things, with great emphasis of course in the atomic bomb.[40]

He laconically remarked that he had "been rather disturded at the trend in the social sciences and in turn by what appeared to be a widening gulf between the social sciences and humanities."[41] Since the administrative use of the social science led to "pushing people around," Innis recalled that the traditional task of the humanities was to protect and cultivate the individual.[42] Because disrespect for the individual produced disregard for his culture, Innis concluded that "we must somehow escape from the atmosphere that assumes you can learn a foreign language in six weeks or understand an aboriginal culture in six months."[43] The impact of the scientific method threatened to destroy not only our own culture but also our appreciation of other cultures.

It is evident that his criticism of scientific knowledge and his rejection of the use of the methodology of the natural sciences in the social sciences is an index of his estrangement from the trends he perceived in western civilization. As an economic humanist, Innis related economic penetration, not to the cost efficiency common in price studies, but to its effect on culture and character. In his criticism of price studies, he did not ascribe to even the qualified use of the

quantitative method that many thinkers accepted, but rather he thought the method should be rejected as incompatible with the fundamental human condition. Thus Innis' iconoclasm was a more radical and total castigation of western culture than the position of those of his contemporaries who ultimately still had faith in the accumulation of knowledge.

In his view, the scientific viewpoint permeated society because scientific values were carried by communications, including academic contributions. Innis suggested that to avoid the ethnocentricism arising from the bias of communication, the social sicentist ought to research cultures dominated by other forms of communication. Clearly the driving edge of his final criticisms arose from his research into the effects of communication, but the impetus remained his desire to establish humanist underpinnings for academic research.

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CHAPTER III

THE BIAS OF MEDIA

Harold Innis' major theoretical contribution was his theory of historical change. From two principle sources, he developed the theory that change resulted from the influence of different media. He conceived of media as the substance, whether stone or electricity, that carried the symbols of communication. The modern use of paper was the key to his insight; Innis' analysis of the press integrated his interest in technology, an interest derived from Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen, with the staple thesis he elaborated from C.S. Duncan's commodity theory.

Although he claimed that he "tried to use the Marxian interpretation to interpret Marx", his objective was not to examine the Marxist class relationship, nor the distribution of wealth, but to use the Marxian emphasis on the means of production to examine the effects of technology on social organizations. Innis reversed the Marxian proposition that a class dominated society by controlling technology to the suggestion that technology determined social organization. The important role of the means of production or technology did not originate with Marx, but rather with the French 'progressives', in particular the Saint Simonians and August Comte. Innis differed from both Marx and nineteenth century scientism in two ways: he was very critical of the impact of technology on cultural values and felt that "there has been no systematic pushing of the Marxian conclusion to its ultimate limit," namely the study of the

social effects of applied science; secondly he did not support the scientific method.[1]

From Thorstein Veblen, Innis inherited the supposedly irreconcilable problem of the split between technology and the values of the price system. By assuming that the same values determined the use of science as the operation of the price system, Innis resolved this dichotomy. Veblen's support of applied technology had left unanswered the cultural problem he posed: "what can be done to save civilized man kind from the vulgarization and disintegration wrought by the machine industry?"[2] Although Innis agreed with Veblen that "the pecuniary approach /i.e. the price system/, when all pervasive tends to obscure the significance of technology and workmanship," Innis also thought that Veblen's treatment of technology would have benefited from a more balanced approach to economic history.[3] "The conflict between technology and the price system described by Veblen in The Engineer and the Price System, in which restrictions on technology have been of primary concern can be resolved more easily with a broader perspective."[4] The framework Innis proposed as a solution was "an appreciation of the economic role of the newspaper."[5] Since pecuniary desires were satisfied by increased production flowing from technical innovations and by the growth in consumerism resulting from wider distribution, in Innis' mind there was no dichotomy between the price system and technology. This problem existed only in the minds of men who believed that technology was not an expression of social values.

From his analysis of the social changes caused by new technical advances in transportation, Innis realized that the qualities of staples and new fuels encouraged or limited the application of technology. Throughout his career, Innis stressed that the role of the costs of transportation "had the effect...of giving changes of technique a position of strategic importance in economic activity"; that is, the profit motive accelerated technical innovations that would reduce transportation costs.[6] In his first monograph, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway, he noted the obvious fact that the "area north of Lake Superior had ceased to be a barrier to communication," but his study did arouse his interest in researching the "development of transportation facilities incidental to expansion of the fur trade and the gold rush."[7] Innis found that changes in the organization of the fur trade often resulted from the new means of transport provided by technology. With La Verendrye's exploration, "the limits of the fur trade...under prevailing technique had been practically reached," but the successor of the French organization prospered by replacing the canoe with "larger units of transportation in the Great Lakes." When the technology of the industrial revolution penetrated North America, "the evolution in the transport of goods at Fort Garry which began with the steamboats had an immediate effect" on the Métis who were no longer needed to man the York boats to the Bay, nor to haul their Red River carts to St. Paul.[8] The social upheaval evident in the Red River Rebellion was the result of these changes

in technology. Another result of the new fossil fuels was the increased mobility which led to the destruction of the Hudson Bay Company's northern monopoly.

The concept that society was affected by the medium technology exploited for transportation in the fur trade became clearer in his study of mining. Technology had played a small role in extraction of placer gold. However, with the exhaustion of these finds, mechanization dominated the exploitation of the area. Thus, Innis concluded, the nature of the staple limited the application of technology. He observed that although social and economic "changes in the Yukon were conspicuously results of changes in technology," yet the rapid application of technology stemmed from "a commodity relatively unaffected by price changes as a result of the high proportion of transportation costs, [that] provided free play for improved techniques." Just as the portability and value of furs facilitated the change from canoes to areoplanes, the pecuniary and technical qualities of gold affected social organization by encouraging technological innovation.[9]

His study of the printing press stimulated the final development in his interpretation; his shift in emphasis from technology to media can be seen in his conclusion that the rapid proliferation of printing resulted from the adaptability of the western alphabet to metallurgy. Western printing developed rapidly because the depersonalized nature of its written symbols allowed for mass production by reusable metal type. Innis argued that "the nature of the method of writing was a

cause of Chinese conservatism," while in contrast the Western alphabet by "its uniformity and limited numbers was suitable to private enterprise." Chinese calligraphy was not suitable to mass standardization and technical innovation was limited to wooden blocks; whereas the combination of the alphabet and metal type were adaptable to avaliable techniques. Innis noted that although in Germany "Gutenberg was apparently the first to use moveable type cast in metal," the culmination of the "technological revolution in the media of communication" took place in nineteenth century United States. To unearth the implications of the revolution in media that combined moveable type and newsprint, Innis turned to his staple theory with its emphasis on the social implications of the nature of a commodity.[10]

The staple theory provided a unique insight into the social development of North America. Discovering that the Marxian emphasis on technology inadequately explained the social effects of applied science, Innis examined C.S. Duncan's commodity thesis and transformed this into a theory of historical change. During his graduate stay at Chicago, Innis had attended Duncan's lectures on marketing which "emphasized the intimate relationship between the physical characteristics of a commodity and the marketing structure created in respect to it."[11] In his theory of staple production, Innis elaborated the importance of a few commodities, such as fur, cod, square timber, wheat, ore and newsprint, to the evolution of Canadian society. Al-

though his stress on staples cannot be regarded as unique, Innis' position should be distinquished from the simple proposition of W.A. Mackintosh, who argued in 1923 that "the prime requisite of colonial prosperity is the colonial staple."[12] Innis' claim to creativity stems from his transformation of the staple theory into a theory of historical change which he attributed to the media of communication; an insight gained from a particular staple, newsprint, a modern media of communication.[13]

Innis realized that the centralist institutions foreshadowed by fur and created by wheat, clashed with the less centralized institutions produced by other staple exports. Because these changes were best illustrated by the conflict between transportation-communication institutions, his interest focused upon the staple most closely associated with communication---newsprint. At first he treated newprint as an economic staple, and later he attributed centralist and decentralist qualities to the media of communication. Innis summarized his analysis of change in his observation that "the shift to new staples invariably produced periods of crises in which adjustments in the old structure were painfully made..."[14] After the mid 1920's, wheat was no longer the leading staple export and consequently, the railways designed to transport wheat had difficulty readjusting. During the depression, Innis argued that "it is difficult to over estimate the importance of wheat to Canadian industrial development and to Canada's present

problems" of which the principle one was the centralist tendency of Confederation.[15] With particular pleasure, Innis pointed out that the centralist institutions of the fur trade were "the forerunners of Confederation."[16] But just as in the nineteenth century, "the transition from lumber and wooden sailing vessels to wheat and iron steamships, and railroads is the key to the troubled economic development of the period after 1850" culminating in Confederation, in the twentieth century, so "Confederation as an instrument of steam power has been compelled to face the implications of hydroelectric power and petroleum."[17] Innis concluded his studies of staples holding the assumption that the centralist institutions of the fur and wheat staples and particularly steam power had to read-just to the new social relationships created by twentieth century means of communication. Innis contrasted this to the Maritime experience where "the limitations of centralization appear in the costs of transportation and the inevitable decentralization involved in exploiting widely separated areas."[18] From his comparative analysis, he deduced that staples and later media would create either centralized or decentralized institutions.

In his analysis of mining and pulp production, Innis discovered that the qualities of staples affected the life span of their institutions. From his comparison of the longevity of institutions, created by different ore bodies, Innis thought that "the ultimate effects of mining are dependent not only on

the character of the metals but also on the size and character of those bodies and rapidity of their exploitation." After the exhaustion of placer mining, mountains of earth had to be flushed to collect the remaining gold which produced "the third stage of development in the region...the introduction of capital and machinery on a larger scale." Also, of marked contrast to placer mining, was the development of base metal deposits in Southeastern British Columbia in which management oriented business made "determined attempts...to exploit mines systematically and to develop large ore bodies of relatively low grade ore." Whereas the social history of placer mines was violent and transitory, the history of base metal communities illustrated continuous not spasmodic, social development. These studies revealed to Innis the social importance of the quality of a media which produced institutions of longer duration.[19]

Through his study of the staple newsprint, Innis formalized his theory of the bias of media, arguing that the daily use of newsprint by the modern press distorted time. Assuming the newspaper had been "a pioneer in the development of speed in communication and transportation," Innis summarized the social effects of newsprint in a sweeping manner; he attributed the:

> widening of markets, the effectiveness of competition, lowering of costs of production, the spread of the price system, the evolution of a sensitive monetary structure, and the development of equilibrium economics...to the development of the newspaper.[20]

Society was greatly affected by the press' "insistence on time

as a uniform and quantitative continum /which/ has obscured qualitative differences and its disparate and discontiuous character," a condition Innis found discomforting.[21] Although he ruefully observed that the "impact of technology on communication is tempered only by commercialism itself," he had to conclude that "inventions in commercialism have destroyed a sense of time."[22] The adaptability of pulp to rapid technological innovation created an extremely impermanent media, newsprint, that by its 'daily' replacement, gave society little sense of duration. Since paper existed long before pulp production, an evolutionary analysis of the media was necessary; consequently, Innis turned to the historical impact of paper to determine the media's important qualities; however, what emerged was a history of western media, not just of paper.

Because Innis emphasized that "the concepts of time and space reflect the significance of media to civilization" his views of time and space precede consideration of the premises and implications of his theory of historical change.[23] In his view, the bias of media towards time or space reflected society's cultural worth. The crucial significance of media to Innis was noted by J.W. Carey who wrote that "in cultural terms, time meant the sacred, the moral, the historical; space the present and the future, the technical and the secular."[24] Although Innis only dealt with the qualities of these concepts late in his career, yet he had not ignored their importance, because his historical method inevitably entailed a long time

* evolved as a necessary result

span and a vast extent of space. His first major publication only covered about half a century and most of Canada, but the Fur Trade and the Cod Fisheries encompassed over three hundred years each and a vast extent of land or sea. His last monograph, Empire and Communications, stretched from ancient Babylon to modern North America.

In Innis' view, the communication network, limited by the contacts of the economic system, determined the conception idea of space for the individual and society. Noting that "Adam Smith analyzed the extent of the market as determined by transportation," Innis contributed the idea of space as determined by transportation.[25] When writing about the fisheries, Innis knew his sense of space would prove a difficulty because "the psychological barrier incidental to sustained interest in the St. Lawrence posed a handicap to an interest in the fishing industry and its region."[26] Geography which had been the primary process affecting space, was modified by technological changes that revolutionized transport; thus the contacts of the economics system, whether limited by geography or technology, determined the sense of space. However, the economic system is only a series of institutions and whether these institutions are created by staples for extraction or the media of technology for transportation, they are essential communications networks; thus the principle relationship is that between space and the media of communication. From this, it follows that space is relative since it is affected by the various media of communication, what Marshall McLuhan called the "global village" of the

electrical age.

In his view, the media of communication determined the value and nature of time in each civilization. Time received more attention than space in his thought because Innis felt the qualities of time were being ignored by the demand of western technology that time be measured, ordered, instant, isolated, and controlled scientifically. He emphasized his horror by concluding one article with the title from Aldous Huxley's book Time must have a stop, and by naming another address, "A Plea for Time?" The western world needed to escape from its obsession with the instant and by "freezing ourselves from time (moment) and attempting a balance between the demands of time and space we can develop conditions favourable to an interest in cultural activity."[27]

The meaning of time presented problems to those who believed in objectivity because the use of time in industrial society had no parallel in the past. Since "Economic historians and indeed all historians assume a time factor and their assumptions reflect the attitude towards time of the period in which they write," the historian must try to assess the nature and significance of time to previous societies.[28] Arguing that time "cannot be regarded as a straight line but as a series of curves depending in part on technological advances,"[29] Innis concluded that modern technology had intensified time to an extent unprecedented in the past.

Innis regreted the acceptance of the Western linear conception of time by modern students, for this was a rather

"procrustean device" to apply in the appraisal of civilization. "The Western concept of time with its linear character reinforced by the use of the decimal system, has capacity for infinite extension to the past and the future and a limited capacity for adaption."[30] In the west, time was an inflexible succession of logically following instants that had difficulty integrating social elements not involved in routine and technical affairs. Because the media of commercial technology dominated time, time's importance lay in what was accomplished in each instance; time itself had no intrinsic merit. Innis suggested that time was discontinuous;

> Social time, for example, has been described as qualitatively differentiated according to the beliefs and customs common to a group and not as continuous by subject to interruptions of actual dates.[31]

In contrast to the Western linear conception, Innis cited the Chinese view of cyclical historical time, and in another article, he viewed the "Chinese concept of time...as plural and characterized by a succession of times," which made it very adaptable to the collective experience of social life.[32] Through his comparison, Innis illustrated that the quantitative conception that integrated people into the social experience.

Innis prefaced his theory of historical change with two significant qualifications. He acknowledged that,"it would be presumptuous to suggest that the written or the printed word has determined the course of civilization." Moreover, as "the twentieth century has been notable in the concern with studies of civilizations which have reflected an intense interest in

the possible future of our own civilization," Innis stressed his own present-mindedness and the intimate relation of his theory to the problems he perceived in contemporary western civilization.[33]

His model of historical change contained four essential important elements which were connected by the intrinsic nature of media. The first principle of his theory described the bias of the media:

> Media which emphasizes time are those which are durable in character such as parchment, clay and stone. The heavy materials are suited to the development of architecture and sculpture. Media which emphasize space are apt to be less durable and light in character such as papyrus and paper. The latter are suited to wide areas in administration and trade.

Thus, certain media have specific qualities which emphasize time or space. The second element stressed the significance of these media in terms of social organization:

> Materials which emphasize time favour decentralization and hierarchical types of institutions, while those which emphasize space favour centralization and systems of government less hierarchical in character.

Media, as had staples, affected social organization. The third element, the one most obviously directed towards mid-twentieth century North America, was the creation of equalibrium in terms of time and space:

> Large-scale political organizations such as empires must be considered from the standpoint of two dimensions, those of space and time, and persist by overcoming the bias of media which over emphasize either dimension. They have tended to flourish under conditions in which civi-

> lization reflects the influence of more than one medium and in which the bias of one toward decentralization is offset by the bias of another medium towards centralization.[34]

The fourth proposition in his theory is partially contained in the third part. Innis argued that when a media created a spatial or temporal imbalance in society the media was displaced by a new media emphasizing the opposite quality; however, he acknowledged that "an extension of cyclical theory may seem to have been carried too far."[35] In Empire and Communications, Innis used these four propositions to analyze the evolution of western society.

Innis used his theory to launch a searing criticism of the spatial bias produced by modern media, which he contrasted unfavourably with the balance achieved by the ancient Greek oral tradition. As had many other scholars, Innis argued that "the achievement of rich oral tradition in Greek civilization became the basis of Western culture."[36] The importance Innis placed on the oral tradition in developing character is glimpsed in his note that the "significance of conversation as nearness to reality shown in the power of Socrates and Christ... neither of whom apparently wrote any thing."[37] The strength of the Greek oral tradition was evident in their epics which demanded a flexible alphabet and poetry written in hexameter. The intensity of the community life produced by the oral tradition "drove a wedge between the political empire concept with its emphasis on time and reduced them to the rational proportions of the city-state." The balanced structure struck by

the Greeks was noticeably absent in several other periods. The social turmoil between the Old and New Kingdom in Egyptian civilization "coincides with a shift in emphasis on stone as a medium of communication or as a basis of prestige, as shown in the pyramids, to an emphasis on papyrus." The rapid introduction of papyrus in eastern territories allowed "an alphabet to become the basis of political organization through efficient control of territorial space and of religious organization, through efficient control over time..."[38] Innis believed that in Greece the spatial bias of papyrus was countered by the medium; the result was their famous cultural flowering.

Innis compared the social effects in the West of the precursors of paper. The longevity of the Byzantine Empire was based on the balance created by the temporal bias of parchment and the spatial bias of papyrus. In eastern Christendom, "a compromise between organization reflecting the bias of different media; that of papyrus in the development of an imperial bureaucracy in relation to a vast area and that of parchment in the development of an ecclesiastical hierarchy in relation to time," produced a stable Empire. He compared East to Western Christendom, because in the West "parchment was the product of a widely scattered agricultural economy suited to the demands of a decentralized administration and to land transportation," and therefore lacked the stability and duration of the Eastern Empire.[39] The Mohammedan dominance of Egypt and the Mediterranean had created a temporal bias in Western Christendom by isolating Europe from a reliable supply of papyrus. The disintegration

of the Mohammedan Empire faciliated the filtration of Chinese paper into the West which caused widespread social turmoil. Innis argued that "the introduction of printing marked the begining of the long struggle between a civilization based on writing and vellum, and a civilization based on paper and the printing press."[40] The dramatic shift from the parchment hand copyist to mechanical reproduction on paper produced the carnage of the Thirty Years War. Furthermore, noting "the commercial revolution beginning about 1225 was marked by the spread in the manufacture of paper to Europe," Innis concluded that "printing accentuated a commercial interest and the publisher concerned with markets began to displace the printer concerned with production."[41] And thus occured the demise of Veblen's craftsman mentality. The mass production of paper acelerated spatial bias and tied technology to commercial values.

The succeeding centuries witnessed the phenomenal growth of an imbalance towards space, evident in continuous warfare. Technological innovation reinforced this bias in its most recent new media, electricity. Because "the Treaty of Versailles emphasized self-determination as a governing principle and recognized the significance of language in the printing press, consequently, it rapidly became outdated with the mechanization of the spoken word in the radio." Since both print and radio emphasized space, no balance could be achieved and social turmoil resulted. Warning that "mass production and standardization are the enemies of the West," he pleaded that "determined efforts to recapture the vitality of the oral

tradition...be made." Clearly, his conclusion reflected his distaste of the production-consumption ethic which mechanized life.[42]

The significance of technology was its determination of the possible dominant media of communication. If media threatened cultural stability, it was necessary to stimulate a competing media; therefore, he believed that support and stimulation of the oral tradition was essential for western culture. In many respects, Innis' theory can be regarded as his counter-proposal to the emphasis on the price system, science, and technology. He believed the values these influences exploited were the prime movers of the bias of communication. Thus Innis resolved the dichotomy between technology and ideas by assuming that media had intrinsic values. His treatment of media with respect to time and space integrated technological effects with social purpose, providing a means of assessing the implications of technology.

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CHAPTER IV

THE BIAS OF COMMUNICATION

Innis did not study political economy in the sense of the distribution of wealth, but he did pursue a literal conception of political economy summed up in his claim that "political disturbances reflected economic disturbances more directly."[1] Canadian monopoly institutions, created to exploit staples, epitomized the relationship between economics and politics, and offered a unique means of analyzing the political economy of Eurppean Empires. The connection he perceived between fur and the Hudson Bay Company's monopoly, between wheat and the C.P.R.'s monopoly, led Innis to consider whether newsprint created a monopoly. He echoed the moral indignation Adam Smith displayed when attacking the monopolies of mercantilism, in his criticism of the "monopoly of knowledge" produced by the newspaper. In Innis' view, the monopoly of knowledge was the system of beliefs imposed on communication by the techniques which exploited the media of communication. The bias of communication comprised the monopoly of knowledge and the bias of the media of communication; however, the qualities of these biases, i.e. the monopoly of knowledge and the bias of media, coincided; for example, the system of religious beliefs perpetuated by copyist and the temporal emphasis of parchment. Since, in his early work Innis had treated monopoly control as illustrative of the problems of empires, he continued to relate the monopoly of knowledge of communication to the problems of creating stability in modern empires, particular-

ly the United States of America.

Even though Innis analyzed monopolies in terms of the economic problems of overhead costs, he used his study of monopolies to emphasize not the economic aspects but rather the extent to which European empires had dominated North American social development. In his assessment of the economic efficiency of monopolies, Innis transformed J.M. Clark's concept of overhead costs. Initially, Innis used Clark's tool to explain the limits of economic expansion because of the capital costs of technical innovations; but later, in his study of newsprint he transformed the conservative meaning of overhead costs into his conception of unused capacity--the expansion of production and transportation facilities produced by technology---as an accelerator of economic expansion.[2]

In Innis' view, the efficiency of a monopoly could be measured by its ability to stabilize the effects of the economic process by controlling overhead costs of capital expansion, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway was Innis' first study of a monopoly institution. He believed that because the railway "rates in eastern Canada were regulated by competition" from the water routes and other railways, the resultant C.P.R. policy made"the non-competitive area of Western Canada as productive as possible." Monopoly was instrumental in reducing the overhead charges of branch line construction since expansion followed traffic demands and was not subject to speculative building to offset competition. However, the

resultant wheat blockage at the turn of the century led to rapid expansion and two more transcontinentals. Innis contrasted the disequilibrium of the early twentieth century, to the economic balance the C.P.R. provided after the First World War: "as it had been the basic factor in the rapid expansion of Canada in the last half a century it will become the basic factor in the stability of Canada's growth in the next." Innis concluded that since "from a monopolistic position it has turned to that of a protector against monopoly," the C.P.R. had become a countervailing force contributing to stability.[3]

Throughout the history of the fur trade, "typical European institutions of the period such as the monopoly were adapted and modified according to the demands of a new environment." During the Imperial French period, monopoly organization resulted from the difficulties of overcoming geography under prevailing techniques. Champlain was able "to arrange for monopoly control" and become "the first successful trust promoter" of North America. Although the valley of the St. Lawrence contributed to centralization because it offered only one communication route to Europe, the sailing ship was another factor to consider because "the heavy overhead charges incidental to the trade with France were an additional cause of concentration." The large capital investment necessary to equip a sailing vessel to tranship the furs to Europe encouraged the formation of a trust to limit overhead expenditures but the consequences of limiting the number of sailing vessels heading out from France were slow economic and population growth. In

Innis' view, the early fur monopolies curbed economic expansion.[4]

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Hudson Bay Company epitomized the ability of a monopoly to pace social and technological change by achieving economic balance. Innis argued that "the activities of the Hudson Bay Company in the period 1821 to 1869 deserve an important place in the history of monopolies." The company had triumphed politically because "the success of monopoly control over costs was measured from the pecuniary point of view in terms of net profits and of dividends." To limit the overhead costs of transport, the company developed the Red River colony as a labour pool. Monopoly allowed the company to minimize the number of York boatmen and horse train personnel and to reduce wages of casual labour. These were complemented through lowering the overhead costs of importing foodstuffs by encouraging local "agriculture [which] became a more important source of supply of provisions." Since "Monopoly control was effective in controlling the production and sale of the cheaper fur..." the efficiency of the Hudson Bay Company allowed it to dominate the market and conserve the resource. The stability of Rupert's land was not disturbed until American railways, built to exploit a different commodity, penetrated the northwest.[5]

In his study of newsprint, Innis changed Clark's tool of overhead costs into his own conception of unused capacity as a major contributor to economic imbalance. Innis explained the increasing impact of newsprint by directing "your attention

centers around the development of pulp and paper industry in relation to overhead costs as an accelerator of the economic expansion of the United States."[6] The massive expansion of paper production due to the shift from rags to wood pulp incurred vast capital expenditures and this "overhead /led/ to constant demand for filler to use up unused capacity."[7] Newspapers grew in size to "use up" the overhead costs of unused productive capacity of the modern pulp and paper plants. Newspapers consumed more newsprint and their advertisements accelerated consumption and thereby production in general. The consequent economic imbalance in the United States was largely due to the "problems of unused capacity /which/ have had the effect of quickening and accentuating the long-run general trends of economic development."[8]

Although Canadian newsprint had achieved a monopoly position in the U.S. market, evident by its ability to determine the price level of newsprint in the U.S., Innis became interested in newsprint not as an economic monopoly but as a media that imposed on communication a monopoly of knowledge. The dependence of the press on modern newsprint techniques wedded the newspaper to the values of industrial technology--a combination of scientific and commercial values. Innis believed that "science lives its own life not only in the mechanism which is provided to distribute knowledge but also in the sort of knowledge which will be distributed."[9] Science bore a dual relationship to modern communication because it

selected a media suited to its values (electricity must be quantified) and imposed scientific values on communication (eg. brand 'X'). Innis argued that the widespread reliance on the newspaper "led to the growth in the name of science of new monopolies to exploit faith and incredibility."[10] This latest monopoly produced an unstable public opinion and thus his shift of interest from economic to information monopoly was paralleled by his emphasizing not economic but political imbalance.

Innis related the problems of monopolies to the difficulties of empires, and concluded that a monopoly seldom contributed to imperial stability because it was often challanged successfully by economic forces on the periphery of the Empire. The cod fisheries provided material admirably suited to an analysis of the conditions of imperial equilibrium. In 1931, nearly a decade before publication of The Cod Fisheries, Innis presented a paper "as an analysis of the growth of the fishing industry, and as an attempt to apply conclusions reached in study of the fur trade, to a study of the relationship between that industry and the expansion of the Empire."[11] Innis noted that:

> While monopoly had established itself in the fur trade of St. Lawrence valley the difficulties of competition in the fishing industry of the maritime region proved insuperable;[12]

consequently, he argued that the history of the fishing industry was a continuous record of "the victory of the fisherman over

monopoly."[13] In the first half of the eighteenth century, "the contribution of the fishing industry to the integration of the British Empire was in striking contrast to its contribution to the French."[14] The New England settlement contributed to the efficiency of the fishery's trade by providing an integrated trade circuit. The nature of the cod migration had stimulated settlement adapted to the gradual northward trend of the fishing operations. After the treaty of Utrecht, the French tried to integrate their empire "by their entrenchment in Cape Breton and by a determined effort to develop a balanced empire."[15] The relative stability achieved between the English and French Empires stimulated the countervailing force of commercialism on the more developed periphery of the British Empire because "the inevitable tendency towards equilibrium produced a lack of political balance which finally broke the control of both first Empires."[16] Innis argued that:

> the encouragement of the fishing industry described by Adam Smith hastened the growth of commercialism in New England and sharpened the conflict with monopolistic aspects of merchantilism to the point which brought about its collapse.[17]

From this he drew the conclusion that the empire's periphery challenged the dominance of the metropolitan center. Although he later qualified the cyclic aspects of his theory, it is evident Innis believed that the tendency towards equilibrium whether within or between Empires created a monopoly of knowledge which stimulated the formation of a counter monopoly of knowledge on the periphery of the Empire.[18]

After World War II, Innis analyzed the historical influence that the monopoly of knowledge, built around the newspaper, had upon political equilibrium of Empires. Innis summed up his position in his proposition that "the Conservative power of monopolies of knowledge compels the development of technological revolution in the media of communication in marginal areas."[19] His bias is evident in his assumption that "we entered the open seas of democracy in the twentieth century with nothing to worship but the totalitarianism of the modern state."[20] He believed that the development of printing was instrumental in the creation of the fascist tendency of public opinion.

The printing press, a child of the Renaissance, made the town the purveyor of secular learning in competition with the monastic copyist and illuminator. At the edge of the Catholic Empire, the northern humanists of Holland fashioned their cultural revolution about the new media of communication. "Erasmus and the humanists saw the significance of a new instrument in the war against ignorance," but in the hinterland the "moral purpose differed profoundly from that of the Italian humanist." Although Erasmus "broke the barrier between sacred and profane learning," the zeal of the new northern press made the newspaper the vanguard of "the reformation and liberal ideas," and the new media ceased to be a humanist vehicle and became a propaganda tool. Gradually, "writers became concerned to influence public opinion" with

the result that Luther destroyed the classical Renaissance.[21] The public opinion created by the press had contributed to the separatist movement on the periphery of the Catholic empire by exploiting "the vitality of the classics of Greece which reflected the power of civilization based on an oral tradition [which] gradually weakened the monopoly of knowledge held by the church."[22] The new media of communication permitted creativity to flourish for a short period before a new political equilibrium tied the press to a new monopoly of knowledge that fossilized public opinion.

Innis found that the effects of the suppression of the press in France contrasted sharply with the effects of its public control by taxation in Britain. Strict censorship in France stimulated the proliferation of new thought on France's periphery, the Netherlands. In Innis' opinion, "it is just to remember the indispensable services rendered by the freedom of the press in Holland to the dissemination of French thought in the eighteenth century." By contrast, in England, the tax of 1712 on advertising curtailed newspaper production which both led to writer's exploiting fiction and the growth of subsidized liberal papers. Since "the complete dependence of authors on booksellers meant that the market was cluttered with trash," Innis suggested that the economic burden placed on journalism nearly destroyed English literature. The tax on advertising encouraged the subsidizing of newspapers for political purposes and consequently, the English press became

monopolized by liberalism since it was less adaptable to commercial exploitation. The period witnessed the popularity of Dafoe who as "the oracle of the masses" "contributed powerfully to make the newspaper the fourth estate." The British advertising tax had made the press a monopolizer of political opinion.[23]

The monopolistic aspects of mercantilism were destroyed by the effects of a new media of communication in the hinterland of the British Empire. Britain's acquiescence to the advertising tax of 1712 was markedly different to its reception on the periphery of the empire where "the Stamp Act of 1765 followed the principle of the stamp taxes in England in 1712 and brought a general protest which changed the character of journalism." Because "paper occupied a crucial position in the development of public opinion and its sensitiveness was evident in protests against taxes imposed by Great Britain," the new media of communication was quickly exploited to create a new monopoly of opinion. Innis observed that subsequently "a new postal service in 1775 and larger numbers of post riders built up a news service and created a community of ideas and attituded and unified action." The newspaper was central to the success of the revolution as "propaganda was essential to the marshalling of opinion in a democratic community." In larger context, the revolution "was in part a result of the appeal to a written tradition and the clash with an oral tradition." While Britain has remained wedded to the oral tradition of parliament; the United States, since the revolu-

tion has been dominated by the written tradition of the Constitution.[24]

The contrasting policies of Great Britain and the United States illustrate the ability of a monopoly to avoid technological change and thereby pace social change. Innis emphasized that "where as in the United States technological advance supported the rapid extension of the newspaper in Great Britain taxes restricted development." The British taxes turned journalists into popularizers, particulary in the first part of the nineteenth century which saw the growth of quarterlies. The proliferation of "magazines and manuals impaired the love of study, research and scholarship," while the "middle class newspapers press for elevating a clever man like Dickens above scholars, philosophers and statesmen." The increasing criticism of mercantilism and the success of economic liberalism in changing the Navigation Acts and Corn laws undermined the monopoly position of The Times:

> The attack of Cobden on The Times followed a long struggle against the old mercantilism system and it was significant that its power in expressing the demands of the interests cheltered behind that system was the last of the monopolistic privileges to fall.

The Times' monopoly ended with the repeal of the Stamp duty of 1855 and gradually through the remainder of the century British journalism was transformed by the rapid importation of American techniques. However, the monopolistic tendency of the Stamp Act had contributed to stable public opinion. After this date, British governments gained greater percentages of

the 'popular' vote.[25]

The most significant development of the newspaper occurred on the periphery of European culture in the United States. The newspaper was the only father of the new Republic to be enshrined in the Bill of Rights. In North America the press "has linked trade to opinion."[26] Moreover, the success of the revolution tied America to consumption, since "the guarantee of freedom of the press under the Bill of Rights in the United States and its encouragement by postal regulations has meant an unrestricted operation of commercial forces..."[27] In contrast to Britain before 1855, the American newspaper carried the bias of the production interests who monopolized the information of the newspaper.

Because "newspapers favoured a marked extension of advertising" and "the economy became biased toward the mass production of goods...," the newspaper's "bias culminated in an obsession with the immediate," furthering spatial imbalance that augured for the lesser political enitities of the world.[28] The American technical prowess continuously endangered political economy as "swings in public opinion are more violent with new inventions in commercialism, and independent thought is more difficult to sustain."[29] Innis suggested that "freedom of the press has been regarded as a great bulwark of our civilization and it would be dangerous to say that it has become the great bulwark of monopolies of the press;" nonetheless, this was Innis' position in the early cold war

period.[30]

The horror with which Innis viewed the power of the press emerged in his protest that considering the press "from a scientific and not from a party-political standpoint" was incomprehensible since "in these days of totalitarian tendencies it might be argued that these clauses involve a contradiction."[31] The postion of the press in "American civilization meant the extension of knowledge to all members of the body politic" and "the ideal of democracy namely election of the common man." Because the equality of the mechanized word encouraged an emphasis on "practical science," modern communication made the problems of political economy incomprehensible by oversimplifying long range effects.[32] Believing the objective bias of mechanized knowledge distorted reality, Innis cautioned that "the most dangerous illusions accompany the most obvious facts including the printed and mechanized word."[33]

While the first British empire's monopoly system was destroyed by the effect of a new media on the periphery, and a new balance was achieved between England and the United States, Innis foresaw no such challenge to the American monopoly of communication, because all industrial countries were biased by the same media of communication.

The scientific and spatial bias of modern media distorted political problems and made the reconciliation of the demands of time and space difficult. The crucial effect was the interference with foreign affairs because the "printing press destroy-

ed internationalism."[34] The newspaper's spatial bias and disintegration of time created severe limitations in the ability of the United States to handle its new imperial responsibilities. Since foreign policy reflected the lump character to technological development and the monopolistic demands of newspapers, a century of technological innovation was crowned by Randolph Hearst's war. The exploitation of the press to further exports enhanced national capitalism. Innis agreed that:

> the claim thatobsession with advertising and circulation in the period from 1919 to 1939 coincided with a lack of intelligent interest in public affairs and a lack of effective opposition to foreign policy at an early date appear to have justification.[35]

The attachment of the press to commercial opinion and its discussion of the scientific "truths" combined to distort international problems and create an irrational sense of security.

The mypoic bias of the American press exaberated internal problems as well. Innis perceived that:

> without experience in meeting these demands an appeal is made to organized force as an instrument of continuity. Dependence on organized power and a traditional antipathy to coloured peoples weakens political sensitivity and lack of experience with problems of continuity and empire threatens the Western world with uncertainty and war.[36]

The cultural bias of science and the discontinuity induced by the newspaper ill prepared the United States for its gargantuum task. However, this sin was not peculiar to the

monopoly of knowledge in North America because Innis asserted the general principle that "an interest in learning assumes a stable society in which organized force is sufficiently powerful to provide sustained protection."[37]

Innis satisfied his humanism and his nationalism by giving to Canadians the mission of saving the United States from its monopoly of knowledge. He claimed that because of the influence of American communication's monopoly, "Canada moved from colony to nation to colony." Innis found it ironical that "we complained bitterly of Great Britain in the Minto affair, the Naval Bill, and the like, but no questions are asked as to the implications of joint defence shemes with the United States..."[38] By noting that "ultimate power rests in the hands of the army as the outcome of the conscription issue has shown," it was evident to Innis that Canada had resorted to totalitarianism in two world wars.[39] He lamented that "we have never had the courage of Yugoslavia in relation to Russia and we have never produced a Tito."[40] Although the United States' fear of communism was similar to "the fanatic fear of mice shown by elephants," there was the danger of Canada being swallowed by American fanaticism. Innis' solution of "assisting the development of a third bloc designed to withstand the pressure of the United States and Russia," predicted the vain attempts of future Canadian diplomatic history.[41] The Canadian dilemma was not purely military, however; the crucial problem was the preservation of Canadian culture.

Innis noted with a deep concern that "in the long list of volumes of The Relations of Canada and the United States series little interest is shown in cultural relationships and the omission is ominous." Nationalized communications was one of the few cultural levers at the disposal of Canadians. Innis suggested that:

> by attempting constructive efforts to explore the cultural possibilities of various media of communication and to develop them along lines free from commercialism, Canadians might make a contribution to the cultural life of the United States by releasing it from dependence on the sale of tobacco and other commodities.[42]

Canada is the periphery of the American empire, and the artistic use of communication would have a fundamental effect on the whole empire, suffering from the bias of commercialism. His nationalist desire to preserve Canada had fortuitously merged with his humanist interest in the problems of culture.

Innis regarded the pervasive American monopoly of knowledge as a conspiracy to destroy the university tradition and creative thought generally because the values of both consumption and scientific truth inhibited speculative thought. The trend among academics was to"become a part of government bureaucracies" and "the kept class of autocracies."[43] Due to the pressure of business and political interests for authoritative academic statements, the various universities' Boards of Governors "have felt compelled to lend themselves to the systematic rape of scholarship," through the interference "with the content of courses in the interest of particular

groups..."[44] Because of the "obsession with scholastic problems of reconciling dynamic and static theories," the commercial monopoly induced academics into studying riddles at the expense of critical thought.[45] This result can be compared to the Church's monopoly of knowledge before printing which explored such fundamental considerations as angles and needles. In general, "the mechanization of modern society compels increasing interest in science and the machine, and attracts the best minds from the most difficult problems of western civilization." The mechanization of knowledge had destroyed learning by encouraging academic empires. Specialized research became "less assimilable to students and more suitable to the demands of bureaucratic exhibitionism," and secondly the academic specialist fell into the arms of administration and learning and teaching were relegated to a secondary position. Although the post-World War Two period witnessed massive educational grants, "all across Canada there is an emphasis on buildings, courses, research in applied science and money and a constant neglect of men."[46] The bureaucratic university suffocated the human element. The search for awareness was lost amid a "concern with information" supported by the "text-book industry and other industries which might be described as information industries."[47] Academic research and inquiry were not adaptable to the format of text-books, because the synthetic nature of course texts inhibited independent thought and distorted original research.

The social demands imposed on the university destroyed its historic function because in the name of practical science "she forgot that her existence depended on the search for truth and not on truth."[48] Innis thought that the univeristy was doomed because "force is no longer concerned with the scholar's protection and is actively engaged in shemes for his destruction."[49] The only conclusion which could be deduced from these conditions was that "in our concern with the problems of modern scholarship we are faced with the prospect of a new Dark Ages."[50] The scientific bias of communication and the proliferation of information industries shattered hopes for academic creativity.

Innis claimed that he was "only presenting a footnote on the work of Graham Wallas," but his efforts were justified since "it should be said that the subject of his work was in itself inherently neglected."[51] "Graham Wallas pointed to the decline of discussion with the spread of machine industry and to the emphasis on information and facts as destructive of the environment for thought."[52] Since mechanized knowledge threatened to exterminate humanism, Innis supported the countering bias of the oral tradition which emphasized continuity in time as opposed to the disintegration of social time by printed and electrical media. Modern metropolises tended to encourage "a widening of the range of reception, so that large numbers receive, but are unable to make any direct response." Since "those on the receiving end of material from a mechanized

central system are precluded from participation in healthy, vigorous, and vital discussion," society suffers from an inability of the individual to penetrate social problems.[53] This condition contrasted most unfavourably with the integrative function of the oral tradition. "In oral intercourse," in Innis' view, "the eye, ear, and brain, the sense and the faculties acted together in busy co-operation and rivalry--each eliciting, stimulating, and supplementing the other."[54] The stimulation of many senses helped to integrate the personality and to develop critical faculties. The disintegrative effects of modern communication accentuated personal isolation with the result that:

> the excesses of individualism rather than the integration of personality have characterized the schizophrenia of Western Civilization.[55]

These effects were in sharp contrast to the "oral tradition which supported Greek scepticism and evaded monopolies..."[56] of knowledge. The qualities of the oral tradition were dearly needed in the twentieth century. Innis concluded that the media of communication created a scientific monopoly of knowledge which was detrimental to the development of character at which the Greek oral tradition had been so successful.

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[2]My conclusion is contradicted by Daniel Drache's claim that, "Innis regarded technology as a force of conservation in history", in "Harold A. Innis: Canadian Nationalist" Journal of Canadian History, vol.4, (May 1969) p.10

[3]Innis, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway, pp. 173 Innis, The Problems of Staple Production in Canada, pp.29.

[4]Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.41, p.33, p.33 p.58.

[5]Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.287, p.325, p.300 p.327.

[6]Innis Papers, foot 35, Harold A. Innis, "An Uneasy Conscience", p.3.

[7]Ibid., foot 34, Idea File, p.280

[8]Innis, "Unused Capacity as a Factor in Canadian Economic History", in Innis, Political Economy, p.216

[9]Innis, "A Critical Review", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.192

[10]Innis, "The Problem of Space", ibid., p.131

[11]Harold A. Innis, "An Introduction to the Economic History of the Maritimes", Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association, 1931, p.85.

[12]Innis, The Cod Fisheries, p.85.

[13]Ibid., p.68.

[14]Ibid., p.119

[15]Harold A. Innis, "Cape Breton and the French Regime", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Third Series, vol. 24, Section 2, p.51.

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[16]Innis, The Cod Fisheries, p.211

[17]Ibid., p.183

[18]Daniel Drache in "Harold Innis: A Canadian Nationalist", Journal of Canadian Studies, vol. 4, (May 1969) has emphasized the importance of Innis' use of dialectical logic. However significant his dialectical logic may be, I wish to stress that his use of opposing concepts, in the above instance metropolis versus hinterland examplified his humanist interest in the problem of social stability.

[19]Innis, "The Press, A neglected factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.78

[20]Innis, "An Economic Approach to English literature in the Nineteenth Century", in Innis, Political Economy, p.55

[21]Innis Papers, foot 34, History of Communication, Chapter 6, "Printing in the Sixteenth Century", p.40, p.53, p.47, p.55, p.58.

[22]Innis, "Minerva's Owl", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.22.

[23]Innis Papers, foot 34, History of Communications, Chapter 8, "The Paper and Printing Industries in the Eighteenth Century", Section A, p.29; Section B, p.56; Section C, p.119 p.120.

[24]Ibid., Section A, p.246, p.212-213, p.252, p.258, p.282

[25]Ibid., (no chapter number), "The Printing Industry in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century", p.1; Chapter 9, "Paper and Printing in the Nineteenth Century", p.149, p.135 p.27.

[26]Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State", in Innis, Political Economy, p.122.

[27]Innis, "The Strategy of Culture", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.15

[28]Innis, "Technology and Public Opinion in the United States", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.187

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[29]Innis, Political Economy, preface, p.vii-viii

[30]Innis, "Industrialism and Cultural Values", in Innis The Bias of Communication, p. 139

[31]Innis, "The Press, A neglected factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.77

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[33]Innis, Political Economy, preface p.vii

[34]Ibid., "A Plea for the University Tradition", p.65

[35]Innis, "The Press, A neglected factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.100

[36]Loc. cit.

[37]Innis, "Technology and Public Opinion in the United States", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.188

[38]Innis, "Great Britain; The United States and Canada", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.121

[39]Innis, Political Economy, preface p.xii

[40]Innis, "The Military Implications of the American Constitution", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.44

[41]Ibid., "Great Britain; the United States and Canada", p. 125

[42]Ibid., "The Strategy of Culture", p.3

[43]Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development", in Innis Political Economy, p.31

[44]Ibid., "A Plea for the University Tradition", p.69

[45]Innis, "The Press, A neglected factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.108

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[46]in Innis, Political Economy,"The University in the Modern Crises, p.74; "Political Economy in the Modern State", p.125; "The University in the Modern Crises", p.76

[47]Innis, "A Plea for Time", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.83

[48]Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition", in Innis Political Economy, p.138

[49]Innis, "Minerva's Owl", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.30-31.

[50]Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern States", in Innis, Political Economy, p.138

[51]Innis, "The Press, A neglected factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.78

[52]Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development", in Innis Political Economy, p.30

[53]Innis, "The Press,---", in Innis, Changing Concepts of Time, p.102

[54]Innis, "The Problems of Space", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.105

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[56]Innis, "The Problem of Space", in Innis, The Bias of Communication, p.112.

CONCLUSION

Relevance has become the motto of the undergraduate university. During his early travels about Canada, Innis asked "Is the precambrian shield culturaly a curse?"[1] This seemingly irrelevant query is a paradox heavily laden with irony. It points towards his early and continuous humanist interest in culture. Although "Innis remained throughout a disciple of Adam Smith" and exuded the "classical liberal passion for the individual," this essentially humanist stance should be distinguished from the bald statement that "Innis was a Liberal."[2] To argue that for Innis there "had to be a Canadian Liberalism..." is to make his work relevant through a contradiction of terms and to deny his humanist legacy.[3] It is more accurate to turn to John Bartlet Brebner's conclusion that "in a more narrowly political sense, Innis was the philosopher liberal confronting a transvaluation of values."[4] In his analysis of media, Innis argued that the values of classical liberalism were irrelevant because the modern media of communication disseminated the anti-humanitarian values of the price-system and science.

It is ironic that Innis' question contained a grain of truth which germinated into his theory of the media of communication. Economic nationalists who tote out Innis' ideas every time the U.S.A. glowers at Canada have seldom examined the corrupting impact Canadain staples have had on western culture.

They fail to relate Innis' communication theory, particularly with reference to Canadian newsprint, to the disintegration of western culture because as nationalists they cannot believe that the "True North Strong and Free" is a culture curse. Innis continuously cautioned that the economics of conservation and failure have been ignored. Certainly, in these days of the ecological crisis it must be acknowledged that Innis' warnings about the human effects of mass consumerism--his critique of the price system studies--was one of the most original viewpoints of his generation. Subsequent Canadian economic historians have been remiss by not further defining the relationship of a resource area and its exploitation to the industrial world.

Perhaps Innis also wished to point out that the precambrian formation pierced the North American continent down to the Great Lakes and thereby cut off French Canadians from the interior and isolated them in Quebec. Many Canadians who use Innis' work to support arguments for a centralist Canada fail to acknowledge that Innis presented Canada as a cultural composite, most notably in the Indian-French-Anglo-American make-up of the North West Company. The Laurentian Thesis notwithstanding, Innis observed that "to an important extent the history of Canada has been that of a struggle between French and English." His theory of communication has paticular relevance in this context, since language differences are exacerbated by modern mechanical reproduction. Certainly his statement that "culture and language have proved more powerful than force" leads to

the conclusion that Canada may not long retain its present Federal structure.[5] This is not to say Innis was not a nationalist. Long before the voyage of the tanker "Manhattan," he had concerned himself with Canada's claim to sovereignty over the Artic because of the attitude of American researchers who showed little sensitivity "regarding political boundaries and nationalist traditions."[6]

The final irony of Innis' question about the precambrian shield, besides the fact that it should be taken seriously, is that it illustrates the shallowness of the arguments for relevance. Although he denied price studies since they were permeated with the sense of the immediate, Innis' work became far more "relevant" because his method and bias gave his questions human significance. Recalling the words he wrote with reference to Veblen, "it is the method of approach which must be stressed."[7] Marshall McLuhan, who is "pleased to think of /his/ own book The Gutenberg Galaxy (University of Toronto Press, 1962) as a footnote to the observations of Innis..." has emphasized that "Innis taught us how to use the bias of culture and communication as an instrument of research."[8] Innis resolved the threat posed to humanism by a society dominated by technological values not only by relating technology to ideas, and by developing a theory of change caused by technological innovation, he also elaborated a theory which could appreciate the values of other cultures. However, his essentially humanist message remains uncommunicat-

ed as he suggested in his remark that "I have long since escaped from the illusion that people read my books."[9]

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