Changing Leadership Patterns: Conference of Mennonites in Canada

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The post-World War II years challenged the Canadian Mennonites to examine their religious organizations in the the context of a growing rationalization of the organizational environment. Like other societal organizations, Mennonite religious organizations were compelled to adopt a more bureaucratic form to ensure survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The post-war decade shows this pattern in the way participatory democracy pushed aside autocratic decision-making, professional pastors replaced traditional bishops, formal rules replaced informal traditions, and complex organizations replaced simple associations. This paper will document these organizational changes at the denominational and congregational levels and examine internal problems and external pressures associated with the changes. Organizational changes will be analyzed using the dimensions of formalization, polity and complexity.

Denominational change will be analyzed on a national level, using the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) as a case study. This organization was established in western Canada in 1903 as a means of linking together the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Manitoba and the Rosenorter Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan. Today it is one of the largest Mennonite denominations in Canada with almost 30,000 baptized members scattered in 152 congregations across Canada (CMC Yearbook, 1987). Selected CMC member congregations will provide the data for developing an overview of organizational change at the congregational level. The other large Canadian denomination is the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church (CCMBC) with some 25,700 members in 170 congregations (CCMBC Yearbook, 1988). In this paper I will make only brief references to some parallel changes in this denomination. It is my general impression that there are many

parallel structural developments in these two denominations but confirmation will have to await an in-depth comparative study.

Material for this analysis comes primarily from denominational and related files, denominational yearbooks and congregational histories housed at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and the Centre for MB Studies in Canada. Content analysis is used to generate the data for this paper.

An examination of CMC documents shows that constitutional bylaws divide the CMC history into three relatively distinctive structural eras. The first constitution adopted at the Eigenheim conference sessions in 1904 represents the committee era (1903-1954). It outlines a very simple associational structure using elected and appointed committees to execute conference wishes. In 1959 CMC adopted a second constitution representing the board era (1955-1970). This document introduced a board and subcommittee system with annotated descriptions of responsibilities and procedures. The third constitution associated with the partnership era (1971-1978) was adopted in 1975. It reduced the number of boards, formalized regional representation and encouraged consultation and cooperation. With a focus on postwar organizational change, the board era of CMC, 1955-1970, provides a natural data base for this paper.

Uprooting Traditions

Religious traditions are hard to change, particularly for a people proud of their religious nonconformity. This is evident when we examine some of the organizational factors associated with the emergence of the board era. Internally the CMC organization experienced concerns about *committee overlap* and *traditional leadership.* The committee structure showed definite signs of fatigue in the early 1950s, particularly in the education area where excessive overlap of committee domains created duplication of work. The initial attempt to reorganize the education committee into a board structure was accepted by conference delegates in 1953 (CMC Yearbook, 1953:63-65). This reorganization included the appointment of a half time field secretary, the first salaried position in the CMC. A year later the Christian Service Committee came with a similar request (CMC Yearbook, 1954:42-43). There was also a call for a central treasury (CMC Yearbook 1954:5). Clearly the traditional committee structure was no longer adequate.

Executive authority during the committee era was vested in a three-man committee: chairman *(Vorsitzer),* vice-chairman and secretary. The oligarchic tendency of democratic organizations was evident during this era as positions were filled frequently by re-electing the incumbents. This is well illustrated in a story Katie Funk Wiebe tells of B.B. Janz, a prominent Mennonite Brethren Church leader during this period, who enjoyed church work more than many other things. After one conference session, he is reported to have said with some satisfaction, "I have retained all my offices" (Wiebe, 1987:46). CMC records show that during the committee era of 52

years only eighteen different persons served on the executive committee. One person, David Toews, held almost a quarter (23%) of the executive offices during this period, twenty-six years as chairman of CMC. Toews plus five additional office holders held a combined total of three-quarters (76%) of the executive positions. Five of the six were ordained bishops. The data confirm a relatively entrenched ecclesiastical elite controlling the affairs of CMC during the committee era.

Not only did these half dozen persons control the executive, they also retained concurrent memberships in several other committees. This was an efficient way of collecting and distributing information under the circumstances but seriously restricted opportunities for member participation. The traditional authority of the bishop or elder *(Aeltester)* was much in evidence. It is not surprising that this committee era has also been labelled the "bishop era." It is partly this exclusive centralized control system that prompted a call from the younger delegates, "the young turks," for an open participatory democracy.

Not only did these internal issues call for change but increasing rationalization of the organizational environment also encouraged conformity. The General Conference Mennonite Church, a parent-like organization, had completed a revision of its constitution in 1950 which called for a revised board structure (Pannabecker, 1975:194-195). Four major boards—Trustees and Finance, Education and Publication, Missions, and Christian Service—reflected the new functional division (Pannabecker, 1975:194). Given that the CMC had representatives on these boards, questions were raised about how these representatives should link to the CMC structures. It is this factor that specifically concerned the members of the active Christian Service committee.

All this prompted the Executive Committee to set up a review committee to come up with a possible reorganization model and the necessary modifications of the constitution. Structures, rules and procedures should be reviewed with the intent of revitalizing the organization. This committee presented its report in 1955 (CMC Yearbook, 1955:42, 166-170).

In 1956 CMC adopted the new organizational model consisting of an expanded executive committee, four major boards and two standing committees (CMC Yearbook, 1956:30-31). It was intentionally designed to parallel the General Conference structure in order to facilitate, among other things, the exchange of information and representational linkages. It is interesting to note that just over a decade later the CCMBC also adopted a board structure (CCMBC Yearbook, 1967:23).

In the remainder of the paper I want to document three areas of organizational change that evolved out of this reorganization of CMC—formalization, polity and complexity. Formalization focuses on written rules and procedures, polity considers authority, decision-making and social control, and complexity refers to divisions or departments. Table 1 shows the organizational changes between the committee and board eras in the three areas.

Table 1.   Organizational Change of Conference of Mennonites in Canada by Conference Eras

Dimensions Eras	Formalization	Polity	Complexity
committee era '03-54	informal traditions & customs	autocratic decision- making	domain consensus
		executive & committees	functional
board era '55-70	formal rules & procedures	participatory democracy	domain consensus
		executive boards & council executive sec.	functional

Formalization

For Mennonites, constitutions represent a relatively new form of formal administrative control. In its earlier history the church *(Gemeinde)* generally was governed by unwritten traditions and customs transmitted and sustained by the ministerial team *(Lehrdienst)*. With team members elected for life terms, continuity and consistency in applying church policies was generally assured. Constitutional church government was advocated by some church members to increase grassroots participation in church affairs and to institutionalize universal accountability. Others were more cynical, suggesting that constitutions were just another way of guarding the traditional structures and their custodians.

In summarizing the comparison of the 1959 and 1904 documents, several points should be noted. The ideological foundation and conference principles, i.e., membership requirements, relationship to congregations, delegate representation and amendment procedures were generally affirmed in the new document. The revisions were evident in three areas, formalization of procedures, election policy and restructuring of activities.

The 1959 document was a much expanded version of the 1904 document. This may be largely attributed to the formalization of procedures. Throughout the document the duties of officers, boards, committees, congregations and delegates are carefully prescribed. Special attention is given to defining the operational domain of each of the main boards. It is noteworthy that this formalization of procedures coincided with a modification of election policies.

The election policies reflect a new sense of democracy and opportunity. The number of consecutive terms that a board member could serve is limited to three or a total of nine years. Executive officers are also limited to three consecutive terms but each term is limited to one year. In addition to limiting consecutive terms, the new document further limits multiple committee/ board memberships. This new ruling had the immediate impact of increasing opportunities for representation. With these changes in the election policies it is not surprising that activities had to be restructured.

The board structure, instituted to reduce overlap and confusion of domains among the committees, provides an intermediate coordinating body to oversee the tasks in selected areas of conference programming. Previous committee tasks were now allocated to appropriate boards. The twelve member boards were granted the authority to create the necessary division of labour required to accomplish their mandate. It would be fair to say that the new constitutional bylaws reflect a carefully crafted organization designed to accomplish its mission effectively and more democratically. The expansion of the rules and procedures indicate the increased level of CMC formalization during the board era.

The formalization of the CMC organization during the board era is also reflected in its member congregations. Here are two examples. The 1964 revised constitution of the Tiefengrund Rosenorter Mennonite Church reads much like the 1959 bylaws in terms of formalization, authority structures and complexity (Regier, 1980:23-24). Aldergrove Bethel Mennonite Church (1980:16) reports that in 1964-65 they constructed their first "properly drawn" constitution. The CMC constitution process provided both a model and an inspiration for revising local constitutions and parallel functional structures.

Polity

It is mandatory for organizations to constitute an appropriate polity to accomplish their tasks and secure the loyalty of their membership. The polity includes the total system of authority structures, decision making and implementing social control.

Historical evidence indicates that the Anabaptist movement rejected the hierarchical authority structures perpetuated by the medieval church. Instead the Early Church is adopted as an appropriate model for institutionalizing their Christian beliefs and practices. This democratic egalitarian model predicated on the "priesthood of all believers" evolved into a religious community in which theological authority came to be vested in a leadership team *(Lehrdienst)* democratically elected by the membership for life-time appointments (Sawatsky, 1983). At the head of this team was the elder or bishop who would oversee the nurture of the church and preside over the administration of the ordinances. Regional conferences were convened occasionally by church leaders to deliberate on theological and life-style issues. Local broth-

erhood meetings provided an opportunity for lay member input on church affairs.

   To analyze the polity of the CMC during the period under consideration I will focus on three bodies—the delegate body, the executive committee, and the boards.

Delegate Body

   For the CMC all humanly created authority structures were ultimately subject to the Holy Scriptures, particularly the New Testament. In the organizational structure itself this final authority was vested in the delegate body comprised of official representatives from member congregations. It was understood that "the conference is a deliberative body, carrying the powers of recommendation, but not legislation" (Article V, 1959 Bylaws). Formally the

Table 2.   Official Delegates and Member Churches Represented at Conference Sessions by Selected Years and Conference Membership

Conference		Official Delegates		Member Churches	
Year	Membership	Act/Pot[1]	%	Rep/Tot[2]	%
1905	*	*	*	2/2	100
1910	1110**	25/37	68	4/4	100
1915	1800**	33/60	55	7/7	100
1920	2280**	55/76	72	10/10	100
1925	3150	74/105	70	10/12	83
1930	7231	78/241	32	25/34	74
1935	10217	119/341	35	28/40	70
1940	11891	76/396	19	28/58	48
1945	13697	172/457	38	43/63	68
1950	15500	210/517	41	50/68	74
1955	15956	215/532	40	62/72	86
1960	17828	309/594	52	68/81	84
1965	20579	278/686	41	91/119	77
1970	22265	433/742	58	108/134	81
1975	23979	447/799	56	121/134[3]	90
1980	25953	529/865	61	124/137	91

*missing data.
**estimated on the basis of votes allocated to churches at the delegate sessions.
[1] Act/Pot - number of official delegates compared with number of potential delegates. Potential delegates estimated by dividing conference membership by 30.
[2] Rep/Tot = number of churches represented compared with total number of member churches.
[3] The list of churches represented suggests that only 114 churches were represented instead of the 121 listed in the minutes (CMC Yearbook, 1975:57, 116).

CMC would convene delegate sessions annually to discuss and enact policies pertaining to the structuring of activities and perceived tasks of the organization. At times the decision-making was perceived as little more than rubber stamping proposals and projects presented by boards and committees.

In looking at the number of official delegates and the number of churches represented at the annual conferences, several interesting patterns emerge. The data (Table 2) show that during the early committee era (1903-1929) churches were well represented at the annual conference. Almost all member churches were represented with actual number of delegates averaging about 70 percent of the maximum potential delegate positions (based on one vote per 30 members). The late committee era (1930-1954) shows an opposite pattern. The number of member churches represented at sessions averaged about 70 percent with some lean years in the early '40s when less than 50 percent were represented. Not only were fewer churches represented but a smaller proportion of eligible delegates appeared (between 32 and 41 percent of the maximum potential number). Two hundred and ten delegates out of a possible 517 were registered in 1950. The economic depression during th 1930s and the war-time hostilities directed toward the Mennonites made conference work difficult. To urge congregations to take representative democracy seriously the CMC passed a resolution in 1941 limiting the number of votes per delegate to a maximum to ten (CMC Yearbook, 1941:20).

The board era, 1955-1970, shows an increase in the proportion of churches represented at the conference sessions with between 77 and 86 percent now sending representatives. The number of official delegates also showed signs of strengthening by moving from 40 percent in 1955 to 58 percent in 1970. By the end of this era 433 official delegates were registered at the 1970 annual sessions. The data suggest that member churches took their responsibility seriously in sending delegates to the annual conferences, yet the number sent is considerably fewer than the guidelines permitted.

The composition of the delegate body had changed significantly over the decades. The delegate lists during the committee era clearly reflect a male dominated organization. According to the official delegate lists published in conference yearbooks, official women delegates first appear in 1959 when two women were listed as delegates from the Vancouver Mennonite Mission Church (CMC Yearbook, 1959:79). In 1964 the first woman board member was elected to sit on the Board of Christian Education (CMC Yearbook, 1964:35). By the mid-'70s approximately one-third of the delegates were women (CMC Yearbook, 1974:58) and five women held elected positions (CMC Yearbook, 1975:119-121). While it is true that women have just recently taken their place as delegates to the annual business sessions, they have actually had a long association with the conference sessions through a separate women's organization.

There was always strong representation of clergy among the official delegates. They were, as one would expect, both interested and available, and the churches expected them to participate in the extended church community

(Gerbrandt, 1972). It was perceived to be part of their job description. From the very beginning efforts were made to impress on member churches that this was not to be defined as a ministers' conference. In fact a separate minsters' conference was convened annually on the day prior to the delegate sessions to discuss issues related to pastoral care in churches. Cynics, however, regarded the CMC as just another ministerial association. A breakdown of delegates into clergy-laity in 1968 shows that just over one-third of the 330 official delegates were ministers or lay ministers (Letkemann, 1968:3). A comparison of the delegate lists with lists of clergy (using 1935 & 1950 data) reveals that the proportion of clergy delegates had declined from two-thirds in the mid-1930s to one-half in the '50s and one-third in the late '60s. The trend shows a definite shift away from a clergy dominated delegate body. Increasingly the "grass roots" people within the organization were assuming their responsibility in conference decision-making.

Executive Committee

The executive committee was elected by the delegate body to officially coordinate the CMC organization between sessions. (The executive committee of the Conference was renamed the general board in the 1975 constitutional bylaws. The function of the general board remained essentially the same. For purposes of clarity the term executive committee will be used inclusively). Specific constitutional norms defined the nature of its authority and tenure. The formal duties of the executive, as defined by the 1904 constitution, essentially involved conducting the annual delegate sessions. The 1959 bylaws (see Article XII.B, 1959 Bylaws) elaborate on the formal responsibilities by empowering the executive committee to act as legal representatives, adjudicate issues outside the jurisdiction of boards, fill vacancies between sessions, and act as consultants to the boards. In many ways this merely reflects the formalization of tasks of the executive as understood and taken for granted by the membership.

Executive committee decisions were made at officially constituted meetings, usually three or four between annual sessions. A simple majority vote was used to pass or reject formal motions. In urgent situations between meetings a mailed ballot was used to determine executive decisions.

The reorganization of the CMC which as noted earlier included limiting tenure, eliminating concurrent memberships and increasing the size of the executive, may be interpreted as decentralizing the authority structure of CMC by spreading the authority to a larger group of elected members. But it was also aimed at breaking down the traditional control of the bishops and making the organization more accessible to younger college trained members. Where only 18 different members were involved as executive officers during the committee era (52 years), 25 served during the board/partnership eras (24 years) (CMC Yearbook, 1978:111-112). This does not include the expanded executive committee structure operating during this period.

During the board era the expanded executive committee perceived itself as a leader in conference affairs. It is noted in the executive committee report in 1965 that "The Executive Committee must remain on the forefront of Conference thinking" (CMC Yearbook, 1965:90). The role of the chairman was now viewed more as a moderator of interest groups. The boards assumed greater authority in terms of decision-making and initiating resolutions for delegate consideration. The Council of Boards and executive secretaries provided the central coordinating function for CMC. During the course of the board era this supposedly more decentralized authority structure was increasingly viewed as a bureaucratic structure usurping the authority and needs of the local congregation in order to pursue its own program goals.

A central figure that facilitated much of the executive committee decision-making was the general executive secretary. The position of general executive secretary was first created in 1961. According to the 1975 bylaws (Article VII, Section 8) the general executive secretary was responsible for the coordination of the total conference program and the supervision of the conference office. The job description for this position included many of the administrative tasks previously done by the conference chairman and secretary. More specifically, the tasks included preparation of agendas for meetings, managing the central office, coordinating conference activities, creating promotional programs, channelling personnel placement information, and public relations with congregations and conferences. The executive committee was responsible for the appointment of this potentially powerful position in CMC. The authority of the general executive secretary was based on knowledge or expertise. The addition of this position gave legitimacy to CMC as an efficient religious organization.

I concluded from reviewing executive committee minutes and general executive secretary correspondence from the sixties (CMC Collection, Vols. 134-141) that the appointment of an executive secretary changed the decision-making process of the CMC organization. In many ways the executive secretary functioned like the central nervous system for the organization, receiving and sending messages (cf., Barnard, 1964). The business-like orientation that evolved in the conference administration may be partially attributed to the work of the executive secretary (e.g., standardization of writing minutes, developing standard forms for evaluation and agreements, organization of files). This also helped to maximize computational decisions in the administrative area. The executive committee delegated him to prepare agendas for various meetings with the necessary supporting documents, to draft proposals on specific issues, and to convene or be a member of a study commission. This provided many opportunities to make evaluations and recommend action to the executive committee and/or other conference-related bodies. In many ways the opportunity to influence decision-making in this position paralleled that of the conference chairman during the committee era. Correspondence indicates that the executive secretary was very cautious not to make decisions without delegated authority in areas where responsibilities

were not clear. In the CCMBC the recommendation to hire an executive secretary in 1957 was rejected partly because it violated the dynamics of the brotherhood (CCMBC Yearbook, 1957:103-104).

Boards

Boards and committees were created by conference delegates to supervise programs and projects on behalf of the membership. General directives, either formally defined in the constitutional bylaws or outlined in resolutions accepted by the delegates, authorized their activities. Annual written reports were required to inform the CMC of ongoing activities and financial accountability. Members, elected or appointed by the CMC, were granted authority primarily by virtue of their positions. Any external appointments were also ratified by the CMC.

The committee era produced a proliferation of three-member committees attending to specific conference-related functions. Each committee, acting relatively independently, was directly accountable to the delegate body and responsible for generating funds to cover their program costs. Failing to secure adequate funds could be interpreted as an indication of lack of interest or dissatisfaction with the way matters were processed.

The board structures, introduced during the 1950s, combined the tasks of committees operating in the same functional area (e.g., Board of Missions combined the work of the foreign and home missions committees). Each board was directly accountable to the membership and also to each other at the annual council of boards sessions. Small subcommittees were created at the discretion of a board in order to divide board tasks and reported only to the board. A board was also directly represented on the executive committee by the board chairman. This integrated network was designed to improve organizational efficiency and programme effectiveness, and to hold boards and committees more accountable for the authority granted to them by the membership.

The concept of a special forum for board members (council of boards) was incorporated into the reorganization package adopted by the Conference in 1956. The main function of the forum was to coordinate the work of the boards and plan for future direction. An integral part of this planning involved formulating a corporate budget. Budget decisions made at this forum were presented to the annual conference for consideration and adjustment. Mid-year corrections could be introduced to offset unexpected changes in financial resources.

In comparing the allocation of formal authority across conference eras, the actual authority of the bodies had changed only slightly. What had changed substantially was the number of members involved in the decision-making process. Efforts were also made to increase the "grass roots" participation in decision-making. This shift may be interpreted as a decentralization of authority in that more groups were now involved in the decision-making.

Amidst these changes the CMC remained steadfast in affirming the Scriptures as the ultimate authority, using the congregational polity to structure authority relationships and employing democratic principles in decision-making.

Congregations

At the congregational level the 1950s also reflect a shift in authority structures. Church councils led by lay chairpersons replaced the traditional *Lehrdienst* authority structures. Dick (1980:17) notes that the Didsbury Bergthal Mennonite church elected the first lay congregational leader in 1957, "but not without serious apprehensions." He goes on to say that "because the chairman and some of the council had professional experience, they were able to introduce rules of parliamentary procedure that made the work of the council and congregation more ordered and efficient" (Dick, 1980:17). Sawatsky (1983) sees this as the shift from traditional to rational-pragmatic authority. This transition also included a much stronger emphasis on individual congregational autonomy. Territorial churches or *Gemeinde* (e.g., Manitoba Bergthaler) served by the *Lehrdienst* gradually succumbed to the localization movement giving the right of self-governance to each local congregation (Gerbrandt, 1972:344-353).

During the post-war years the multiple lay ministry used by Mennonites in Prussia, Russia and North and South America gradually gave way to a professional full time salaried pastor. Sawatsky (1983:2) notes that "the employed pastor now was perceived more as a functionary fulfilling particular duties defined by the congregation than someone called of God to mediate the Word to God's people." In the Alberta Mennonite Conference the first full time salaried pastor was hired by the First Mennonite Church in Edmonton in 1958 (Dick, 1980:84). Congregational histories generally make a point of identifying the first full time salaried pastor to serve the congregation. Here are a few selected examples: Steinbach Mennonite, 1962; Winnipeg Home Street Mennonite, 1964; Eigenheim Mennonite, 1964; Calgary First Mennonite, 1967; Didsbury Bergthal, 1967. By the end of the board era the single professional pastor was an established fact. The integration of this fact into a congregational polity was much more difficult. In sum the post-war years liberated the denominations and congregations from traditional authority structures by advocating participatory democracy, congregationalism and professionalism.

Complexity

The concept "complexity" is used in the organizational literature to refer to the multiple divisions, diversity of occupational titles and hierarchical levels contained within the boundaries of the organization. The general configuration of the CMC organization was that of a relatively "flat"structure

Table 3. Functional Differentiation of Conference of Mennonites in Canada by Conference Eras

Functions Eras	# ADM	HOM	SER	PUB	COL	EDU	FOM	MEH	FIN	TOT
early committee era '03-29	*	*	*	*	*					5
late committee era '30-54	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		8
boardz era '55-70	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	8
partnership era '71-78	*	*	*	*		*	*		*	7

\# Function code; ADM = administration, HOM = home missions, SER = Christian service, PUB = publication, COL = colonization and relief, EDU = education, FOM = foreign missions, MEH = mental health, FIN = finance, TOT = total.

with some horizontal differentiation. Congregational structures reflected similar patterns. This shape remained relatively stable for the period under consideration, sustained by a strong ideological commitment to equality and brotherhood. The horizontal differentiation of the CMC was reflected in the number of functional areas conference delegates identified as essential for sustaining a Mennonite peoplehood and furthering the Kingdom of God in their home communities and abroad.

A search of the CMC documents produced nine general functional areas that covered the scope of CMC activities—administration, home and foreign missions, Christian service, publication, colonization and relief, education, mental health and finance. Functional areas were indicated by the official election of committees or boards to oversee them. The level of complexity was indicated by the total number of functional areas operational during a given era. Table 3 indicates that apart from the early committee era the level of complexity remained relatively stable, i.e., there appeared to be general agreement on the CMC domain. It should be understood that this is a general measure in that it does not reflect the scope nor the weight the CMC placed on any given area.

The data indicate that in the post-war years the CMC work was divided into eight functional areas, the same as in the late committee era. Although the level remained the same, the areas changed with the phasing out of the mental health area and the addition of finance. The other functional areas continued but were now coordinated by boards. Prior to this period committees were required to raise their own funds and disburse the same as required.

More committees increased the competition for scarce resources and caused domain confusion. This condition prompted the call for a central treasury and professional expertise in managing the financial matters of the CMC.

The area of Christian service took on a whole new character during the board era. The focus of providing for the poor and needy was expanded to include active discussions on social issues and social action (peace conferences, voluntary service, peace literature, capital punishment, draft dodgers). Life style issues (divorce and remarriage, alcoholism) also received special consideration. This is a good example of how activities within a functional area could vary over time.

According to the data, the level of complexity declined slightly during the partnership era with the colonization and relief area having been phased out during the previous era. Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) (MCCC), an inter-Mennonite agency, took over the relief arm of the Canadian Mennonites during the 1960s. Representatives from different church conferences, including the CMC, served on the MCCC board overseeing the relief work on both national and international levels. This organization also took on some of the earlier Board of Christian Service activities such as promotion of peace and non-violence, witnessing to the government, and offender ministries.

The findings indicate that horizontal differentiation in terms of functions remained relatively stable at eight areas after the early committee era. While there appears to be general consensus on the domain of the conference, the activities within the areas show considerable variation from one era to another.

As the board era progressed, the tensions between conference boards, and between provincial and national conference structures did not abate in spite of adjustments. Two common concerns surfaced repeatedly during the conference sessions in the late '60s. On the one hand, delegates wanted the grassroots levels, i.e., local congregations and provincial conferences, to take a greater initiative in areas of programming previously dominated by the CMC. On the other hand, voices were calling for greater involvement in inter-Mennonite cooperation and "to take seriously other denominations especially the larger church unions such as the National Association of Evangelical Churches and the National Council of Churches" (CMC Yearbook, 1969:9). Frank Epp (1972:171) sums up the essence of the board era when he says, "Just when we had learned to draw up constitutions and to do church work through proper bureaucracy and organization, we were confronted by the structures as obstacles and impossible taskmasters."

These general concerns combined with declining financial support, excessive administrative costs, theological differences, domain confusion and outmoded functional divisions, provided the springboard for a new organizational structure and the subsequent rewriting of the constitution in 1975.

Conclusion

For the more progressive Mennonite denominations in Canada and specifically the CMC the post-war years represented some significant changes in organizational structures. The data show that the 1954 decision to review the conference organization initiated the move from an autocratic decision-making process (based on traditional authority) to a formalized participatory democracy (based on rational-pragmatic authority). The tenure and multiple membership restrictions introduced during the board era decentralized the decision-making process in that many more members were involved (e.g., on the expanded executive committee and boards). With the appointment of professional staff came an increase in the standardization of procedures and overall coordination of conference activities. These changes together with the formalization of board and committee responsibilities pushed the CMC from a simple sectarian association to a bureaucratic denominational organization.

This reorientation also occurred at the congregational level where ministerial teams led by bishops were replaced by professional full time pastors and church councils led by lay members. Local congregational autonomy became fully institutionalized during this period with congregational members, not the ministerial team, representing the final authority on congregational and denominational matters. In the congregations and the denomination generally professionalism and individualism were now challenging the traditional adherence to a strict congregational polity and an orthodox Anabaptist theology.

From a societal perspective these internal shifts enhanced the legitimacy of Mennonite religious organizations within the context of the Canadian religious institutions. Sectarian boundaries have softened. The Mennonite religious structures, as institutional isomorphism theory would suggest, resemble more and more other organizational forms within the environment.

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