Mennonites and Politics in Canada and the United States

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I. Introduction

For more than three centuries in the United States and almost two centuries in Canada, Mennonites have been significantly involved in politics. Although at times, especially in the early decades and even until World War I, the emphasis was placed largely on withdrawal and avoidance, the long-term interaction with civil authorities has been amazingly extensive. Unfortunately, however, the various components of this complex relationship have been largely ignored by political scientists. Indeed, the political activities and experiences of North American Mennonites, although extensively described in mainly fragmentary, tangential, or "popular" fashion, constitute probably the least analyzed of the major facets comprising Mennonite life in the two countries. There are very few major works by scholars with a doctorate in Political Science.

One reason for the paucity of political analysis is the scarcity of Mennonite political scientists; in Canada only a half dozen or so have doctoral training in the area and not all of these have focussed on Mennonite studies.¹ Proportionately, the situation among American Mennonites is even more lamentable in this respect. Significantly, no non-Mennonite political scientist has concentrated on this area; "outside" studies in this field are virtually non-existent.² Only infrequently do non-Mennonite political scientists pay any noteworthy attention to Mennonite political thought or Mennonite political action or inaction; even in recent years the examples are few. In *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*, Joseph Rothschild discusses the Mennonites but argues they are not yet, and perhaps cannot become, mobilized as a political voice.³ A more informed and sympathetic treatment, especially concerning pacifism, is found in Barrie Paskins and Michael Dockrill, *The Ethics of War.*⁴

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There are several additional major reasons why political analysis is scarce. For one thing, the state of the academic art must be viewed in the context of the state of the reality. Despite Menno Simons' almost defiant political pronouncements,⁵ there evolved in subsequent generations a considerable antipathy towards almost every type of overtly political activity involving the larger polity. Over time, a people who had initially built bridges to others, who had not hesitated to challenge political authorities, became insular and self-oriented. Eventually, for large segments of the Mennonite peoplehood, ethnic apartness and agrarian lifestyle created both social and geographical distances from the centres of secular political power. Socially and politically, especially after several migrations, they had become an ethnic "people apart."

Another important general consideration is that the original North American frontier ethnic entrenchment was accompanied by related notions that government and political phenomena were basically anti-Christian or at least largely sub-Christian. Consider, for example, the early North American Mennonite Brethren directives as set forth in Appendix A. Many Mennonite groups were even more anti-political. Ironically, an uncle of Bill Janzen, who established and heads MCC (Canada)'s Ottawa Office, was excommunicated from the church for voting in a political election.⁶ In such a social setting any overt commitment to the political arena, be it practical or academic, would generally be frowned on. Of course, we must also remember that until about fifty years ago, any Mennonite pursuit of higher education, especially if unrelated to certain service professions, was rare.

Some further considerations and caveats must also be noted. While many Mennonite religious structures, educational institutions, and publication ventures encompassed and continue to encompass both Canada and the United States, many activities, especially the political, have not been transnational. Thus, we find that while all of the main Mennonite conferences straddle the border and all have conference-wide declarations and statements on political views, the actual political activities tend to be national or regional. Much of the literature reflects this situation. In this paper it would be desirable to deal equally with the American and Canadian Mennonite political evolution and the related scholarship; however, constraints of space and time make that impossible. Accordingly, I will focus largely on the Canadian political reality but review both Canadian and American scholarship and general writing as they relate to politics.

Before we proceed further in assessing scholarly as well as other writing we do well to acknowledge another complicating factor — one not unique to the study of Mennonites and politics but certainly relevant. There is widespread confusion, not least among political scientists them-
selves, concerning the scope of the discipline as well as any principal methodology.

Half a century ago, Max Weber said that politics involved the enforcement of law and order in a specific territory by a dominant authority employing coercion, threatening to do so, or at least capable of doing so. More recently, Harold Lasswell has argued that politics involves the shaping and sharing of power having the purpose of determining who gets what, when, and how. In a similar vein, David Easton asserts that the essence of politics is the production and authoritative allocation of values, both tangible and intangible.

From the time of classical Greece, and particularly since the seminal writings of Karl Marx, the debate has continued. For working purposes, I have defined politics as follows. "In its most comprehensive meaning it refers to the art and science of government as well as to those structures, organizations, and activities through which individuals or groups of people seek to achieve power, freedom, economic rewards or other benefits." Political science, then, is

... the study of the institutions and processes of government, as well as the study of the organization, behaviour, policies, beliefs, and doctrines of individual people and groups of people associated with government, for the purpose of making explanations and generalizations of political phenomena. Government, in turn, is defined as the office holders in certain institutions, who, by whatever means, have come to be recognized as the bearers of ultimate power within a polity and whose main role is the authoritative allocation of resources and values in that polity.

Although various experts have advanced extensive arguments for a specific methodology — be it behaviorism, "scientific methodology", quantification, systems analysis, Marxist analysis, comparative interpretation, "decision-making", or the study of power — no single methodology has gained general acceptance. I take the view that there is some merit in virtually all approaches, that they generally complement each other, that no single approach is sufficient to explain all that we ought to know about politics, and that various approaches or methodologies can be equally useful, albeit for different purposes.

Given this state of affairs in the discipline, it is not always easy to delineate categorically what constitutes political analysis and what is simply description or journalism.

There is also the question of Mennonite identity. Sociologists and certain other academics can generally get around this problem by analyzing groups of people; the precise demarcations are not particularly consequential. But for political scientists, especially when studying elected officials, senior bureaucrats and party activists, it is crucial to ascertain whether the individuals in question are, in fact, Mennonites. Elsewhere an attempt has been made to categorize the main types of ethnic, ethnic-
religious, and religious Mennonites (see Mennonite Brethren Herald, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Feb. 12, 1982)); in this paper we shall not draw the lines too finely. For our purposes a Mennonite is anyone who was born an ethnic Mennonite and has retained significant connections with Mennonites or someone who has joined one of the score or so of Mennonite religious denominations.10

In dealing with Mennonites and politics, and the literature on that topic, we must be careful to recognize the great variety of Mennonite responses to the political realm. Clearly there is a vast difference between the well-established isolationism of the Old Order and the adaptive pragmatism of most of the Mennonite groups that immigrated in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Given their numerical pre-eminence,11 the Mennonite Church, the General Conference Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren, the last two mainly "Russian-Mennonite" in membership, will be given major attention. Most of the Canadian and American political activists and academics also come from these groups. Interestingly, the more traditional "Mennonite Church,"12 with its prominent religious spokesmen and writers, has provided much of the theological analysis of political affairs.

Although very few political scientists have written scholarly works about Mennonites and politics — James Juhnke's A People of Two Kingdoms is probably the most notable exception — there is no dearth of relevant literature written by assorted other Mennonite academics. Historians, sociologists, clergymen, theologians and journalists have written much. In addition to the hundreds of monographs and the countless pamphlets and position papers, library shelves are bulging with conference reports and yearbooks, denominational journals, popular weeklies, biweeklies, and monthlies,13 as well as several very useful academic journals.14

II. Involvement in Politics

1. The Early Years

For most Mennonites who came to Canada and the United States as pioneers, political involvement was part and parcel of their daily life. I am referring not mainly to negotiations with government officials in distant cities, although there was extensive interaction concerning land-holding, settlement policies, military exemption, language rights, and educational privileges, but to their own self-government. Extensive "state within a state" arrangements were made in Ontario, in several regions which now constitute the prairie provinces, as well as in many parts of the U.S. Frank Epp has described the most important of the arrangements,15 as has William Janzen, who has traced the "limits of liberty" with reference not only to land-holding but also to schooling, to military service, and social welfare.16 While both accounts consist mainly of historical narrative and
description, both provide much useful interpretation. Epp skillfully traces a complex web of events, issues, and personalities; Janzen expertly delineates the political negotiations, confrontations, and compromises. Although most of the early Mennonites, in both Canada and the U.S., abstained from voting as part of their desire to avoid political involvement, they did not hesitate to spell out their own political requests and to petition governments for special privileges. The inherent contradiction between these two stances seems to have been unrecognized or ignored. Janzen describes how certain colonies hired solicitors to put pressure on the Commissioner of Dominion Lands and on the Minister of the Interior. He shows how the Canadian government “made changes in the general homestead laws.” Numerous delegations headed for Ottawa in efforts to get additional land reserves set aside, to get language regulations changed, and to achieve other goals. Frequently the government of the day, partly because of the pressure tactics and partly because of their own self-interest, accommodated the petitioners by readily passing the desired Orders-in-Council. That early activity has been well-researched, at least in Canada.

The adroitness of early Mennonite politicking is illustrated by the following events. In the Spring of 1873 a Mennonite delegation came from Russia to assess settlement opportunities in Western Canada. Some delegates were unimpressed but four agreed to “accept” eight townships in southern Manitoba. They thanked the government for its assistance but then added, “Should we after the arrival of the first of our immigrants, think that another location than the present one which you have reserved for us would suit us better, then we hope that you will exchange the reserve to such parts as we should find preferable, . . .” On July 25, 1873, their amended requests were granted. Clever “pressure” politics, or at least self-serving interaction with politicians, had early beginnings among North American Mennonites.

Attempting to influence government decisions very quickly became standard Mennonite political practice. Important Canadian spokesmen (some writers would term them lobbyists) in the early decades of this century included, Abraham Doerksen, Benjamin Ewert, David Toews, and especially S. F. Coffman; among prominent leaders prior to and during World War II were B. B. Jantz, E. J. Swalm, J. B. Martin, C. F. Klassen, J. A. Toews, and especially David Toews. Perhaps the widespread readiness on the part of Russian-Mennonites to become involved in political affairs is rooted in the extensive and quite successful political activities in Russia involving the vast numbers of landless Mennonites in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In Canada the early and major role of Mennonites in opening up vast areas in the West probably also played a role in politicization. While scholars have generally chronicled
the important events in Canada, we still lack a full American account, other than Juhnke’s study of Kansas Mennonites, as well as a clear analysis of the political culture and the political socialization which characterized the early settlements in Pennsylvania, Southern Ontario, and the Canadian prairies. Also, we still have no thorough study of the extent to which the settlers in the reserves and in Ontario realized that they were deeply involved in politics both in their self-government and in their extensive and intensive interactions with governments of the larger polities. For example, we are still waiting for someone to write a dissertation on “The Politics of Withdrawal; the Political Lobbying by Conservative Mennonites in Ontario from the 1793 Petition for Military Exemption to the Canada Pension Plan Dilemma of 1966.”

Doubtless many of the early Mennonites did not consider their municipal self-rule to be political. Abraham Erb, leader of the first Waterloo settlement in 1806, probably did not consider himself to be a political leader, though he certainly was one, and even Moses Springer, the first mayor following Waterloo’s incorporation as a village in 1857 probably might have objected to being called a politician, at least until he later was elected the first member to represent Waterloo County in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. During the past 125 years Waterloo has had numerous Mennonite mayors and members of the provincial assembly. The present Member of the Provincial Parliament, Herbert Epp, who served previously as Waterloo’s mayor, continues the tradition. Some factual information is at hand for Waterloo and for numerous other regions in Canada and the U.S., but we still do not know how it happened that large segments of the Mennonite population transformed themselves, within a few generations, from “die Stillen im Lande” to front-rank party supporters and activists. That research remains to be done.

Several historical monographs contain useful information on Mennonite political involvement in Canada and the U.S. John A. Toews’ history of the Mennonite Brethren denomination has a chapter on the topic and Frank Epp’s Mennonite Exodus has numerous relevant chapters as does his general history of Canadian Mennonites.

2. The Contemporary Scene

Although we lack definitive scholarly research in the area, we do have numerous brief articles on the relatively recent Mennonite political activism which resulted from “external” stimulation, ideological accommodation, and widespread assimilation. We should note also that this activism seems to be considerably more pronounced in Canada than in the U.S. Among the various facets waiting to be studied is this basic question of greater Canadian electoral involvement as well as the impressionistic observation that, in general, American Mennonites are more
conservative in political ideology and more withdrawn politically than are Canadian Mennonites. Presumably the different mixes and ratios of denominations accounts for at least part of the difference.

Quite apart from the early and continuing political activity which was rooted in the self-government of the land reserves, broader Mennonite involvement in Canadian party politics had a surprisingly early beginning. For example, when the new province of Alberta held its first provincial election in 1905, among the successful candidates was a gentleman by the name of Cornelius Hiebert. For several decades, however, very few Mennonites stood for provincial office but that situation began to change markedly after World War II. In the last several provincial elections in each of the five western provinces it has not been unusual to find anywhere from three to ten Mennonites running for seats in the provincial legislature. Prominent Mennonite politicians who have been elected in Canada and in the U.S., together with some who sought office, are listed in Appendix B.

In light of this extensive and growing political activism, in contrast to traditional avoidance, it is important that the political ideologies, electoral campaigns, and the voting records of Mennonite politicians should be studied. Although some of these politicians are not (now) members of Mennonite churches, it would still be interesting to ascertain, for example, to what extent they have advocated Mennonite/Anabaptist ethics and values.

Even as North American Mennonites by the score have entered the electoral arena, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others have joined the civil service. Some have served at very senior levels. In B.C. Edgar Epp achieved the rank of Deputy Minister, in Ottawa E. A. Driedger served as Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada, in 1974 Mr. N. M. Ediger became president and chief executive officer of the crown corporation Eldorado, Jake Koop became Senior Research Scientist for the Defense Research Board, Abe Willms was promoted to the position of Chief of the Public Archives Records Centre, Abe Baerg serves as a senior scientist in the Department of Agriculture, and Ted Regehr headed the Records Section, Public Archives of Canada. Significantly, numerous Mennonites served as government translators, a service which seems to have received widespread approval in the larger Mennonite community. Information about Mennonites in U.S. government service is hard to come by. Edgar Metzler, who is knowledgeable about Washington affairs, notes, “I was surprised to discover how many Mennonites are working on the staffs of various Federal bureaucracies...”

In a sense, given the burgeoning of bureaucracies throughout Canada and the U.S., such an influx of Mennonite civil servants at all levels is not really surprising, but its extent and nature nevertheless deserve
scholarly attention. Participation in military establishments as well as conscientious objection have been thoroughly documented; the civilian side has been largely ignored.

Equally overlooked thus far is the growing contingent of full-time Mennonite party workers and top-level advisors in all of the major parties, especially in Canada. Over the years this category has included individuals such as John Braun who worked for the New Democratic Party's Max Saltsman; Peter Thiessen, who served as assistant to Manitoba's NDP Premier, Edward Schreyer; Peter Harder, executive assistant to national Progressive Conservative Party Leader Joe Clark; William Regehr, currently serving as principal secretary and chief-of-staff to NDP Premier Howard Pawley of Manitoba; and Don Ratzlaff who worked for Oregon's Republican Senator Mark Hatfield, to cite only a few. In this connection Edgar Metzler observes that in Washington "at least seven Mennonites who identify themselves as such . . . are key staff members for senators and representatives."

Additionally, of course, there is the whole question of party membership and voting patterns. To date, aside from the Kansas data provided by Juhnke, virtually no research has been done in either of these areas. We do not know in any precise manner which groups of Mennonites have the highest voter turnout, whether Mennonite voter turnout correlates in any way with social conservatism or specific socio-economic status indicators, whether voting correlates somehow with age, or whether there are significant differences between Canadian and American Mennonite voting practices and patterns. With ever-increasing quantitative and research skills available, and with widespread Mennonite financial resources, we probably have reason to hope that the needed psychological and related political research will be undertaken soon.

A special category of political involvement has centred on the two Mennonite Central Committee liaison, information, and "lobby" offices in Ottawa and Washington D.C. In the latter, and older, office, Delton Franz has played a vital role; his Washington Memos are a major source of information. An insight into the role and importance of the Washington Office can be gained from his "The Washington Office: Reflections After Ten Years." In Ottawa Bill Janzen has pioneered a type of political involvement and close interaction with politicians which many Mennonites still consider to be suspect. While some preliminary evaluation has been undertaken, no thorough research has been done. Meanwhile, Ottawa office reports and releases are gradually becoming regular features in several Mennonite periodicals.

Not surprisingly, given traditional Mennonite attitudes, much of the Mennonite writing on Mennonite political activism has dealt with basic description, commentary for the popular press and fragmentary
Some writers, notably John Howard Yoder, have brought specifically theological insight to bear on political activism, while others have raised more general questions. A useful recent survey based substantially on interviews and a questionnaire is Rick Goosen's unpublished paper, "A New Vision or a Shattering Vision? Canadian Mennonites and Political Participation."

Before we leave the topic of political involvement we should remind ourselves of some additional major questions which have not yet been mentioned. How extensive has Mennonite involvement been at the municipal level? Why have Mennonite activists, many of whom hold to a "peculiar" pacifist/non-resistance ethic, opted for involvement in party activity in larger polities instead of non-partisan public "service" at more immediate local levels? How, if at all, does Mennonite political activism differ from other Mennonite activism? What has been the impact of the Mennonite Central Committee, especially its Peace Section, on Mennonite political involvement? How has Mennonite involvement with governmental foreign service agencies such as CIDA, in Canada, and AID, in the U.S. affected the traditional international Mennonite missions relief and service ministries?

Obviously, there is much fascinating work waiting to be done by political scholars.

III. Church and State: The Perennial Problem

Since the inception of the Mennonite movement in the sixteenth century the relationship of church and state has been a central concern. At first the issues had much to do with state persecution and individual freedom. Then, especially for those who migrated to Russia, the agenda consisted largely of group benefits and exemptions. In our day the questions, in addition to most of those already mentioned, deal largely with state claims, church influence on public policy, citizenship duties, and church-state interaction in free societies.

Relatively little work has been done by political scientists on Mennonite concerns in this area but very much relevant material has been written by others. To begin with, all of the major Mennonite groups have expended much effort developing and revising their denominational and ethnic perspectives and positions. In 1951 the Mennonite General Conference ("Old Mennonites") adopted a fourteen-page document entitled, Peace and the Christian Witness. Its two sections under the headings, "A Declaration of Christian Faith and Commitment with Respect to Peace, War, and Nonresistance" and "The Christian Witness to the State" constitute not only a clear theological stance but a first-rate political study. The General Conference Mennonite Church has produced several major political statements including the twelve-page pamphlet, A Christian
Declaration on Peace, War and Military Service, officially adopted in 1953. A significant revision of that statement, sometimes referred to as "The Fresno Statement" and entitled, Way of Peace, was adopted in 1973. The Mennonite Brethren Church, in a 1976 revision of their Confession of Faith, also addressed itself forthrightly to some key political issues. Section 14 deals with "The State" and Section 15 with "Love and Nonresistance." The present writer was commissioned to write explanatory statements on both sections and they have been published. In 1977 the senior Mennonite Brethren Council also commissioned the present writer to prepare a "guidelines" paper on "Involvement in the Political Order." Several smaller Mennonite bodies have also drawn up official statements in these areas.

Particularly noteworthy in this area is the 36-page document entitled, Report, A New Look at the Church and State Issue drawn up in 1965 by a 46-member assembly of North American Mennonite academics and clergymen in Chicago. Also significant are many of the chapters in the Guy F. Hershberger Festschrift, Kingdom, Cross and Community, edited by J. R. Burkholder and Calvin Redekop. Especially relevant are "Nonresistance, Nonviolent Resistance, and Power" by J. Lawrence Burkholder, "Mennonites in Militarist America: Some Consequences of World War I" by James C. Juhnke, "The State and the Free Church" by John H. Redekop, and "Civil Religion is but Old Establishment Writ Large" by John A. Lapp.

Several scholars have been particularly significant in clarifying the basic Mennonite perspective on church-state affairs. Guy F. Hershberger, whose political writings spanned the years from 1922 to 1976, must be seen as the pioneering giant. Among his hundreds of political writings, as listed in the Festschrift, two are pre-eminent: War, Peace, and Nonresistance and The Way of the Cross in Human Relations. John Howard Yoder also merits special mention. His carefully reasoned volume, The Christian Witness to the State, remains a classic statement of how the state fits into the Anabaptist view of the world. More theological but also of great value as political writings are two sequels, The Original Revolution; Essays on Christian Pacifism and The Politics of Jesus.

A listing of all the relevant books, booklets, position papers, reports, periodical articles, editorials, and columns would itself fill a volume. The Mennonite writings on church-state relations, though generally not done by political scientists and, in the main, theological or historical in perspective, are indeed vast. Amidst the mass of words the scholar should not overlook the numerous politically-oriented papers presented at the many North American study conferences on church-state matters. Among the most significant are: Report of the MCC Peace Section Study Conference, Winona Lake, Indiana, November 9 to 12,


Three additional major political-theological treatments of church-state relations by Mennonite historians are John A. Toews, True Nonresistance Through Christ,70 Paul Peachey, ed., Biblical Realism Confronts the National,71 and Robert Kreider, "The Anabaptists and the State."72 For the best overall Mennonite bibliography on church-state relations scholars should consult the undated 18-page, MCC, Peace Section Church-State Relations Study Bibliography.

Despite all of the vast theologically, historically, and sociologically oriented scholarly production on church-state relations, there is still much room for more specifically political analyses. Much more remains to be mined; many political relationships wait to be reassessed.
IV. Problem and Policy Areas

In recent decades several Mennonite writers, including a few political scholars, have addressed themselves to numerous problem and policy areas involving Mennonites and politics. In the following pages we shall review some of the important literature in ten areas.

1. Political Ideology; Political Thought

Dennis Wieler's M.A. thesis, "The Political Thought of Anabaptism in the Sixteenth Century" provides a general historical backdrop as well as a useful bibliography. An article which has been widely reprinted is John H. Redekop's "Evangelical Christianity and Political Ideology." The general field remains largely neglected; very little attention has been given by political scientists or other academics to the relationship between Mennonite values and political ideologies. The related question of how to come to terms with the classical two-kingdom thesis has been given more attention. Thomas Sanders has provided the best comparative analysis. Other noteworthy treatments include those by Clarence Baum, Robert Friedman, J. H. Yoder, and Paul Peachey, Your Church and Your Nation.

2. Communism and Anti-Communism

Although Mennonites, particularly those who came from Eastern Europe, tend to have strong anti-communist tendencies, relatively little serious analysis has been undertaken. Some notable contributions are three by Frank Epp: "Communism, Anti-Communism, and the Mennonite," "On Being Afraid of Communism," and "The Marks of Communism." Others include Edgar Metzler, Let's Talk About Extremism, two by John H. Redekop, "Communism-Capitalism," and "Comments on the Anti-Communist Movement," and the pamphlet, "A Christian Declaration on Communism and Anti-Communism" published by the General Conference Mennonite Church. Substantial additional political analysis still needs to be done.

3. Political Values; Political Culture; Political Socialization

Easily the most important research in this area is reflected in James C. Juhnke, A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites. At another level of analysis but still interesting is Dennis V. Wieler, "Die Stille im Lande" — Political Orientations of the Mennonites in Saskatchewan. Some information on values is also contained in J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder, Anabaptists Four Centuries Later; a Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren In Christ Denominations. Peter Hamm's doctoral dissertation is based on the Mennonite Brethren data extrapolated from the Kauffman-Harder analysis. Some relevant Canadian data is also found in John H. Redekop's survey of leadership values, "The Interaction of Economics and Religion;
the Case of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada," based on 283 questionnaire responses. An excellent and inclusive analysis of ethnic political values is found in Frank Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the immigrant newspaper of a Canadian minority group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s." A good start has been made in this area but the gaps are still great.

4. Political Responsibility

In recent decades a modest but growing body of literature has been produced by Mennonite scholars discussing not withdrawal and separation but responsibility towards society in general and government in particular. Frank Epp has produced numerous chapters, articles and editorials including, "The Christian Response to National Disorder," and Your Neighbor and Yourself; a Study on Responsibility in Immigration. A preliminary theoretical framework is developed by Elmer Neufeld in, "Christian Responsibility in the Political Situation" and by John H. Redekop in "How Should Christians Respond to Big Government?" An informative discussion of the issue is found in three articles in the Concern pamphlet series: Gordon D. Kaufman, "Nonresistance and Responsibility;" Albert J. Meyer, "A Second Look at Responsibility;" and David Habegger, "'Nonresistance and Responsibility' — A Critical Analysis." A particularly relevant chapter in one of Walter Klaassen's books is "The Ministry of Reconciliation; the Church as the Agent of the Establishment of Peace." Scholarly treatment of many aspects of this topic is found in many issues of the Peace Section Newsletter and Washington Memo, both published by the Peace Section of the Mennonite Central Committee. John Howard Yoder's The Christian Witness to the State is also relevant here as is Edward Yoder's, "The Obligation of the Christian to the State and Community — 'Render to Caesar'."

5. Nationalism

Despite a theological stance of aloofness, many North American Mennonites have in recent decades been caught up in nationalistic identification, especially in the United States. Relatively little research has been launched in this area but some noteworthy writings are at hand. Rodney J. Sawatsky's "Nationalism — Myths and Realities," serves as a useful introduction to the topic. Various aspects of Mennonite ethics and nationalism are analyzed in the booklet, Citizens and Disciples; Christian Essays on Nationalism, which is probably the most important publication produced on this topic thus far. Contributing scholars include David Schroeder, John A. Lapp, Walter Klaassen, James Longacre, Jams Juhnke, Rodney Sawatsky, and John H. Redekop. A concise discussion of some of the key issues can be found in Frank Epp, "The Church and Nationalism."
6. Civil Religion

Until recent years Mennonite academics seemed to be reluctant to undertake research or to publish in this area, probably because many Mennonite groups were, are, deeply divided on the topic. Admiration for “Christian America” and, to a lesser extent, for “Christian Canada” was and probably remains widespread. However, a body of critical literature is slowly developing. John H. Redekop’s The American Far Right, A Case Study of Billy James Hargis and Christian Crusade spells out the main issues involved. The July, 1976 issue of Direction contains three important articles on the topic. The contributors are Paul Toews, John H. Redekop, and Ben Ollenburger. Two major studies of Christian-Americanism on the occasion of the U.S. Bicentennial are John A. Lapp, A Dream for America and Donald B. Kraybill, Our Star-Spangled Faith. More recently Mervin Dick has produced a stimulating and controversial brief analysis of the Moral Majority.

7. Militarism, War, and Conscription

Mennonite scholars have produced much important material in this area. In addition to the major works by John Howard Yoder and Guy F. Hershberger, there are the more specialized works on World War II, already mentioned. Several chapters in Walter Klaassen’s, What Have You To Do With Peace? deal with this topic. Ernie Regehr has written numerous key items including What is Militarism? and Making a Killing; Canada’s Arms Industry. Myron S. Augsburger has contributed an excellent chapter, “Christian Pacifism,” to Robert G. Clouse’s comparative study, War, Four Christian Views. Frank Epp’s provocative chapters “Sometimes I Pray for Nuclear War,” “American Causes of World War III,” and “The Unrealism of Militarism” break some new ground. Illustrative of the extensive literature published by or for the Mennonite Central Committee on personal participation in warfare are the two booklets, Must Christians Fight by Edward Yoder and Conscience and Conscription by various contributors. An important recent release is Donald Kraybill’s Facing Nuclear War, which argues convincingly that at least nuclear pacifism should be normative for all Christians.

8. War Taxes

During the last fifteen years Mennonite writers have begun to give serious attention to the increasing percentage of tax monies which are used to support military establishments. A key book is Donald D. Kaufman, What Belongs to Caesar? Equally important is his parallel volume, The Tax Dilemma, Praying For Peace; Paying For War. Other important writings are Walter Klaassen, Mennonites and War Taxes; the papers presented at the 1975 war tax conference held in Kitchener, Ontario, especially Willard Swartley’s paper, “The Christian and the Payment of

9. Church-State Cooperation; Criteria for Participation

In contrast to the traditional Mennonite assessment of the state and political activity, but in line with considerable Mennonite current activity and interaction, several Mennonite academics have written on cooperation as well as criteria for a more positive involvement. One of the important works in the field, and one of the earliest to suggest the possibility of developing new perspectives, is Elmer Neufeld's "Christian Responsibility in the Political Situation." An attempt to spell out an over-arching re-evaluation of the positive potential in politics is John H. Redekop's "The State and the Free Church." Frank Epp develops some similar ideas in "Evangelism and Visions of a New World." Three items which deal with criteria governing positive involvement are John H. Redekop's Making Political Decisions: A Christian Perspective, his column, "Praying for Government," and his article, "A Christian look at the '79 election." An interview with Jake Epp, M.P., is also relevant.

Additional noteworthy items are: the Christian Leader article, "Can my vote be biblical?" the pamphlet, "Canadian Christians: Unique Possibilities for Peace," published by the Conference of Mennonites in Canada; Leo Driedger's "Some Guides to Consider in Political Involvement;" John A. Lapp, "The Christian and Politics: How do we participate — hold office, vote, or primarily pray?;" J. Winfield Fretz, "Should Mennonites Participate in Politics;" Elmer Ediger, "A Christian's Political Responsibility;" James Juhnke, "Our almost unused political power;" and John E. Lapp, "How Should I Witness to the State? An informative account of recent successful church-government cooperation is Larry Kehler's, Making Room for Strangers; a Review of the Refugee Assistance Program of MCC (Canada). Research on positive and assertive Mennonite political involvement on behalf of others is still uncommon and much more needs to be done.

10. Human Rights

The academic as well as "popular" Mennonite literature dealing with this area of politics is large and constantly expanding. A seminal, concise piece is Frank Epp's Human Rights and Christian Responsibility. Another useful item is C. Norman Kraus's "Toward a Biblical Perspective on Justice." Considerable literature is now appearing on numerous public policy areas dealing with racism, labour and manage-
ment, minority problems, and much more. One area that has been given extensive attention is capital punishment. Significant Mennonite publications on this topic include John Howard Yoder, *The Christian and Capital Punishment*, a pamphlet issued by the General Conference Mennonite Church, and Larry Kehler, *Capital Punishment Study Guide for Groups and Congregations*. For an incisive analysis of Mennonite views and problems concerning social justice see Duane K. Friesen, *Mennonites and Social Justice: Problems and Prospects*. A significant inter-Mennonite development is the joint work of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church in drawing up a major position paper still being revised, "Justice and the Christian Witness." The literature on this topic is expanding rapidly.

Many other political issues ranging from the Cold War and foreign aid to ecology, conservation, and native rights have evoked Mennonite scholarly response. Unfortunately, given space constraints, the literature cannot be reviewed here. What seems generally noteworthy, however, is that a relatively small ethnic group, which until fifty years ago was not particularly sympathetic to higher education and certainly not to political involvement, has produced a truly impressive body of political and quasi-political commentary and scholarly analysis.

V. Conclusion

This survey has indicated that while North American Mennonites have not produced many political scientists, and these have thus far produced only a few rigorous analyses in terms of any of the standard methodologies of political science, there has nonetheless been a floodtide of relevant publications, especially in recent years. Even though some large gaps remain, Mennonite historians, theologians, sociologists, and various "popular" journalists have written extensively about political phenomena.

At present, perhaps the greatest need is for more and better bibliographies and field research on political socialization, the politics of religious expression, political activism, and election behaviour. Additionally, despite the major contributions by Guy F. Hershberger, John Howard Yoder and Frank H. Epp, we still do not have a definitive comparison or synthesis of contemporary Mennonite political involvement and traditional Mennonite theology.

Perhaps, collectively, Mennonite scholars and the general constituency need to take politics much more seriously without giving it the status of ultimate seriousness. The undertaking promises to be simultaneously fascinating and challenging. Investigation will bring rewarding surprises.

But much has been accomplished. Given the fact that the Mennonite
Encyclopaedia has not a single entry under “politics” or “government,” it is amazing to discover what has, in fact, been experienced and what has already been written by the Mennonites of Canada and the United States.

Appendix A

Mennonite Brethren Historical Library
A. E. Janzen
Tabor College
Hillsboro, Kansas

Conference Resolutions Pertaining to Political Matters Including “Voting”

1878 — Holding government offices. That members are not permitted to hold government offices or take any part at the polls. However, we appreciate the protection we enjoy under our Government. GCR, 1878.

1888 — Delegation to political conventions. That in regard to being delegate to national political conventions, it is strongly advised that, while we desire to have a good government, members should be careful so as not to defile their conscience. However, the Conference does not want to form a definite resolution in this matter. GCR, 1888, p. 70.

1890 — Political involvement. Voting. That members of the church refrain from participation and involvement in the contentions of political parties, but are permitted to vote quietly at elections, and may also vote for “prohibition.” GCR, 1890, p. 107.

1893 — Holding public office. That our brethren shall not hold the offices of justice of the peace or constable. A member may be a “notary public.” GCR, 1893, p. 156.

1943 — Patriotism. That we confirm our undivided loyalty to our country and to our government which has graciously provided ways and means affording our young men a chance to serve their country without being compelled to become a part of the military power which would be contrary to our confession of faith and their consciences. GCR, 1943, p. 67.

1945 — Conscription. That we ask our brethren of the Public Relations Committee to lead us in exercising proper influence against peacetime conscription of our young men, but that in case of its inevitable enactment, we favor asking for special provisions of service in a non-military capacity. GCR, 1945, p. 40.

1945 — M. B. position. That the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America go on record as being opposed to any type of military conscription and that this decision be sent to Congress and the proper (other) authorities through Brother P. C. Hiebert. GCR, 1945, p. 75.

1900 — Suing and going to court. That the Conference makes
reference to its resolution of 1889 (GCR, 1889, p. 89) and asks its members to get along peaceably and not to make use of the law, in order to keep the conscience clear and to have an open way to the fellowship with the Lord and with the brethren. GCR, 1900, p. 233.

1905 — *Fugitive from justice*. That in the case of persons who committed a crime and fled the country, then were converted and are asking for baptism: the Conference ruled that a handing over to the law is not required if nobody is harmed by the restoration, and the handing over to the law would not change anything. GCR, 1905, p. 340.

Appendix B

*Mennonite Politicians*

Note: This list is obviously preliminary and fragmentary but it serves to illustrate the extent and nature of Mennonite political activism. For some discussion of this topic see *Thrust*, vol. 8, No. 1, 1976, pp. 23-24; *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, April 27, 1979, pp. 4-10 and May 21, 1982, p. 15; John Dueck, "Forsake 400-year tradition; Mennonites enter politics by the dozen, *Mennonite Reporter*, January 12, 1976, pp. 10-11; and *The Christian Leader*, August 1, 1978, p. 18, and October 24, 1978, p. 20.

United States — National Level

1. *Christian William Ramseyer* (1875-1943), member of a Mennonite church in Davis County, Iowa. Born in Ohio. Elected to U.S. Congress in 1914 and served from 1915 to 1933. He was a Republican, presumably lost out in the depression backlash.

2. *Benjamin F. Welty* (1890-?), a Mennonite from Lima, Ohio, Democrat elected to Congress in 1916 and served two terms 1917-21. He was not a pacifist — served as a private in the Spanish-American War, in the Ohio National Guard. But Mennonites seeking help and access to decision-makers in Washington D.C. during World War I said they got some good assistance from Welty. From 1924-1951 he was in law practice in Ohio.

3. *Edward Clayton Eicher* (1878-1944), member of the Washington County Iowa Mennonite congregation, son of a well-known Bishop Benjamin Eicher. Delegate to Democrat National Convention in Chicago in 1932, and elected to Congress that year, helped by the same tide that hurt Ramseyer. He served three terms, to 1938, resigned to accept an appointment as Commissioner on Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington D.C., and then in 1942 appointed Chief Justice of the District Court of the U.S. for the District of Columbia. He was the presiding judge at the trial during World War II of Gerald Winrod, pro-
Nazi fundamentalist from Kansas who had received a lot of support from Mennonites.

4. **James Juhnke**, Kansas' Fourth Congressional District, Wichita region, as a Democrat in 1970; not elected.

5. **Leroy Kennel**, a member of the Lombard Mennonite Church and a teacher at Bethany (Church of the Brethren) seminary. He ran an unsuccessful campaign as the Democrat candidate for U.S. Congress in his district in 1980.

**United States — State and Regional Level**

1. **Kansas**
   - **Paul Janzen & Mrs. D. P. Ewert** have been an activist core in the Democratic Party in Marion County, Kansas.
   - **Ferdinand J. Funk**, elected state representative for one term in 1894.
   - **Peter J. Galle** elected state representative 1902.
   - **Duane Goossen** of Goessel, Kansas, is currently running as a Republican to represent the 70th district in the Kansas Legislature.
   - **Walter W. Graber**, also a Democrat of Pretty Prairie, elected for a term or two to the Kansas House in the 1960s.
   - **A. W. W. Graber** of Pretty Prairie, Reno County, Kansas, served two or three terms in the state legislature.
   - **Leon H. Harms** ran for state representative and not elected.
   - **P. A. Hiebert** ran for state representative in 1934; not elected.
   - **Walter Huxman**, Democrat of Pretty Prairie, Kansas, was elected governor of Kansas in 1936. He was of Mennonite background, but never a church member.
   - **J. A. Schowalter** of Schowalter Foundation fame, elected to Kansas House in 1934; served three terms.
   - **Ronald Wedel** has been active in McPherson County, Kansas.
   - **Lloyd Spaulding & Arnold Wedel** have been active Democrats in Harvey County, Kansas, and **Merrill Raber** served a number of years as Democratic County Chairman.

2. **South Dakota**
   - **Harvey Wollman** served for several years as Democratic Lieutenant Governor of South Dakota and, in 1978, briefly as Acting Governor. Interestingly, Lieutenant-Governor Wollman was "sworn in" as Acting Governor by his brother, Roger, a Republican member, and subsequently Chief Justice of the South Dakota Supreme Court.

3. **Virginia**
   - **A. Lowell Hertzler** was Democratic Party Chairman of Rockingham County, Virginia, until recently.
Canada — National Level (served as Members of Parliament)

1. British Columbia:
   - Benno Friesen (Progressive Conservative), Whiterock-Surrey-Delta, 1974-
   - Erhart Regier (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation/New Democratic Party), New Westminster, 1953-1962.

2. Manitoba:
   - Arthur Jake Epp (Progressive Conservative), Provencher, 1972-
     Served as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in Prime Minister Joe Clark's government, 1979-80.
   - Dean Whiteway (Progressive Conservative), Selkirk, 1974-1979.

3. Ontario:
   - William Andres (Liberal), St. Catharines (Niagara Falls), 1979-80.

Some Candidates In Recent Elections Who Were Not Successful:

1. 1979 Canadian General Election:
   - Frank Epp (Liberal), Ontario
   - Howard Loewen (Liberal), Manitoba

2. 1980 Canadian General Election:
   - George Elias (Independent), Manitoba
   - Frank Epp (Liberal), Ontario
   - Jake Froese (Progressive Conservative), Ontario
   - John Froese (Progressive Conservative), Manitoba
   - John Pankratz (Independent), British Columbia
   - Peter Penner (Independent), Manitoba
   - Don Redekop (Liberal), Ontario
   - John Reimer (Progressive Conservative), Ontario
   - Herman Rempel (NDP), Manitoba
   - Jack Suderman (Liberal), British Columbia
   - David Wiebe (Liberal), Ontario

Canada — Provincial Level

1. Alberta:
   - Cornelius Hiebert (Conservative), 1906-1909, Didsbury. Born August 2, 1862, in South Russia; parents came to Manitoba in 1876; married to A. Dick, July 29, 1888; overseer for the Village of Didsbury, 1902-1904; school trustee 1902; a Mennonite; a lumber merchant. (Source: Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1908, p. 453.)
   - Ray Ratzlaff (Social Credit), 1967-1971, when he lost by 8 votes, Three Hills. Served as Minister of Tourism, etc.
   - Werner Schmidt (Social Credit). Was elected as provincial party leader,
in 1971 ran for a seat in the provincial legislature but was not elected in that election nor in several subsequent attempts. 

2. British Columbia:
Harvey Schroeder (Social Credit), 1972- , Chilliwack. Currently serves as Speaker in the provincial legislature.

3. Manitoba:
Robert Banman (Progressive Conservative), 1973- , La Verendrye. Served as Minister of Tourism and in five other ministries.
Harry J. Enns (Progressive Conservative), 1966- , Rockwood-Iberville. Served as Minister of Agriculture, of Highways, and of Mines and Natural Resources.
Albert Driedger (Progressive Conservative), 1977- , Emerson.
Victor Schroeder (New Democratic Party), 1977- , Rossmere. Currently serves as Minister of Finance.

4. Ontario:
Herbert Epp (Liberal), 1977- , Waterloo.

5. Saskatchewan:
David Boldt (Liberal), 1960-1975, Rosthern. Served as Minister of Social Welfare, of Highways, etc.
Isaak Elias (Social Credit), 1956-1960, Rosthern.
Gerhard Enns (Liberal), 1905-1914, Rosthern.
Harold Martens (Progressive Conservative), 1982- , Morse.
Herbert Swan (Progressive Conservative), 1978- , Rosetown-Elrose.
John Thiessen (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation), 1956-1964, Shellbrook.
John E. Wiebe (Liberal), 1971-1978, Morse.

Notes
2 One noteworthy item is James S. Nyman, The Mennonite Vote, a University of British Columbia B.A. thesis in political science, 1956. The thesis analyzes the impact of Social Credit on voting behaviour in the Electoral District of Chilliwack, B.C., in the 1952 provincial general election.
9 Ibid.
11 The 1977-78 figures for the three largest Canadian Mennonite groups were: Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 133 congregations having 26,000 members; Mennonite Brethren, 129 congregations having 20,000 members; Mennonite Church (Canada), 110 congregations having 10,000 members. See *Faith Today*, October- November, 1979, p. 12.
12 "Tradition" is used here to refer to both social and theological reluctance to accept change.
13 The major Mennonite newspapers are: *Mennonite Weekly Review* (Newton, Kansas), independent; *The Mennonite* (Winnipeg) Mennonite General Conference of North America; *The Canadian Mennonite* (Altona, Manitoba, October 16, 1953-February 19, 1971), independent; *Mennonite Reporter* (Waterloo, Ontario), independent; *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (Winnipeg), Mennonite Brethren; *The Christian Leader* (Hillsboro, Kansas) Mennonite Brethren; *Mennonite Community* (Scottsdale, PA). Significant other Mennonite periodicals include *Mennonite Life* (Newton, Kansas), *Mennonite Mirror* (Winnipeg), and *Peace Section Newsletter* (Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, Ohio).
14 The two most important Mennonite scholarly journals are *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (Scottsdale, PA, published by the Mennonite Historical Society for Goshen College and The Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries) and *Direction* (Winnipeg, published by Christian Press for Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of Arts, Tabor College, Fresno Pacific College, and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary.)
17 Ibid., pp. 77-79.
18 Ibid., p. 83.
19 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
22 For information on Mennonite political involvement in Waterloo see *Waterloo Chronicle*, souvenir edition commemorating the 125th anniversary of the City of Waterloo, May 26, 1982, pp. 3, 8-11.
23 Ibid., pp. 9-10.


A personal letter to the author, August 26, 1982.


For a useful bibliography of mainly non-Mennonite resources see MCC Peace Section Church-State Relations Study Bibliography, mimeo.

Ed Unruh, “A fascination with politics that led to the premier’s officer,” Mennonite Mirror, January, 1982, p. 17.

Letter, August 26, 1982.


See endnote 2, above.


In addition to his major works cited in endnotes 48, 49, and 50, see, for example, John Howard Yoder, “The Biblical Mandate”, Post American, April, 1974, pp. 21-25, and his “The Christian’s Responsibility to the State,” Ontario Peace Bulletin, November 12, 1963, pp. 2-7. Concerning general analysis see, for example, Bill Janzen, “Politics — is it for Mennonites?”, With, October, 1976, pp. 6-9. In the same issue see Sam Steiner’s article under the same title, pp. 9-12.


A Christian Declaration on Peace, War and Military Service (Newton, Kansas: General Conference Mennonite Church, c. 1953).


63 John H. Redekop, “Church and State in Canada” in Jarold K. Zeman and Walter Klaassen, eds., The Believers’ Church in Canada (Brantford, Ontario and Winnipeg: Baptist Federation of Canada and MCC (Canada, 1979), pp. 191-205.
69 The Mennonite Quarterly Review carries numerous book reviews on this topic. Useful material is also published in the quarterly, A Journal of Church and State.
72 Robert Kreider, “The Anabaptists and the State,” in Guy F. Hershberger, ed., The


39 J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder, Anabaptists Four Centuries Later; a Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1975).


41 John H. Redekop, "The Interaction of Economics and Religion; the Case of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada." A summary is found in the Mennonite Brethren Herald, December 18, 1981, pp. 4-6. The complete document is available from the M. B. Archives, Winnipeg.


44 Frank H. Epp, Your Neighbor as Yourself; a Study on Responsibility in Immigration (Winnipeg: MCC (Canada), 1968). See also his edited volume I would like to dodge the draft-dodgers but... (Waterloo, Ontario: Conrad Press, 1970).

104 Journal of Mennonite Studies


104. As cited above. The pamphlet has 31 pages.


110. Mervin Dick, "The Moral Majority: Shall We Join Up Or Shall We Sit This One Out?" Mimeo; a sermon preached in Fresno, California, November 2, 1980.

111. See endnotes 46 to 50.

112. See endnote 29.


120. Donald Kraybill, Facing Nuclear War (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1982).


132 "Christian witness growing in Ottawa," Mennonite Brethren Herald, April 27, 1979, pp. 6-10.

133 "Can my vote be Biblical?" The Christian Leader, October 21, 1980, pp. 2-5.

134 "Canadian Christians: Unique Possibilities for Peace." Published by The Board of Christian Service, Conference of Mennonites in Canada.


140 John E. Lapp, "How Should I Witness to the State?" Mennonite Brethren Herald, October 20, 1967, pp. 4-5.


143 See endnote 101.


