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“The Backdrop Against Which Everything Happened”: English-Canadian Student Movements and Off-Campus Movements for Change

Roberta Lexier

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between the 1960s’ student movements at English-Canadian universities and provincial, national, and international movements for change. Student activists, the intellectual and political leaders of the student movements, were greatly influenced by issues external to the university and inspired by movements aimed at wider social change. Through an examination of the student movements at three English-Canadian universities — University of Toronto, University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus (now University of Regina), and Simon Fraser University — it becomes clear that, although external issues and movements often failed to mobilize large numbers of students on campus and frequently divided student leaders themselves, student activists were inspired by what they saw as national liberation movements, including the Civil Rights Movement, the Red Power Movement, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the Vietnam War, and the Canadian nationalist movement. Such external movements, which sought democratic rights for perceived oppressed groups, helped shape the political culture on university campuses and often further radicalized student activists. Throughout the Sixties, student activists continued to draw inspiration from global, national, and provincial movements aimed at wider societal change and they became increasingly radicalized, seeking change both within the university and in the wider society.

On 22 November 1963, the same day American President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, students at the University of Toronto marched on the provincial legislature at Queen’s Park to express their concern for the future of the Canadian Confederation.¹ In anticipation of a Federal-Provincial Conference to be held later that month, students organized this “March for Canada” and presented a brief to Ontario Premier John Robarts asking him to “think of the welfare of Canada and . . . maintain an understanding and flexible attitude towards the problems which will confront the conference.”² These expected problems were a result of the emergence of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the growing demands for a different relationship between the federal government and that province. As Students’ Administrative Council (SAC) President Doug Ward stated:

¹ “March on Queen’s Park Grows,” *The Varsity*, 18 November 1963, 1.

² “March for Canada,” *The Varsity*, 22 November 1963, 1.

We are concerned about "le fait Canadien francais," the French-Canadian Fact. Our neighbors to the east are accomplishing a renaissance and revolution which are giving fresh vitality to their cultural group. We are aware of the power of this fact, and we know something of the directions that power can take. The 20th [C]entury has witnessed that no force can stand in the road of a nation which is intent upon helping itself to find its place in the sun.³

Encouraged by these changes in Quebec and, at the same time, concerned for the future of the partnership between French- and English-speaking peoples, approximately three thousand University of Toronto students joined the march. "We do wish to give voice to our hope," explained Ward, "that we shall be able to grow up in Canada where those things which separate the French from the English will be the creative differences of language and culture, and not a border between two countries and a record of myopic relations."⁴

Five years later, student activists at Simon Fraser University attempted to change the name of their university. In the summer of 1968, members of the Students for a Democratic University (SDU), using their newly-acquired positions in the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS), passed a motion to change the name of the university to Louis Riel University. These activists argued that rather than being a "Loyalist, fur-trader and explorer," Simon Fraser was actually a "member of the vanguard of pirates, thieves, and carpet-baggers which dispossessed and usurped the native Indians of Canada from their rightful heritage." Furthermore, "the settlers of Canada, and we, their descendents," the motion stated, "have been guilty of a systematic policy of genocide . . . against the native Indians of Canada." The effect, then, of naming the university after Simon Fraser was to "celebrate a history of robbery and chicanery by virtue of which the native Indians of Canada were remorselessly and ruthlessly dispossessed of their rightful heritage." Instead, the activists argued that the university should be named Louis Riel University "in order to honour the single man who, by his actions to gain justice and freedom for Canadians of Indian ancestry, courageously wrote the single page of the history of the Canadian West of which we can be thoroughly proud, and who, by his cruel murder, revealed clearly the means by which our ancestors (non-Indian) gained control of this land."⁵

These two events illustrate some of the ways in which student activists in the 1960s sought to engage with provincial, national, and global movements for change. The Sixties was a period of widespread social upheaval. Around the world, people mobilized to transform their societies and create a more democratic world. Much of this activism was located on university campuses as young people began to challenge the values and practices of the society in which they lived. Universities had become increasingly important during the post-World War II economic and technological boom and, coupled with the demands created by the enormous size of the baby boom generation, expanded dramatically during this period.⁶

³ "Text of Ward's Speech at Queen's Park," *The Varsity*, 25 November 1963, 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Simon Fraser University Archives (SFUA), F-74 Simon Fraser Student Society Fonds, File F-74-2-0-13 "Minutes May-Aug. 1968." "Minutes of SFSS Executive Council," 24 June 1968.

⁶ Philip A. Massolin, "Modernization and Reaction: Postwar Evolutions and the Critique of Higher Learning in English-Speaking Canada, 1945-1970," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 130-163; Patricia Jasen, "In Pursuit of Human Values (or Laugh When you Say That): The Student Critique of the Arts Curriculum in the 1960s," in *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Education*, eds. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 248-249.

In Canada, rising enrolments and evolving conceptions of the role of students within the university community led to the development of a relatively united student movement on university campuses by the mid-1960s. This movement was largely a result of shared definitions of student identity and democracy; in particular, many students were united in their conception of students as responsible adult members of the university community who should be granted the rights and responsibilities associated with membership in any democratic community. The intellectual and political leaders of this movement were the student activists who were active in student government, the student newspaper, and other extra-parliamentary political organizations. They were greatly influenced by issues external to the university and inspired by movements aimed at wider social change. While always a small minority of the student body, the activists were nonetheless especially influential in shaping the issues and demands of the student movement on campuses.

This study looks at movements at three English-Canadian universities: University of Toronto, University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus (now University of Regina), and Simon Fraser University. These universities were chosen for a number of reasons: all three universities had active student movements in the Sixties; each university came into existence at a different time and in various contexts; each had distinctive student populations and different relationships with their external environment; and they were located in diverse regions throughout English Canada. As well, the three universities were of varying sizes. On one extreme was the Regina Campus, which had a student population of only 643 in 1961 and reached a peak of just over 4,000 students in the fall of 1969; at the other extreme sat the University of Toronto, which in the 1963-64 academic year had an enrolment of more than 26,000 students and reached over 50,000 students by 1973-74. Simon Fraser was moderately sized, opening in 1965 with an enrolment of 2,528 and reaching over 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students by 1973.⁷

Although external issues and movements at times failed to mobilize large numbers of students on campus and frequently divided student leaders themselves, student activists were nevertheless inspired by what they saw as national liberation movements, including the Civil Rights Movement, the Red Power Movement, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the Vietnam War, and the Canadian nationalist movement. Such external movements, which sought democratic rights for perceived oppressed groups, helped shape the political culture on university campuses and often further radicalized student activists. In particular, at the University of Toronto, because of its location in the largest and arguably the most important city in Canada, student activists frequently interacted with external political movements and sought wider societal change. At Simon Fraser University and the Regina Campus, external issues were less central to the student movements; nonetheless, at all three universities, student activists continued to draw inspiration from provincial, national, and international movements aimed at broad societal change. They became increasingly radicalized throughout the Sixties, seeking change both within the university and in the wider society.

External issues have long been influential and important to politically-active students on Canadian university campuses, as a number of scholars have illustrated. Catherine Gidney, for example, demonstrates that, as far back as the 1920s, student leaders were influenced by off-campus concerns. Focusing on the Student Christian Movement (SCM), she explains that international developments in religion, along with concerns over economic depression, war, and conflict, inspired such students to take

⁷ For enrolment figures, see: J.W.T. Spinks, *A Decade of Change: The University of Saskatchewan, 1959-70* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1972); University of Regina Archives (URA), University of Saskatchewan, *Annual Report, 1964-65 to 1973-74*; University of Toronto Archives (UTA), University of Toronto, *President's Report, 1963-64 to 1973-74*; Hugh Johnston, *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 115; and SFUA, F-52 Office of Analytical Studies Fonds, F 52-2-2-1, Enrollment Statistics.

social action and develop movements aimed at social change.⁸ Similarly, Paul Axelrod, in his study of student life at English-Canadian universities during the 1930s, illustrates how the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, and the possibility of war led some students to participate in “efforts to transform the political and social order of Canadian society.”⁹ Although Axelrod argues that these students often had difficulty attracting widespread support for these external concerns, he explains how politically-active students were nonetheless inspired and influenced by outside political issues.¹⁰ In her study of the student movements in Quebec in the 1950s, Nicole Neatby also argues that broader issues were important to student leaders. Those student leaders, she argues, were influenced by worldwide concerns, such as international peace and global cooperation, and by provincial developments related to the social reform of Quebec society. These larger issues inspired student leaders to mobilize for social change while at the same time attempting to transform their universities.¹¹ These authors illustrate the importance of external issues to student activists throughout the twentieth century. In terms of the Sixties’ student movements, that external concerns influenced the politically-active students of this period has long been assumed; this article seeks to further study the actual impact of external movements on student activists during this time.

Although the Sixties’ student movements often developed around a sense of membership in the university community,¹² student activists, for their part, also developed a sense of belonging to a wider group; they increasingly saw themselves as citizens of a provincial, national, and global community. “The two aspects of citizenship went hand in hand,” argues historian James Pitsula. “Just as students questioned the paternalistic structure of the university and the limited scope of student government, they began to take an interest in issues external to the university.”¹³ “The student is part of society,” explained Regina Campus Students’ Union President Ken Sunquist in 1969, and should therefore be concerned about “community affairs.”¹⁴ Similarly, University of Toronto SAC President John Roberts commented in 1965: “That students must be concerned and involved with matters of local, national and international importance can no longer be disputed. This is a responsibility to our society which must be met, a responsibility which cannot be discharged solely by our academic endeavours.”¹⁵ For many student activists, students were members of the university but also citizens of a wider community and as a result had a responsibility to press for change off-campus as well.

⁸ Catherine Gidney, *A Long Eclipse: The Liberal Protestant Establishment and the Canadian University, 1920-1970* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 56-65.

⁹ Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 128.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 128-148.

¹¹ Nicole Neatby, “Student Leaders at the University of Montreal from 1950 to 1958: Beyond the ‘Carabin Persona’,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 26-44; *Carabins ou Activistes? L’idealisme et la radicalisation de la pensée étudiante à l’Université de Montréal au temps du duplessisme* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

¹² Roberta Lexier, “The Community of Scholars: The English-Canadian Student Movement and University Governance,” in *Mobilizations and Engagements: Social Movements in Canada*, eds., Marie Hammond-Callaghan and Matthew Hayday (Halifax: Fernwood Press, Forthcoming 2008).

¹³ James Pitsula, *As One Who Serves: The Making of the University of Regina* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 288.

¹⁴ “Carillon Interview – Ken Sunquist, President of the S.R.C.,” *The Carillon*, 8 September 1969, 4.

¹⁵ UTA, P78-0692. Students’ Administrative Council, *Velut Arbor Aevo etc. . . 1964-65*, 6.

The Civil Rights Movement

With a sense of citizenship in a global community, along with their consistent focus on notions of democracy, student activists took a keen interest in the Civil Rights Movement in the American South. Sixties' students were raised in the post-Second World War period that was rooted in an ideological division between communism and democracy. During the height of the Cold War, young people were bombarded with the rhetoric of democracy and generally internalized the values supposedly inherent in a democratic society. These principles included the right to self-determination and involvement in decision-making as well as the right to social and economic equality. For these students, democracy remained an important issue throughout the period. Activists were inspired by what they viewed as a liberation movement, which originated in the mid-1950s when African-Americans used civil disobedience tactics to fight discriminatory segregation and voting laws. By 1960, African-American students had begun a campaign of lunch counter sit-ins. The following year, "Freedom Riders" used similar tactics to challenge segregation laws on interstate buses in the South. By 1963, voter registration drives began in the South and in 1964 the first Civil Rights Bill prohibiting discrimination in public places was passed.¹⁶ According to Toronto student Andrew Szende, the Civil Rights Movement attracted the attention of many activists because it

exemplified the kind of better world that people were seeking . . . [R]ight here in North America the Black people in the South were still being denied their human rights and their own right to self-determination — that would be their inability to register to vote, their intimidation, the lynchings, the killings, the violation of human and civil rights that were quite prevalent. And it sort of fit right in with the kind of idealism for a better world.¹⁷

"We saw inequity," explained Ernie Lightman, "and if you see an inequity, then . . . you have an obligation to change it."¹⁸ For that reason, many young people, including many from Canada, actively participated in this movement¹⁹ and gained important experience and a renewed dedication to fight injustice.²⁰

Most scholars of the Sixties' student movements in the United States and Canada generally agree that the Civil Rights Movement had an impact on the development of on-campus political activism. American scholars, in particular, argued that the Civil Rights Movement was central to the development of the student movements in that country. "The prime force initiating a generation's ideological evolution from 1950s conformism to 1968 revolutionism," argues Max Elbaum, "was the civil rights movement."²¹ No other issue or movement, according to Douglas Rossinow, was as important to shaping the spirit and political concerns of the American New Left as the Civil Rights Movement.²² According to these scholars, students learned the tactics of civil disobedience, direct action, and community organizing from the

¹⁶ Joan Morrison and Robert K. Morrison, *From Camelot to Kent State: The Sixties Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 339-340.

¹⁷ Andrew Szende, interview with the author, 3 February 2006.

¹⁸ Ernie Lightman, interview with the author, 7 March 2006.

¹⁹ John Conway, interview with the author, 21 March 2002; Lightman, interview; and "The Sitdowners," *The Toronto Star*, 20 March 1965, 8.

²⁰ W.J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War: The 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 19.

²¹ Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002), 19.

²² Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 164.

struggle for racial equality in the South as well as a particular sense of democracy that guided the student movements throughout the period.²³

For Canadian scholars, the importance of the Civil Rights Movement is often a site of disagreement. While scholars such as François Ricard and Myrna Kostash only briefly touch upon the influence of the movement on Canadian students,²⁴ others argue that the Civil Rights Movement “exerted a powerful influence upon students in Canada.”²⁵ According to Doug Owrām, for example, this movement made an “indelible mark on the postwar generation.” The Civil Rights Movement, he asserts, presented clear democratic values, legitimized resistance to governmental authority, and demonstrated the effectiveness of mass protest. For many students, the struggle for racial equality in the United States illustrated the clear gap between the rhetoric and reality of a supposedly democratic society. “Here was an element of Western democracy using the forces of the state to deny rights to its own people.”²⁶

Student activists learned important lessons from the Civil Rights Movement regarding the efficacy of civil disobedience and direct action as political tactics, which, in the American South, became a template for the actions used by student activists in Canada throughout the Sixties. “We sought to imitate many of those tactics in the student movement,” explains John Conway, “certainly they were an inspiration.”²⁷ “The Civil Rights movement,” SFU activist John Cleveland argues, “was a direct model for a lot of what followed.”²⁸ Additionally, activists involved in organizations such as the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) adopted the strategy of community organizing practiced by many Civil Rights organizations in the United States.²⁹

At the University of Toronto, students felt a sense of influence over the sites of power in North America, and organized protests around the Civil Rights movements. The main action in Toronto revolved around a sit-in at the United States Consulate on University Avenue in March 1965, which was organized to protest the treatment of Civil Rights workers in Alabama who were beaten by state troopers during a march from Selma to Montgomery. Using the tactics of the Civil Rights Movement itself, these students demanded that the United States federal government intervene to protect peaceful protesters, stating that they would remain at the consulate until “satisfactory steps are taken by the American federal government to enforce the Constitutional rights of the Negro.”³⁰ For one week, students from the Friends of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), the SCM, and SUPA³¹ remained at the

²³ See Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Jennifer Frost, *“An Interracial Movement of the Poor”: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

²⁴ François Ricard, *The Lyric Generation: The Life and Times of the Baby Boomers*, trans. Donald Winkler (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994), 43; and Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1980).

²⁵ Cyril Levitt, *Children of Privilege: A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 47. See also, Doug Owrām, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

²⁶ Owrām, *Born at the Right Time*, 166-167.

²⁷ Conway, interview. See also, Bob Johnston, interview with the author, 24 April 2006.

²⁸ John Cleveland, interview with the author, 11 February 2006.

²⁹ Levitt, *Children of Privilege*, 47; Dimitrios J. Roussopoulos, ed., *The New Left in Canada* (Montreal: Our Generation Press – Black Rose Books, 1970).

³⁰ “Will Demonstrate Today,” *The Varsity*, 10 March 1965, 1.

³¹ “The Sitdowners,” 8.

consulate 24-hours a day, braving snow and sub-zero temperatures to demand the recognition of basic democratic rights in the American South.³²

Student activists, however, were criticized for focusing on the racial prejudice south of the border while ignoring the plight of the First Nations and other minorities in Canada.³³ For example, a *Globe and Mail* editorial which applauded the sit-in at the consulate also stated that “[r]acial prejudice may be found in our midst, may be found near the University of Toronto campus, may indeed be found right on it . . . Could they [the students] not direct some heart and some energy to Canada’s own racial, religious and political tensions — which differ from those of Alabama only in degree?”³⁴ In fact, although SUPA developed community action programs focused on racial and economic discrimination in Canada, for many students Civil Rights remained an American issue.³⁵

However, exceptions did occur. Despite a lack of research into the relationship between the student movement and the emerging Red Power Movement, for example, some student activists were inspired by this Canadian liberation movement and were keen to relate concerns over racial equality and injustice to their own environment.³⁶ While students in Toronto focused on the issue of Civil Rights in the United States, students in western Canada were more concerned with, and influenced by, the treatment of First Nations peoples at home. This was the case at Simon Fraser University as evidenced by the attempt, discussed above, to change the name of the university to Louis Riel University. Not all students on campus, however, were impressed by the attempts to rename the university. A petition calling for a vote of non-confidence against the student council was circulated and attracted 138 signatures out of a population of approximately five thousand students. At a general meeting, students voted overwhelmingly against the impeachment motion, but, despite the sale of over 500 Louis Riel University buttons which second vice-president John Conway believed “indicated wide student support for the name-change,” the student body also voted to retain the name of Simon Fraser University.³⁷

The Quiet Revolution

Another particularly Canadian issue that became important for student activists during the Sixties was the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. Although François Ricard argues that young people were only tangentially involved in the Quiet Revolution,³⁸ this movement, which sought a dramatic social, cultural, economic, and political transformation of Quebec society,³⁹ was an inspiration to many student activists

³² Harvey Shepherd, “Men Must Speak,” *The Varsity*, 11 March 1965, 2.

³³ “Holier than America?” *Toronto Star*, 12 March 1965, 6; Letters to the Editor, *Toronto Star*, 18 March 1965, 6.

³⁴ “Our Students Have Spirit,” *The Globe and Mail*, 15 March 1965, 6.

³⁵ The story of national organizations such as SUPA is tremendously important, but is largely outside the purview of this article.

³⁶ SFUA, F-79 The Simon Fraser University Faculty Association Fonds, File F-79-3-4-1, “CAUT censure of SFU, 1967-69.” “A Programme of Action for SFU,” [1968].

³⁷ “Mall Meeting Leaves Council in Limbo,” *The Peak*, 24 July 1968, 3. SFUA, F-74 Simon Fraser Student Society Fonds, File F-74-3-2-20, “Martin Loney – Correspondence, May-Aug. 1968.” Letter to A.R. Babcock from Martin Loney, 16 July 1968. See also, Jim Harding, interview with the author, 20 January 2006; and Gordon Hardy, “Council Faces Impeachment: Board Confrontation, Louis Riel Major Issues,” *The Peak*, 17 July 1968, 1.

³⁸ Ricard, *The Lyric Generation*, 81-89.

³⁹ Marc Renaud, “New Middle Class in Search of Social Hegemony,” in *Quebec: State and Society*, ed. Alain G. Gagnon (Toronto: Methuen, 1984), 150-185; Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, third edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993); Paul-Andre Linteau, Rene Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and Francois Ricard, *Quebec Since 1930* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1991); Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec’s Quiet Revolution: Liberalism Versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985); John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson, Volume II: 1949-1972* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). The Quiet

seeking broad social change. While little has been written on the relationship between the student movements in English Canada and the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, Doug Owrarn has acknowledged the importance of this issue for Canadian students. Quebec, according to Owrarn, provided Canadians with a local cause, an internal matter that raised issues of justice similar to those in the American South. The Quiet Revolution was viewed as a liberation movement of an oppressed minority within Canada.⁴⁰

The Quiet Revolution was seen by many English-Canadian student activists as an attempt by the people of Quebec to take control of their own lives and reject the perceived external forces that restricted their democratic rights, including the domination of the Catholic Church, the traditional elite, the English minority, and the rest of Canada. Through a cultural and political transformation, the Quebecois sought the rights of self-determination and sovereignty, confirming for some students that the world was changing and that “formerly oppressed populations were beginning to rise up and resist.”⁴¹ In this way, the Quiet Revolution was an inspiration for student activists who believed in a democracy centred on the rights of all peoples to make the decisions that affect their lives free from external pressure or force.⁴² This, Owrarn argues, gave the Quiet Revolution an authenticity that English-Canadian student movements could never match. Thus, activists either sought to understand and accommodate the aspirations of the Quebecois or link their causes with the Quiet Revolution in order to gain legitimacy.⁴³

The Quiet Revolution emerged as a significant on-campus concern only in Toronto. For students at the Regina Campus and Simon Fraser, although interested in other national and international movements, Quebec was seen as physically remote and not of direct concern to those on campus.⁴⁴ Many University of Toronto activists, on the other hand, perceived Toronto as “an integral part of Ontario’s branch-plant economy, a metropolitan force that dominates and oppresses the Quebecois,”⁴⁵ and, as a result, they took a direct interest in their eastern neighbours. These activists believed that students in Toronto were in a unique position to influence the future of Canadian federalism because of the close and difficult historical relationship between Ontario and Quebec. “The students of the University of Toronto,” claimed an editorial in the student newspaper, *The Varsity*, “are students of the only university in Canada which is in a position to help close the breach between French and English Canada.”⁴⁶

With this exaggerated sense of power and responsibility, student activists in Toronto organized the March for Canada and continued to analyze and discuss the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. Concerns over

Revolution, which challenged the hegemony of the Catholic Church, culminated in what Rand Dyck argues was “a new attitude toward the state” by which the provincial government would become “the principal engine of social and economic development.” It emerged in response to the rapid and extensive modernization in Quebec in the post-World War II period and resulted in increased urbanization and the decline of the Catholic Church as the primary social and political authority. Dyck, *Provincial Politics in Canada: Towards the Turn of the Century* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall Canada, 1996), 256-257. Kenneth McRoberts argues that this process of modernization was similar to developments elsewhere, but Quebec’s unique situation led to an increasing reliance on the provincial government and the renewal of French-Canadian nationalism. This social, cultural, economic, and political transformation was symbolized by the 1960 defeat of the Union Nationale government and the election of Liberal Premier Jean Lesage. John English argues that Lesage responded to “the national gusts by demanding a fundamental revision of Canadian federalism and by promising a definition of Quebec nationality, by which the ‘state’ of Quebec would become the realization of the expression of nationality.” English, *The Worldly Years*, 277.

⁴⁰ Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time*, 168-169.

⁴¹ Conway, interview. See also, Martin Loney, interview with the author, 31 January 2006; and Cleveland, interview.

⁴² Lightman, interview; Greg Kealey, interview with the author, 13 January 2006.

⁴³ Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time*, 168-169.

⁴⁴ Cleveland, interview. See also Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time*, 170.

⁴⁵ “Quebec Libre – Not Just a Cultural Question,” *The Varsity*, 5 November 1969, 4.

⁴⁶ “Today’s Opportunity,” *The Varsity*, 22 November 1963, 4.

the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada remained important at the University of Toronto throughout the Sixties and, with the growing radicalization of the movements in Toronto and the emergence of a revolutionary independence movement in Quebec, new forms of protest developed. For example, in 1969, the radical New Left Caucus organized a march to “protest the subjugation of Quebec to English speaking interests.” Chanting “Le Quebec au Quebecois,” approximately 150 people insisted that the Quebecois be granted “the most fundamental freedoms that are inherent in a democracy,” although no specific demands were presented.⁴⁷ For these activists, who viewed themselves as important players on the national scene, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec was of immediate concern and could be influenced through demonstrations of support in Toronto.

The interest expressed by activists in the Quiet Revolution did not translate into significant interaction between the student movement in Toronto and the nationalist movement in Quebec. Although students in Toronto attempted to make connections with their counterparts in Quebec,⁴⁸ French-Canadian students were consumed with their own issues and had little interest in the student movements in English Canada.⁴⁹ Activists in Quebec had adopted much earlier and more completely than their English counterparts the French concept of student syndicalism that perceived each student as a “young intellectual worker” and an active and responsible citizen.⁵⁰ As well, French-Canadian students saw themselves primarily as citizens of the province of Quebec rather than citizens of the Canadian nation. As a result, Quebecois students actively engaged in the social, cultural, political, and economic changes taking place in their own province and largely ignored the movements in English Canada. Indeed, despite attempts by the national student organization, the Canadian Union of Students (CUS), to address the concerns of French-Canadian students and maintain connections with them, the Quebec universities withdrew from the organization in 1965.⁵¹ Overall, students in English Canada and in Quebec were largely unable to work together; rather than being united by a common student identity, French- and English-speaking students were divided by language and by perceived citizenship in different communities.

Despite this lack of direct involvement, activists in English Canada were nonetheless inspired by what they saw as a movement for social change, and they sought to find ways to contribute to or draw from the currents in Quebec. Many activists in English Canada seemed somewhat envious of the energy and momentum in Quebec, drawing inspiration from the movements in that province. “Through this march,” Doug Ward explained at the March for Canada in 1963, “we are catching up [to] a student involvement and commitment which has spread to us from our French-Canadian contemporaries; and as one of them has noted, we students are perhaps apprentice-doctors, but we are not apprentice citizens.”⁵²

The Vietnam War

Another issue that had a significant influence on student activists at English-Canadian universities was the Vietnam War. Cyril Levitt contends that “[t]here is no question that the politicization of hundreds of thousands of university students (perhaps millions globally) occurred over the issue of the Vietnam

⁴⁷ “Toronto Radicals March Happily for Quebec,” *The Varsity*, 10 November 1969, 11.

⁴⁸ Mary Lewis, interview with the author, 8 March 2006.

⁴⁹ Owrham, *Born at the Right Time*, 169, 234.

⁵⁰ Serge Joyal, “Student Syndicalism in Quebec,” *Canadian Dimension* 2, no.3 (March, April 1965): 20-21. See also, Robert Frederick Clift, “The Fullest Development of Human Potential: The Canadian Union of Students, 1963-1969” (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2002), 23.

⁵¹ Clift, “The Fullest Development of Human Potential,” 22-25.

⁵² “Text of Ward’s speech,” *The Varsity*, 5.

[W]ar.”⁵³ This war, often framed as a Cold War struggle between democracy and communism, had a tremendous impact on young people around the world. The United States government, arguing “that the dominos of Asia were beginning to topple towards Moscow and Beijing, began a long effort to prop up the government of South Vietnam.”⁵⁴ American President Eisenhower sent military advisors to Vietnam in 1956 and the American presence continued to increase under President Kennedy. When Lyndon Johnson sent 170,000 ground troops into Vietnam in 1965, the first antiwar protests began on a national scale in the United States.⁵⁵ With thousands of young Americans serving in Vietnam, many of whom had been drafted into military service, protests against the war spread throughout the United States and internationally, continuing, often with violent results, until the end of the war in the mid-1970s.⁵⁶ Students around the world, including those in Britain, France, Germany, the United States, and Canada, joined with thousands of citizens to protest what was to them a clear example of American imperialism.⁵⁷

General consensus among scholars of the Sixties’ social movements holds that the Vietnam War was extremely influential for students on university campuses. In the United States, the length and scale of the war, the increasing draft calls, and the rising death toll made the war impossible to ignore.⁵⁸ By the late 1960s, the Vietnam War became the central issue for the American Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and provided the means to link students with other citizens and create an international movement against American imperialism.⁵⁹ In Canada, while the war was a less personal issue than it was in the United States, it was nonetheless important for student activists. Owsram suggests that the Vietnam War challenged the basic assumptions of the Cold War period and was a key component of the early campus-based activism. This interest in the Vietnam War, however, was merely an indication of the American influence over the Canadian student movement.⁶⁰ Levitt, too, believes that Vietnam was important for the student movements, arguing that the anti-war movement was the central issue on university campuses in both countries during this period.⁶¹

Activists drew inspiration and motivation from the war throughout the Sixties and sought to mobilize others in opposition to what they saw as an act of American imperialism and aggression. According to Martin Loney, who was active at Simon Fraser University and as President of the CUS, Vietnam was “the backdrop against which everything happened.”⁶² For activists interested in creating a more democratic society based on the principles of self-determination and sovereignty, Vietnam existed as both an example and an opportunity to press for broader societal changes. Despite the official position of the American government, that the purpose of the military action was to bring democracy to the region, student activists believed that the people of Vietnam should have the right to make their own decisions without external force. As Loney explains: “Vietnam for us was black and white, there were no shades of gray . . . [I]t wasn’t a belief that democracy was fine and well in Vietnam, it was a belief that the

⁵³ Levitt, *Children of Privilege*, 49.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁵⁵ Morrison and Morrison, *From Camelot to Kent State*, 339-341. See also, Marvin Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, eds., *Vietnam and America* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 296.

⁵⁶ Morrison and Morrison, *From Camelot to Kent State*, 343.

⁵⁷ Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain France, Italy, and the United States, 1958-c.1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Levitt, *Children of Privilege*; Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). See also, Cleveland, interview; Andrew Wernick, interview with the author, 19 February 2006; and Ceta Ramkalawansingh, interview with the author, 10 March 2006.

⁵⁸ Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 181; Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 86.

⁵⁹ Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 209-246; Varon, *Bringing the War Home*; and Marwick, *The Sixties*.

⁶⁰ Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 183, 219.

⁶¹ Levitt, *Children of Privilege*, 49-50.

⁶² Loney, interview.

Americans were killing thousands of innocents and that the Vietnamese should solve their own problems.”⁶³ The Vietnam War, according to Regina Campus student activist Don Mitchell, had “a broad influence in disillusioning people about . . . super power politics and awareness about the rest of the world and conditions in third world countries . . .” The struggles in Vietnam were seen as a national liberation movement that was being oppressed by an imperialistic American government. As Toronto student Andrew Wernick recalls, Vietnam was “manifestly imperial and it was manifestly brutal”⁶⁴

Drawing on this national liberation and anti-imperialistic rhetoric, the Vietnam War became a central issue for many student activists. In fact, in looking back on their experiences, many former activists recall that the war was what gave the student movements much of their energy.⁶⁵ “The war in Vietnam,” argues SFU student activist Gordon Hardy, “was certainly one of the great galvanizers of student activism.” Similarly, Toronto activist Paul Copeland remembers that “the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War resistance are the two things that . . . caused the most activism all over North America and probably in many other parts of the world . . . Probably the most radicalizing thing was all of the anti-war stuff.” The war, he argues, became an effective organizing tool and a “rallying cry.”⁶⁶

Since Canadian students had a less personal stake in the war than their American counterparts who faced the military draft, activists sought ways to reframe the issues to make them relevant to students at Canadian universities. As a number of scholars, including Charles Taylor, Victor Levant, and Douglas Ross have shown, despite its supposed neutral status, Canada was intimately connected with the American war in Vietnam.⁶⁷ Activists on Canadian university campuses criticized the federal government for promoting the United States’ position on various international commissions, publicly supporting American war aims, and providing military and political intelligence. Most disturbing for many students was the continual flow of arms and munitions manufactured in Canada for use by the American military in Vietnam, allowing Canadian companies and the government to profit from the death of millions of Vietnamese citizens.⁶⁸ Arguing that democracy would only exist in Vietnam when the people were given the rights of self-determination and sovereignty with freedom from external force, activists also demanded that the Canadian government call on the United States to pull out its troops and withdraw permission for Canadian companies to export war materials for use in Vietnam.⁶⁹

Canadian student activists also encountered the Vietnam War in their relationships with the thousands of draft dodgers and military deserters who migrated to Canada during this period. Although the actual number is uncertain, approximately 40,000 draft dodgers and deserters are estimated to have

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Don Mitchell, interview with the author, 4 March 2002; Wernick, interview.

⁶⁵ Simon Foulds, interview with the author, 30 January 2006.

⁶⁶ Gordon Hardy, interview with the author, 10 February 2006; Paul Copeland, interview with the author, 27 January 2006.

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, *Snow Job: Canada, the United States and Vietnam (1954 to 1973)* (Toronto: Anansi, 1974); Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986); Douglas A. Ross, *In the Interests of Peace: Canada and Vietnam, 1954-1973* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

⁶⁸ McMaster University Archives (hereafter MUA), Canadian student social and political organizations (c.1968-1977), Radical Organizations Archive, Box 7, File “Student Association to End the War in Vietnam.” Pamphlet “Ottawa’s Complicity in Vietnam, a SAEWV pamphlet,” [n.d.], 9-13; Canadian student social and political organizations (c.1968-1977), Radical Organizations Archive, Box 2, File “Canadian Student Days of Protest.” University of Toronto Committee to End the War in Vietnam, pamphlet, [n.d.].

⁶⁹ MUA, Canadian student social and political organizations (c.1968-1977), Radical Organizations Archive, Box 1, File “Canada/Vietnam Week.” “An Open Letter to Prime Minister Pearson from Participants in Canada/Vietnam Week,” 6 March 1966.

come to Canada between 1965 and 1975.⁷⁰ These young men, often accompanied by their wives and girlfriends, brought the Vietnam War to Canada through their decision not to fight. While more study needs to be done on the relationship between these men and women and the student movements of the period, some evidence suggests that student activists were involved in the organizations that assisted draft dodgers and military deserters and that the men and women coming to Canada to escape the war had an important influence on the student movements. Although draft dodgers and military deserters largely operated independently from the student movement, Toronto student Joel Lexchin recalled that a great deal of support was expressed for the work being done on their behalf, including finding places to live and employment and providing legal counsel.⁷¹ John Conway, a student at the Regina Campus and Simon Fraser University, remembered even greater involvement:

Those of us who were in the anti-war movement from the beginning were very much involved in a — we used to call it the second underground railway . . . So we actually had a railway across the country where we were sneaking people across the border and across the country. That activity was important for us politically because it . . . gave real practical effect to our opposition to the war, and the idea of actually helping a young American escape this horrible war was fulfilling. It made you feel you were making a contribution in a practical way to stopping the war.⁷²

In Regina, a committee composed of concerned citizens, students, and faculty members was organized to assist those coming to the city to escape the war. The Regina Committee to Aid Deserters provided housing, employment and legal counselling, and general support for those wishing to create a new home in Canada.⁷³ Whether students were similarly involved in the Vancouver Committee to Aid American War Objectors and the American Deserters Committee in Vancouver⁷⁴ is unclear, but in Toronto, the Toronto Anti-Draft Program (TADP) office was situated on the University of Toronto campus with its newsletter, *Amex*, published from the same building as the student newspaper, *The Varsity*.⁷⁵ The SAC at the University of Toronto also provided support for the publication of a handbook to assist those intending to immigrate to Canada.⁷⁶

When SAC attempted to provide direct financial support to the TADP, however, it faced enormous opposition from the Engineering Society which “opposed the use of student funds ‘by an organization such as SAC’ to help draft dodgers.” These engineering students argued that the SAC should not involve itself in off-campus issues such as the war in Vietnam and the draft dodgers and military resisters who sought to avoid it. The student government, they believed, should not take a stand on non-student issues.⁷⁷ Those in favour of granting support to the TADP argued that “[b]y its nature, student or any type of Government is a political organization involved in social issues.”⁷⁸ “To suggest that we as

⁷⁰ Renee Kasinsky, *Refugees from Militarism: Draft Age Americans in Canada* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1976), 77-81.

⁷¹ Joel Lexchin, interview with the author, 21 March 2006.

⁷² Conway, interview.

⁷³ “Regina Committee to Aid Deserters,” *The Carillon*, 13 November 1969, 4.

⁷⁴ Although evidence may indicate that a number of Simon Fraser University professors were involved in these organizations, the extent of similar student involvement is uncertain. See, Hans Fenger, “Students Against Draft-dodger Aid,” *The Peak*, 26 October 1966, 1; and “Draft Committee Holds Meetings,” *The Peak*, 25 January 1967, 7.

⁷⁵ John Hagan, *Northern Passage: American Vietnam War Resisters in Canada* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 71-72. See also, Tom Walkom, interview with the author, 8 March 2006.

⁷⁶ Tom Faulkner, interview with the author, 7 February 2006.

⁷⁷ “Engineers Oppose Draft Dodger Aid,” *The Varsity*, 11 October 1967, 1.

⁷⁸ “Why SAC Should Support Draft-dodgers,” *The Varsity*, 11 October 1967, 5.

students can possibly live in this world and yet isolate ourselves on the campus, is more than ludicrous," stated a *Varsity* editorial. "The university is set smack in the middle of society and students can't creep inside its buildings and not concern themselves with what is outside."⁷⁹ At the 11 October 1967 SAC meeting, it was decided by a vote of 24 to 21 not to provide financial support for the TADP.⁸⁰ While the university-wide student government could not provide financial support for the exile community, however, other student organizations, including the University College Literary and Athletic Society, did provide such aid.⁸¹

Student activists participated in the anti-war movement in other ways as well. As editor of the Regina student newspaper, *The Carillon*, John Conway felt a responsibility to criticize the "genocide being committed in Vietnam in the name of democracy."⁸² He frequently included articles on the war and its importance in the newspaper. At Simon Fraser University, a referendum was held in 1967 to determine student opinion and guide Student Society policy on the issue of the Vietnam War. "[T]his is our war too," members of the Simon Fraser University Committee to End the War in Vietnam stated. "The Canadian government helps prosecute it, benefits from it and is partially responsible for the continuation of the war. They act in our name in the eyes of the world."⁸³ In the referendum, held 2 August 1967, over 69 per cent of those voting called on the Canadian Government to "advocate the U.S. Government stop the bombing of North Viet Nam and negotiate for the withdrawal of U.S. and Allied troops from South Viet Nam." Only 37 per cent felt that Canada should "continue its present policy of selling armaments to the United States which are used in Viet Nam," and 28 per cent felt that the Government should "pledge total support for U.S. policy as presently being carried out in Viet Nam."⁸⁴

Opposition to the Vietnam War was also manifested in concerns over the use of university facilities to support the military-industrial complex. For example, on 20 November 1967, approximately eighty University of Toronto students and faculty members initiated a sit-in at the University Placement Service, an employment service on campus, in opposition to the use of that facility by representatives of the Dow Chemical Company. Dow had become a particular target of the anti-war movement in both the United States and Canada as the primary manufacturer of napalm, an incendiary weapon used extensively in the Vietnam War. At the University of Toronto, protests against Dow united a number of faculty members and student activists in opposition to the use of university facilities by companies involved in the manufacture and sale of weaponry used in the Vietnam War. "As we would not invade Vietnam," stated mathematics professor and activist Chandler Davis, "we should not be a cog in a machine which is invading Vietnam."⁸⁵ The issue at hand, according to the University of Toronto student newspaper, was the moral responsibility of the university to reject any association with a company involved in the slaughter of innocent Vietnamese civilians. "U of T," it was argued, "should have nothing whatsoever to do with a company that profits from such a crime."⁸⁶

⁷⁹ "Draft Dodgers and the War at SAC Tonight," *The Varsity*, 11 October 1967, 4.

⁸⁰ David Frank, "SAC Dodges Draft-dodger Dilemma in Dramatic Debate," *The Varsity*, 13 October 1967, 1.

⁸¹ Charles Levi, *Comings and Goings: University Students in Canadian Society, 1854-1973* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 14.

⁸² "Conway Continued . . ." *The Carillon*, 22 October 1965, 3.

⁸³ SFUA, F-74 Simon Fraser Student Society Fonds, File F-74-9-0-11, "Ephemera, 1965-68." S.F.U. Committee to End the War Against Vietnam, "Vote Against the War in Vietnam," [1967].

⁸⁴ SFUA, F-74 Simon Fraser Student Society Fonds, File F-74-3-3-2, "1st Vice President – Correspondence, 1967." Letter to the Right Honourable Lester Pearson, Prime Minister from Dave Yorke, 1st Vice-President SFSS, 8 August 1967.

⁸⁵ Paul MacRae, "Dow Job Interviews Provoke Protest," *The Varsity*, 20 November 1967, 1.

⁸⁶ "Dow Offers You More Than Just Saran Wrap," *The Varsity*, 20 November 1967, 4.

The Dow protests, however, created or highlighted divisions within the student body. The engineering students, for example, who were being recruited by Dow, reacted strongly against what they saw as a threat to their future employment. The Engineering Society held a General Meeting on 29 November 1967 at which time a motion was passed demanding that the university administration invite Dow Chemical back to the campus to complete their interview schedule. The engineering students seeking employment with Dow, they argued, were “deprived of their rights as students within the University, were subjected to indignities and even to personal violence.” These students, the motion continued, “should themselves have the right to make moral decisions about their employers” without interference from any other group or individual on campus.⁸⁷

Other student groups, including the student council at St Michael’s College, also condemned the sit-in at the Placement Service. A motion that passed overwhelmingly stated that: “This council, while recognizing the right of dissent through peaceful and orderly methods, for example picketing and boycotting, abhors violence and the restriction of the rights of students to decide for themselves what companies they wish to work for.”⁸⁸ For them, as for many others on campus, the issue was the right of particular groups or individuals to restrict the freedom of expression and movement of others on campus. This form of demonstration was seen as “contrary to everything a university stands for.”⁸⁹ The right-wing Edmund Burke Society also demonstrated against the Dow protests, holding a counter-demonstration at the 20 November 1967 protest. They opposed the anti-war protestors on ideological grounds and carried signs reading: “We Dig Dow – Bomb to Win in Vietnam” and “Attention Dow – Peace Creeps do not Speak for U of T Students.”⁹⁰

Despite this opposition, the SAC passed a motion supporting the demands made at the Placement Service demonstration. Following a long debate, it was agreed by a vote of 24-14 that “[r]ecruiters for firms profiting from the Vietnam war [sic] are not welcome on the University of Toronto campus.” The SAC called for the “immediate convening of an advisory board on campus employment services to authorize the use of facilities” and “instructed SAC representatives on the board to oppose requests ‘from companies supplying materials to parties for use directly in military action in Vietnam.’”⁹¹ In response to this decision, a group of students, under the auspices of the Ad Hoc Committee for Representative Student Government, began circulating a petition calling for the impeachment of SAC president, Tom Faulkner. Faulkner, they argued, “no longer represents the students of this university.”⁹² The issue for many of these students, mostly from the engineering and law faculties, was that SAC was formulating policies on “moral and political issues” for which they were not elected. In response to the more than 1,600 signatures that the petition received, Faulkner decided to resign his position and allow the student body to decide whether he still represented their interests.⁹³

In the election campaign that followed, Faulkner ran against law student Bill Charlton who argued that SAC should not “seek the power to declare on the value of a moral position, let alone seek the power to legislate on the basis of that decision.” The university, Charlton believed, should facilitate debate and discussion among its members rather than dictating one official truth to which all must subscribe.⁹⁴ For

⁸⁷ UTA, B1989-0031 Claude Bissell collection, Box 3. Memo to J.F. Westhead from T.G.L. Lawson, “Anti-Dow Chemicals Demonstration,” 2 January 1968, 1.

⁸⁸ “St. Michael’s Council Condemns Sit-in,” *The Varsity*, 24 November 1967, 3.

⁸⁹ UTA, A1975-0021 Office of the President, Box 147, File “CAPUT.” “A Statement by John H. Sword, Acting President,” 21 November 1967.

⁹⁰ Paul MacRae, “Sit-in Sparks SAC Debate on Employment Recruiting,” *The Varsity*, 22 November 1967, 1.

⁹¹ David Frank, “Vietnam War Suppliers Not Welcome at U of T: SAC,” *The Varsity*, 24 November 1967, 1.

⁹² Brian Cruchley, “Petitioners Pursue Faulkner’s Resignation,” *The Varsity*, 24 November 1967, 1.

⁹³ Mike Kesterton, “Tom Faulkner will Resign from SAC,” *The Varsity*, 27 November 1967, 1.

⁹⁴ Bill Charlton, “The Candidates,” *The Varsity*, 13 December 1967, 5.

student activists such as Faulkner, this position denied student government the right to comment on any controversial issues and restricted its activities to dances, yearbooks, and other social concerns.⁹⁵ Faulkner and his supporters believed that student government should debate issues that students consider important and take action in the best interests of its constituents. Refusing to take action on controversial issues, student activists argued, is tantamount to accepting the status quo, which is not “apolitical” or free of “power” but is “heavily value-laden.” Student government must, therefore, initiate debate and action to challenge the existing framework.⁹⁶

The student body seemed to agree with this assessment as they returned Faulkner to office with over five thousand votes cast in his favour. In commenting on the results, Faulkner believed that the “students have chosen — they want a government which takes an active stand on issues we can deal with.”⁹⁷ Despite this result, the whole upheaval, from the Dow protests to the SAC election, illustrated the disparate definitions of the proper place of the student within the larger society. Although many agreed that students were responsible citizens with a duty to participate in issues relevant to society, others believed that students should concentrate solely on the university community and leave the broader issues to others off campus. Indeed, in the end, in Regina, John Conway was fired as the editor of *The Carillon* because of his continual coverage of the Vietnam War. The Students’ Representative Council (SRC) believed that the “first responsibility of the student newspaper is to provide coverage of student events” and criticized Conway for failing to dedicate sufficient space to these happenings.⁹⁸ The newspaper, they argued, was funded by student fees and should therefore represent the student body, reporting on dances, frosh activities, and other such student events.⁹⁹ As well, many activists at the University of Toronto and Simon Fraser University recalled that, while the Vietnam War had an impact on the way some students viewed the world, it did not have a significant or direct impact on what was happening on campus. Generally speaking, while activists were greatly inspired and motivated by the anti-war movement, attempts to mobilize against the war often faced opposition from the more conservative students on campus.¹⁰⁰

Levitt has argued that the “centre of the anti-war movement was located in the universities,”¹⁰¹ but leadership of this movement was often in the hands of non-students. Faculty members, rather than students, organized much of the on-campus anti-war activism.¹⁰² For example, at both Simon Fraser University and the University of Toronto, the Committee to End the War in Vietnam was a faculty-run group focused on ending the war and supporting draft dodgers and military deserters.¹⁰³ Student activists participated in the yearly protests against the war, which began in 1965, but many of these were off-campus events organized by individuals and organizations external to the university. Overall, the anti-war movement was dominated by non-students and was, in fact, sometimes seen by activists themselves as a distraction from “the needed long term change in domestic social reform.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵ Faulkner, interview.

⁹⁶ Tom Faulkner, “The Candidates,” *The Varsity*, 13 December 1967, 5.

⁹⁷ Paul MacRae, “Faulkner Returned to Office by 800-vote Majority,” *The Varsity*, 15 December 1967, 1.

⁹⁸ “Kelly,” *The Carillon*, 22 October 1965, 1.

⁹⁹ D. Mitchell, “Council & Comment,” *The Carillon*, 22 October 1965, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Lexchin, interview; Stan Wong, interview with the author, 9 May 2006; Cleveland, interview; and Hugh Armstrong, interview with the author, 7 March 2006.

¹⁰¹ Levitt, *Children of Privilege*, 49.

¹⁰² Sharon Yandle, interview with the author, 13 February 2006.

¹⁰³ S.F.U. Committee to End the War Against Vietnam, “Vote Against the War in Vietnam,” [1967]; Kenneth McNaught, *Conscience and History: A Memoir* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁴ Peter Warrian, interview with the author, 9 March 2006.

Nonetheless, the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement radicalized many student activists and inspired them to push for change, both within the university community and in the wider society.

Canadian Nationalism

Another concern for student activists at English-Canadian universities was the growing Canadian nationalist movement that developed by the late 1960s and early 1970s. With the Quiet Revolution and a separatist movement brewing in Quebec and Canada celebrating its centennial in 1967, as well as growing concerns over American imperialism both globally and in Canada,¹⁰⁵ many Canadians began to adopt an increasingly nationalistic stance, questioning their relationship with their powerful neighbours to the South and seeking definitions of what it meant to be "Canadian." This "new nationalism," according to Stephen Azzi, emerged from a growing feeling of concern over the level of American influence in Canada.¹⁰⁶ Although Azzi argued that this nationalism was primarily focused on economic issues, concerns were raised regarding the influence of the United States over all aspects of Canadian life, including politics, culture, and the economy.¹⁰⁷ This influence, many Canadians believed, prevented the country from developing independent political, cultural, or economic policies; Canada was seen merely as a satellite or colony of the United States.¹⁰⁸ By the late 1960s, this concern for Canadian sovereignty had become central to the national debates.

For many student activists, Canadian nationalism became an increasingly important issue by the early 1970s. An especially strong fusion between nationalism and Canadian youth was forged that saw American foreign and domestic policies as disagreeable and believed in the need for an independent Canada.¹⁰⁹ Many activists viewed American influence as a form of imperialism, and, drawing upon widespread anti-imperialist rhetoric, argued that Canada should follow in the footsteps of other countries around the world and break their bonds of colonialism. Only through national liberation, which would ensure political and economic sovereignty, they believed, could Canada become a truly democratic nation.¹¹⁰

On university campuses, the issue of Canadian nationalism arose as growing concerns were expressed about the influence of the United States on the Canadian educational system. "As is so much else in Canadian political, economic, social and cultural life," argued John Conway in an article in the SFU student newspaper, *The Peak*, "education, especially university education, is increasingly dominated by the American Empire."¹¹¹ This domination was particularly evident in the decreasing proportion of Canadians teaching at Canadian universities caused by the rising influx of academics from the United States, a situation studied by Carleton University professors Robin Matthews and James Steele.¹¹² This loss of control over "the most vital and critically important cultural institution any modern society

¹⁰⁵ J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996).

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 167.

¹⁰⁷ See George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965); Kari Levitt, *Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970); and Mel Watkins, *Foreign Ownership and the Structure of Canadian Industry* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968).

¹⁰⁸ SFUA, F-79 The Simon Fraser University Faculty Association Fonds, File F-79-3-4-1, "CAUT censure of SFU, 1967-69." "A Programme of Action for SFU," [1968], 1; James Laxer, "The Student Movement and Canadian Independence," *Canadian Dimension* 6, no. 3-4 (August-September 1969): 27-34.

¹⁰⁹ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 300.

¹¹⁰ See Steve Langdon, "'American Imperialism' is not Irrelevant Jargon," *The Varsity*, 2 December 1968, 4; Harvey Shepherd, interview with the author, 18 January 2006; and "A Programme of Action for SFU," 1.

¹¹¹ John Conway, "Educational Imperialism," *The Peak*, 12 March 1969, 7.

¹¹² Robin Matthews and James Steele, *The Struggle for Canadian Universities* (Toronto: New Press, 1969).

possesses — our universities,” Conway believed, crippled the nation.¹¹³ One possible solution to this American control over the Canadian educational system, some argued, was the establishment of a quota to limit the number of non-Canadians in any university department and an insistence that “the content of studies take proper account of Canada’s land, its peoples, their history, their culture, their means of livelihood and their relations with other peoples of the world.”¹¹⁴ Many students, concerned about their employment prospects in Canadian universities, supported these demands.¹¹⁵

Student activists also sought to defend Canadian nationalism by developing an independent student movement that focused on the issues most relevant to the Canadian context. Although these students recognized that they had derived much of their style and ideology from the student movements in the United States and that American issues had often dominated their political agenda, by the late 1960s, students such as James Laxer sought to develop tactics more appropriate to Canada’s specific national context. Canadian students, Laxer argued, must focus on the struggle against the Americanization of Canadian institutions and introduce the issue of imperialism into the politics of the country.¹¹⁶ Many student activists, who had been inspired by the movements in the United States, believed in a need to focus more closely on the Canadian context and reject what seemed to many to be their branch-plant relationship with those movements. According to Toronto student Andrew Wernick, many Canadian student activists resented the attempts by American student leaders to influence what was happening north of the border. Ultimately, attempts were made to indigenize the movements and make them more relevant to the Canadian national context.¹¹⁷

Disagreement again developed within the core of student activists, however, over the issue of Canadian nationalism. In Toronto, it was possible to “detect the ripple of disagreement within the groups or the group at the time.”¹¹⁸ The reluctance of some student activists to focus on Canadian nationalism reflected a debate raging in left-wing organizations more generally; while some activists believed that nationalism provided a means to overcome American imperialism, others argued the necessity for looking beyond national borders to create an international revolutionary movement. Although some agreed that Canada existed as a subservient colony to the United States, little consensus could be reached on how much to stress issues of Canadian independence and nationalism.¹¹⁹ As a result of these different interpretations, student activists often disagreed on strategies or tactics and split into increasingly divided factions. Some students who took a nationalist perspective joined the Waffle movement within the New Democratic Party (NDP). This organization sought to re-define the NDP and return the party to its traditional roots. The movement, based on the “Manifesto for an Independent Socialist Canada” and in large part dominated by student activists, focused on a number of issues, including a return to the socialism of the Regina Manifesto, a rejection of Americanism defined as “militarism abroad and racism

¹¹³ LAC, MG31-D66 Peter Warrian Fonds, Vol.1, File “CUS Misc. Papers.” J.F. Conway, “American Imperialism in Our Educational System,” [1969], 4.

¹¹⁴ MUA, Canadian student social and political organizations (c.1968-1977), Radical Organizations Archive, Box 1, File “Canadian Liberation Movement.” Petition “Canada Must Have Canadian Universities,” [n.d.]. This movement is discussed in Jeffrey Cormier, *The Canadianization Movement: Emergence, Survival and Success* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

¹¹⁵ “GSU Wants 100% Canadian U of T Junior Staff Quota,” *The Varsity*, 2 December 1970, 14.

¹¹⁶ Laxer, “The Student Movement and Canadian Independence,” 30.

¹¹⁷ Harding, interview; Susan Reisler, interview with the author, 10 March 2006; Wernick, interview; Lightman, interview; Howard Adelman, interview with the author, 9 March 2006; and Lexchin, interview.

¹¹⁸ Philip Resnick, interview with the author, 10 February 2006.

¹¹⁹ Wernick, interview.

at home," and women's liberation.¹²⁰ The student internationalists, on the other hand, often worked within one of the Trotskyite or Marxist-Leninist organizations.¹²¹

Conclusion

In the end, various global, national, and provincial movements played an important role in shaping the English-Canadian student movements. Worldwide struggles against oppression contributed to the development of an increasingly radical political culture on university campuses as student activists drew inspiration from these movements and aspired to help in democratic transformations sweeping the globe. Student activists at the University of Toronto, Simon Fraser University, and University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus were inspired and influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, the Red Power Movement, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the Vietnam War, and the Canadian nationalist movement, all of which politicized and radicalized student activists who sought to change both the university community and the wider society. This was particularly true at the University of Toronto, where student activists seemed to have felt a greater ability and responsibility to influence global, national, and provincial sites of power. Although external concerns rarely mobilized the student population *en masse* on campus, and often created or highlighted divisions among students, wider movements for social change provided opportunities to discuss integral issues of national and international consequence.

This particular form of student activism fractured and dissolved at English-Canadian universities by the mid-1970s as conditions on these campuses and in the wider society evolved.¹²² Nevertheless, universities have long been sites of political protest and action and, following the Sixties, students persisted in pressing for social change. Student leaders in the Sixties were radicalized by issues of racism, imperialism, and war; in the years that followed, student activists have been influenced by similar issues such as apartheid in South Africa, globalization, the environment, and wars and policies of oppression internationally. Further research may expose the similarities and differences between the Sixties' student movements and those that have followed. Clearly, just as external issues were important to student activists in Canada from at least as far back as the 1920s, these issues continue to radicalize and mobilize students and likely will in the future.

¹²⁰ Desmond Morton, *The New Democrats, 1961-1986: The Politics of Change* (Toronto: Copp Clark, Pitman, 1986), 93; Don Kossick, interview with the author, 9 March 2002.

¹²¹ Wernick, interview; Kenda Richards, interview with the author, 18 February 2002.

¹²² See, for example, Owsen, *Born at the Right Time*, 280-307; and Levitt, *Children of Privilege*, 93-114.