History of Intellectual Culture

http://www.ucalgary.ca/hic • ISSN 1492-7810
2014-16 • Vol. 11, No. 1

The Farthing Brothers and the Narrativisation of a Conservative Canada

Kevin Anderson

Abstract

Hugh and John Farthing, "mid-level" Tory thinkers, were brothers who have been overlooked in Canadian intellectual and political history. They helped construct one of the enduring conservative narratives of mid-twentieth-century Canada. The Farthings posited an anti-Liberal/liberal, monarchistic story that explained not only Liberal political dominance but the concomitant decline of democracy in Canada. At the centre of the Farthings' narrative was the villainous Mackenzie King, motivated by a materialistic, republican vision of society and beholden to French Canada. The Farthings perpetuated a conspiratorial vision of French Canada leading Canadians toward a regulatory Keynesian statism, diluting the body politic of its British and spiritual essence, and facilitating the eventual swallowing of Canada by un-British ideologies. Examining the Farthings' ideas from the 1920s to the 1950s reveals a complexity within conservatism that belies the normative division of Canadian conservatives into neo-liberal and Red Tory camps. The Farthings distrusted the state, especially one controlled by the Liberals. It also demonstrates the reality of a fear of foreignness specific to this narrative and the Tory vision of Britishness: Liberals were equated with "the foreign," incapable of exercising the responsibilities of British constitutionalism, while stolid Tories had to defend this tradition for the future of the nation.

Responding to an inquiry in June 1927 from William J. Bingham, an Englishman who had recently arrived in Alberta, regarding the principles of Conservatives in Canada, secretary of the Calgary Conservative Association Hugh Farthing summarized what he believed the party stood for. Paramount among these principles was the British connection: "As in England . . . does the Party stand for loyalty to British institutions of Government and for proper respect to established authority." He assured Bingham that he was not impugning the patriotism of "our Liberal and Progressive opponents" or suggesting that they "are opposed to [the] British connection," but simply that "we emphasize the Imperial tie more than our opponents do." Yet Hugh, writing in the shadow of the King–Byng Affair, also expressed an early manifestation of what would become a constant post-war Conservative refrain: that the Liberals, particularly under Mackenzie King, openly courted those opposed to the British connection. In the same breath that Hugh assured Bingham of the good intentions of non-Tories, he added that "Those who desire secession of Canada from the Empire and those who oppose any active participation by Canada in Imperial defence and other Empire efforts, are always supporters of the Liberal Party."[1]

[1] Bingham to "Sir (or Madam)," 27 June 1927; Hugh Farthing (hereafter "Hugh") to Bingham, 30 June 1927, Farthing and Tavender fonds (FT), file 3, vol. 1, Legal Archives Society of Alberta (LASA). The Farthing brothers closely identified the Liberal Party with liberalism in Canada, so it is difficult to separate the two. Where I am referring specifically to the Liberal Party, I have capitalized "Liberal"; where I am referring specifically to liberalism (or at least

Hugh's younger brother, John, shared his brother's belief in the centrality of the British connection as well as Hugh's distaste for the Liberals. John's hostility to King and his influence over Canada's nationalism is the main subject of the second of two lengthy letters to his friend and constitutional expert Eugene Forsey denouncing an article George Ferguson had recently written for *Saturday Night* in March 1952. In his article, Ferguson defended the potential removal of the terms "Royal" and "Dominion" from official Canadian documents, believing this to be a manifestation of Canada's inevitable march toward independence.[2] John was livid, seeing the hand of "mass Mack-Kingism" in the removal of these traditional titles and behind the belief in the inevitable trajectory of nationhood itself. In fact, according to John, in his long political career King had poisoned Canadian nationalism and transformed it into a harmful doctrine of inevitable progress in three major ways: first, in the petty way in which he "carried out his supposedly great life work." Second, by accepting and encouraging French Canadian nationalism, King had ensured his own political survival but caused national unity to be akin to the demands of French Canadians. Third, and most importantly, King's resentment of Britain — epitomized in his "slapping of the governor-general's face in public," referring to the King–Byng Affair — had "destroyed the constitution of the country and with it all possibility of Canadian nationhood." King's actions had resulted in a nation with no deeper meaning beyond political will. He had sullied the office of governor-general and become a demagogue, linking nationalism to his person/party, not to the ancient tradition of monarchy. John even speculated that King was simply attempting to finish what his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, had begun in 1837: the transformation of Canada into "an independent republic."[3]

The Farthings and a Conservative Milieu

Conservative discourses like those above were efforts to narrate alternative national accounts from that of the so-called Authorized Version of Canadian history. The Authorized Version was most obvious in Arthur Lower's aptly titled *From Colony to Nation*, allegedly celebrating Canada's gradual distance from the British motherland as *the* centrepiece of Canadian national development.[4] These discourses contained heroes, villains, and origin stories, designed to legitimize a certain understanding of the past, present, and future. The Farthing brothers helped construct one such rival narrative, positing a story that explained Liberal political dominance and the concomitant decline of democracy in Canada. At the core of their vision was the sanctity of the heroic Crown-in-Parliament. This had been violated by the King–Byng affair, a claim echoed by others in conservative circles at this time.[5]

---

the Farthings' interpretation of liberalism), I have used a lowercase "l." Where I am referring to both simultaneously, I have written "Liberal/liberal."

[2] Ferguson, "Old, New Strides in Nationalism," *Saturday Night*, 8 March 1952. This was one of the many concerns of Canadian conservatism during the 1940s and 1950s. Philip Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals, The Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939–1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 251–3.

[3] John Farthing (hereafter "Jack"; see note 29) to Forsey, 24 March 1952, Farthing, John, Part I, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, Eugene Forsey fonds (EF), Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

[4] This term appears in Donald Wright's *Donald Creighton: A Life in History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2015) 176, 221–2 and is discussed in Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals*, 244–5.

[5] Forsey certainly held this position. He analyzed the King–Byng affair in great detail in his dissertation "The Royal Dissolution of Parliament in the British Commonwealth" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1941), 220–409. He also wrote an article in 1951 repeating his charges about King undermining the British tradition. "Mr. King and Parliamentary Government," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 17 (1951): 451–67. Conservative journalist Grattan O'Leary detailed a similar account in his memoirs, *Recollections of People, Press and Politics* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), 7–8. O'Leary noted that when he first went to Ottawa the governor-general "was far from the supernumerary he became following the constitutional confrontation between Mackenzie King and Lord Byng, a situation in which honour, decency, and right were on Byng's side and deceit, demagoguery, and victory on King's."

For the Farthings, King's and the Liberals' actions (interpreted to be synonymous) revealed a crass plot to destroy the British connection, motivated by a materialistic and republican vision of society at the behest of a narrow-minded French Canada to whom they were beholden. The Farthings embraced a conspiratorial vision of French Canada using its influence to lead Canadians toward an increasingly regulatory Keynesian statism, diluting the Canadian body politic of its British and spiritual essence, and facilitating the eventual swallowing of Canada by un-British ideologies. This narrative culminated in the election of John Diefenbaker in 1957, the same year as the posthumous release of John's *Freedom Wears a Crown*, which became part of the intellectual backbone of the Conservative resurgence of the time.[6] Conservatives would alter the narrative in the 1960s, increasingly reacting to a "permissive society" and the seemingly endless expansion of the Keynesian welfare state. But the seeds for both neo-liberalism, or at least its rejection of Keynesianism and statism, and the rise of social conservatism and rightist identity politics, emphasizing the need for traditionalist morals based in a narrowly ethno-nationalist vision of the country,[7] were present in the discourses of early post-war Tory narratives.[8]

While not as well-known as other Tories, the Farthings were very involved, through party activism, networks of sociability, articles, and John's book, in the conservative movement. Hugh and John are significant, I think, for three interrelated reasons: (1) they occupy a space, an intellectual-political "middle ground," often ignored in the history of ideas and politics; (2) analysis of figures in this space nuances our understanding of conservatism; (3) small seeds here lead to the larger transformation(s) within the conservative milieu of the post-war era. Conservatives, due to the rise of the welfare state, the threat of communism, the relative decline in Canada of the British connection, the changing ethnic composition of the nation, and the vocal presence of Quebec, became increasingly suspicious of state intervention and non-British influence. The Farthings were not quite residents of the "cultic milieu" sociologist Colin Campbell believes represents the "cultural underground" of society, filled with "deviant belief systems" unified in opposition to orthodoxy.[9] Yet they were also not national leaders of the Conservative Party or leading conservative intellectuals (although they were in contact with many of these types of figures). Instead, they

---

[6] The *Globe and Mail* listed Farthing's *Freedom Wears a Crown* (Toronto: Kingswood House, 1957) along with Judith Robinson's *This is on the House* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957) and Leslie Roberts' *C.D.: The Life and Times of Clarence Decatur Howe* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1957) as contributing to the repudiation of the Liberal government in 1957. "Explorations 7 Sets Intellectual High," *Globe and Mail*, 15 June 1957.

[7] See James Farney, *Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 3–13, for an excellent discussion of the rise of social conservatism in reaction to the "permissiveness" of the 1960s, specifically the sexual revolution, as well as its roots in previous decades.

[8] Daniel Stedman Jones defines neo-liberalism as "the free market ideology based on individual liberty and limited self-government that connected human freedom to the actions of the rational, self-interested actor in the competitive marketplace," emanating largely from the thought of Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and Karl Popper in the 1930s–1950s. Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2–8. David Harvey, from a more explicitly Marxist perspective, defines neo-liberalism at its simplest as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices." Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2. This essay is not proposing that the Farthings were "dyed-in-the-wool" neo-liberals. They would have disagreed with Harvey's contention (*Brief History*, 3–7) that market exchange is upheld as an ethic unto itself, for example, in neo-liberalism. This essay is proposing that the seeds of the conservative attack on the state in Canada lie in perhaps unexpected places and were motivated by conservative dedication to the individual *as well as* fear of "the Other."

[9] Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002), 14–15.

existed within a middle space. Too often conservatism has been understood only from the perspective of party elites or the most articulate thinkers, presenting an intellectually cohesive and systematic ideology. The Farthings, as "mid-level" apparatchiks and thinkers, help to demonstrate the diversity within conservative thought. This article historicizes what has become a normative category, conservatism, not necessarily to evaluate the abstract coherence of grand ideas, but to study the content of ideas over time and in space.

I also connect Hugh and John to some of the most important conservative actors of this period, such as Forsey, journalist Judith Robinson, and George Drew. Hugh and John were, admittedly, not the best-known figures in conservative circles; yet what they wrote and the people they wrote to, I maintain, were small pieces in a quilt of tropes, talking points, and ideological certainties that defined the post-war Canadian right. Scattered mentions of the Farthings, especially John due to *Freedom*, appear in the scant historical literature on conservatism, connecting them directly to a larger conservative milieu critical of post-war liberal nationalism.[10] I want to tie together these threads, to understand, like Michael Freeden, the "universe of meanings" created by a particular grouping of ideas of whatever level of coherence and what this universe says about how historical actors make sense of their world.[11] For the Farthings, their British-based conservatism refracted and constructed a narrative of heroes and villains, triumphant and tragic origin stories, and a Canada of "Us" and "Them."

Recent historical studies[12] of Canadian conservatism have often pointed to a bifurcation within conservatism, most commonly interpreted to be between Red Toryism, which praises the British connection, promotes an organic vision of society, and advocates state intervention, and neo-liberals, who reject state activism as inevitably leading down the "road to serfdom," resembling their brethren to the south.[13] Yet this division is too clean. The Farthings, for example, did not reject state intervention in the economy or the usefulness of government as a whole. They praised Parliament as representing the greatness of Canada's British heritage. They did, however, challenge the efficacy of a bureaucratized Keynesian welfare state as sapping individuality. More importantly, the Farthings rejected the state as an instrument in engineering Canadian society as they increasingly identified this same state with an alien/French Canadian Liberal Party in the 1940s and 1950s. The Farthings, in other words, represent a

[10] See Charles Taylor, *Radical Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982), 40–41; C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964–1968* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queens University Press, 2010), 27–29; Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals*, 237–9, 244–5.

[11] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1–3.

[12] Older studies exist of conservatism in Canada. Many are biographies of prominent Conservative politicians, with Creighton's two-volume study of Macdonald, *John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1952) and *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), serving as the classic of the genre, or historical profiles of the Conservative Party, such as John R. Williams, *The Conservative Party of Canada: 1920–1949* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1956) and J.L. Granatstein, *The Politics of Survival: The Conservative Party of Canada, 1939–1945* (University of Toronto: Toronto, 1970). Exceptions that analyze the centrality of intellectuals and ideas in this older literature are Taylor's journalistic *Radical Tories* and John Conway, "An 'Adapted Organic Tradition,'" *Daedalus* 117 (1988): 381–96.

[13] For the most recent studies of Canadian conservatism that emphasize this view, see Dagmar Eberle, Rainer-Olaf Schultze, and Roland Sturm, "Mission Accomplished? A Comparative Exploration of Conservatism in the United States and Canada," in *Conservative Parties and Right-Wing Politics in North America: Reaping the Benefits of an Ideological Victory?*, ed. Eberle, Schultze, and Sturm (Germany: Leske+Budrich, Opladen, 2003), 11–30. In the same volume, Martin Thunert concludes that anti-statism went largely unheralded in Canada until the 1990s because it was counter to Canadian political culture, characterized by "collectivist . . . (Red Toryism)"; Thunert, "Conservative Think Tanks in the United States and Canada," 246–7. Also see James Farney and David Rayside, *Conservatism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), especially Farney and Rayside, "Introduction: The Meanings of Conservatism," 3–17, and Steve Patten, "The Triumph of Neoliberalism within Partisan Conservatism in Canada," 59–76.

specifically Canadian reaction to a wider transitional period in transatlantic conservative thought in which Burkean notions of respect for social hierarchies and the humane virtues of Christianity were being challenged by the radical free-market ideas of Friedrich Hayek with the rise of the welfare state.[14]

While it is unclear if the Farthing brothers read Hayek's work, the brothers and the narrative they helped to construct about the Kingsian Liberals do help reveal the ambivalence toward the modern state at the heart of an allegedly pro-interventionist Red Toryism.[15] The brothers rejected radical individualism; yet their suspicion of communism, the Liberal Party and that party's "creature," the Keynesian welfare state, was part of a growing conservative chorus that, as scholar David Harvey has noted in his history of neo-liberalism, "captured" the ideals of individual freedom in public discourse and turned these ideals against the interventionist state.[16] The seeds for a conservative intellectual distrust of Keynesian planning and an alleged post-war Keynesian consensus in Canadian society thus lay not only in market-worship, but in the firmly monarchistic thought and anti-Kingsian liberalism of Tories such as the Farthings.

To complicate matters more, John did not totally reject Americanism. The United States was to be admired in some respects as it emerged from the Reformation tradition, in that individual choice and responsibility were prized; America simply exemplified a different vision of democracy, rejecting the monarchy but maintaining certain fundamental principles. Canada had an extra barrier to the materialism present in America, the Crown-in-Parliament. It served to preserve the ancient values of nobility and honour from the regimentation and communization of the modern world, while acting as an organic embodiment of the entire body politic, not beholden to crass political interests. This very barrier was being slowly degraded by the Liberals. In fact, the Farthings demonstrated a greater concern with Canada being transformed into a corrupt *South American*–style republic by the "mass Mack-Kingism" infecting politics than a North American one, speaking to the brothers' concern with the rise of "non-Reformation" and/or non-British influences.

I am building on the work of Nancy Christie, Cara Spittal's dissertation on the "Diefenbaker moment," Donald Wright's recent biography of nationalist historian Donald Creighton, and a growing literature on the dynamic relationship between Britishness and Canadian identity. Christie's conclusion that in this period a group of public figures struggled to forge a new synthesis through which to challenge the Keynesian vision of technocratic democracy is important to any study of twentieth-century Canadian conservatism.[17] I have been influenced by Spittal's examination of intellectuals and politicians reconstructing the narrative of Canada along explicitly conservative lines. What the Farthings demonstrate is that while Spittal notes that professional politicians and intellectuals strove to modernize national narrative(s) and create an inclusive conservative vision, there remained a segment of conservatism that could never truly let go of an ethnocentric vision of society.[18] Hostility toward French Canada certainly went beyond just the Farthings in conservative circles; Wright, while denying that Creighton was *only* a Francophobic bigot, profiles Creighton's inability to ever truly understand French Canada on its own terms.[19] The brothers went beyond Creighton's caricatured perceptions of French Canadians, however, envisioning the hand of an insatiable French Canadian nationalism behind most Liberal decisions. A

[14] Jones, *Masters of the Universe*.

[15] It is anachronistic to apply the term "Red Tory" to the Farthings as this term was not commonly used until Gad Horowitz's "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 32 (1966): 143–71. Nevertheless, this is the terminology used in the literature discussing conservatism in Canada.

[16] Harvey, *Brief History*, 41–42.

[17] Nancy Christie, "'Look out for Leviathan': The Search for a Conservative Modernist Consensus," in *Cultures of Citizenship in Postwar Canada, 1940–1955* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2003), 63–66.

[18] Cara Spittal, "The Diefenbaker Moment" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 7–8, 22–23, 37–39, 50–51, 60.

[19] Wright, *Donald Creighton*, 4–8, 124–7, 130–2, 137–41.

suspicion of and hostility toward French Canada and non-British actors was not a prejudicial aberration, but constitutive of their conservatism.

Historians have recently made excellent efforts to recover the dynamism of Britishness in Canadian identity, critiquing older interpretations of Britishness as simply evidence of a colonial mindset or "nostalgic diehard" Anglophilia.[20] José Igartua has studied the "Other Quiet Revolution" of post-war English Canada, consisting of a sudden decline of British-dominated ethnic nationalism in the 1960s in the face of multiculturalism, a vocal French Canadian nationalism, and civic-nationalist arguments rejecting ethnocentrism. C.P. Champion, on the other hand, maintains that in Britishness itself, a tradition that lasted past the 1960s, lay the recognition of diversity and "universal" civic values. Britishness was thus not just evidence of a racist colonial past, but a central component of a shifting and complex English Canadian identity, an important idea to which Philip Buckner has dedicated several studies.[21]

I place myself between these schools of thought, as Champion and some other historians of Britishness tend to assume that proclamations of support for tolerance by staunch pro-British nationalists are examples of tolerance.[22] Britishness as the upholding of British institutions and traditions as superior, or at least normative, is undoubtedly a central component in any understanding of English Canadian identity; yet this does not necessitate an either/or binary of racist colonialism or altruistic devotion to democracy.[23] The Farthings represent the tensions inherent in this debate: the brothers embraced a positive vision of Canada as a British nation with the potential to be a model democracy. They simultaneously held with suspicion the involvement of "Others," including non-British immigrants and French Canadians, in government and civic life. Britishness was not just ideological, in other words, but had an ethno-nationalist component, one that would feed right-wing conspiracy theories about French Canadian dominance and anti-immigrant screeds for years to come.[24]

---

[20] This phrase is from Philip Resnick in *The Masks of Proteus: Canadian Reflections on the State* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1990), 83.

[21] José Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945–1971* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Champion, *Strange Demise*; Philip A. Buckner, "Whatever Happened to the British Empire?" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 4 (1993): 3–32; John Herd Thompson, "Canada and the 'Third British Empire,' 1901–1939," 87–106 and Buckner, "Canada and the End of Empire, 1939–1982," 107–26 in *Canada and the British Empire*, ed. Philip Buckner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); R. Douglas Francis, "Historical Perspectives on Britain: The Ideas of Canadian Historians Frank H. Underhill and Arthur R.M. Lower," in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 309–21; Buckner, "Introduction," 1–14 and Andrea Benvenuti and Stuart Ward, "Britain, Europe, and the 'Other Quiet Revolution' in Canada," 165–82 in *Canada and the End of Empire*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005).

[22] For example, Andrew Smith, "Canadian Progress and the British Connection: Why Canadian Historians Seeking the Middle Road Should Give 2 ½ Cheers for the British Empire," in *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*, ed. Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson (London: University of London, 2009): 75–97.

[23] See my *Not Quite Us: Anti-Catholicism, The History of an Idea in English Canada, 1900–2000* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, forthcoming Spring 2019), 9–14.

[24] I am thinking specifically of the conspiratorial literature from BMG Publishing, most infamously Jock Andrew's *Bilingual Today, French Tomorrow: Trudeau's Master Plan and How It Can Be Stopped* (Richmond Hill, ON: BMG Publishing, 1977). As noted below, Jack's book became something of a "cult classic" in right-wing, pro-British circles during the 1960s–1990s. According to Matthew Hayday, Andrew himself became part of the Alliance for the Preservation of English in Canada, which used Farthing's book. Hayday, *So They Want Us to Learn French: Promoting and Opposing Bilingualism in English-Speaking Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015), 111–13, 185–8.

Who Were These Men?

Providing a comprehensive analysis of the brothers' lives is difficult, as neither left a complete collection of papers and neither had any children. Instead, scraps of information are contained in various archives of associations they belonged to, law firms they worked for, or friends they frequently corresponded with.[25] Particularly in John's case, large swathes of his short life are, at least for this author, undocumented. Hugh (Figure 1) and John (Figure 2) were the sons of Anglican Bishop of Montreal John Cragg Farthing. Both were born in Woodstock, Ontario, Hugh in 1892 and John in 1897; both went to McGill University, with Hugh moving on to study law at Osgoode Hall in Toronto; and both fought in the First World War.[26] Hugh was seriously injured in a gas attack in 1917 and sent back to Toronto. He was called to the Ontario bar in 1919, but his injuries continued to take their toll and he was forced to move to a drier climate, Calgary, in 1922. Hugh became a successful lawyer in Calgary, particularly as an advocate for veterans' rights (he served on various committees for the Royal Legion of Alberta and as its legal advisor). Like his father, he was a devout Anglican, serving the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Calgary both as a lawyer and as Chancellor. Early upon arriving in Alberta, Hugh became active in the Conservative Party. He sat in the Alberta legislature as MLA for Calgary from 1930 to 1935, although he was one of many victims of the Social Credit sweep of 1935. He unsuccessfully ran in Calgary East during the 1940 federal election swept by the Liberals, an election that saw no Conservatives elected in his home province. Despite the dearth of opportunity for Alberta Tories at this time,[27] he remained active in the party for the rest of his life. Hugh was at the famous Port Hope conference of 1942, convened to inject new life into the moribund Conservatives, for example, and maintained contact with many major Tory figures, such as George Drew, and was "much admir[ed]" by Arthur Meighen.[28] Hugh was appointed to the Supreme Court of Alberta Trial Division in 1960, remaining there until his retirement in 1967. Hugh died soon after in 1968, leaving behind his wife, Jean; no children; and a legacy of activity in the legal, Conservative, and Anglican circles of Alberta.

John, often referred to by his friends as Jack, left a more enigmatic legacy. If Hugh was the epitome of a respected member of the community, Jack was its opposite. Early in their lives, Jack would appear to have been on an even more impressive path, attending Oxford in 1921 and rubbing shoulders with the future elite of English Canada. Jack was a member of "The Group," an informal forum for Canadian Oxonians interested in current affairs. Yet early in his time at Oxford, Brooke Claxton, who briefly became one of Jack's friends, noticed that Jack often became incommunicado for weeks at a time, even with his family, suffering from what appeared to be overwork. This became a recurring theme in Jack's life. For example, when explaining why in 1929 he resigned a lecturing job in the McGill economics department, most

[25] The archives I accessed are Forsey's and Meighen's correspondence with Jack; Drew's correspondence with Hugh; the FT; and the records of the Alberta legislature while Hugh was an MLA. I would like to thank the archivists at LAC, LASA, and Queen's University Archives and the Inter-Library Loan staff at the University of Calgary for all of their invaluable help locating this material.

[26] Unless otherwise noted, the information on Hugh is from a biography in the FT. For the information on John, see Judith Robinson, "Preface," *Freedom Wears a Crown*, v.

[27] See the Parliament of Canada website section on the "History of Federal Ridings Since 1867," accessed 10 November, 2016, http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=G. The Tories elected only two MPs in 1945, 1949, and 1953; only three in 1957. Provincially, the Tories elected only two MLAs in 1935 and combined with the Liberals as "Independents" in 1940 to elect 19 MLAs, a number that soon collapsed. The Tories elected only a handful of MLAs until 1971. See Elections Alberta website, accessed 10 November 2016, http://www.elections.ab.ca/reports/statistics/distribution-of-seats-by-party/.

[28] Kenneth C. Cragg, "Conservative Party Policies Weighed at Port Hope: Conservative Laymen Ponder Party's Future," *Globe and Mail*, 5 September 1942. Meighen to Forsey, 19 February 1952, vol. 223, reel 2746, Arthur Meighen fonds (AM), LAC (through Queen's University Archives).

accounts note that he left because he opposed the Keynesian orthodoxy of the time (despite this being quite early for the advocacy of Keynesianism in Canada). Stephen Leacock, the head of the department at the time, had a different explanation: Jack suffered from a severe mental breakdown and had to be quietly replaced. While no conclusive statement can be made on Jack's mental health, his proclivity for privacy and inability to maintain a job perhaps explains the different tacks each brother took in their activism, with Jack remaining largely a private letter writer and Hugh engaging directly in electoral politics, as well as the lack of surviving correspondence between the two. Little to no documentation chronicles Jack's life during the Great Depression, but he resurfaced in 1942, becoming a master at Bishop's College School in Lennoxville, Quebec, in 1942. In 1949 Jack resigned his position to devote his time to his book.

Figure 1: Hugh Farthing, n.d. Courtesy of the Glenbow Archives, NB-16-237.

Around this time, Jack began to correspond with Eugene Forsey, sparked by an article Forsey had written for the *Globe and Mail* in 1951 in defence of maintaining "Royal" and "Dominion" as titles in Canada.[29] Jack and Forsey became fast friends, frequently corresponding with each other, with Forsey often referring to Jack as a "genius."[30] Jack began writing letters to the *Montreal Gazette* about the issue, becoming part of the conservative voices denouncing the Liberals' attempts to "destroy" Canada's British heritage.[31]

[29] Forsey, "Depriving Canada of Its History," *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 1951. See previous letter from Jack to Meighen for this account.

[30] Forsey to Creighton, 2 April 1952, Correspondence w. Eugene Forsey, 1944–1964, vol. 26, Donald Creighton fonds, LAC and Eugene Forsey, *A Life on the Fringe: The Memoirs of Eugene Forsey* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21–24.

[31] I could only find one published letter, "Asks that 'Royal' and 'Dominion' be Restored," *Montreal Gazette*, 22 March 1952, but he also prepared a letter for 27 March 1952 that was never published. Contained in vol. 220A, reel 2744, AM.

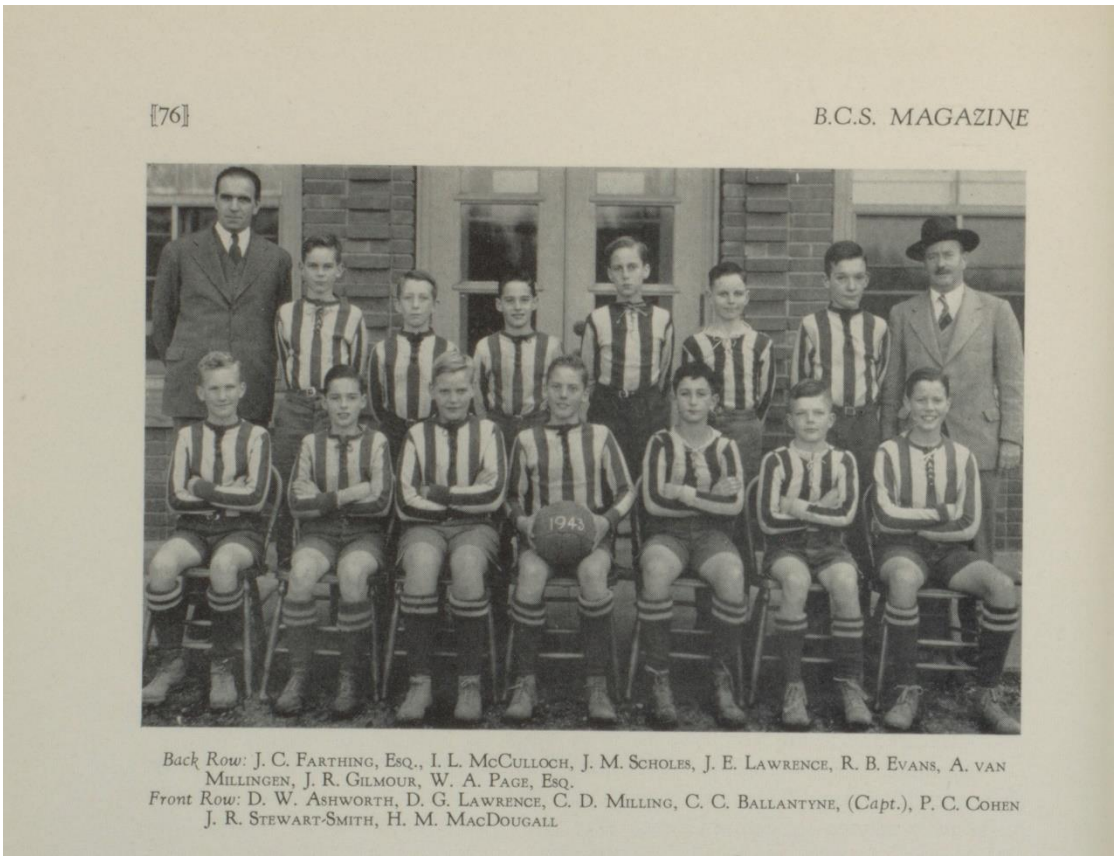

Figure 2: John Farthing, standing far left, coaching the soccer team, *Yearbook*, Winter 1943. Courtesy of Bishop's College School Archives.

Forsey, Jack, and conservative journalist Judith Robinson, of the *Globe and Mail* and the Toronto *News*, began to plan a volume about the importance of the British connection to both the history and contemporary reality of Canada. These three represented a core group of Tories who were increasingly vocal by the 1950s, who rejected what they interpreted as the Liberal sullying of Canada's British connection. While the project never got off the ground, largely because Jack was delinquent in submitting his chapters, it appears that much of his writings became the basis for his posthumous *Freedom Wears a Crown*, edited by Robinson and Margaret Blackstock and with a preface by Conservative luminary and leadership candidate Davie Fulton.[32] Another reason this project never progressed, at least while Jack was alive, was that he remained fixated on completing his planned book on economics. Since he was financially ruined after years of not working, Forsey put Jack in touch with his friend Meighen, whom Jack asked for some money to support his project. Meighen initially rejected Jack's plea, quickly clarifying that he would only fund a project about the British connection.[33] But the damage was done. Jack largely cut off contact

[32] Robinson, "Preface," *Freedom*, vi–viii; Donald Creighton, "Eugene Alfred Forsey," 7–10, in Forsey, *Freedom and Order: Collected Essays* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974); Forsey to Meighen, 20 and 27 July 1952, 5 February 1953, vol. 223, reel 2746, AM.

[33] Jack to Meighen, 12 December 1953, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF; Meighen to Jack, 29 and 30 December 1953, vol. 220A, reel 2744, AM.

with Meighen and Forsey and sank deeper into isolation, interpreting Meighen's response as an unforgivable insult. Jack was hospitalized in early 1954 for a chest condition and died. He was only fifty-six years old.[34] Forsey wrote a touching *in memoriam* for the *Montreal Gazette*, praising Jack's "unflinching intellectual integrity." He left behind his brother as well as a set of ideas and a narrative of Canadian history and politics that remains significant to the Red Tory vision of the country.[35]

Freedom became a "cult classic" in some conservative circles and was lambasted by non-conservatives who bothered to read it. Forsey wrote a glowing review of it in *Queen's Quarterly*, recommending it to all Canadians who cared about the future of the country or of civilisation.[36] William Arthur Deacon of the *Globe and Mail* called *Freedom* the "most important statement made in this generation" because it showed to Canadians in black and white the drift of their country away from its essence toward Americanism.[37] Frank Underhill, identified by Donald Wright as one of the authors of the Authorized Version of Canadian history, on the other hand, attacked the book as a "Tory manifesto" in an analysis of the general resurgence of conservatism in North America. Underhill spared nothing in his review, labelling the book as "silly" and claiming, in fact, that it represented a return to the absolutist monarchies of the Tudors and Stuarts. For Underhill, Jack was a poor student of history in that he could not distinguish between Whiggism and republicanism and so condemned it all; this, along with Jack's clear antipathy to French Canadians, for Underhill meant that Jack was not to be taken seriously.[38]

Freedom took on new life in the far right of the 1970s–1990s. Infamous anti-Semite and Social Credit activist Ron Gostick offered a seminar entitled "Does Freedom Wear a Crown?" in 1971 through his Canadian League of Rights. The Freedom Council of Canada, the Canadian branch of the far-right World Anti-Communist League, also associated with Gostick and his lieutenant Pat Walsh, had a quotation from *Freedom* on its letterhead into the 1980s.[39] Finally, as noted by Matthew Hayday, the Alliance for the Preservation of English in Canada used Jack's book in the 1990s in its effort to combat Quebec separatism and preserve some "essence" of English Canada.[40] The book clearly had an effect on the sphere of political thought, even if somewhat inconsistent, like Jack himself.

The Original Sin: King–Byng and the Destruction of Canada's Constitutional Order

The King–Byng affair became the "original sin" in the post-war conservative narrative. King–Byng was the cleverly named constitutional crisis of 1926: Governor-General Lord Byng refused to grant King's request for dissolution of the House to hold an election; King was facing censure due to corruption charges against his government. Byng instead called on Arthur Meighen, the leader of the Conservatives and the single party with the most seats from the 1925 election, to form a government. King and the Liberals then manoeuvred to have Meighen's government quickly fall, forcing Meighen to ask Byng for dissolution and

[34] Jack to Forsey, n.d., Farthing, John, Part 3, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3; Ronnie to Forsey, n.d., Farthing, John, Part I, 1943, 1952–1954, EF. Jack was born 18 March 1897 and died 9 March 1954, sadly only days before his fifty-seventh birthday. Robinson, "Preface," *Freedom Wears a Crown*, v.

[35] Forsey, "John C. Farthing," *Montreal Gazette*, 15 March 1954. For example, Ron Dart, a philosopher of Red Toryism, mentions *Freedom* as an example of the "responsible Red Tory vision." Dart, *The Red Tory Tradition: Ancient Roots, New Routes: A Series of Essays* (Dewdney, BC: Synaxis Press, 1999), 18–19. In his memoirs, Forsey praised *Freedom* as a "small masterpiece on constitutional monarchy." Forsey, *Life on the Fringe*, 21–24.

[36] Forsey, "A Challenge to Liberals," *Queen's Quarterly* 64 (1957): 435.

[37] Deacon, "Ideal of King in Parliament."

[38] Frank Underhill, "The Revival of Conservatism in North America," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 52 (1958), 16–17. Wright, *Donald Creighton*, 221–2, 236–7.

[39] Pat Walsh to Dear Friend, advertisement for "Does Freedom Wear a Crown?" 31 March 1971, file 18, box 5; Pat Walsh to Ku Cheng-kang, 12 November 1984, file 4, box 31, Robert Thompson fonds, Trinity Western University Archives.

[40] Hayday, *So They Want Us to Learn French*, 245–8. I would like to thank Reviewer 4 for drawing my attention to APEC.

an election, an election that saw King and the Liberals re-elected campaigning on defending Canada's independence versus British imperialism.[41] Hugh worked for the Tories in Alberta during the 1925 and the 1926 elections and undoubtedly saw King's arguments against the authority of Byng as counter to the British tradition.[42] This was the context in which Hugh answered Bingham's query mentioned at the outset, challenging the loyalty of Liberals to the British traditions that made Canada great. He stressed that the nation had been built specifically by Tories and even more specifically by John A. Macdonald. Macdonald had pioneered every major innovation, from the building of the railway to the buying of the Prairies, and if one perused Hansard, Hugh assured Bingham, one would see constant Liberal obstruction and a lack of vision for the nation.[43]

By the 1940s, with the dramatic rise of the welfare state, a changing discourse regarding the importance of the British connection and Britishness, and the continued control of the political scene in Canada by the King Liberals, King–Byng took on new significance. Hugh had accepted the total culpability of the King Liberals in the denigration of public life by this time and now publicly denounced them. In a short 1942 article for Robinson's *News*, written while he was attending the Port Hope retreat, Hugh questioned whether Canadians understood what had happened to their nation since the onset of Liberal rule in the 1920s. Canada was not a republic, Hugh reiterated, but was designed from the beginning to reflect the mixed constitution of Britain. In other words, the Crown and the governor-general were not figureheads but essential components of the social and political order. They represented balance and order, checks on the dominance of Cabinet. King had undermined this perfect balance in 1926 when he began his assault on the fundamentals of British Canadian society. His actions since, such as the dissolution of Parliament in 1940 to hold an election in wartime, had resulted in a dictatorship. According to Hugh, King saw democracy as "a system of government by which the people choose a man to be a dictator for a term of years." Hugh noted that this notion may have been accepted in the United States, but was totally foreign to the British traditions of Canada. For Hugh, Canadians had been made ignorant on purpose, being tricked by the Kingsian propaganda of the post-Byng years into believing that the governor-general and Crown were archaic holdovers from a colonial era.[44] Tories, such as Hugh, thus had a responsibility to restore to Canadians their heritage of a balanced constitution and true democracy.

Hugh was not a lone voice on this issue. Forsey wrote his dissertation ostensibly on federal and royal disallowance of legislation, but when released in 1943 it consisted of a massive study of the King–Byng Affair, attacking the Kingsian narrative of Canada triumphing over colonial rule. In a letter to Meighen in 1951 discussing an upcoming article in which Forsey again attacked the Liberal/liberal narrative of King–Byng, Forsey noted the necessity of setting the record straight, as he had barely seen anyone publicly say such a thing, outside of Hugh.[45] Hugh was not the most influential conservative in Canada, nor was he the most original thinker, but he represents to some extent the voice and very real ideas of mid-level activists and functionaries, too often ignored in the studying of political thought.

Jack was no stranger to his brother's interpretation of the deleterious effects of the King–Byng affair on Canadian society. Jack began writing Forsey in the midst of what these figures interpreted as a high point in the Liberal/liberal attacks on Britishness in Canada. The bureaucratized Keynesian welfare state was in full swing, Louis St. Laurent (only the second French Canadian prime minister) had comfortably won the 1949 election, assuring almost twenty consecutive years of Liberal rule (only made worse in the 1953

[41] Christopher Dummitt, *Unbuttoned: A History of Mackenzie King's Secret Life* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2017), 21–22, 76–78 for a recent analysis of King–Byng.

[42] Hugh to Elgar Higgin, 22 October 1925; Hugh to Major J.T. Haig, 24 April 1926, File 3, Vol. 1, FT.

[43] Hugh to Bingham, 30 June 1927, FT.

[44] Hugh, "Scuttling Democracy," Toronto *News*, 17 October 1942.

[45] Forsey to Meighen, 6 September 1951, vol. 223, reel 2746, AM. The article is Forsey, "King and Parliamentary Government." Dummit, *Unbuttoned*, 76–80.

election!) and the Liberals appeared to be threatening to remove the titles "Royal" and "Dominion" from the country and its institutions. In a characteristically lengthy letter to Forsey in January 1952, condemning the appointment of a Canadian governor-general, Jack was blunt: "the whole moral debacle which is the present public life of Canada goes back . . . to the Byng incident." Jack added that King in "one stroke destroyed the entire constitutional fabric of this country and we have since simply been living on words and names without any essential substance or meaning."[46] Forsey was so pleased with this letter that he forwarded it to Meighen, who noted several times to Forsey that he agreed wholeheartedly with the sentiment that King/Liberals hid their crass opportunism in calls for national unity (although both men admitted they were uncomfortable with Jack's rabid anti-Catholicism, discussed later).[47]

As noted in the opening, Jack pushed this narrative of Kingsian duplicity back even earlier than the King–Byng affair: at its most extreme, Jack interpreted King's entire family line as dedicated to the corruption of British Canada. He told Forsey that King's disintegration of public life had begun at the latest in 1917–1919 when he consciously decided to base his career on serving and exploiting a solid Quebec, abandoning all principle.[48] Perhaps reflecting his family's direct involvement and sacrifice in the First World War,[49] Jack traced the corruption of Canadian life to the divisions elicited by the conscription crisis of 1917. He also equated the acceptance of French Canadian interests by King with the rejection of principle; he could conceive of this position as only at best opportunism, not a sincere effort at national unity. Nevertheless, the King–Byng affair remained paramount in Jack's mind and was referenced in *Freedom* as the last time Canada was ruled by something other than "Government by Arithmetic." King and the Liberals believed themselves to be the rightful rulers of Canada because they could best represent the "will of the people." Quantity, in other words, had triumphed over the inherited wisdom of the past embodied in the British constitution. Now the royal representative was portrayed as a vassal of a foreign power, and the prime minister, as dictator of cabinet government, simply made irrefutable demands of this figurehead "giving royal sanction to the death of all constitutional and truly representative government in this democracy."[50]

The same principles determined Jack's response to the Liberal government's ambiguity toward using the terms "Royal" and "Dominion." Jack engaged in a small debate over this issue in the *Montreal Gazette*, responding to a letter from Noble Power, the president of the Westmount Young Liberal Association, who suggested that the title "Canada" worked for most Canadians. Jack was livid, writing that "Though . . . Cabinet unity has long since taken its place, with the rest of our constitution as a people . . . the trampling of all such traditions under foot should not be taken to mean that the . . . practice of political 'double-talk' has . . . become one of the cherished traditions of the people of this country."[51]

What Power and the "apostles" of St. Laurent and King did not understand was that "Royal" and "Dominion" not only were descriptors but embodied the form of government that Canada was to have. In an unpublished companion letter to the *Gazette*, Jack further attacked Power, noting that the Fathers of Confederation had created a democracy, but not one based on simple majority will, as this was fleeting. It was based on eternal principle, and the Dominion Parliament was the means to balance the needs of the

[46] Jack to Forsey, 25 January 1952, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF.

[47] Meighen to Forsey, 14 February 1952, Forsey to Meighen, 18 February 1952, Meighen to Forsey, 6 March 1952, vol. 223, reel 2746, AM.

[48] Jack to Forsey, 20 February 1952, vol. 220A, reel 2744, AM.

[49] The Farthing patriarch wrote Prime Minister Borden expressing his support for the pro-conscription Unionists in 1917. He noted in an earlier letter that he, as someone who had "flesh and blood in the war," was glad Borden was in charge. John Farthing to Borden, 6 October 1917 and 17 July 1916, vols. 20 and 78, reels C-4319 and C-4208, respectively, Robert Borden fonds, LAC.

[50] Jack, *Freedom*, 54–63.

[51] Jack, "Asks That 'Royal' and 'Dominion' Be Restored," *Montreal Gazette*, 22 March 1952.

majority and the individual to ensure the continuance of democracy and stem demagoguery. "Royal" and "Dominion" provided an ideal to which "the people" could aspire and properly live as a nation. For Jack, Power's letter demonstrated how far the Liberals' "childish resentment of Britain" had gone, equating the popular will with their personal power and abolishing any sense of tradition or ideal. This was the essence of demagoguery.[52] Like his brother, Jack was not the most important Tory mind or voice in the nation; yet his letters and his eventual book represent a Tory sentiment just below the surface of mainstream political discourse, striving to preserve the values of a British Canada believed to be disappearing. As letter-writer D. Murray Murphy noted in the *Gazette* in praise of Jack's letter, it represented "every reader who maintains a trace of that loyalist spirit that has always been the foundation and backbone of our Dominion, and fortunately for all still survives."[53]

Keynesianism, Communism, and the Evil of the Liberal Regulatory State

Both Farthings saw in the Liberal Party's denigration of the British connection the triumph of materialism, dangerous especially with the rise of communism and Keynesian economics. Hugh had a complex, perhaps contradictory, understanding of the balance between free enterprise and state regulation that changed over time. In an unidentified speech from 1924, Hugh noted that he was a proud Protectionist as opposed to a "Free Trader" because the latter placed economic efficiency above all other concerns. The problem with all classical economics, and modern liberalism in general, was that it ignored the "supreme communal authority" and its responsibilities not only toward the wealth of its citizens but also their basic humanity.[54] Hugh added a succinct denouncement of the regulatory state, such as it was in 1927, in his letter to Bingham, noting that Conservatives "emphasize the duty of every individual to the State rather than the duty of the State to the individual."[55]

Hugh summarized this balanced vision in another short article for Robinson's *News* decades later, questioning the Tories convening in Winnipeg in 1942 embracing either the Keynesian socialism of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) or "unrestricted individualism." Much had changed in those decades, such as the rise of centralized planning and the Great Depression; yet Hugh's concerns remained relatively consistent. Those attending the convention were missing the point. Conservatism never stood for abstract economic theories: conservatives were to be the ultimate economic realists, using the state when needed but always emphasizing individual initiative. The nature of the nation and of society itself could not be reduced to economic and mathematical formulas.[56]

These various strands of discourse coalesced in a speech Hugh gave in support of Douglas Harkness, a Calgary Tory candidate (successfully) standing for re-election in 1953. Hugh was an important figure in the local Conservative association and was vicious in his denunciation of the Liberal "dictatorship." He repeated the conservative refrain that saw in the King–St. Laurent Liberals a dictatorial force. Igartua notes that at this time conservatives were especially angry at the Liberals' obscurantist actions in Parliament, especially of C.D. Howe.[57] Hugh agreed with Drew's statement during the campaign that allowing materialism to subsume spiritual values would cause Canada to drift into communism, the "quintessence of materialism." For Hugh, the main issue at stake was nothing less than the future of free constitutional government in Canada, something that had been attacked for decades by the ruling Liberals. They had

[52] Jack, unpublished letter to the editor, *Montreal Gazette*, 27 March 1952, enclosed to Forsey, vol. 220A, reel 2744, AM.
[53] D. Murray Murphy, "Safeguarding Canadian Traditions," *Montreal Gazette*, 27 March 1952.
[54] Hugh C. Farthing re tariff policies, 1924: unidentified speech, notes, article, file 7, vol. 1, TF.
[55] Hugh to Bingham, 30 June 1927, TF.
[56] Hugh, "Tory Humbly Suggests," Toronto *News*, 7 September 1942.
[57] Igartua, "'Ready, Aye, Ready' No More? Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press," in *Canada and the End of Empire*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 49–51.

gradually worn down the institutions of democracy just like the enemies of democracy in other nations. In fact, according to Hugh, the Liberals had selected a summer date for the election to suppress voter turnout, another cynical ploy to reinforce one-party rule. Hugh closed his speech with an admonition, reminding his radio audience that Harkness had served his nation during the Second World War, fighting for Canadians' right to vote. If they stayed home or vacationed instead of voting, they were supporting the Liberal dictatorship. If "any people value anything — money or pleasure or holidays or a trip out of town — more than freedom," Hugh stated, "they will lose that freedom."[58] This was not simply a partisan warning by a Tory diehard; this was the conviction of someone who believed the Liberals had destroyed "his" country and were transforming it into something he did not recognize.

Jack tied this triumph of materialism more explicitly to Keynesianism. Canadian economists were, by the early 1950s, still debating the merits of applying Keynesian macroeconomics to a small, open economy such as Canada. "Old institutionalists," like Harold Innis, feared constant government intervention as both inflationary and leading to an over-centralization of power; Keynesianism violated the pragmatism of Canadian economic traditions, where the state was only the institutionalization of the microeconomic needs of the various regional economies. Keynesians saw the internationalization of trade due to technological innovations and post-war American hegemony as inevitably leading to unprecedented pressure on a traditionally open economy such as Canada, necessitating Keynesian macroeconomic techniques to ensure employment stability. It appeared that in practical terms (in governance), the Keynesians had won.[59]

In a 1953 letter to Meighen, the tragic hero of the King–Byng affair, Jack tried to quickly summarize his deeply anti-Keynesian economic philosophy. This statement can at best be termed vague, surprising for someone who had lectured in economics. For example, he referred to desiring an economic equivalent to the "British Conservative tradition" pioneered by Burke, Coleridge, and even Shakespeare![60] Meighen was himself confused, as was Forsey, whom Meighen asked for advice when Jack asked for money to fund his book on economics. Yet a core in Jack's economic thinking speaks to larger conservative themes of the post-war era, particularly the fear of over-regulation and the destruction of the creativity of the individual entrepreneur. Forsey recognized this core and modestly advocated for Meighen to fund Jack's proposed book on economics along with a book on the British tradition, noting that "If he really brings the two books off, they may be one of the great intellectual events of the history of Canada, and indeed of recent times in the Western world. On the other hand, they may not."[61]

Jack rejected all attempts by economists to structure society along mechanical principles, either the "Ricardian or Classical Economics," of which American republicanism was the political counterpart, or the Keynesian system, pioneered by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal and which now represented the current "Liberal-party 'set-up.'" The "Classical-Republican" system was based explicitly on Newton's mechanistic vision of the universe, while Keynesianism was based on "simultaneous equations," or "necessitous, mathematical equality," directly counter to the organic order, freely and historically developed, that Jack valued. Implicit in this statement is Jack's discomfort with the social engineering of Keynesianism, bureaucratically planning a national community. For Jack the problem was the systemization of the economy, hindering the natural, even poetic nature of the British social order from developing.[62]

Jack expanded on these ideas in *Freedom Wears a Crown*. Jack held that in contemporary times, the arrogant assumption of the Enlightenment — that with Newtonian systems man could finally construct a

[58] Hugh, radio speech, 6 August 1953, file 4, Douglas Scott Harkness fonds, Glenbow Museum Archives.
[59] Neill, *Canadian Economic Thought*, 134–5, 140–8, 172–8.
[60] Jack to Meighen, 12 December 1953, vol. 220A, reel 2744, AM.
[61] Meighen to Forsey, 18 December 1953, Forsey to Meighen, 23 and 28 December 1953, vol. 224, reel 2746 AM.
[62] Jack to Meighen, 12 December 1953, vol. 220A, reel 2744, AM.

social order based on perfect individual freedom — had rightfully collapsed. Keynesianism, the only scientific attempt to fill this vacuum, echoed many of these principles but claimed that a free economic order providing a "harmonious social order" was impossible. All that scientific economics could provide was selective state control to prevent a full communist dictatorship. According to Jack, in other words, Keynesianism simply normalized the gradual takeover of the economy by the state and the regulation of everyday life. This was masked by affluence, especially in English Canadian society.

Jack saw this cynical reality, that the use of Keynesianism was a means to bribe the public into sacrificing its heritage, as directly tied to the Kingsian Liberals. In a letter quoted in *Freedom*, Jack denounced the recent Massey Report recommending government funding for universities, as it would inevitably result in another free institution becoming dependent on "the State." Jack pleaded that "it is in free social institutions that the individual is able to realize and express his own personal freedom," but in the midst of affluence it appeared that Canadians were willing to allow these noble institutions to become "mere adjuncts of the Liberal party — or of the One-Party State."[63] Jack, in other words, rejected wholesale individualism; he also rejected the ability of the current government, by ignoring Canada's British traditions, to artificially construct a nation.

Jack's distaste for Keynesianism went deeper than just partisanship. He rejected systems, historical laws, and the entire idea of inevitable progress, viewing any recent decline of the Newtonian asocial vision of society as a positive. Humans were inherently social beings, according to Jack. The problem was that because of affluence Canadians, and others, were not looking to their pre-Enlightenment traditions as a guide in this confused world. Modern people had become too wedded to the technology of a scientific vision of the world to entirely repudiate its legacy. This ignored the central fallacy of the Newtonian scientific tradition, a fallacy that even the Marxists had discovered, "of regarding the life of man in complete abstraction from the course of human history." Canada's Liberal/liberal masters still perpetuated this, particularly by telling Canadians that their past contained nothing of value, that they must always move forward instead of re-establishing the legacy of the British connection. Here lay the source of solving the uncertainty of the modern social order, one in which radical individualism had been rejected but where the scientific models leading to that individualism remained dominant: the British monarchical order. It inherently recognized the wisdom of tradition and the importance of freedom, and inculcated the "sense of responsibility that freedom always involves" without falling into the materialism of Marxism. The government was meant not just to guarantee certain laws and basic freedoms, nor to cater to a crass majority will, as with Liberal/liberal Keynesianism or American individual liberty. In the Canadian and British tradition (as Jack put it, "the British tradition is Canada"), society was a community of people "bound together by a common spirit of loyalty in an essentially unitary society" linked together by the Crown, a personal loyalty above economics and beyond politics.[64] Keynesianism, instead, was divisive and false. The Liberals were hurting Canada by appealing to Canadians' worst instincts of greed and apathy. While Jack's own economic theories were largely ill defined, his distaste for the regulation of society, from Soviet communism to Keynesianism, was clear.

Constitutive of the Farthings' conservatism, which was devoted to the common good, was a distrust of the potential of the state to disrupt the traditional structures of society. Keynesianism was harmful in its materialism and cynical in its claims to equalizing society. The Farthings' approach to the relationship of the state to the individual can be characterized as subsidiarist, a moral-political principle upholding an organic conception of society denying both the efficiency and morality of transferring the function of a subordinate but competent body to a higher one. This ensured the freedom of individuals within a

[63] Jack, *Freedom*, 149–50, 100. Paul Litt, *The Muses, The Masses and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), chapter 7.
[64] Jack, *Freedom*, 38–50, 84.

decentralized society and state.[65] The monarchy, in this framework, did not represent centralization, but idealism and organicism. As James Farney has written, Canadian conservatism before the 1970s often manifested itself as a compromise between traditionalist Toryism and free-market neo-liberalism, particularly at the practical political level, to combat similar enemies, namely, liberalism and communism. The compromise was easily accomplished because both factions saw in government a potential evil.[66] The Farthings existed in this context, rejecting a new social order built on regulation and systemization but also fearing the consequences of unrestrained individualism. The state was suspect, specifically when controlled by an amoral Liberal Party and when "emptied" of its monarchical nature. Only by appealing to the British past could Canada hope to exist as a free country in the tense world of the present and future.

They Are Not Us: The "Other" in Conservative Narrative

Underlying all of this — the sullying of the British tradition, the triumph of materialism — was the belief that the Liberals had facilitated the emergence of a force alien to British Canada, both historically and ethnically. This opposition to "foreignness" was not aberrational to the Farthings' conservatism but intrinsic to their vision of the nation. Only those truly steeped in British traditions could be trusted with the obligations of constitutional democracy and, it seems, only some could ever *become* steeped in these traditions. In 1939, for example, Hugh wrote then-Senator Meighen, warning him that elements within the German population on the Prairies were organizing for Hitler and spreading Nazi propaganda. He was writing to Meighen specifically because Hugh knew that the Liberals had cultivated the "foreign vote" and undermined any strengthening of British sentiment.[67]

Hugh long held that Western immigration policies had hurt the region's development, especially during the Great Depression, swamping the Prairies with "Central European[s]," mentioning this in the Alberta legislature in 1933.[68] In another exchange in the legislature that year, Hugh condemned the rise of communism and accused both the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and the CCF of tolerating the rise of this harmful ideology. He clearly delineated sides in the contest between communism and democracy by calling on all "Britishers" to combat its spread. Hugh made it clear that "Britisher" was not only an ideological label, representing "universal" values of freedom and democracy, when he drew attention to one "Mr. Murphy" giving fraternal greetings to communists at a recent UFA convention. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that "Mr. Farthing said that gentleman's face did not look like the popular conception of a 'Murphy,'" suggesting that the speaker was "foreign."[69]

Hugh reiterated this distrust of non-British residents in a 1940 letter to Drew, then leader of the Ontario Conservatives. Hugh warned Drew after a meeting of the Provincial Executive of Alberta Conservatives that if the national Tories did not embrace an "overwhelmingly British" sentiment with regards to conscription during the Second World War and, like the Liberals "toad[ied] to the non-British elements" of the nation, it would lose the support of Conservatives in cities such as Calgary. Drew completely agreed with Hugh, responding a few days later that the Conservative Party had to justify its very existence by

[65] Gregory Baum, *Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political Thought in the Thirties and Forties* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1980), 89; P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 111–13.

[66] Farney, *Social Conservatives*, 12–20.

[67] Hugh to Meighen, 25 April 1939, vol. 201, reel C-3580, AM.

[68] "New Legislation Is Now Proposed by Parliament," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 23 March 1933, Alberta Scrapbook Hansard. Italics mine.

[69] "Communism Attacked by Tory MLA," *Edmonton Bulletin*, Scrapbook Hansard, 11 March 1933.

prosecuting the war effort fully and being a "vigorous adherent" of the British connection.[70] In a 1946 letter to Drew bemoaning how, in Hugh's interpretation, the recent Dominion-Provincial Conference completely ignored the Western provinces Hugh expressed worry about increased immigration after the Second World War. He blamed the allegedly disastrous immigration policies of the 1920s on three institutions: railway companies, the Catholic Church, and the Liberal Party, "who wanted to run a Tammany Hall with foreign voters," and he was concerned this could be repeated in the new post-war era. These forces, along with French Canada, were conspiring to destroy the British nature of Canada.[71] Drew's response showed his frustration with Hugh's pessimistic appraisal of post-war federalism. He ignored Hugh's comments on immigration and French Canada this time, blaming the media in Western Canada for misinterpreting the advances made at the Conference, at least by the Conservative representatives.[72]

Hugh by the 1940s thus equated Liberal and Ottawa rule with Quebec and foreign rule, which explained the "collapse" of British immigration to Canada after the Second World War and the frustrating dysfunction of the government in general. He told Drew, immediately before the federal election of 1945 and while Drew was premier of Ontario, that the election was truly about whether Canada was to be an English or a French nation and, if the latter, the once proud nation of Canada was to resemble a dependent Latin American republic. Hugh, for his part, was responding to a "confidential" letter Drew had sent him two days earlier, in which Drew had made it clear that *the* central issue in the upcoming election should be about whether Canada was to be Quebec dominated or be loyal to "British democracy," which meant the preservation of personal freedom. Drew added in a post-election response that while the Tories lost the election, they mostly held Ontario. Drew thus reassured Hugh that the Tories in Ontario would remain committed to the British connection and "equality of opportunity and obligation" by maintaining the "British stock" of the province.[73] For Hugh, and Drew, the non-British forces in Canada were not just ethnically different but represented a threat to the functioning of Canadian democracy itself.

Jack repeated his brother's concerns over the "Otherness" of contemporary Liberal/liberal Canada and "creeping republicanism."[74] Despite frequent and familiar Tory criticisms of American republicanism, including allegations that Liberal/liberal materialism and Quebec were pushing Canada into American arms, Jack often spoke of Americans in terms of a shared heritage.[75] At the core of this heritage was the Reformation, which instilled a sense of individual rights balanced with personal responsibility to the community and respect for law, instead of blind faith in a hierarchy. The United States and Canada represented different interpretations of the "Reformation ideal of the Christian social order," of the principle of balance and order, with the United States missing a central component, the monarchy.[76]

Jack made it clear in a letter to Forsey that Catholic Quebec's anti-British propaganda, while effective in undermining the British tradition in Canada, would not result in what they wanted, which was the transformation of Canada into a South American–style republic dependent on the Catholic Church. Instead, Jack made an important distinction: it would result in the integration of Canada into a large North American–style republic, thus still sharing the heritage of the Reformation. Forsey and Meighen tended to

[70] Hugh to Drew, 18 January 1940, Drew to Hugh, 23 January 1940, file 474, vol. 54, GD. See Granatstein, *Politics of Survival*, for a discussion of the factions in the Conservative Party.

[71] Hugh to Drew, 1 August 1946, vol. 54, file 474, GD.

[72] Drew to Hugh, 6 August 1946, vol. 54, file 474, GD. For Drew's role in the Conference see Marc J. Gotlieb, "George Drew and the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction of 1945–6," *Canadian Historical Review* 66 (1985): 27–47. Thanks to Gotlieb for drawing my attention to Hugh's comments to Drew.

[73] Hugh to Drew, 14 May 1945, Drew to Hugh, 12 May 1945, Drew to Hugh, 27 June 1945, vol. 54, file 474, GD.

[74] This was a term used by Forsey in reference to the "anti-British" policies of the Liberal government. See Forsey, "The Missing 'Royal,'" *Globe and Mail*, 22 September 1954.

[75] Jack to Forsey, 24 March 1952, 25 January 1952, Farthing, John, Part I, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF.

[76] Jack to Forsey, 16 April 1952, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF; Jack, *Freedom*, 9.

ignore this distinction in their responses, fearing the inevitability of Jack's theory that Quebec's dilution of the British connection would lead to an American takeover and the disappearance of a distinct Canada.[77]

The American system was certainly inferior to the British tradition, according to Jack, but as he told Forsey, it existed in the same intellectual universe as real democracy. The major difference, of course, was the presence of the Crown-in-Parliament in Canada, which allowed for a nation based on "personal freedom within a free personal order" instead of the strict "ideal of individual liberty under law" in America. Jack expanded on these ideas in excerpts from a manuscript contained in Forsey's archives. According to Jack, the British "Sovereignty of the Person" preserved a sense of idealism and unity for society because of the undivided powers given to the Crown-in-Parliament. It did not, like American republicanism, assume the corruption of "Man" by constructing a government made entirely of checks and balances. It gave subjects of the monarch something to aspire to. Jack was not naive; he admitted "Man" was corruptible, but to admit this from the outset in the structure of government itself undermined the potential for interdependence among individuals as they could have no faith in their fellow subjects.[78]

According to Jack, for Americans the "Supremacy of Law" protecting the natural rights of individual people overrode any sense of personal loyalty to the commonweal, facilitating the sometimes reckless individualism of that country.[79] Yet even here Jack contradicted himself, writing in *Freedom* that Americans valued the Constitution above all else because it bestowed liberty upon them. This unity, based in principle and a "supreme ideal of national life," was lacking in Canada and, through the machinations of Liberal "pure-Canada cultists," caused Canada to be on an eternal fruitless journey for "national unity." These cultists were motivated by the false principles of placating French Canada and forgetting Canada's British past. Canada already had a unitary national ideal, the Crown, but Kingsians and Catholic Quebec had shamefully discarded it in favour of, in the end, national hollowness. Jack rejected the American vision of society as he believed in a better way, one based on freedom to live in a social order, not just liberty, which was equivalent to strict individualism.[80]

Jack had a deep ambivalence toward America, at least in the early 1950s, instead of an outright hostility. This is perhaps reflective of a wider conservative reaction to the simultaneous excesses of McCarthyism and undoubted American leadership in the fight against communism. Jack, though, was decidedly not anti-American, particularly in the face of greater threats to the British tradition from within. His animus toward these threats, or his own intellectual inconsistency regarding American influence, also prevented him from tempering his criticism of the non-British forces even in the face of his own logic: Quebec's attack on the British tradition appeared to lead not necessarily to a Latin-American Catholic state, but to an American one steeped in the traditions of the Reformation.

Primary among these threats was the Catholic Church, especially due to its influence in Quebec. Jack claimed in *Freedom* that since "the pure Canadianism of French Canada consists precisely in traditions that have come to the French Canadian from France and from Rome … we can never realize a pure-Canada unity until all English-speaking Canadians have accepted . . . these traditions."[81] Jack was even less diplomatic in the letter he sent to Forsey attacking Quebec and the Church for wanting to create a South American–style republic. Jack feared that "The power behind, seeking to upset the Throne, is the R.C. Church, which knows that if it can destroy the British tradition in this country it can then readily dominate the flabby unprincipled mass or mess that is then left." Without the British tradition, in other words,

---

[77] Forsey to Meighen, 7 February 1952, Meighen to Forsey, 14 February 1952, Forsey to Meighen, 18 February 1952, vol. 223, reel 2746, AM.

[78] Jack to Forsey, 25 January 1952, 18 March 1952, 24 March 1952, J.F. Mss, p. 66, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF. Underlining in original.

[79] J.F. Mss, p. 66, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF.

[80] Jack, *Freedom*, 13–18, 32–34, 49.

[81] Jack, *Freedom*, 86.

nothing was upholding the soul of the Canadian people and the nation would be easily dominated by the "absolutist imperialism" of the Catholic Church. He assured Forsey that "I have no dislike whatever of French Canadians"; the triumph of the Liberal/liberal vision of the nation, however, was equivalent to the loss of everything the "non-Roman" world had contributed to Western civilisation's history.[82]

To his credit, Forsey rejected Jack's blatant anti-Catholicism, cautioning him against raising the spectre of racial and religious hatred and noted that recently Forsey had met several Catholics, such as conservative journalist Gratton O'Leary, who were pro-British. Yet he and Meighen did not see it as important enough to dismiss Jack's ideas, noting that being frank about French Canadians and defending the British heritage of Canada was not anti-Catholic; for the most part Jack's ideas were brilliant. Meighen in fact explicitly said that while Jack's anti-Catholicism was regrettable, he could not disagree with anything of substance that he had written.[83]

Jack was no stranger to crude ethnocentrism and this crept into his commentary. He revealed his contempt not just for the Kingsian vision of the nation, for example, but for French Canadians in general in yet another letter to Forsey. Jack claimed that almost nothing in Quebec was distinctly Canadian; it was a continuation of "seventeenth century Normandy," dismissively adding "Pea soup, perhaps." This was the central problem with French Canada: it remained obsessed with ousting the British, the "Big Bad Wolffe,'" instead of creating its own traditions and contributing to Canada. This was not a dynamic component of the nation, but a destructive one.[84] These sentiments, again, were not aberrational. They are at least representative of how this staunchly British Tory understood his world and his conservatism in contrast to the Liberal/liberal materialism being foisted on their proud British nation.

Perhaps the epitome of Jack's vision of the underlying reality behind the Liberal/liberal destruction of British Canada appeared in advice he shared with Forsey regarding their planned project. Jack reiterated his concern with the affluence of Canadian society, noting "Our biggest enemy is the . . . contentment of the people with our present material progress" because it caused any criticism of the Liberals to seem perverse. What their work on the British nature of Canada had to make clear was that supporting Britishness was not nostalgic imperialism or hostility toward the French. Jack wanted to maintain an "equipose" between French and English within a constitutional democracy. Britishness instead represented the acceptance of the heritage of the Reformation, at the core of which was responsibility. This was why English Canadians went to war, for example, not obsequiousness as Quebeckers charged during conscription crises. In fact, at the heart of Catholicism was a profound selfishness in which nothing mattered but the survival and triumph of the Church, not civilisation, not democracy. For this to occur the Church needed only obedient Catholics to forge "proper" Catholic nations. Jack pointed again to Church-dominated South American republics as a negative example in that they had refuted their colonial past, become economically self-sufficient, and yet contributed nothing to the world in times of crisis. "So, you see," Jack concluded, "the materialism of our newfound Eng.-Canadianism [*sic*] (i.e. individual development as the be-all and end-all) is fully at one with the Romanism of the S.A. [*sic*] republics." Forsey yet again rejected Jack's anti-Catholicism, reassuring Jack that there were many good French Canadians and Catholics. Forsey even feared that if this project became too anti-Catholic he would lose his job, as his boss was Catholic![85] For Jack this was more than just a personal matter but deeply ideological, as even the blame for materialism, the bane of British Canada's existence, could be lain at the feet of the Catholic Church and French Canada, forces of "Otherness" in a nation otherwise dedicated to the freedom of the British Reformation.

---

[82] Jack to Forsey, 25 January 1952, Farthing, John, Part 3, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF.

[83] Meighen to Forsey, 14 February 1952, Forsey to Meighen, 18 February 1952, Meighen to Forsey, 19 February 1952, Meighen to Forsey, 6 March 1952, vol. 223, reel 2746, AM.

[84] Jack to Forsey, 24 March 1952, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF.

[85] Jack to Forsey, 16 April 1952, Farthing, John, Part 1, 1943, 1952–1954, vol. 3, EF.

Conclusion

Hugh and Jack Farthing are examples from a particular milieu, a middle-ground between the "underground" and the mainstream: they were not central thinkers or actors in the conservative movement, they were often explicitly ethnocentric, and, particularly with Jack, they sometimes had unorthodox economic and political ideas. Yet they both participated in the creation of and were shaped by a narrative that would have far-reaching effects on the right as the post-war era continued. The brothers, while differing on some issues, held the British connection and the monarchy to be sacrosanct; it was irreducible to economics and systemization. The monarchy was integral to the proper functioning of the government, the maintenance of a balanced constitution as well as the protection of non-statist communalism.

The Farthings, like other Tories, interpreted the political dominance of the King Liberals and the perceived decline of the importance of Britishness in the Canadian polity as a concerted attack on the very existence of the nation. The narrative they constructed, beginning with the King–Byng affair, equated being "appropriately" British with being truly Canadian and democratic. The internal logic of this conservative narrative and their suspicion of state regulation pushed the Farthings into questioning the efficacy of Keynesianism as well as rejecting Liberal reforms as emanating from foreign, French Canadian sources. The Farthings' conservative vision of the nation, based in the principles of organicism and tradition, ostensibly embracing the fundamental unity of society in the face of liberal atomization, thus dissolved into an exclusive narrative of "Us" versus "Them." These types of categorization would certainly continue on the right in the coming years. The apparent contradictions at the core of conservative ideals, of stressing the need for social and national unity while challenging and questioning the loyalty of large segments of the non-Anglo population, or of emphasizing the importance of the common good while rejecting statism and government interference (at least when controlled by Liberals and fellow-travellers) would remain and develop as the conservative movement(s) recalibrated itself in reaction to the expansion of the welfare state and the "permissive society" of the 1960s.