LS: There are two major documents that I'd like to start awith today, and look at in some detail because they were fairly important in their time. One is a White Paper that is published in March 1967 on, I believe, human resource development. The second is a book that you publish in the same year, called Political Realignment: A Challenge to Thoughtful Canadians.

Let's start with the White Paper. I'm interested in why a White Paper at that point in time, and in the major proposals that came out of the White Paper and the specific programs that perhaps led from it. Why did you put forth the White Paper at that point in time?

ECM: You must remember, at that period in the life of the Social Credit Government, it had been in office for well over 30 years. We had gone through some significant periods, the Depression years, the War years, the post-War readjustment period, the resource development period. It was always my conviction that one of the responsibilities of a government leader was to always be thinking ahead to what should be the future points of concentration by the Government in the development of the Province and the interests of its people. There's a danger for governments when they've been in office a long time, of getting into a rut where just about everything they do is a mere repetition of what they've done before - perhaps improved or varied a little bit, but not significantly different.

I didn't want the Social Credit Government to get into that position. The period of 30-some years in which the Government had been in office at that time had certainly been a time when it had gone from one set of conditions to another set fundamentally different, as I say, the War years and the post-War adjustment and the resource development and all this. But we were at the stage where I could see the Government was sort of settling in to a routine type of administration. So we gave a lot of thought to looking ahead to the future of the Province, in what direction should the Government's focus of attention be? And it seemed to me and some of my colleagues that as a young province, up until that point in provincial

history, the concentration had been primarily (and understandably) on the development of the physical resources of the Province.

I say understandably because in a young province, a young part of the country, the first thing you have to do is clear the fields and plant the crops and build the roads and build the schools and hospitals - all of the physical development which is fundamental in the early period of a country or province's or region's history. We had been engaged in doing that, and practically everything that was done, not only by our Government but by the Governments that preceded us, was slanted in that direction.

It seemed reasonable to me that perhaps we should shift the focus more to the human resources development than the physical resources development. The White Paper you refer to really dealt with human resources development. In it we expounded the concepts - which were not new, but we tried to bring them back into clearer focus - that the responsibility of Government primarily should be to create an environment and an economy and a society that would encourage individuals to develop their own potential along the line that they were interested in developing.

We called it a "society of free and creative individuals" rather than a "great society". That was the term that was popular in those days because Johnson used it in the United States. And while these terms, I don't suppose, are adopted in the first place to have precise meanings but merely to convey a general meaning, the "great society" to me conveyed the idea of a society collectively being great, whereas what we were trying to focus attention on was, let's have a society made up of great individuals so that the focus of development and attention is on the free and creative individuals as such and what they do, rather than on the mass of people that comprise a society as a whole.

So the thrust of that White Paper was developing that concept that the responsibility of government and the role that we intended to play as a provincial Government in our next phase was to try to produce the

environment that would give birth to a society of free and creative individuals with the emphasis on individual development.

LS: How did you think you could do that, given human nature and people and our history?

ECM: I believe, when it comes to human nature, that most people (not all people, but certainly many people) have a latent power and desire to express themselves along some line. They're constantly circumscribed by the overall norms and patterns that governments as a rule develop for society. And society adopts it and this becomes the thing you do, this is the way you go, this is it. That if you could free people from some of those things that circumscribe them, I think we'd be surprised at how many individuals would blossom out - maybe not doing big things, but doing things that they want to do. They wouldn't be constantly under pressures to conform to this pattern or that pattern.

Only time would have told to what extent it was successful, but we did think that there were quite a lot of things that could be done, removing government restrictions where those restrictions were really unnecessary. When you get right down to it, they're there to get people to conform to a pattern that a government had decided was a good pattern to conform to. Maybe the government had a very valid argument as to why that was a good pattern, but why should you force people, contrary perhaps to their will or their own desires, into a pattern? People have a right to be wrong as well as a right to be right, and the trouble so often with governments is they think they know better than the people what's good for them - what's best for them - and so they seem scared to let the poor little individual have a free rein to develop him or herself as they wish to do, because maybe they wouldn't develop in the way that was best for them.

Now, in many cases that would be true, but, so what? As long as they don't hurt somebody else - I mean, that's where the government's responsibility comes in - give them the right to be either right or wrong, as long as they have a greater freedom of choice. That's really what we were getting at.

LS: Is that a realistic thing for someone who, say, doesn't have a certain amount of economic security? Where does the government responsibility lie?

ECM: The economic insecurity is one of the things that circumscribe people, and so coming back to what I've said, those would be the areas where the government would assume responsibility. If we were going to put people in a position where this freedom of choice would be meaningful, then you had to do things which would try at least to enable them to have economic conditions that wouldn't circumscribe them too much. It didn't mean the Government being removed from all of those things; we still fully intended to do everything we could to improve the economic conditions of everybody. But one of the objectives of doing it - sort of a new objective, in a way - was that that person, having some measure of economic security (whether he got it _through Government programs or greater development of the private sector - however he got it), would have that much more freedom to do the developing himself in these other lines.

LS: What were some of the specific programs that the White Paper proposed?

ECM: Well, the White Paper was a very general paper. It did not get into specific programs. It was simply setting out a concept. You may be familiar with the process that was followed. We developed this Paper in discussion with the members of the Cabinet, and it was approved unanimously by the Cabinet. Then we took it to the Legislature and it was debated in the House and approved by the House. The Opposition didn't approve it because, naturally, it came from the Government so they wouldn't approve it. But it was adopted (unanimously as far as the Government Members were concerned, which was the great majority of the House - I think we had 55 or 56 Members of the House out of the 63).

As I say, it was a general Paper spelling out this concept. It didn't attempt in the Paper itself to set out programs. Following that, in the limited time that I was there afterward, we took a few preliminary steps that were necessary towards implementing the concept. We set up a Human Resources Council, for example. We also gave a lot of attention to what

might be done in the field of native people. There was an area where obviously people were terribly circumscribed by economic conditions as well as by a lot of other things. But the Paper itself didn't go into those, and we ourselves did not have a lot of firm programs in place. It was rather to propose a concept that we thought was rather exciting, that had great potential, and that was worth a Government concentrating on to see how far you could help society along in that direction.

LS: One of the things I remember about that time was the Human Resources Development Authority, and being excited by what we thought it could do and it concerned. Can you enlarge on that a bit?

ECM: Well, it was a body that was set up, for one thing, to keep the thrust, the attention, in that direction. This was a new thing, and I knew for example the bureaucracy didn't understand it and would resist. You expect that. I knew, quite frankly, that a lot of our own Members really had little idea of what this was all about. We tried to explain it, but it was new. It wasn't a bread and butter thing like a lot of other things, and I knew that their endorsation was largely because it sounded good on the surface, the Government had recommended it, and this type of thing. But there wasn't the deep knowledge of what we were trying to get at and there wasn't a deep dedication to achieving that. Unless there was some body established to keep the thrust in that direction, the tendency would be for it to get a lot of publicity for a while and then be forgotten. The Human Resources Authority was set up for that purpose to begin with.

In addition to that, it was the body that was trying to develop and coordinate programs to give meaning to these various things that were proposed. That body, I might mention, was one of the groups that was involved in a lot of these discussions with the native people on their needs.

LS: In your comments you've raised an interesting point. When you are running a government and responsible for the programs in the Province and you have a bureaucracy or administration that for whatever reason (good, bad or

indifferent) wants to do things a certain way, how do you as a leader deal with that kind of bureaucracy?

ECM: In our case, as far as the White Paper was concerned, I think it should be said in fairness to the public service that we were not confronted with an antagonistic bureaucracy. It's not the case, for example, of what happens sometimes when there's a change of government; a new government comes in with a lot of new ideas and the bureaucracy it has to deal with is one that has served a previous administration for a long long time and is largely oriented to their way of doing things and their policies, and so on. In those cases, you do often get an actual antagonism on the part of the bureaucracy, to a new government wanting to change everything.

In our case, our relations with our public service on the whole were very good. I think we had as good a relationshp with the public service as any administration in Canada. I didn't have any qualms or concern but what the administrators of the public service, as they got to understand what we were trying to do... There would be the natural resistance because it was prying people out of ruts, and you weren't going to do just what you'd done before. But I didn't anticipate antagonism to it. It was more a matter that there was going to be a period of education and explanation and all this type of thing. And that's a slow process; you don't do it overnight.

I really had no reservations at all but what we could carry if not the enthusiasm certainly the judgment to the extent that we could bring the bureaucracy along with us. They were not antagonistic to the Government or what the Government was trying to do. Among them would be many who would welcome something new. But at the same time, you don't change a bureaucracy - friendly or unfriendly - overnight.

And incidentally, this was largely where the program petered out. That was not done. I was only there a short time after, and then the emphasis went off of this program, and the thing sort of died on the vine.

LS: So in fact you're saying, in a way, that you have to sort of "baby-sit" it through.

ECM: In those early stages, the members of the Government have to have a deep personal involvement with their departments, explaining what you're trying to get at, what the philosophy is, and so on. And in this case, while some of that was done in the preliminary stages it didn't get to the place where there was a complete understanding of what we were trying to get at on the part of the administrators.

LS: Is this the time also that the press called a group of advisers (in your office? or in Mr. Strom's office?) the "Young Turks"?

ECM: That was in Mr. Strom's office. Some of those younger fellows that were involved with Mr. Strom were involved in this. I had two or three of these fellows outside the Government doing work on this White Paper, and they were involved. I don't think any of them were on the staff of the Government while I was there - maybe just one or two at the end - but some of them were brought in later by Mr. Strom.

LS: I guess I'm particularly interested in how you do infuse new ideas in government.

ECM: Well, I can offer this observation, and it's hard to put it in words that wouldn't sound critical if looked at from some angles. My own belief is that when a government wants to make a significant change in its thrust it's not a matter of abandoning one set of concerns in which you've been interested and adopting another, it's a matter of adding something more. We didn't drop something else in order to do this. My belief is the Government Members themselves pretty well have to do it as far as the staff is concerned. They have confidence in their Minister and their leaders if you've got a good relationship.

If you bring professional people in from outside, they're new in the public service, for one thing, so they're resented for that reason. And I think

(I'm speaking now as an outside observer) this was one of the things that happened in Mr. Strom's administration. He did bring in a number, and the older civil servants who had been there for years resented these "young turks" as they called them, coming in from outside to tell them what was going to be done. Psychologically it's a mistake to do it that way. That's why I say, the Minister's got to do it. It's got to come from the top. You can't hire a professional outside and say, "You go in and re-orient the thinking of the public service." They won't accept that. And I think that's where some problems arose in Mr. Strom's case.

LS: I want to go back to one specific quote out of the White Paper; I think it's tied in more to the development of physical resources. It occurs on page 49, as follows: "The Government of Alberta will not support or pursue policies that tend to create an artificial economic climate or Balkanize the Canadian economy. The Government believes in 'domestic freedom of trade' within Canada's boundaries, and regards the granting of special subsidies to industries to locate in areas where otherwise they would not locate as expediency which ignores the realities of economics and geography and distorts sound resource development."

I'm interested in that particularly in view of today's situation in the province. What are your comments?

ECM: One reason why that was included at that time was that there was quite a pronounced tendency in those days for provincial governments especially, and sometimes the Federal Government under their regional development programs, to provide various forms of financial incentives to industries if they located in a certain area. In the case of the Federal Government with their economic assistance programs, the idea was, "Here's an area of the country where the economy is dragging, where there's unemployment. That's the place we ought to be encouraging industrial growth to create jobs," and so on. And in that context that was quite understandable.

But where these things create problems is if you put an industry in an area that is not suitable for that type of industry, simply because the government pays it to go there by giving it grants or tax concessions or something, you've really created a situation where you're going to have to carry that thing permanently. In other words, there's not enough attention given to whether the industry can become a viable operation on its own in that region. Or is it going to have to have government assistance permanently because it never should have gone there in the first place?

A classic example of this in the news right now is the steel mill down in the Maritimes which is just in the process of closing. It never should have been there anyway, from the standpoint of a sound judgment of the economics. But it's been bolstered by staggering government subsidies, both federal and provincial, and now at last it's folding anyway. It was not viable in that region.

We had some concerns, even in our own Province, as a result of this Federal program of incentives. I remember, for example, a company that was interested in establishing a pulp mill. The Federal Government had drawn some lines across the map in north-western Alberta, in one region this was the boundary which was called an "undeveloped area" on the one side of the boundary. By a mill moving a matter of not too many miles (just across this imaginary line on the map) it qualified for several millions of dollars in federal grants which were not available to it if it stayed on the other side of the line! Now that puts an industry in a difficult position. In this particular case, the area where it did not qualify for a federal subsidy was a much preferable area from the standpoint of transportation (road and rail facilities) and all the other things that the industry had to have. And yet to get the federal assistance it had to go in an area where these things didn't exist, and therefore had to be built and had to be built by government.

That kind of thing happens in provinces and all over the country. The provinces I don't think have done quite so much in recent years. But we had provinces that were offering quite substantial financial incentives "if

you'll build in our province". I remember a plant which was also later built in the Maritimes - and failed - had looked at Alberta as a site to build (this was a heavy-water plant). Their conclusion was, this was the logical place to build. Everything they were looking for was here. But we didn't agree with this thing - we had no grants or incentives. We said, "We'd love to have you build here, but you're on your own. You have a viable operation; we're not going to put public money into it." But the Maritimes said, "We need the work, the employment, so if you come here we'll subsidize you." They went there, and of course the thing failed. It was not a viable place to build that kind of an industry.

That's what we were getting at with this thing in the White Paper. It was important in our view to get back to reality in these things. Industry should be built in the place that's the most viable place for that industry to operate, where it has a chance of success, and is not going to become a white elephant that the public taxpayer is going to have to keep on digging up money to keep in operation. You see, once you put these things in (especially if you put them in for the purpose of creating local employment or stimulating the local economy) it's almost impossible for a government to let them die afterwards, because then they're defeating the very purpose they put the thing there in the first place. And if the location is such that the industry can't be viable, then the government may get a lot of good publicity at the time but ultimately is put in the position of, "Are we going to keep on dishing out taxpayers' money to keep this thing going, or are we going to say, 'If it can't compete in the market with other comparable industries, then it's in the wrong place or it's the wrong industry'?"

LS: For me it raises a question, for instance in Alberta, of this whole thing of developing secondary industries or manufacturing. And going back to the old National Policy about the West being the source of war materials and the market, but the East being the manufacturing. We have such inequities because of that continuing kind of thinking, it seems. So then, what do you do for a place like Alberta, given those concerns that you've just expressed?

ECM: When you speak of diversification of industry, so many people think that means taking the same kind of industries that have been concentrated, say, in Central Canada, and moving some of them into the West or the Maritimes. To me, that is unrealistic. I don't believe this part of Canada, as far as we can see into the future, will be a viable place for heavy industry. For heavy industry, you have to be fairly close to the consumer market. You can't transport steel and heavy products of that kind thousands of miles to the place where it's used.

So what you have to concentrate is developing a type of industry, or finding a type of industry, that is not seriously adversely affected by being at a long distance from a market. That's what it adds up to.

Now in Alberta's case, I think the emphasis that has been put on petrochemical industries and that type of industries has recognized that to a large extent. They're still having troubles. But that type of industry produces a product which is valuable in relation to its bulk and weight, and so its distance from population centres or the places where the product is being consumed is not nearly as serious as it is in the case of the heavy industries.

Certainly in the past the assumption that you're going to solve the economy of Western Canada by transplanting a lot of big manufacturing industries from Central Canada to the West was simply not viable. It could not have worked. Those industries (in the first place) would not have come without staggering government subsidies, because the business people know that you've got to be close to your market.

It's a matter of developing a new type of industry. Fortunately for these more sparsely populated regions of both Canada and the United States, in the last quarter of a century there have been many industries of a new type altogether. For example, the field of electronics. There's a huge industry. The electronic industry today is staggering; it's growing at a fabulous rate. The whole computer rage, and all this type of stuff. Those are things you can manufacture anywhere. They don't have to be close to a

population centre. Their value is high in relation to bulk and weight. That's the kind of thing we have to concentrate on in the areas where we're a long way away from the consumer markets.

LS: But we don't seem to be very successful at doing that.

ECM: No, to my mind there has not been the effort made in that direction. Too much of the effort has been in simply trying to get the same type of industries that built up Ontario and Quebec in the early days. But in this White Paper those references were to this very concept I'm expounding. We recognized it and said, "We don't think that concept is sound, that you can just plant an industry somewhere because you want to have an industry there." We're never going to have a completely free trade structure, of course, but if you have a free trade structure, then the industry's going to decide where is the best place to go.

That doesn't mean the governments can't give a lot of encouragement. We always said, and I still firmly believe, the greatest single thing a government can do is create an environment, business climate, that's attractive to industry. A lot of governments don't recognize this, and won't even believe it, but I'm convinced that that is more important to many industries than a government grant or subsidy with a lot of government intervention attached to it. If the place is viable, if the industry's viable, then the thing the investor is concerned about, and the industry deciding whether or not to build there is concerned about, is, if we build there, if we commit millions of dollars to a plant, are the rules of the game going to be changed half-way through the project being built? Are we going to be struck with staggering taxation once we're there? Is the government going to start intervening and wanting an equity position n the industry? Are they favorable to government takeover of industry? These are the things they worry about. If a government stakes out a position and says, "Look, you're on your own; you're not going to get financial assistance from us. But we can assure you this: you're not going to be expropriated, you're not going to be hit with penalizing taxation after you've committed your expenditures to the place where you can't back out,

you're not going to have unnecessary government regulation" - that's worth a good many million dollars to any intelligent industrialist.

LS: That's like a policy of stability.

ECM: That's right. It's a matter of political stability. And of course one of the things that's happening in Canada today that's stifling our industrial growth in this country is the policy of government intervention. The Federal Government now would like to be involved in everything. If they're not involved in it, they want to regulate it to death. That's the type of thing that's keeping hundreds of millions of dollars in investment capital out of Canada today.

It's not that the country and the resources and everything else are not here that would make the industry viable, but there's just a lack of confidence in the government.

LS: One final thing on this whole question of economic climate or Balkanization of the Canadian economy and again bringing it to the current situation. What is your opinion about the fact that Alberta is considered to be a wealthy province, a "have" province, compared to some "have-nots", although that may be changing these days? And how it should in fact be using its wealth vis-a-vis other parts of the country? You have a concern for all Canadians as well, you're not just a concerned Albertan.

ECM: Well, Alberta, it has to be remembered, is a "have" province primarily because of the abundance of our energy resources. It's our good fortune to have so much of the oil and coal and gas and so forth of Canada located in Alberta. But there are some things we always have to keep in mind about that. In the first place, it's not something that's available to everybody. There are thousands of businessmen and farmers and so forth in Alberta that are not involved in energy resources. In other words, it's nice to be in the Province where they are, and you get certain indirect benefits, but it's not everybody - it's not the kind of thing that applies right across the board.

Secondly, you're dealing with an irreplaceable resource; no matter how much you have, you've only got so much and every bit of it you sell, you've got that much less. Somewhere, whether it's ten years, fifty years, or a hundred years, somewhere you have an end of any depleting resource. That creates a very important factor that has to be remembered.

In Alberta's case, I think the financial and economic benefits that come from having those resources need to be reflected in several directions. One, there should be a definite advantage to the citizens of the Province as a whole by reason of the fact that those resources are here and developed here. To some extent, to quite an extent, that has been true. For example, we're the only province in Canada without a gasoline tax. That's one of the benefits that comes to everybody in Alberta, practically everybody, that drives a car, because those resources are here in the Province.

The employment that results from the service industries to those resource developments is another plus. I say the service industries because they employ far more people than the actual resource development industries themselves.

Thirdly, there is the tremendous increase in Provincial revenues which has been manifest so clearly in the last number of years that gave birth to the idea of the Heritage Trust Fund, which, in principle, I think was very sound. That's an actual financial recognition of the fact that these resources are irreplaceable, that you're getting that revenue from a depleting resource, and that at least a portion of the revenue should not be spent on the day-to-day social services of the Province. If you spent everything on that, then when the resources run out you've got a terrible situation. Rather it should be diverted to capital expenditures or to programs which do encourage this thing we were talking about a few moments ago - the greater diversification of the economy of the Province so that when those resources are no longer the prominent thing there are others to take its place.

I think the first this has been recognized in Alberta - the Heritage Trust Fund was set up and 30% of the revenue put into it. I think what is and has been open to a lot of debate and criticism is whether the Heritage Trust Fund is being used in the wisest way to achieve these other objectives. Simply lending Trust Fund money to other Provincial Governments, for example, doesn't do anything to stimulate Alberta's economy or diversify its economy. I think that's where the program has been weak. I have not been able to detect, as an outsider, any great evidence of greater diversification of Alberta's economy by virtue of the Trust Fund. There have been some efforts in the petrochemical fields and so on, but I don't think there has been a bold, imaginative program to ferret out these other types of industries that I mentioned a while back and induce them to establish here. Most of the things that have been done have been directly energy-related - petrochemicals are merely another phase of the energy program.

I would be more intrigued to see concentration on the electronics industry and a lot of these things that are just in the early stages of their development. When you think what's happened in the word processing and computerization all all of this stuff in the last ten years - well, who knows what another 25 years may bring forth?

You referred to our responsibility to the rest of Canada, and we do have that responsibility and it should be recognized. While these resources belong to the Province (there's no argument about that; even in the BNA Act, and it's been strengthened in the new Constitution, the title belongs to the people and government of the Province), they are Canadian resources. We're part of Canada. And in that context they're Canadian as compared with foreign resources.

I think that the Province, with the Heritage Trust Fund, could play quite a helpful role to the rest of Canada by being sort of the bankers for the development and implementation of a new national policy (versus the old National Policy you referred to that was based on the concept of industry concentrated in Central Canada and the hinterland, the other parts, being

the markets; the central part being protected by tariffs - that's all going to change, whether they want it or not). It seems to me that there's a role for a fund like the Heritage Trust Fund as the banker, to provide the financial muscle needed to bring about that change to a new National Policy. As far as I know, I don't think that's an aspect of it that's been considered.

LS: Could you just enlarge on that a bit? for example?

ECM: It comes back in part to what we mentioned a few moments ago. The days are past when you're going to operate this country as a federation under the old policy with treating Central Canada as an industrial area and the rest of the country as just the hinterland. I don't even like using the word "diversification". That implies taking the stuff from the East and moving it out here. The industrialization of what used to be the hinterland must be an integral part of a new National Policy. In other words, industry has got to be a vital factor in our economy in the West, for example, not just the natural resources industry, which is all we've had to date, plus agriculture, but these other forms of processing which do lend themselves to a region with a sparce population a long way from markets.

To me, one of the best categories of industry to talk about is the electronics field. I would like to see an all-out effort to ferret out the feasibility/viability of that type of industry and induce them (not necessarily by financial help although when I say, "act as a banker", that might be a part of it for the time being)... That's the area I'd like to see concentrated on.

The reason I can't give you a lot of detailed answers - I don't think the area has been explored. It's there but it hasn't been exploited. And yet, to me, that probably offers the greatest possibility of a much broader-based economy in Western Canada than perhaps even in the Maritimes, than the idea of just hoping that somehow we're going to pry some industries out of Ontario and transfer them to the West. That isn't going to happen.

LS: The banker role, though, of the Fund, would be for more than the Province?

ECM: It could be. I look on the new National Policy as vital to the preservation of Canada, not just Alberta. One of the things that's created so many of the problems that are involved in all this constitutional hassle and the deterioration of Federal/Provincial relations, is the breakdown of the old National Policy. It's no longer applicable, but a lot of people are still fighting to preserve it. They can't see a new Policy.

My point is that if we're going to preserve Canada as a nation, we've got to have a new Policy. So that's vital to us in Alberta as well as to the other parts of Canada. On those grounds, I think there's a justification of a region of Canada that's in a financial position to play a constructive role. I'd far rather see us active in that context than just loaning money to another Provincial Government to get them further into debt and then get into a hassle because they can't pay us back somewhere down the role, and this kind of thing.

LS: It's like building a new long-range economic base.

ECM: Yes, it's new, that's precisely it. A new economic base. It comes back in a sense to what I was talking about with the White Paper concept. Get out of the rut. They want to keep on doing it; they're clinging to this old National Policy, 40 years after it's antiquated and out of date, fighting to preserve it. Why don't we recognize that it's had its day, it's served its purpose. It was a good policy in its time, but it's gone, it's finished. It's a matter of innovation; we need some innovators in this country!

LS: Speaking of innovation, I'd like to move on to the second document I alluded at the beginning, and that is the book that was published in 1967, which you authored, called Political Realignment: A Challenge to Thoughtful Canadians. That's a very interesting book, in terms of your proposal, first of all looking at what you thought was the situation in

1967 in our country in the Federal arena, and then your proposal of realigning the whole concept of social conservativism.

Can you give us the background first of all. Why did you write the book then? What were the main tenets of the book? And how was it received?

ECM: Going back to the origin of the thing, actually it wasn't my idea to write the book. The ideas expressed in it were ideas that I'd been not only concerned about but expounding in speeches over quite a period of time. My son, Preston, who was always interested in this field, had done a lot of work for me and with me in gathering data. It was more his idea, and some of his younger colleagues, to get this stuff down in some form where people could analyze it, that brought this to the actual stage of putting it in a book. That was one aspect. There was another one which was related to it.

You'll remember it recognized the concept that the old political order in Canada was disintegrating, that our political parties had more and more ceased to represent any clear-cut position. The public was left with no clear-cut choice in an election. The parties had become more and more "all things to all men". You had in the Liberal party people that were more socialist than the NDP and more conservative than the Tories. You had in the Conservative party the "Red Tories" that were, some of them, more radical than the NDP, and others that were the old reactionaries that wouldn't budge nor change no matter what happened. The parties didn't represent any meaningful position.

As a result, you had more and more political confusion, more and more frustration on the part of the public, and our elections were becoming more and more personality contests. When parties no longer represent anything, the tendency of people is to single out and vote for the candidate. They like Bill Smith better than John Jones. Television got into the act, especially with leaders. It was a matter of, "Our man looks prettier on television and comes through better than your man, so he's the fellow that ought to be Prime Minister." This isn't necessarily the good criterion for

a good Prime Minister - that he looks good on television, or his charisma comes through on television! But that became a big factor. Trudeau was sold to Canada by television, largely, his first time around. He had the ingredients that the media lapped up, hook line and sinker, and sold to the Canadian public.

All of that disturbed me a great deal, and I'm sure it disturbed a great many other people. I was convinced that out of this disintegration, as in any other kind of disintegration, ultimately some new entity emerges. That's what happens in anything that disintegrates. A plant dies in the fall and goes back into the soil, and produces another plant. There's always something given birth by death.

My thoughts were along the line, "What's going to emerge out of all this?" That's really the philosophy behind "political realignment".

As to the timing of it. (Leaving out the NDP - they at least had been consistent in that they were socialist first, last and all the time, and they maintained that position consistently; the public rejection of the NDP was not because of inconsistency; it was because the philosophy was not appealing to people that believe in individual initiative and freedom.) Of the two old-line parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, which had become almost indistinguishable as far as policy was concerned, they did have a national political structure, organization, which is fundamental to electing governments.

The Liberals had become more and more socialistic; the NDP were described in Parliament by one of their own leaders as "Liberals in a hurry" or something like that. They had also demonstrated, in my opinion, over many years, that they were not a party that was tied to principles of convictions. They would shift with the wind. The Liberal philosophy of staying in power was to shift with the public mood; the main purpose of a party is to get elected, period. While there are a lot of individuals of whom this wouldn't be true, I don't think it's untrue or unfair to say that as a national party particularly the one thing they've concentrated on

consistently is how to get elected, and how to stay elected. "Never mind your principles; don't let them get in the way. Don't let adherence to any fixed policy keep you from being elected. If the public want a change, change; but get elected and stay elected. Don't wash your linen in public." They do all their fighting behind closed doors; Tories always do it out in the street. These are a few of the fundamental differences.

I could see no hope of the Liberal party becoming a vehicle for meaningful political change, for that reason. I didn't feel that they were attracted to convictions. What I was advocating in this book meant a commitment to some very firm principles and convictions, and I couldn't see them ever doing that. They had become too much the party of changing with the wind to get elected.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, had a tradition of adherence to policy. But they were destroying themselves by infighting. That was at the period of the leadership hassle when they ditched John Diefenbaker. Looking at the national scene as it was evolving then, it was obvious that the Tories, first of all, traditionally were more apt to be a party that would be attracted by some firm convictions and principles and stick with them. And secondly, they were in a state of political disarray. They were tearing themselves apart. If ever a party has an opportunity to stake out a new policy position, it's at that stage in its history.

I may have used this illustration way back in our earlier talks. It's something like a man living in a house that he's dissatisfied with. The house is out of date and it no longer meets his needs, but he likes the old thing and he's very hesitant about tearing it down to redesign it. But while he's in this state of uncertainty, if a typhoon comes along and blows the thing down, and he has to rebuild it - when he rebuilds it is the opportune time to put the partitions where he wants them and modernize it.

Right at the time we're referring to, the Tory party was in that position. They were blowing their house to pieces with all this internal hassle, and it was obvious they were going to have to pretty well rebuild. I rushed

this book - quite honestly - to get it out ahead of the time they had their national convention in which they made their leadership change, in the hope that they might take advantage of this position in which they found themselves - that somebody might say, "Look, we've got more to attend to than just changing leaders; let's take a hard look at what we're going to represent as a party." I had hoped that there might be a chance that they'd find something in the ideas set out in Political Realignment that they could have seized on and staked out that new ideological position, which would not have made them a new party but a party with a whole new focus, a whole new thrust. And they could have used the political machine that was already in place, just with a new objective.

But they were so engrossed in destroying themselves and ditching John Diefenbaker, as far as I know I don't think the matter of party policy received any attention at that convention at all. It was swept under the rug, to be left to some other day. But that had a bearing on the timing of it.

LS: You make some very strong statements in the book about the direction and the philosophy, and at one point you say that historically the humanism or the humanitarian concerns of the left or socialists (you talk about "philosophy X and Y") - people are attracted to that or feel the need for those kinds of concerns but have a problem with the economic philosophy put forward. The Liberal/Conservative thing was the reverse, where the economic philosophy was more "realistic" but that people felt they had lost sight of this social program.

I don't know if that's a correct interpretation of what you said in the book, but if it is, taking off from that, what were some of the specific directions or philosophies that you hoped this new realignment would put forth for Canadians?

ECM: Let me emphasize to begin with, I was not proposing (as some people reading the book concluded) an amalgamation of some existing parties or affiliation. Some interpreted that I was talking about an amalgamation of

the Conservative and Social Credit parties! The book was not talking about party amalgamation at all. It was talking about a political concept which was not new in the sense that the ingredients did not always exist, but it was a new combination of those ingredients.

You put your finger on one of the key points just a moment ago. The NDP - to give them credit - have done an extremely good job, supported largely by the media, which leans in their direction, in selling the public on the idea that the socialist is the only political animal that's really concerned about humanitarian issues. They're the party of the working man; they're the party of the fellow that's in trouble; they're thinking about people. They create the impression that the other parties are big business and this kind of thing, and have no concern. That's false, completely false, but they've done an excellent job in selling the public that they represent the humanitarian concern group in Canada. I'm convinced that there are more people of equal humanitarian concern in the other parties, but they're not perceived that way by the public.

On the other hand, while you can give credit to the socialist for this humanitarian concern (it's something that's desperately lacking in the whole of society today and needs to be commended for their concern - sick people ought to be taken care of, poor people ought to be helped, people in trouble ought to have compassionate government) but their weakness, as you mentioned a moment ago, is that their economic proposals (which are largely a matter of government intervention, government control, if not actual government ownership of the means of production) have been repeatedly demonstrated as hopelessly inefficient in creating the wherewithal to provide these social concerns. So they're contradictory in that sense. They want to provide for the social needs of people and they're very sincere and intense about it. But what they advocate economically destroys the very base that's necessary to meet the social needs.

On the other hand, you have the old traditional parties that have been much more understanding of the importance of the role of private initiative and enterprise and all the rest of it in the economy, but at least are

perceived as not having much interest in applying that in meeting social needs.

What I was calling for was a synthesis of those two concepts. This would become the philosophy of this new political force - humanitarian concern that would be unmatched by anybody (that would be a prime goal, genuine humanitarian concern, the social needs of people have to be recognized and looked after), and to do that we'd streamline the economy, not by greater government intervention but by getting government restrictions out of the way of industry and individuals so that we'd maximize the productive capacity of the country in order to meet these humanitarian concerns.

We used the term in that book of "social conservative" to try to convey that idea as it's in the public mind. "Social" conveying the idea of concern for the needs of people, society, the welfare of society - the humanitarian aspect; "conservative", the old concept of conservatism, the preservation of those principles and precepts that are basic to encouraging an economy that produces the wherewithal to meet the humanitarian concerns.

I still think the term wasn't a bad term. It was bad only in the sense that "social" made some people think it must have something to do with socialism, and "conservative" must have something to do with the Tory party. Now, it didn't mean that, but I can understand why people concluded that.

LS: It raises the whole question, though, of how you break the mold of thinking of those people. For instance, just to extrapolate, say that the Progressive Conservative Party had in fact bought your proposal. If I were then a Conservative in the country at that time, I'm not sure how I would understand what had just happened. How would you convince them?

ECM: Well, that's an educational process. If the Conservative Party, as such, adopted that policy position, it would have had both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage it would have was that it was an established party with an organizational base, and known across the country. People

are always scared of things that are brand new and it takes a while before they're accepted. The disadvantage was the very point you mentioned; it would then become a philosophy of the Conservative political party. The reason I felt that it was worth that gamble - and I recognized that there was the disadvantage as well as the advantage - because the alternative was the emergence of a totally new force. In fact, the book deals with that. We said, if no party will restructure its position to give effect to this concept, then the only alternative if the emergence of a new force altogether.

The emergence of a new force would have the advantage that it would not be tagged onto any existing political party and it would therefore escape the prejudices or the likes or dislikes of that particular party. Its big disadvantage (and it's a very real one) is that starting from scratch you've got to put in place a national organization, and that's a gigantic task. It takes a lot people, time, and money, and it's a question of whether the advantage outweighs the disadvantage or not.

But I made it quite clear in the book that if no existing party (and I was quite frank in saying that at that stage the only one I could see having a hope of restructuring itself was the Tory party) did it, then the only alternative was the emergence of a new force. I'm still convinced that that's what we're going to see in Canada. I think it has to come - the emergence of a whole new force. That's a gigantic task.

But if you look at the situation today, if you talk to people anywhere in Canada today (and it shows up in your opinion polls), the number of undecided people when it comes to vote is saying that thousands - probably millions - of people are totally dissatisfied with the political structure as it is today. They are potential candidates for a new force if it's presented to them. It's a big educational task, but there's no alternative.

LS: Do you see the thesis that you put forth in this book, in terms of its philosophy, as being relevant today?

ECM: It's more relevant today than it was 10 years ago. The thing that I found interesting, and in a sense satisfying, having predicted it - just about everything we anticipated in that book has happened. First of all, the existing parties proved that they were not capable of readjusting themselves to a new position. If the Tories couldn't do it then, I think that was the opportune time, for the reasons I've mentioned - they were in a state of disarray.

The public disillusionment and frustration with the existing political structure is much worse today than it was then. There are more people today mad at all parties. And what's happening across Canada today is a clear evidence of that. You see these provincial elections in Manitoba - they throw the Tories out and they put the NDP in, not because they want the NDP. They were mad at the Tories. People are mad at governments, period. Move across the line a few miles to Saskatchewan, and they throw the NDP out and put the Tories in. This makes no ideological sense. People are mad at governments, because they do not see the existing political structure as coming to grips with either the humanitarian concerns or the economic concerns.

What I was talking about was a synthesis of concepts which would do both those things - come to grips with humanitarian concerns, social concerns, and at the same time weed the abuses and bad things out of the free enterprise economy so that it would function fairly and equitably and produce the goods.

LS: The PC's, though, may be facing a leadership issue. Would you see putting this forward to them again?

ECM: No, they had their chance. I can see nothing in what transpired then and what's transpired since that time to make me think it would be other than a waste of time to propose a fundamentally new position for them today.

LS: In your book you talk about the Social Credit Party nationally in 1967 as well. You make the point that it had not been successful up to that time

in that national arena. And you also allude to the fact that it attracted fringe elements that weren't very positive or beneficial. Are those the two reasons why you did not propose in 1967 that it be the vehicle for this realignment?

ECM: Largely. It was a recognized political party, so it had the same drawbacks as any other. In other words, it was perceived by the public as representing a certain position, and that position was not one that commanded wide public support. That's why it never made any great progress nationally. The most obvious reason for that was the national Social Credit Party was too narrowly based, and it always was. It came into being as purely a monetary reform movement; it never had a broad base in how it was going to cope or what its position was on a hundred and one other things that a national party had to deal with. So it attracted the support primarily of those that were interested in monetary reform and things of that kind, which is not a broad enough base to ever elect a national government. And it never seemed to be able to get beyond that restricted base.

So I couldn't see that it represented a vehicle that would command public support. As soon as you mentioned National Social Credit Party to the frustrated elector that was neither Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Social Credit he'd say, "Oh yes, that's that bunch that stand for so-and-so and so-and-so." He had that perception.

This is the one advantage of a new entity emerging. It's the same thing that's being encountered by the WCC in Alberta today - the fact that it's new and not tied to something else. The Liberals can abandon their ranks and join it, the Tories could abandon their ranks and join it. But you won't get a Tory easily to abandon his ranks and join the Liberal Party because they adopt a new policy; or a Liberal to leave his and go over and join the Tories.

Create a new entity, and you remove that big obstacle. We found that in Alberta of course in 1935. People were angry at the Farmers' Government.

Liberals were proposing one thing, the Tories were proposing something else, but they'd fought each other for years. The Farmers weren't going to join the Liberals, the Liberals weren't going to join the Tories; there were the political barriers. Social Credit came along, and the Tories could join it - they weren't joining an enemy. The Liberals could join it - they weren't joining an enemy. And that's where it had its advantage.

LS: I'd like to expand a little on this, because is very relevant today, I think. One question first: when you said that you rushed the publication of the book so that it could be considered by the Conservatives as they were going through this upheaval, did you have discussions with Conservatives?

ECM: Only the odd individual. I had no official discussions with them, no.

LS: Did Preston?

ECM: With individuals. In fact, there were quite a lot of Conservatives who were quite enthused about this, I think. The reason I say that is that we didn't do it, but I know that delegates to that Convention were sent copies of that book - some of them told me themselves that they had as many as four copies sent to them, by people who were so anxious that every one of them would have a copy of the book in their hand. These were from Conservative people. The Conservatives were very anxious about this. But of course they were snowed under with the Convention's concentration on leadership hassles.

LS: So there wasn't a broad, general discussion of it?

ECM: I don't think it was eveer discussed at all - other than the backroom talk between a few people at a coffee table or something. It was never discussed in the Convention.

LS: I know you said in the book that you were not putting forward the proposals so that you could be a national leader of the realignment. But was there

any discussion about you perhaps being involved in some significant way, if the Conservatives had considered this?

ECM: Well, again, there were by groups. I had communications from groups of people wanting to know if I would do this, if this was done. I don't know the extent of this; I don't imagine it was any great extent. It was certainly never discussed by the Conservatives, to my knowledge, as such. These were concerned people, some of them who had read the book. They said, "This makes sense to us. Now, if something is done along this line, will you lead it? What will you do in it?" There was quite a bit of that.

LS: What was your feeling at that time?

ECM: First of all, I made it quite clear that was not my purpose in writing the book. I was advancing the concept, I was not looking for the national leadership. But I usually assured them I would do everything I could within reason to help along any group that would do that. I never made any decision on the leadership thing; I felt that was premature because there wouldn't be anything to lead until there was a group put together. But as far as helping to put it together, and the educational work and all that, I always assured them I would do everything I could in that regard.

LS: Although you did not write the book to create a platform for yourself as the leader, are you saying that, had that come about, you would have considered that?

ECM: I would have depended on the circumstances. Had the thing taken hold and emerged, caught on with the public and become a populist movement, if they had wanted me to do it, I would probably have done it. I would have done it reluctantly - I didn't want it. But you don't start something in the concept stage and then back out of it if it takes hold. That's what happened in Alberta when Mr. Aberhart started talking about Social Credit as an educational thing. When it got to the stage where it became political, it would have been totally wrong, in my view and I'm sure in his view, of him to say at that stage, well, certainly he had no thought of

going into politics, and no desire. And that was the farthest thing from his mind when he started talking about it educationally. But you couldn't at that stage say, "I've been responsible for creating this; now, thank you very much, I'm going off to fish!" You don't do that; you have a responsibility.

And I would have done it, had it developed that way, but it didn't develop that way.

LS: There are two things I want to tie in. The proposal that you make in the book, with the kind of thinking before 1935 in Alberta in terms of a new movement or a political realignment - a new way of looking at things - and today, in Canada. I don't know if I'm making myself very clear, but in the centre is this philosophy or proposal for a movement or a new kind of what that a party could operate, and what was happening in Alberta before Social Credit and what is happening in today's world.

Where do we go? with your experience in 1935 and your thoughts in 1967 on this, and the situation today.

ECM: I guess you're really asking to what extent there's a parallel between the score then and now.

LS: Yes, and where can we go with it?

ECM: There is a parallel, to my mind. In Alberta in those days there was frustration over the economic conditions primarily. There was frustration with the political structure because they felt the government wasn't coming to grip with either their social needs or the economic, so there was widespread frustration in Alberta which was one of the ingredients that gave birth to the populist movement of Social Credit.

There is certainly a parallel frustration nationally in this country today. People are desperately concerned because the government is floundering around with no solutions or proposals to deal with the economic

crisis - and I think you have to call it a crisis in the state it is now. In fact, I think I've said before they not only obviously have no solutions to propose, but largely they won't even acknowledge that the problem is there, which is terribly frustrating to people. So there's a definite parallel there.

There was another factor that was involved in Alberta's case, and this would be more true of Alberta than the rest of the country, but it does have a parallel in the national arena. This frustration developed in Alberta after a long period of one government being in power. The Farmers had been there 14 years, which was a long time in those days. Alberta's unique that way - they always keep their governments a long time. There was that frustration that grew out of that - "This government's been around here 14 years, and what are they doing? What grasp have they got of the problems we're facing?"

That certainly has a parallel nationally. This country has been run by the Liberals the biggest part of the time since Confederation. If you look at the country from the standpoint of the mess it's in, I suppose they have to take the credit for the biggest part of the mess. They've run it the longest. What I'm getting at is that the emergence of a populist movement does seem to have a relationship to the length of time that a country or province has been governed by one group. People get mad; they say, "They're not doing the job; we've got to make a change."

So you've got those parallels. You've got what I've already referred to - the disintegration of the national political parties as not representing anything. That's more pronounced nationally today than it was in Alberta in 1935. In those days the parties at least had a more clear-cut position.

So I would say that you've got a parallel in the Federal field today with just about everything that existed in Alberta that gave birth to the Social Credit movement then.

Now, it should be said that nationally of course the emergence of a new political force and the growth of a new populist movement is more difficult. The larger the entity, the more difficult it is, physically for one thing. You could drive all over Alberta and organize study groups, which we did in those days, and it could physically be done. That's a very difficult thing to do for 24 million people in a country the size of Canada.

Secondly, in the smaller entities like a province your people are more one-minded in what they want to do. Nationally you don't have that one-mindedness. In assessing this frustration of today the course of action, for example, that would be desired by the people of Quebec would not be the same course of action as B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan people would want. You've got a much greater diversity in what the people think they want to do, or would like to see, than you have in the smaller entity. It certainly isn't impossible, but a populist movement has greater difficulty being born nationally than it does provincially. And the ones who take on the responsibility of the educational work, which is primarily the big entity in the early stages, have a much more difficult task on their hands nationally.

LS: The level of frustration is very high.

ECM: Oh, very high.

LS: And it is anti-established-party. What are your predictions then? Given those difficulties, what do you see for the country?

ECM: It's hard to predict at this stage because we're still in the disintegration process, and things can change so quickly. I can only answer it in those general terms that I have used. I am convinced, one, that our present political structure already has disintegrated to the place that it is not going to be saved, in its present form. There's going to be a change, period. I think that's obvious.

The public frustration is getting right up at the boiling point, and it's being expressed right now by frustration and anger at all governments. I think it would be fairly safe to say that very few, if any, governments in Canada can go to the public today and be sure of re-election. I'm rather interested in what's happened since, because I was speaking at a public convention about four months ago, and I was asked about this afterward by the press because in that talk I made the statement that in my view I doubted there was a government in the country that would survive the public adverse reaction to their governments if this economic situation was permitted to go on much longer. And I've been asked about it a number of times since because it is what is happening today.

With all those factors in the offing, and the process of disintegration still going on, precisely what will happen I think is impossible to predict at this stage. The possibilities I see are: Nationally, if the Conservative Party (I think it's appropriate to use names here because this will be historic some day) today had strong, dynamic leadership, even with the existing party and its position, it could sweep this country in an election. The frustration and anger at the Trudeau Government is such that there wouldn't be any question about that.

Their great problem today is that their leader is not perceived by the rank and file of the public as being a strong leader and a man capable of governing the country. Whether they can correct that without destroying themselves further, in the time between now and another election, only time will tell. If the conditions go on as they are, even with the present leadership, the polls indicate they might win the government. It would not solve anything, because they would not have solid public support. It would be, "We've chosen what we think is the lesser of two evils, but they're both so bad, we're not happy with either." That would be the public attitude. So nobody knows at this stage whether they'll do something about their leadership position. I can see their problem. Their time is short, and if they change now they go through the hassle of dividing the party, and a new man has got the problem of solidifying the party again before an election and time is short. And with the Liberal propensity for always

doing the thing that you do to get election, they'd call an election like that, if it was expedient for them to do it. So I can understand the Tories' reticence. Secondly, they've nobody in the arena that's the obvious leader. If there was somebody that was the obvious public choice, then it would be a different thing. I'm afraid Mr. Clark would be gone tomorrow if that situation existed.

So I don't know. That's one of the uncertain factor. But it's a possibility they might sweep the country. I don't think it would solve anything if their policy was just as it is today. We'd just have more of the same thing and four years later they'd want to throw them out if they didn't destroy themselves in that process, which they're very good at.

All that means, I guess, is that maybe this next time around is just another part of the process of disintegration. Maybe the chaos has not reached the stage that it has to reach before there emerges a force. And one thing I think history teaches us is that these forces can emerge very quickly. It certainly did in Alberta. Even today with this WCC - in a matter of two or three months it came from nothing to where it's prominent across the country today.

LS: Let's talk about that. In the provincial arena, that's happened. Could something like the the WCC emerge quickly nationally? Is that possible?

ECM: A movement could emerge nationally. It would be like the WCC only in that it's a movement that emerged here. In what it stands for, no. The WCC is a regional concept, not a national one. All I'm pointing out is that the fact that it could emerge in a large region of Canada shows that a populist movement representing a different position could emerge nationally if it caught the public imagination nationally as this has caught the public imagination regionally.

LS: Regionally, the WCC has caught onto something. The Olds-Didsbury recent byelection. What are your thoughts on it. Many people out there have said

that it's something that's going to rise up and die within a couple of months, and are not taking it seriously. Do you take it seriously?

ECM: Yes, very seriously.

LS: Why?

ECM: Well, it is a populist movement.

LS: What do you mean by that?

ECM: It emerged out of the people themselves in their state of discontent. It was not superimposed on them from the top down. If I could draw a comparison: When the present Conservative Government defeated the Social Credit party in Alberta, it did not emerge out of the public. Now-Premier Lougheed was then in the Legislature as the Conservative leader. He was young, he was personable, he was aggressive, he was intelligent. He got around him a number of young people who were the same type - appealing to people, they had drive, they were young, they were vigorous. His ideology, his philosophy, was very little different from the Social Credit Government. It wasn't a conflict of ideology at all. The whole argument was, "They're old and tired in office; we're new and fresh; we can do all that they do and more, and do it better." It was just that simple. They put together a team, they got the top advertising specialists they could get with television and other media, and they sold that idea to the people of Alberta. The people were ready for it, and they bought it. It was sold from the top down - that's the only point I'm making - and sold very successfully. It didn't start out in the grass roots; it didn't emerge out of the people.

Now the WCC is entirely different. They didn't start anything from the top. This thing just blew up in the frustration of people out in the various regions of the province. From what I'm told, at some of these meetings there wasn't even anybody in charge. They'd call a meeting and get there and pick somebody for chairman, and somebody'd get up and talk

and they'd voice their frustrations - and this is the way it came. Now that's a populist movement. That's coming from the people themselves. That's the way Social Credit started. It emerged out of the frustration of the people. And this WCC I take seriously because it's the first populist movement I know of in this country since the NDP or then-CCF in Saskatchewan, and Social Credit in Alberta. A movement that emerges out of the people, which is populist, is a very different thing than a political party with a Madison Avenue sales force that goes and sells the image and the team and the program to the public.

LS: What is its program?

ECM: It hasn't got one! Maybe I'm exaggerating, but it's program today, as far as I know, is very, very vague. I doubt if you'd find two of them that would give you the same answer to that question. Secondly, in their program as far as it has been enunciated, it has so much stuff which is negative as far as them getting public support that it just shows that nobody has sat down with a serious mind to say, "What's the ultimate end of what we're talking about?"

These aren't wild-eyed radicals from the sticks; there are a lot of business and professional people, but at this stage little more than a voice of frustration, mad at everything, mad at Ottawa, mad at Trudeau, mad at Lougheed, mad at the economy, mad, mad, mad. It's negative, it's frustration. But frustration's a very, very powerful emotion. It moves mountains. If within the WCC (and it could happen this way) somebody sits down and says, "Now wait a minute. These things we're talking about, two-thirds of them do not make sense so we'd better take a look at those. Another third is antagonizing a lot of people unnecessarily - we'd better take a look at those."

For example, to talk about separating Western Canada and forming a self-contained entity (which really means another nation) is ridiculous. They haven't the foggiest idea of what's involved in forming a nation. Your army, your navy, your air force, your postal system, your

international relations, your coinage - a thousand things I don't think they've ever even thought of. It's all just wild statements - we're going to be independent, without ever thinking through what being independent means. Surely somebody among the intelligent people they've got in there is sooner or later going to say, "Now wait a minute. This is pretty stupid, what we're advocating."

If they approached this thing with the idea, "What is needful to give us balance at Ottawa (which is what they're talking about) - if we could get the four western provinces to speak with one united voice, we've got roughly 6 million people in Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and Manitoba. We've got a comparable voice there with the population of Quebec. We've got more than the Maritimes put together, and just a little short of Ontario." That kind of thing would make sense and would attract the support of a lot of intelligent, thoughtful people who will never go along with the idea of separation, apart altogether from the fact that not that many Canadians want to destroy their country, break their country up.

That's one thing. Secondly, among the statements that they're issuing, there are so many gross exaggerations and outright untruths. But you know, they get cheers from the crowd. For example, one I've read a number of time is that the new Constitution takes away our property rights! Now where this comes from - some, myself among others, tried very hard to get some of these delegations to these conferences to be sure you wrote into the constitution the right of the individual to own property and not to be deprived thereof except by due process and proper compensation. Now, that was thrown out, it was not included, it's not in the Constitution.

The reason it wasn't in the Constitution (and this again illustrates the inconsistency of some of the things the WCC are saying - they're blaming Ottawa, "Trudeau wants to confiscate everything so he wouldn't put property rights in the Constitution"), it was <u>not</u> the Federal Government that objected to it. The objection came from some of the Provinces. And their reason was, you've got provinces (the Maritimes and I think Saskatchewan to some extent) who have expropriated land, who want to pass laws that say if

you're not a resident of Saskatchewan or Prince Edward Island you can't buy land in the Province - you're a foreigner even though you're another Canadian - these were the fellows that objected to the property rights provision. Ottawa's being blamed for it. I don't think Ottawa's unhappy about it being thrown out - they were very happy to let the provinces fight over it and say, "Well of course we'll concede to what you want; if you don't want it in there we'll leave it out."

So in the first place, when they say this is something that Ottawa did, that's not true. Heaven knows there are enough things you can criticize Ottawa for without picking something that they didn't do. But on top of that, then they say, because this was not in, we have lost our property rights. Now, our property rights are exactly the same today as they were before the Constitution was passed. Any property rights we had under existing provincial law - there's nothing in the Constitution about property rights! So our property rights are neither beneficially nor adversely affected by the Constitution - it doesn't deal with our property rights at all. Everything we had before it was passed is still there; nothing we had before has been taken away or added to.

And yet they make these statements. They're completely false. And surely before too long somebody is going to say, "Look, if we want credibility with the people we've got to stop making these statements which are totally false or at least grossly inaccurate." If they do that, and they ditch this "separation" thing and make this a united voice of the West to speak on Western concerns, I think they'd mushroom. Now whether they'll destroy themselves before they get that far or not... They're going through that crucial stage.

And now of course they're involved in an internal hassle. The president's resigned, the provincial leader's resigned. And they've resigned because these are outspoken separatists. They say, "We want separation." They're now saying, "Well, we didn't intend to separate without a referendum." Well of course this is just playing around on words. In the public eye they're perceived as out-and-out separatists for Western Canada. So

they've resigned because there's a faction within the group that says, "We're not for separatism." And I'm convinced that the great bulk of their people (if the question was put to them) would be opposed to separatism.

It's interesting in the Saskatchewan general election they put 40 candidates in the field, and they got less than 3% of the vote. Yet they tell me their meetings were well-attended and enthusiastic. But when it came down to the separatist thing.... And now I understand that some of the WCC people in Saskatchewan are saying, "We were getting along fine till those so-and-so's came over from Alberta (WCC leaders from Alberta) and ranted about this separation thing. Of course our people were turned off; they said, 'We don't want to break up our country. No way.'" Now they've got a hassle, and the only member they've elected in this by-election at Olds-Didsbury, and now the man has announced that he's not going to run in that riding again. He's standing for election in his home riding, so now he's being accused of going back on his word because apparently he promised them in the by-election that if he was elected he'd move there and represent them! So they're going through these internal hassles that may destroy them.

And incidentally this is not uncommon with a populist movement - this happened with Social Credit. In 1934 it nearly destroyed itself before it became a political movement. The internal hassle at that time was over whether the philosophy of Social Credit as Mr. Aberhart was expounding it was consistent with that of Major C. H. Douglas. Douglas of course was a theorist, his books were very ambiguous in many respects. There was a little nucleus in Calgary of a Social Credit study group that had been there before Mr. Aberhart started on it, that held from the beginning that Mr. Aberhart's interpretation of Major Douglas' books was not correct, that he wasn't pure Social Credit. These became known as the "Douglasites" and ultimately led to the insurgency after the Government was elected - or at least it was a factor in it.

LS: That was 1937 or so, right?

ECM: That was in 1936 and 37. But this was back in 1934, before it even became a political movement. There was a group within it that started saying Mr. Aberhart was not propounding genuine Douglas Social Credit. And it got to the stage where on one occasion, at a public meeting in Calgary (I happened to be chairman of the meeting) Mr. Aberhart was giving a lecture and he announced at the close of his lecture that he was resigning as the leader of the educational organization because he wanted to see this thing go, and if the view was that what he was proposing was not the genuine proposals, then let's get somebody that that knows them to go ahead, and count me out.

There was a terrible furore of course. I merely cite that as an example of how in that populist movement, before it even became political, there were the factions. The quarrel in this case was over the rightness or wrongness of interpretation of an ideology, that nearly destroyed it. The public outcry was so great that he went back at it again, and these people were silenced. Then they emerged again after and this gave birth to the Insurgency.

LS: Does that mean that the leadership is vital? the personality, the popularity of that leader? Did everything understand the theoretical differences?

ECM: No.

LS: It was Mr. Aberhart they believed in, right?

ECM: This is right. And that's why in that case the disruption that came from some accusing him of not presenting a pure Social Credit philosophy was smothered. He dropped out as a personal matter. He said, "All I'm trying to do is tell people, here's what I think is a possible solution. I'm not in it to fight with people over whether I read the book correctly or not." But your point is very well taken there. When he took this position it was very quickly shown that there was a small group of theorists that were opposing what he was saying on this purely academic ground, but the rank and file of people, when they heard he had resigned, nearly had a fit. He

was deluged with letters and phone calls, "You can't do this. You can't do this. You're our leader; you're the one we're looking to." That's where the confidence was.

So the stature of the leader and the confidence that people have in him is vital. This again, as far as the WCC is concerned, is rather interesting. They do not have a leader that stands out that way. The rank and file probably couldn't tell you who the leader was, in fact. They haven't got one now because he's resigned. So you haven't any one individual as the focal point, as representing the concept.

LS: To continue talking about these stages that a populist movement may go through before it becomes a party. One of the things that occurs to me is that if it is a populist movement and it does have strong grass roots supports, even a threat to the leadership for instance (and now I'm talking about 1934 and Social Credit) - would in a period of days or weeks not have been a threat? Is that correct? or is that naive to believe that?

ECM: That depends on the strength and prestige of the leader. All populist movements attract leaders. Sometimes they emerge early in the movement when the movement is still relatively small and the leader's stature in the eyes of the public grows with the movement. Other times the movement goes on for some time without any obvious leader and somebody emerges or is chosen, and so on.

There's a little difference there between what happened in the Social Credit movement in the 30's and what's happening in the WCC today. In the 30's, the actual work that gave birth to the populist movement (apart from the economic conditions and the frustration - the ingredients that were there) was the fact that Mr. Aberhart initiated an educational campaign, and carried this on for a year with no political connotations, but with a tremendous public interest. And that was the catalyst that gave birth to the movement. The circumstances were the frustration, the economic conditions, and all of these things. But when he came along with these educational lectures on the possibility of Social Credit being an answer to

some of these problems, the people just latched onto it. But the point there was that right from the inception of the thing that became the catalyst that brought the movement into being, he was there as the leader. He was the one that did it. And as a result, the leader in that case was a little ahead of the movement. In the WCC today, the movement is ahead of the leader - they still haven't got a leader. The ones they've had resigned, and so on. So you haven't the same identity.

In Mr. Aberhart's case, and the Social Credit movement's case, when the Social Credit movement got into difficulties, when it was still an educational movement, a number of incidents happened that led to a lot of argument over this. But as far as the rank and file of the public was concerned, Mr. Aberhart and Social Credit were synonymous. So at the stage when he actually resigned from the movement because of the controversy, what happened was that the public outcry was for him - he was Social Credit as far as 95% of the public were concerned. The little group of academics that had precipitated the internal disagreement that led to his resignation were smothered under the public outcry. Now, that could only happen because he was already established in the public perception as the leader of the movement, even though it had not yet become a political movement at that stage.

LS: He must have know that, didn't he? What was the basis of his resignation?

ECM: It probably was a combination of things. As I've stressed a number of times, he did not go into Social Credit with the idea of it being political. He wasn't looking for political office and he hadn't any ambitions along that line. He was a teacher; he was expounding. I think he was hurt, for one thing, by his efforts being misinterpreted and the impression being given by some of these academic Social Crediters that he was misleading the people in what Douglas advocated. I think that hurt him, because that was the farthest thing from his nature and purpose in beginning in the first place. Secondly, it was only an educational movement at that time. He wasn't resigning from a government or from a political movement. It was purely an educational work, a very loosely knit thing.

I think he just felt if his efforts were just going to stir up controversy, well fine. He'd have gone on talking about Social Credit or something outside the structure as he'd done when he first started up, but he wasn't going to be tied to an organization that was making life miserable for him and causing divisions. I think it was just that simple as far as he was concerned.

Knowing Mr. Aberhart as well as I do, and his intelligence and ability to assess things, I imagine that he would be pretty sure that the outcry would be there and the public would be after him to resume - which is exactly what happened.

LS: When did Social Credit move from being an educational movement to a political movement? Not so much a date, but what was it that happened in your mind and Mr. Aberhart's mind, and the organization?

ECM: Well, the results of the educational movement and the growth of these Social Credit study groups all over the Province resulted in tremendous political pressure on the Farmers' Government of Alberta. So much so, that they finally agreed to convene hearings by the Agricultural Committee of the Legislature (which was a Committee of the Whole House) on the subject of Social Credit - whether this offered any possible solution to the economic problems of the time. In other words, is there anything to it that can be done?

And they brought before that committee Major Douglas himself - he came over from the Old Country to appear before them. They asked Mr. Aberhart, of course, to appear as a witness, and there were several others.

One was a man by the name of Larkin Collins from Calgary who was the head of this academic group of Social Crediters that had been in existence in Calgary for many years, purely as a little group of a dozen men. Larkin Collins was a Chartered Accountant. I think they became interested first following a visit to Ottawa by Major Douglas away back in the 20's, that was instigated by what was known as the old Ginger Group from Western

Canada - great monetary reformers. They arranged for Douglas to appear before the Senate Banking and Commerce Committee and give evidence on the whole question of monetary reform. That generated some interest in Major Douglas' work. This was back in the 20's. And I believe it was at that time that this group was formed in Calgary. It later became known as the New Age Club. They were a little academic study group.

So when they brought Douglas over before the Agricultural Committee they had this New Age Club represented, and Mr. Aberhart, and I think two or three others. There were five or six witnesses. The hearings lasted for about a week, I guess, and then the Committee reserved its judgment to write its report. When it brought out its report, the report in effect said that the proposals of Social Credit, they felt, had very little viability or possibility of being of any value to the Province or the Government, and that anyway anything that Social Credit proposals advocated would have to be federal rather than provincial because it dealt with money and credit and so on. In other words, they brushed the whole thing off.

Up until that stage, largely at Mr. Aberhart's instigation, the pressure on the Government had been for the Government to do something about it. But that action by the Government of dismissing the whole thing - of course the reaction of the public was, "It's no good looking to the Government to do anything. They've made it clear they're not going to do it." So that was when the public pressure came on Mr. Aberhart. "If the Government won't do anything about this, let's get into the political arena and do it ourselves." That's where the pressure to go political came.

LS: Where did it come from?

ECM: The Social Credit study groups all over the Province; this was the common of conversation in the press and everything else. Resolutions passed by these groups and public meetings passing resolutions demanding that Mr. Aberhart lead them into a political movement.

Sensing this, and Mr. Aberhart being adverse to going into politics himself, he had private discussions with the then-leader of the Conservative Party in the Opposition in the Legislature and with some prominent Liberals, to see if they would be interested in taking this up. The whole idea behind the Social Credit concept was that it could be taken up by any political party; the political party was merely the vehicle that could adopt it. I think it was the Liberals that went as far as writing into their platform in the 1935 election that if elected they would do a new, objective study of Social Credit, whether it had any application to Alberta. That was just sort of a sop, but they wouldn't commit themselves on it.

So Mr. Aberhart was in this position: the Government had rejected it, the Liberals were sitting on the fence, the Tories didn't want to touch it. So then the pressure was on him. That's when the decision was made that the only alternative left was to let it go on as an educational movement and sort of wither on the vine because there was nothing new - just more of what was being done - or go political. They decided to go political.

What happened was they had about 1600 study groups by that time all over Alberta. These study groups named delegates to constituency conventions; every constituency had a bunch of these study groups. They became the conventions, they named candidates. They used a unique method. They were asked to name three candidates, and then they had a selection committee that went around the province and made the final choice from those three. The idea behind this was that it was the first time for all of these and most of these people had never been in the political arena before. That way they thought they'd be able to screen out and get the best calibre of people.

In the space of three months, it moved from purely educational to a fully integrated provincial political organization.

LS: One of the major differences between that and the WCC is that you had a platform. You had a program.

ECM: Oh yes. Well, we had a program once it went political. Of course, during the two years of the educational work there was no program, except there was a discussion of the economic proposals of C. H. Douglas. But because it was only educational there was no attempt to draft up a complete platform.

Now, when they went political, they held two conventions. The reason for the two was that economic conditions were such that it was hard to get a representative convention in one place in the Province. So they had one in Calgary and one in Edmonton - the southern half of Alberta in the second. And they passed the same resolutions. And that was the convention at which they adopted a platform - that's when they first acquired a provincial platform.

LS: But that platform then was put together....

ECM: It was put together in the space of about two months during that transition period from an educational to a political movement.

LS: Were you part of that?

ECM: I was involved in it, yes. The actual drafting work was mostly done by Mr. Aberhart, and of course I was working with him. This was taken to the Conventions as a draft, and of course there were a lot of resolutions. They invited resolutions from each group on different subjects, and there were some revisions made in the light of all of that.

LS: It seems incredible in that story. Did you feel as individuals a phenomenal pressure back here, on putting things....

ECM: There was a lot of pressure! The public was just... by that time there was no turning back. They were just going to do something! The frustration they'd had at the Government before for general conditions of course intensified when the Government rejected this. The Government misread the public thinking. They didn't realize the extent to which the public had

become enthused about this possibility of a solution, in their desperation. And when the Government rejected it, well the Government just sealed its death warrant.

As a result, of course, when the election came in 1935, not a single member of the Government was re-elected.

LS: Was it an exhilarating time for you?

ECM: Oh yes, it was exhilarating! It was also very tiring! We used to work 18 hours a day and drive all over the country and hold two meetings a day, and handle all the other work besides.

LS: Did you know then that you could form the next government?

ECM: We were pretty certain by about the middle of the actual election campaign. The enthusiasm was so tremendous, and so across-the-boards.... We were cautious because it didn't seem possible, but certainly the support seemed to be there, and certainly by the last two weeks of the campaign we didn't have any doubt. We thought we'd have a majority. We never thought we'd sweep the Province of course.

LS: Now, to move from there just to look again at the WCC, in terms of the fact of the leadership vacuum. There isn't a program as far as one can see; it isn't coming out of and isn't involved in an educational movement - I'm just trying to look at some of the non-parallels. How can it "get it's act together"?

ECM: I suppose when you say it's not an educational movement - they have been holding meetings all over the place, and at those meetings they discuss the problems and concerns of the people. That's a very definite parallel with the old Social Credit meetings. I've referred to them as educational. There was a discussion of the problems. The only difference was that in Mr. Aberhart's case he would then go on to expound what Major Douglas was proposing as a solution. In the WCC they discuss the problems and they

propose a solution, an independent Western Canada; in that broad sense, they have that solution. Where the difference is there is that the Social Credit proposal, while dealing only with the economic aspect, at least was a specific proposal. It didn't deal at that stage with all the other things - health and education and agriculture and all of those things. But there was that parallel. The WCC discuss the problems, exactly the same as was done in the Social Credit days, then say, "The only answer to this is you've got to get free from Ottawa, you've got to get free from those so-and-so's in Central Canada, so we've got to have an independent Western Canada." That's their answer as compared with Mr. Aberhart saying, "Here's a set of economic proposals, monetary proposals."

LS: What about taking a proposal, as you proposed in your book, of political realignment, and marry that with an obvious populist movement which the WCC is?

ECM: Well, I would have to acknowledge that it was my hope that the concepts in Political Realignment would give birth to a populist movement. Now, it didn't. We could do lots of analyzing as to why it didn't and so on. Maybe the time wasn't come; maybe it was 10 years premature. I have an idea (it's only an idea) that if Political Realignment had come out within the last year and a half, it might have given birth to a political movement. Maybe it was premature.

To use a vehicle like the WCC, as I indicated earlier - to my mind it would be a very undesireable and unacceptable vehicle, unless it did at least two things: One, abandoned the idea of breaking up Canada and confined itself to the concept of a united voice for the Western region of Canada, a united approach to the problems of the Western region; and, two, eliminated the definite inaccuracies and completely erroneous statements which are so prominent in its material. I wouldn't want to see Political Realignment attached to a movement that was guilty of those two things.

Now, apart from those two things, the ingredients are there, yes.

LS: And the ingredients are there than, as well, in terms of not even using a vehicle but just working with that frustration of the population today.

ECM: That's right. The frustration factor is, I think, one of the strong ones in moving to, say, Political Realignment, or to something like this WCC. But in the case of the WCC, it's taken these other positions. And also you must remember that from its inception it has been a political party. It registered as a political party. It didn't go through an educational process and then decide to become a party the way the Social Credit movement did. The CCF in Saskatchewan went through much the same. It was largely a farmers' cooperative effort initially. And when it issued the Regina Manifesto it became a political party.

LS: I'd like to just move back again in time, and leave that. I think that's a really interesting discussion.

I want to go back and get the final remembrances in terms of your retirement. You retire as Premier of the Province in December of 1968. I'm interested in why you chose that time. You were a young man at that point in time - not so old now! - but a very young man at that point in time. What kind of options did you consider? I've read that one of them was joining Billy Graham's work. What brought that on at that point in time.

ECM: Perhaps just to clear up that one point - there was never any suggestion on their part or my part of my joining Billy Graham's organization. That was purely newspaper speculation.

There were a number of factors. I had been in government then continuously for over 33 years. I'd passed 60, which is not old, but still it's not young. I knew from the standpoint of physical drive and that, from there on out it's not up - it maybe stays level for a while. I was tired; I always drove myself pretty hard, I guess, when I was in government. In addition to the Premiership I always carried one or two porfolios, and did a lot of public speaking and one thing and another as well. I had driven

myself hard; I was very tired. I felt physically I could have handled it for another term - I think without any difficulty particularly. But that would probably have been as long as I would want it to go from that standpoint. Not that you can't do it - you can go on to 75 - but to me this is one of the mistakes that so many political people make. They're past their prime; they haven't got the alertness that you have when you're younger. They haven't got the resilience and stamina. And they hang on and hang on, and then ultimately there comes a situation where some major situation has to be faced that's going to extend over four or five years, and they can't do it. So there's a change then at the worst time from the public interest. And this has happened so often.

My thought was that, sure, I could stay on another four or five years. But I had no way of knowing whether four or five years down the road the circumstances would be opportune from the standpoint of the stability of the Province and the good of the people, that that would be the logical time, or whether there might be a situation then that would say, "You can't do it now."

Whereas at the time I did retire, I don't think things could have been in better shape. The Province was in good shape; we had a good surplus; our debt was all covered by our surplus; we were well within our Budget; we'd had a by-election that fall and won the seat, which had put us back to 56, the same number we started with 34 years before; there were no outstanding issues of any importance; and it seemed to me that it would be very hard to find a time more opportune to make the change.

I've always been a strong believer that leaders should change at a time when there are not great problems or issues on hand - not go out in the middle of something which throws the new man in in a set of circumstances where he has to start from scratch. It was a good time - that more than anything else was the factor.

Secondly (not necessarily in this order), I wanted to do other things. I never subscribed to the idea of spending your whole life in one

occupation. I was only 26 when I went into the Cabinet, and for all practical purposes I'd spent my whole adult life at this. I wanted to get into the private field; I always leaned toward the private sector and was interested in the private sector. I wanted to do some work in that field, and again, if you're going to do that, as I used to say to my colleagues, "If you don't get started on your second occupation by the time you're around 60, you get a little old for your third!" You've got to think about that down the road.

Another thing was my family. I always had the 100% support of my wife and my family from day one. But I recognized that I was in public life before I was married! My family'd never known anything else but that life. I wanted to get away from that for a while. I thought from the family's standpoint it would be nice to have an environment that wasn't in the fishbowl of public life, for a few years anyway.

So it was a combination of all of those things.

LS: Up to that point in time, what did you feel were your greatest accomplishments, looking back?

ECM: I couldn't put my finger on any single one. The things that gave me the greatest satisfaction in all the years in Government were when we were able to do things that actually led to the solution of people's problems. The improvements in the social services of the Province gave me a lot of satisfaction. The growth of the economy which created thousands of jobs and pulled the Province out of its state of terrible financial conditions. We were able to get ourselves out of our state of default, we re-funded the debt and got our financial house in order. There was a lot of satisfaction in all of those.

If I had to pick out one - it would only be a category rather than an individual thing - I was always most affected by the things that actually benefited people. I guess I was always interested in people.

LS: Any disappointments?

ECM: Well, there are disappointments, yes. You try to do some things and you're not successful. You're sorry. I don't look on disappointments in the sense that it was a failure. You give a thing your best effort, and maybe it doesn't work out the way you hoped it would, well, okay, we take it from there. Occasionally the divisions that take place within - I had to ask a couple of Ministers for resignations - these are not easy things to do. But that's part of the job.

LS: I have another question, and that's to look forward, I guess, and it's a big question - a vision for the Province. Given what we've just talked about in terms of the WCC populist movement, ...

ECM: You mean from now, or from the time I dropped out?

LS: No, from now.

ECM: It's so hard in the world of today to look into the future any distance at all. Alberta has all the ingredients for economic greatness. I think the thing that disturbs me most in the trends as I've seen them in the Province - it doesn't surprise me, but it disturbs me - is that all the material affluence that we have experienced here as compared with other parts of the country has not improved the quality of our society. It's worse. It hasn't made our people any happier; they're not as happy as they were in other years. It always makes a person a bit sad to see that. As I say, I'm not surprised; that's the way human nature reacts. And human nature being what it is, you have to expect that. All you can do is try to build in as many safeguards as you can to curb it.

But it disturbs and saddens me today to see the change that has taken place in public attitudes, immorality, disrespect for law, violence - all of these things are a deterioration in our social conditions. To some extent we have to acknowledge that that goes with affluence. It's harder for most

people to retain the quality of life in affluent times than it is in hard times. It's unfortunate it's that way, but it is that way.

If you want it generalized, if you look back in those days of the Great Depression before, people didn't have anything, a great majority were living from hand to mouth. But you could drive all over this Province and if you went into a home, the first thing they'd do is ask you to come in and have dinner, and would you like to stay the night, and anything we can do.... That was the attitude. A locked door was almost unknown. People wandered around the country, if they were lost or something, went to a home, the door was open, you went in, and people were happy to.... It was so different.

We've lost so much by losing those things.

LS: People say that we're going into a recession today, or we are in a recession, with the enormous economic upheaval. Do you see that?

ECM: I can say this, I guess, in a record of this kind, because I'd be hesitant to say it to the public today, that the outlook is as bad as I think it is. You have to be so careful; these things can become self-fulfilling prophecies. If you overemphasize the seriousness of the economic conditions, you undermine confidence, and of course confidence is such a big factor in preserving economic activity.

I'm very, very disturbed at the outlook today in the economy. There are so many built-in factors that are going to make it worse that it's hard to see it getting better - particularly the staggering impact of this long period of high interest rates with the astronomical pile of public and private corporate debt today. I can honestly see no way of this being paid off. I think you're going to see a great upsurge of bankruptcies, both corporate and private; we're already seeing it, in fact. Quite a few of the governments right in this country today, by all normal financial standards, are as good as bankrupt. It's only that there's no way of putting a government into bankruptcy. And as I say, these are built-in costs. The

pyramiding impact of the debt service charges today is so staggering. You see, the debt service charges nationally today are more than the total national budget was only a few years ago. And when people talk about eliminating deficits, here we are facing a $10-12 billion deficit! If you wrung out everything you could possibly wring out of the Federal programs - and there's a lot of waste undoubtedly - let's say at the outside you could wring out $3 billion. What have you done? You've brought your deficit down from $10 to $7 billion. You haven't resolved anything. You're simply able to say, "The temperature's gone down half of one degree, but the fever's still 104." That's the kind of thing that frightens me.

And the same thing prevails in private and corporate debt. I'm afraid this is particularly hard now on a lot of our younger people, and you can't in a sense blame them because they group up and went out into the world in this period of boom where running up a $65,000 mortgage - they didn't lose a night's sleep in doing it. Buying a car, TV, stereo, the whole works, on time and going into debt for it, didn't mean anything to them. Now with jobs cutting down and living costs going up, they can't keep the payments up. And the aggregate of that is just absolutely staggering.

And when you combine that with what I said a few moments ago, the lowering of moral standards, there isn't the sense of obligation today that there used to be. I can remember - and this was one of the noticeable things in the 30's in the Depression - when people got into financial trouble and many of them couldn't pay their debts, the last thing they'd ever think of was repudiating that debt. It was always, "I'll pay you. I can't pay you now, but if it takes me the rest of my life, I'll pay you." And they meant it, that moral obligation to a commitment that they'd made. You don't find that today. Today, applying for bankruptcy - you're back in business the next day, kind of thing. No sense of having broken a covenant that we made with somebody to pay him back for what he lent us.

LS: Can leadership in political office change anything? It seems the forces are so great, one wonders if any kind of leadership can.

ECM: I'm afraid at the best it's fighting a rear-guard action. I know my premise is not accepted by a lot of people, and that makes a difference in how we reason. I personally believe without any shadow of doubt that human nature is basically bad, and that depravity in human nature is a cumulative thing. That's why violence and crime and all that's worse today than it was back a few generations ago.

If that premise is right - and there's no doubt in my mind that it's right - then there are two things that you can do. As individuals you can fight a rear-guard action. In other words, you can resist, and I think we have an obligation to resist, what is detrimental to people, as far as we can do it. And I think a lot can be done that way; you can resist. I don't mean by that that you can legislate righteousness, but you can make it as hard as you can possibly make it for people to do the wrong thing to other people - that type of thing.

The other great hope again would not be accepted by a lot of people, but from a solution standpoint it's (to me) the only hope - a spiritual revival of people. The great secret, if you want to call it a secret, of why Christianity has endured for 2000 years and had the transforming impact it's had not only on individual lives but on society and nations - after all, if you look back, as a simple historic matter, the building of hospitals for the sick and all this kind of stuff has followed Christianity, that's been the motivating thing in so much of it - is that the spiritual regeneration of an individual is the only thing that can offset the natural inclinations to destruction and negative, evil things that are in human nature.

That potential is there. The divine power of God to change the nature of people is no less today than it ever was. It's just that man has turned his back on God to such an extent that we don't cash in on the potential that's there.

I think it is a fact of history that adverse economic conditions do tend to make a substantial number of people think more seriously of the spiritual

dimension of life. Man begins to think that the idea of living by bread alone doesn't have much attraction if there isn't going to be any bread! And he begins to wonder, "Isn't there more to life than two cars in the garage and a membership in the golf club?" and all this kind of thing.

Maybe this is digressing a bit, but it might not be inappropriate to mention it. As you know, I have been associated with a national Christian radio broadcast for 45 years. It's the oldest broadcast of its kind in Canada; we're now in our 57th consecutive year. We broadcast over 61 stations right across the country every week, so there's a representative response of the people all over the country.

I have a particular interest in this, I'll admit, because it was through that broadcast in its initial years that I learned the realism of what Christianity can do in your life. I was a nominal Christian before that, but it was through that that I discovered that an individual's relationship with God - Christ - can be a real thing, not just a theoretical thing. That Christ was more than a historic character, that His resurrection was literal, He's alive today and is prepared to deal with people that will come to Him.

What I really started out to say is, I have noticed in the last year particularly, from our radio correspondence (which is very extensive; we hear from people all over the country) many things that indicate this upsurge of interest in spiritual things. Just one little indicator of that. This broadcast, I think, is an indicator because it ties it back to the material things that people think of. Our radio work has been a voluntary work. One rule we have is for all of us who work on it that nobody receives anything; we won't let anybody be paid for it. The only expenditure we have is the buying of radio time and of course the secretarial/stenographic work for handling mail. But it's supported entirely by the voluntary support of the listeners. It's never been sponsored or underwritten or anything of this kind. It operates on a very simple formula. If we get a few dollars ahead, we add a station. If we go behind, we take them off. We don't believe in going into debt on it, and

it goes that way.

But this last year, when the economic pinch has been the worst that we've had in Canada certainly for many, many years, and living costs are uP certainly for many people - it's very difficult to get by today - our response from the radio audience the last year has been the greatest in any of those 57 years! I think that says something.

We don't appeal for money. We thank people that send help, and say, "You people realize that you're the ones that support this." We never dun people, we never send circulars asking for money. But the spontaneous response has been greater this last year than any year in 57 years!

I think it does indicate, and I think understandably, that when the material things (on which people put such stock when everything's booming along) are lost - when a man loses his job, or they lose their home - they begin to say, "Surely there's more to life. Surely our life doesn't just hinge on the fact of a job or a house or something of this kind. Surely we have a bigger dimension than just that." Then they start thinking, "Well, where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? What should we be doing while we're here?" This turns their thoughts to spiritual things. And it has shown up quite clearly in our work.

LS: I'm just wondering, as a final comment - given the conditions we've talked about and a feeling that I don't know if there's any leadership in the political arena that can turn this around - again, it might be back to the people, it'll come from the people themselves, in the sense of perhaps a questioning and a new spiritual concern. And then pressure can go onto political leaders to meet that. Is that a possible scenario?

ECM: I think it's possible. And I would say this again - and I appreciate in saying these things that people whose convictions and premises are different of course come to different conclusions - political leadership can be a tremendous asset in providing stability in unsettled times. Certainly one of the things we suffer from in Canada today is a general

lack of strong leadership. It's interesting (and rather frightening) that the opinion polls show that the public attitude towards governments and politicians and public leaders today is at an all-time low. We have no natonal leadership that you could look up to with admiration and confidence.

So strong political leadership can be a great asset to a country, and a stabilizing influence. But I would say this from my own convictions, that political leadership alone is not enough. If it's purely materialistic, it can improve the material affluence, perhaps, of the country. It can teach people that if they do live by bread alone, we're going to provide more bread, so we're good fellows. But if you start from the premise that you don't live by bread alone, then there's got to be another dimension. And political leadership alone is still left with a vacuum, unless there's a spiritual leadership as well as political leadership.

When I speak of a hope of the emergence of strong national leadership for political realignment I would never want to leave anybody under the impression that I think that that alone can solve the problems of people or nations. I think that unless they recognize the spiritual dimension along with it they may make some yards, but they're going to fall far short of what's needed. And ultimately they're swamped.

LS: I think people are looking at alternatives.

ECM: I see many indications of it. It's interesting today - I do a lot of work in the business and corporate world - how often in talking to business people their conversation gets around to these things. Concern about "surely there's something more than the almighty dollar and the mad fight for survival in the material world."

LS: Do you think in that questioning that there's a hope?

ECM: Yes, there's a hope there. The reason there's a hope is that when you're dealing with the spiritual realm you're dealing with the supernatural power of God and so there are no limits.

You know, it's interesting, when you look back over history, taking Great Britain and the Wesleys. Their spiritual leadership, I think historians generally credit - Britain could well have gone the way of France and the French Revolution if it hadn't been for the influence of the Wesleys. And the change in economic conditions that grew out of their spiritual ministry - the abolition of child labour and all of that in Britain was directly related to that. And there have been historians who say, and I think rightly so, that they probably did more to change the course of British history than all the battle fleets and armies put together!

LS: The feeling sometimes is, when your economic policies are empty and not working, and don't take into account social concerns - again I come back to your humanist concerns as well as the economic system that has to come with it - then maybe we have to look someplace totally different, that will have econmic ramifications.

ECM: It may well be. And even in this humanitarian concern, there are two types of motivation. There's the do-gooder who really wants to help people but it's a materialistic approach. It's the sensible thing to do. He's realistic - you can't have one person starving next door to one in affluence. It's a sensible thing to do. But the ideal humanitarian concern is the concern that flows from genuine love for that person - love for your neighbour. It's spiritually motivated.

One of the things I've always found so fascinating (and the Bible has been my textbook for many years) in the Christian gospel and the teachings of Christ when He was here, when a lawyer of His day came and asked Him about the commandments ("Which are the greatest commandments?") He said, "Well, there are two that are inseparable: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In

other words, there are your two parts of genuine Christianity - man's relationship to his God, and from that a relationship flowing to his fellows that he'll never get in any other way.

It's a sad thing today - and sad in the spiritual realm.... I remember my son giving a series of talks on this in our radio work some time ago, taking the symbol of the Christian cross, the recognized symbol of Christianity around the world. You have a vertical shaft and you have a horizontal shaft. It really symbolizes these two things that Christ talked about to that lawyer. Your vertical shaft - man's relationship with his God - the up-and-down relationship. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The horizontal one reaches out to the neighbour on either side. You're to love your neighbour as yourself.

What we've done over the years is dismantle the cross till you have a lot of religious people today - all they have left is the shaft. Their concern is limited to their relationship to God. Now that's find; that's important. But they only have half of the Christian gospel. When you talk about their fellows, "He's the enemy out there. We have our little exclusive group and we're going to pray and worship." Then you have the other group that dismantle the cross, and all they have is the horizontal - they're going to do everything for everybody. But when you say, "Where does God come in?" they say, "Oh, that's that religious stuff."

One's as bad as the other. It's only when you get the cross put back together, where the relationship to our fellows and our humanitarian concern to our fellows flows from the fact that there is first this vertical relationship with God that you've got a cross put together again. Which is the whole heart and message of the Christian Gospel.

This is why we do this radio work. It takes a lot of time and effort for years and years, but we're trying to say these very things to people. "Look, there is hope. If you can wrap these two things together, who knows what can happen?"

LS: Would you say, Mr. Manning, that those have been like your personal philosophy? Do you see your personal philosophy that you were active politically, and that's your concern for your neighbour.

ECM: It was my motivation; it was Mr. Aberhart's motivation. I can say, and I'm sure it was true of him, that it was a Christian motivation that put us into politics. I had no desire to go into politics, and I know he didn't. And all the years I stayed in it, I never got to like politics in the political sense. I liked having the opportunity to do something, and the power to do something if you saw something that needed to be done and could be done, and trying to solve people's problems. As I said a little earlier, my greatest satisfaction came from things that affected people. It was concern for people, and a desire to help solve their problems.

You can be very concerned for people, but if you're not in a position where you have the power to do the things needful, it's frustrating. Incidentally, it's what I find so terribly frustrating about this Senate stuff in Ottawa. You see all the problems, you debate all the problems, but you have no power to do the things that need to be done. It's terribly frustrating.

LS: Is that going to change?

ECM: I think it's either going to change or the thing will be abolished, at least that would certainly be my recommendation. It could be made a valuable instrument in the parliamentary process of dealing with national problems, but unless it is you might as well abolish it. It's not worth keeping it on the way it is today.

LS: Will you continue to work with it for a while?

ECM: I don't know how much longer. Of course, I only have a year and a half to go anyway. I doubt if I'll go long, unless I can see some clear indication of something being done, and I see no indication yet.