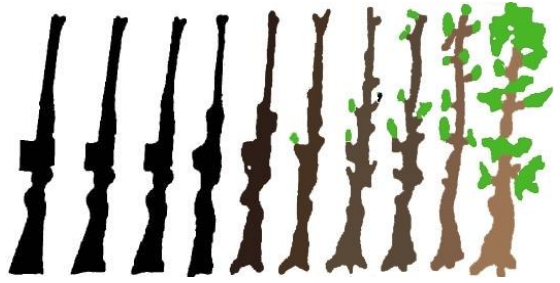


Coalition to
Oppose the
Arms
Trade



191 James St. Ottawa ON K1R 5M6

Dear Thomas,

May 1, 2016

This issue of *Press for Conversion!* offers a critical analysis of how some Canadians have been held captive by cherished national myths. It examines the pivotal role of progressive-sounding narratives in persuading good well-meaning people to support atrocious state crimes, from cultural genocide to imperial wars. This is not just a problem of the past. We still face it today, with such initiatives as the UN's "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, which imperial powers use to disguise their wars as "humanitarian operations."

I was raised by NDP/peace-activist parents who taught me to revere the Social Gospel movement, which was the driving force behind the CCF's creation. Indeed, Rev.J.S. Woodsworth, the founding leader and much-loved hero of the CCF, was an icon of the Social Gospel. In researching this publication, I have had to reconsider and even reject some of my beliefs about the Social Gospel, and Woodsworth in particular.

Progressive Canadians will be shocked by this history. Woodsworth not only embraced extremely racist ideas and promoted residential schools, his writings and sermons helped create the rabidly xenophobic climate that justified forcing some 8,000 largely single, urban, unemployed, working-class East European men into slave-labour "concentration camps" during the WWI era. These men, not coincidentally, were feared as the most likely foreigners to be radicalised by atheist "Red" agitators. Woodsworth did not just *reflect* the biases of his class and ethnicity, or the religious intolerance of so-called "Christian values," or the political extremes of the "Red Scare," he passionately *led* a generation of followers into accepting unjust, elitist ideologies and criminal, state policies.

Please reply to this question: In recognising the dire need for truth and reconciliation, what — if anything — is being done within the NDP to acknowledge the crucial role played by the Social Gospel, and CCF hero Rev.J.S. Woodsworth, in not only promoting ethnocentric, racist and xenophobic attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples, but in advocating assimilationist policies that amounted to cultural genocide?

Sincerely,
Richard Sanders,
Coordinator, COAT