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Defeating the Farmers' Efforts to Help Themselves: The Role of the State in the Collapse of the United Farmers Co-operative Company of New Brunswick, 1918-1922

ONE EVENING EARLY IN THE WINTER of 1917-18, a group of farmers in and around the small village of Pembroke in Carleton County, New Brunswick met to discuss the formation of a local agricultural society. The meeting took an unexpected turn when one of those gathered read aloud a newspaper account of a speech delivered by the president of the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO). Those assembled liked what they heard of the Ontario organization's activities, and they appointed N.F. Phillips, C. Gordon Sharpe, and one-time local MLA Charles L. Smith to make further inquiries and report back to a future meeting. Subsequent to their findings, the first local association of the United Farmers of New Brunswick (UFNB) was formed at Pembroke on 3 February 1918.¹ Within a month, six more UFNB locals had been established in neighbouring communities, with a combined membership of nearly 200.² This was only the beginning. By 1921 the organization boasted 10,000 members; moreover, United Farmer political candidates had captured nine seats in the New Brunswick election of 1920 and formed the official opposition in partnership with two Labor representatives.³

Adopting the motto "Equal Opportunities for All", the UFNB made "studying and teaching the principles of co-operation, and . . . promoting the establishment of co-operative organizations" two of its stated objectives from the outset.⁴ While they retained faith in the free market, and shared state officials' belief that efficient production would lead to greater farm profits, United Farmer leaders, like many late-19th- and early-20th-century agrarians, also vigorously opposed the concentration of economic and political power that had come to typify modern capitalism. The UFNB thus envisioned the co-operative movement as a means of building a more humane, locally empowered society.⁵ In step with this alternative perspective, the organization

1 *United Farmers' Guide* (Moncton), 21 April 1920, p. 9.

2 *Carleton Sentinel* (Woodstock), 15 March 1918, p. 3.

3 *Carleton Sentinel*, 4 February 1921, p. 1.

4 *Carleton Sentinel*, 15 March 1918, p. 4; *Maritime Farmer and Co-operative Dairyman* (Sussex), 19 March 1918, pp. 343, 363.

5 Ian MacPherson, *Each for All: A History of the Co-operative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto, 1979), p. 41. Co-operative economic philosophies did much to fuel agrarian populist political organizations throughout late-19th- and early-20th-century North America. See Ramsay Cook, "Tillers and Toilers: The Rise and Fall of Populism in Canada in the 1890s", *Historical Papers* (1984), pp. 1-20; Kerry A. Badgley, *Ringling in the Common Love of Good: The United Farmers of*

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established the United Farmers Co-operative Company of New Brunswick (UFCCNB), which by the early 1920s supported a network of some 30 locally owned consumer co-operatives.⁶

By the mid-1920s, however, membership in the UFNB was in rapid decline and most of its co-operative stores were bankrupt. As historians have noted, the economic failings of the UFCCNB stemmed from a number of factors, including global recession, poor management, internal division and the concerted opposition of private business. While not denying the validity of these earlier observations, this study concludes, as did several UFNB spokesmen, that outright hostility on the part of the New Brunswick government also played a significant role in the collapse of the United Farmers' co-operative endeavours. Indeed, a number of UFNB spokesmen were convinced that the Liberal administration of Premier Walter Foster deliberately undercut the success of the United Farmers' co-operative initiatives as part of an organized campaign to erode the UFNB's growing political support. This was most evident in the vehement attacks launched against the United Farmers and their co-operative company by the *Maritime Farmer and Co-operative Dairyman* in the run-up to the provincial election of 1920. Owned and operated by close allies of the Foster government, this respected agrarian journal served as a powerful propaganda tool in the province's efforts to undermine UFNB support.

Although it was by far and away the most successful agrarian co-operative organization in New Brunswick history to that time, the United Farmers Co-operative Company received no aid whatsoever from the provincial government. The Foster administration chose instead to sponsor pseudo-co-operative services that drew both money and members away from the United Farmers. The demise of the UFCCNB thus provides a clear illustration that opposition on the part of state officials could have devastating consequences for those engaged in co-operative activity. This is especially evident when one contrasts the UFCCNB experience with those of contemporary co-operative initiatives such as the Maritime Livestock Board (MLB) and the Antigonish Movement, both of which owed a considerable portion of their early success to generous government assistance.

The relationship between the Canadian state – herein defined as the elected and bureaucratic branches of the federal and/or provincial governments – and co-operative organizations historically drew surprisingly little academic attention. However, the last few decades have produced several analyses that focus on the nature of state-co-operative relations in the late-20th century and each suggests that government policy has come to play an increasingly influential role in determining the fate of co-

Ontario, 1914-1926 (Montreal and Kingston, 2000); Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York, 1978); Robert C. McMath, *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898* (New York, 1993) and Robert C. McMath, *Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmers' Alliance* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1976). See also Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism; Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York, 1983); Bruce Palmer, "Man Over Money": *The Southern Critique of American Capitalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980) and Norman Pollack, *The Just Polity: Populism, Law and Human Welfare* (Urbana, IL, 1987).

⁶ *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1921, p. 7.

operative initiatives.⁷ Ian MacPherson, among others, has also commented on the beneficial effect of state assistance in the growth and development of late-19th- and early-20th-century agrarian co-operatives, although this observation is usually made only in passing.⁸ Moreover, while scholars universally note that agrarian leaders could be vocal critics of federal tariff policy and were generally suspicious of government in theory, few examples have been provided to suggest that state action was detrimental to the co-operative aims of farm organizations.

The most prominent exception to this rule is the work of Kerry Badgley, which details how the socially conscious consumer co-operatives of the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO) were effectively undermined by that province's department of agriculture; the department ignored consumer co-operatives and instead emphasized the narrower economic gains to be attained through the promotion of marketing co-operatives, a phenomenon that proceeded unhindered even during the period the UFO formed the provincial government between 1919 and 1923.⁹ A preference for producer co-operatives over their consumer counterparts also helps to explain the New Brunswick government's antagonistic attitude with respect to the UFNB's co-operative activities. But, more than any other factor, it was the desire to erode the electoral support of their leading political rival that motivated the Foster administration's approach to the United Farmers Co-operative Company of New Brunswick.

The co-operative movement arose out of the efforts of small-scale economic actors whose traditional means of production, marketing and consumption were seriously disrupted by changes wrought by continued capitalist development.¹⁰ Confronted with

7 Alexander F. Laidlaw, *Co-operatives in the Year 2000: A Paper Prepared for the 27th Congress of the International Co-operative Alliance* (London, 1981), pp. 12, 39-40; David Laycock, *Co-operative-Government Relations in Canada: Lobbying, Public Policy Development and The Changing Co-operative System* (Saskatoon, 1987); Murray Fulton and David Laycock, "Co-operatives and Government", in Murray E. Fulton, ed., *Co-operative Organizations and Canadian Society: Popular Institutions and the Dilemmas of Change* (Toronto, 1990), p. 152-3.

8 MacPherson notes the key role played by members of both the federal and provincial departments of agriculture in the establishment of agrarian marketing co-operatives throughout the Maritime region. See Ian MacPherson, "Patterns in the Maritime Co-operative Movement, 1900-1945", *Acadiensis*, V, 1 (Autumn 1975), p. 75. Likewise, it is widely acknowledged that agrarian co-operative development in Saskatchewan was greatly aided by support from the provincial government. See Robert Irwin, "Farmers and Managerial Capitalism: The Saskatchewan Cooperative Elevator Company", *Agricultural History*, 70, 4 (Fall 1996), p. 633 and Brett Fairbairn, "Big Capital, the Big State, and Co-operatives", in Fulton, *Co-operative Organizations and Canadian Society*, p. 243.

9 Kerry Badgley, "'Co-operation Pays and Pays Well': Co-operatives and the State in Ontario, 1914 to 1930", in Donald H. Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, X (Gananoque, ON, 1996), p. 166; Badgley, *Ring in the Common Love of Good*, pp. 147-8. Although Badgley provides one of the best accounts of state efforts to co-opt the reform agenda of a particular agrarian organization, this phenomenon was evident throughout North America by the 1920s. See Robert C. McMath, "Populism in Two Countries: Agrarian Protest in the Great Plains and the Prairie Provinces", *Agricultural History*, 69, 4 (Fall 1995), p. 542. Some state officials in the mid-20th-century Maritimes were also less than helpful in their dealings with co-operative organizations. See Stephen Dutcher, "'Looking Towards the Promised Land': Modernity, Antimodernism and Co-operative Wholesaling in the Maritime Provinces, 1945-1961", *Acadiensis*, XXXIV, 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 54-5.

10 Ian MacPherson, "The Heritage: Sources for a Movement", in J. G. Craig, John E. Jordan and Stefan Haley, eds., *Patterns & Trends of Canadian Co-operative Development* (Saskatoon, 1982), pp. 6, 238.

the need to adopt expensive technology and concerned with the ever-increasing rate of rural depopulation, farmers were among the first to look to co-operation as a means of preserving their economic well-being. Thus, for some, co-operation was first and foremost a necessary business strategy that would enable small producers to attain the efficient, high-quality production required to remain competitive in a free market environment.¹¹ Yet many farmers were also drawn by the co-operative movement's strong criticism of the competitive mindset that underlay the capitalist order. For these individuals, the co-operative approach was a genuine recipe for significant societal reform. Co-operation would ensure the preservation of grass-roots democracy and bring about economic and social justice whereas modern capitalism brought power and wealth only to the privileged few.¹² Ironically, then, co-operation was envisaged both as the best means of solidifying the economic success of farmers within the capitalist system and as the primary instrument through which capitalism could be reformed.

These seemingly contrasting visions posed no dilemma for some but, by the early-20th century, a clear gulf was emerging between those who saw co-operation primarily as an efficient economic strategy and those who championed it as a tool for enacting societal reform. Nowhere was this split more evident than in the vision of co-operation championed by state-employed agricultural officials versus that espoused by agrarian-led populist organizations, although the two camps were never completely polarized. Agricultural professionals such as Nova Scotia's F.W. Walsh, who gave great support to the Antigonish Movement and talked of fighting large corporations on behalf of the "little man", professed a vision of co-operation that moved beyond economic efficiency.¹³ More often than not, however, government officials consistently favoured groups, many of them under government direction, which adhered most closely to a business-only model of co-operation.

The response of state officials to the United Farmers Co-operative Company of New Brunswick is best put in context through a brief analysis of the development of both state-sponsored and independent agrarian co-operatives in the province in the years before the company's founding in 1918. State promotion of agrarian co-operation in New Brunswick began in the spring of 1891 when the provincial government launched a campaign to popularize co-operative dairying. Given much of the credit for making the farmers of Denmark and Ontario world leaders in dairy exports, co-operative dairying required farmers to send milk to a centrally located cheese factory or creamery, rather than manufacturing their own products at home. As returns under the co-operative system were largely dependent on the quality of goods placed on the market, it was hoped that New Brunswick farmers would be encouraged to improve the breeding of their cows and take a more business-minded approach to their work.¹⁴ The annual reports of the provincial dairy superintendent clearly indicate

11 MacPherson, "The Heritage", pp. 6-7, 10. Agrarian co-operation first arose in mid-19th century Germany under the direction of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. See Fairbairn, "Big Capital", p. 239.

12 MacPherson, "The Heritage", p. 17.

13 See F. W. Walsh, *We Fought for the Little Man: My Sixty Years in Agriculture* (Moncton, 1978), pp. 1, 18.

14 W.W. Hubbard, "Life and Times in New Brunswick, 1866-1945", MC 16/ MS1, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB); *Maritime Farmer*, 24 October 1905, pp. 41-2 and 20 February 1906, p. 254.

that government support of co-operative dairying at the turn of the 20th century had as much to do with building a lucrative export trade as it did boosting farmers' incomes.¹⁵ Moreover, as Ian MacPherson notes, the co-operative dairy movement in the Maritimes concerned itself almost exclusively with the pursuit of greater farm profit and had few ties to other, more socially conscious, co-operative endeavours.¹⁶

Ironically, while joint ownership of a dairy factory was held out to farmers as an ideal means of maximizing revenue, farmer-owned factories received no additional government aid and, as noted in the provincial agricultural report of 1909, many co-operative facilities fell by the wayside or were bought out by private interests.¹⁷ Despite these difficulties, New Brunswick's largest and most influential agrarian organization, the Farmers and Dairymen's Association of New Brunswick (FDANB), fully endorsed co-operative dairying. It was a regular topic of discussion at the association's annual meetings and received much attention in its official organ, the *Maritime Farmer and Co-operative Dairymen*, which also presented co-operative dairying as a means of boosting international trade. As an editorial published in October 1903 noted, success on the British export market would not be had until the province's dairymen could produce uniform products of high quality. Co-operative factory production was essential to achieving this goal as a thousand pounds of farm-produced dairy goods inevitably resulted in "about a hundred different flavours".¹⁸

Despite such rhetoric, state-sponsored co-operative activity in rural New Brunswick did not make significant advances until the Great War. Leading this renewed effort was the federal government's livestock branch, which in the spring of 1915 began organizing a national wool growers' association. This group aimed to establish centralized, government-inspected washing and grading warehouses across the country to which farmers could bring their wool, and from which the association could collectively market its goods.¹⁹ This was the first of many co-operative initiatives sponsored by the Dominion Livestock Branch. The collective sale of eggs and poultry, a project that had already proven successful in Prince Edward Island, was also promoted during the war as was the co-operative shipping and sale of livestock.²⁰ Once again, these were limited forms of co-operation, designed first and foremost as a means of improving the standard of agricultural goods produced on Maritime farms.

While Dominion government employees were largely responsible for introducing

15 Province of New Brunswick, *Annual Report on Agriculture*: 1901 (pp. 61-2), 1898 (pp. 150-1, 156-7), 1899 (pp. 54-9) and 1900 (pp. 67, 70-1). The federal government's support of co-operative dairying was also trade-related; see Vernon Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (Toronto, 1946), pp. 214-19.

16 MacPherson, "Patterns in the Maritime Co-operative Movement", p. 74.

17 *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1909, p. 83. For more on the promotion, rise and gradual decline of New Brunswick's small, farmer-owned cheese factories and creameries, see *Annual Report on Agriculture*: 1895 (pp. 18-19), 1902 (p. 41), 1903 (p. 44) and 1908 (p. 51) as well as *Maritime Farmer*, 20 February 1906, p. 254 and 6 March 1906, p. 278.

18 *Maritime Farmer*, 20 October 1903, p. 27.

19 *Maritime Farmer*, 8 June 1915, p. 628. For more on the federal government's work to promote the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers across the country, see Badgley, "Co-operation Pays and Pays Well", pp. 166-7 and MacPherson, *Each For All*, pp. 58-9.

20 *Maritime Farmer*, 6 July 1915, p. 702.

the co-operative marketing of eggs, wool and livestock, much of the work done to guarantee the success of these programs was carried out by staff from the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture. Provincial representatives delivered lectures on the benefits of the co-operative sale of wool to every agricultural society in the province and worked to form wool growers' associations in any district not served by an agricultural society. The provincial superintendent of livestock also commonly served as secretary of the New Brunswick Sheep Breeders' Association, the organization under whose auspices the co-operative marketing of wool was conducted in the province. Moreover, the province's district agricultural representatives provided invaluable assistance to the Dominion Livestock Branch in its efforts to encourage the co-operative shipment of livestock to Montreal and Toronto.²¹

New Brunswick promoted co-operative initiatives of its own as well. Provincial horticulturalist A.G. Turney was instrumental in organizing and directing the co-operative activities of the New Brunswick Fruit Growers' Association (NBFGA). Turney was elected secretary-treasurer of the NBFGA soon after he joined the provincial department of agriculture in 1910, and in 1918 he initiated and took personal charge of the organization's co-operative purchasing, which supplied members with nursery stock, spraying materials, fertilizer, berry boxes and apple barrels. He soon found these duties to be burdensome, but he recognized that such activity had already become "one of the strong factors in maintaining and increasing the . . . membership" of the association.²² A year earlier, Turney had encouraged the fruit growers' to co-operatively ship some of their apples to out-of-province markets such as Montreal.²³

Hoping to reinvigorate the province's slumping dairy industry, the provincial department of agriculture also lent its support to the establishment of a centralized, farmer-owned co-operative creamery in Moncton. The Farmers Co-operative Creamery was a joint-stock company, and no provincial official sat on its board of directors. Yet, as the agricultural report of 1917 reveals, the Moncton creamery might never have been founded without extensive aid and support from the province. Staff from the department of agriculture helped to organize both the company itself and the cream routes which were to supply it. Moreover, the provincial government "guaranteed the interest on the [creamery's] paid up capital at 6 per cent until the business [wa]s sufficiently large to meet all charges".²⁴

Finally, the provincial superintendent of agricultural societies actively promoted the co-operative purchasing activities of the New Brunswick Agricultural Societies United (NBASU), although government involvement was less intrusive in this case. Due to the province's naturally acidic soil, New Brunswick farmers were among the first in North America to employ large amounts of chemical fertilizers. But as the cost of ready-to-use fertilizer became prohibitive, a small number of agricultural societies began purchasing

21 *Annual Report on Agriculture*: 1918 (p. 57), 1919 (p. 93) and 1921 (p. 51). The difficulties in the shipment of livestock out of province were a product of the lack of stockyard and abattoir facilities in New Brunswick.

22 *Maritime Farmer*, 27 April 1920, p. 532.

23 *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1918, p. 91. For other comments on the co-operative work of the NBFGA, see *Annual Report on Agriculture*: 1919 (pp. 56-8, 75), 1921 (pp. 93-5), 1922 (pp. 120-1) and 1924 (pp. 75-7) as well as *Maritime Farmer*, 22 April 1919, p. 757 and 26 April 1921, p. 393.

24 *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1917, p. 101. See also *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1918, pp. 72-3.

unmixed fertilizer ingredients. Under the direction of A.R. Wetmore and *Maritime Farmer* editor Malcolm MacLeod, the Kingston Agricultural Society near Sussex became renowned for striking good bargains and, by 1913, at least eight other societies were placing fertilizer orders through the Kingston society.²⁵ This arrangement met with such success that talk soon began of founding a central purchasing organization to serve all of the province's agricultural societies. The following spring, Wetmore, MacLeod and four others were legally incorporated as the New Brunswick Agricultural Societies United and, since each agricultural society received government funding, the NBASU was required to file an annual report with the Department of Agriculture outlining its receipts and expenditures.²⁶ The department fully endorsed the NBASU's brand of co-operation. Its cost-effective purchase of chemical fertilizers modelled the type of business practice the department desired farmers to employ.

Once J.D. McKenna began to serve as the NBASU's secretary-treasurer in 1917, the organization became more closely associated with the *Maritime Farmer* than the provincial government. A Nova Scotia native who had moved to Sussex in 1903, McKenna purchased the *Maritime Farmer* a decade later. Earning a small salary for his work on behalf of the NBASU as well as a commission on every ton of goods purchased, McKenna, not surprisingly, gave the organization considerable publicity in the *Maritime Farmer* throughout his tenure as secretary-treasurer. The success of the NBASU, which by the late 1920s purchased approximately one-third of the fertilizer used in New Brunswick annually, thus was not solely a product of direct provincial government support.²⁷ Nonetheless, government backing did much to legitimize the NBASU's activities, and department officials regularly encouraged agricultural societies to make use of the organization's services.

The story of independent, agrarian-led co-operation in New Brunswick is much like that of its state-sponsored counterpart – a burst of activity in the late-19th century, followed by a considerable lull that was broken only towards the end of the First World War. Collective purchasing and the establishment of consumer co-operatives first gained large-scale favour with Canadian farmers in association with the formation of the Patrons of Husbandry, more commonly known as the Grange.²⁸ Founded in the United States in December 1867, American Grange members organized a variety of co-operative enterprises and successfully lobbied to impose government regulations on railway corporations.²⁹ These successes sparked

25 *Maritime Farmer*, 25 August 1914, p. 782; *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1914, pp. 94-5.

26 *Maritime Farmer*, 25 August 1914, p. 782. Fertilizer purchases made through the NBASU were financed by loans from local banks that were then repaid by society members upon receipt of goods.

27 *Maritime Farmer*, 6 November 1928, p. 4. A decade earlier the NBASU had handled only one-sixteenth of the fertilizer purchases in the province. See *Maritime Farmer*, 5 February 1918, p. 266.

28 Louis A. Wood, *A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada* (Toronto, 1924), pp. 73-90, 118-19; Russell Hann, *Some Historical Perspectives on Canadian Agrarian Political Movements: the Ontario Origins of Agrarian Criticism of Canadian Industrial Society*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1973), pp. 5-7.

29 Wood, *Farmers' Movements in Canada*, pp. 22-6. The Grange became so synonymous with the cause of railway reform that the various pieces of state legislation passed on the matter were collectively known as granger laws. For more on the activities of the Grange, see Solon J. Buck, *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and its Political, Economic and Social Manifestations, 1870-1880* (Cambridge, 1913) and D. Sven Nordin, *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867-1900* (Jackson, 1974).

considerable interest north of the border. First established in 1872, the Grange reached its height in Canada seven years later, when approximately 31,000 farmers declared allegiance to the Dominion Grange.³⁰ Canadian Grangers put most of their energy into the collective purchase of farm implements, but a Grange-sponsored wholesale and supply co-operative also met with some success.³¹

Following numerous letters of inquiry, a representative of the Dominion Grange set off on a Maritime tour in the summer of 1875. Shortly thereafter, a subordinate or local Grange was established in York County, New Brunswick. Upwards of 123 subordinate Granges were established in the Maritimes between 1872 and 1907, including 38 in New Brunswick; how many of the latter were operative at any one time remains unclear.³² Grange-inspired co-operative activity in the Maritimes peaked with the establishment of a Halifax branch of the Grange Wholesale Supply Company (GWSC) in 1884. This enterprise struggled from the onset, however, and farmer shareholders throughout the region lost significant sums of money when the company went bankrupt in the late 1880s. The collapse of the Halifax GWSC soured New Brunswick farmers on the idea of large-scale, agrarian-led co-operative activity for many years.³³

This is not to say that the New Brunswick agrarian community had no interest in co-operation during those early years. In the late 1890s, W.W. Hubbard used his position as editor of the *Maritime Farmer* to extol the economic virtues of co-operative marketing: "There is no question but that at present the individual farmer and the small shipper is heavily handicapped by the conditions imposed on him by transportation companies and commission men", he wrote, "and while he stands alone and does not co-operate with his neighbours, he cannot hope to better his position".³⁴ Yet the province's farmers made little progress in this regard prior to the First World War, aside from the small quantities of purebred livestock, seed and fertilizer purchased by local agricultural societies.³⁵ The blame for this state of affairs, at least according to the *Maritime Farmer*, lay not with urban manufacturers, nor with any inherent inequities within the capitalist system, but with farmers themselves. A front-page editorial published in August 1905, for example, noted that while "[m]ost farmers will agree that co-operation would be profitable in many ways", the majority of them continued to "look askance" whenever presented with an actual opportunity.

30 Wood, *Farmers' Movements in Canada*, pp. 32-3, 60. Established in June 1874, the Dominion Grange was completely independent of its American counterpart, although relations between the two organizations remained cordial for the most part. See Wood, *Farmers' Movements in Canada*, pp. 41-59.

31 Wood, *Farmers' Movements in Canada*, pp. 73-7.

32 Dominion Grange records for 1886 list only 12 active locals in New Brunswick, nine of which were in the counties of Albert and Westmorland. See Wood, *Farmers' Movements in Canada*, pp. 54-5, 66-9 and "List of Officers: Subordinate, Division, Provincial and Dominion Granges, Canada, 1886", CIHM no. 59239, pp. 8-9.

33 Wood, *Farmers' Movements in Canada*, pp. 78-9; *Maritime Farmer*, 23 June 1896, p. 2 and 20 October 1896, p. 8. Similar economic failings did much to erode Grange membership across the continent. See Buck, *The Granger Movement*, pp. 274-9.

34 *Maritime Farmer*, 7 September 1897, p. 8.

35 *Maritime Farmer*, 19 June 1906, p. 445; *Annual Report on Agriculture*: 1896 (p. 90), 1898 (p. 63), 1900 (pp. 92-9, 112-14, 126-31, 140, 152-4), 1902 (pp. 238-42, 245-6, 260-6, 278-82), 1903 (pp. 198-201, 217-19, 224-5, 232-3) and 1909 (pp. 157-8).

In the editor's opinion, all too many farmers either refused to join a co-operative venture until it had proven successful, or abandoned it as soon as privately-owned competitors offered them even the slightest economic advantage. Moreover, farmers were both notorious for underpaying their co-operative managers and all too quick to blame management whenever problems arose.³⁶ Whatever the cause, the dearth of any farmer-led alternatives allowed the business-only approach to co-operation, promulgated by government officials, to stand virtually unchallenged until the founding of the United Farmers of New Brunswick in 1918.

Indeed, due to the diverse nature of the province's agricultural resources, forging co-operative economic endeavours was no easy task even for the United Farmers. Unlike Prairie grain growers, New Brunswick agrarians raised a variety of crops and livestock and, as a result, some of the most successful groups of producers regularly found themselves at odds with one another. For example, while dairymen generally supported a high-tariff policy as a means of ensuring the stability of urban markets, potato exporters aggressively sought tariff relief. Common ground was found, however, in the fact that every New Brunswick farmer was a consumer. Consumer co-operation thus offered the UFNB far greater possibilities for building a spirit of agrarian unity. With this in mind, the United Farmers Co-operative Company of New Brunswick (UFCCNB) opened its first member-owned co-operative retail store in Woodstock in early September 1918. It was a wise place to begin. Carleton County was a UFNB stronghold and, as company manager Sam Hagerman later recounted, the initial founders were already familiar with the workings of a farmers' retail co-operative, as many had patronized a Grange co-operative store in nearby Maine.³⁷

The primary motivation behind the founding of the UFCCNB was the desire to save farmers money, but there was more to the United Farmers' vision of co-operation than pure financial gain. Many within the UFNB camp were strong critics of the economic selfishness that had come to characterize the capitalist system. An editorial in their Moncton-based official organ, the *United Farmers' Guide*, noted that while the capitalist era had brought unquestioned material progress, the economic and social costs to the majority were far too high: "The past half century has been one of unparalleled material development . . . a period of such progress as was never before known in the world's history but in many respects it has been a costly progress. It has been an age of materialism wherein competitive selfishness held unrestricted sway. . . We enthroned riches and position and they became the chief end of all. . . This mad desire to attain . . . has resulted in great concentration of wealth and prominence in the hands of a relatively small number of people and in placing the great mass on a relatively lower economic plane".³⁸ The UFNB thus joined agrarians elsewhere in calling for significant economic and social reform through co-operation, an idea which had "as its objective the material and spiritual welfare of the community rather

36 *Maritime Farmer*, 8 August 1905, p. 491. An article published a few months later suggested that "the sturdy, independent nature of the Anglo-Saxon" was one reason why Canadian farmers found it so difficult to co-operate with one another. See *Maritime Farmer*, 24 October 1905, p. 42.

37 *United Farmers' Guide*, 8 December 1920, p. 6. The decision to open the Woodstock store was also influenced by a report on the success of co-operative enterprises in western Canada written by the UFNB's first president, C.L. Smith. See *United Farmers' Guide*, 21 April 1920, p. 53.

38 *United Farmers' Guide*, 8 December 1920, p. 3.

than the raising of a few to opulence and luxury".³⁹ While individual initiative was not to be disparaged, the United Farmers' vision of a truly co-operative economy was one in which the competitive pursuit of private gain would give way to an emphasis on mutual service and collective success.

The founders of the UFCCNB believed the first step in achieving these goals was to adhere closely to the so-called Rochdale principles laid down by the founders of the British co-operative movement; the United Farmers, in fact, remained true to the Rochdale model in all respects other than their decision to take direct political action.⁴⁰ The core Rochdale principle was a one-member, one-vote policy; that is, each stock holder had only one vote regardless of the number of \$25 company shares they held. This practice helped to ensure the democratic character of the UFCCNB even after the maximum 20 shares-per-person restriction was lifted in October 1920. The United Farmers also chose to emulate the Rochdale example by insisting on cash purchases only, by demanding that profits be reasonable and non-speculative, and by distributing surplus profits according to the amount of trading done with the company rather than the percentage of stock owned.⁴¹

UFCCNB faithful were also convinced that the co-operative's organizational structure allowed for an ideal balance between local branch autonomy and centralized administrative control, and this feature was to be in evidence from the moment a group filed a written request for a store to be opened in their community. This local initiative, which was a prerequisite in the founding of all UFCCNB branches, was immediately followed by an investigative tour conducted by a representative from headquarters in Woodstock. If the official was convinced that the area in question had the potential to support a profitable branch – that it was not too close to an existing company store, had adequate rail or water communication, and could raise at least \$8000 in subscribed stock – area shareholders were then authorized to proceed with the election of a local advisory board. This body then worked hand-in-hand with Sam Hagerman at central office in choosing the store location, selecting a branch manger and in making all future management decisions. UFCCNB promoters were confident that this mix of centralized direction and local authority would provide a basis for success where other co-operative models had failed, as it combined the efficiency of central management with "the adoption of safe business practices [generally associated] with local responsibility".⁴²

But if the UFCCNB, not to mention the broader co-operative movement, was to be successful in the long-term, much would depend on the educational and organizational abilities of a highly motivated core of leaders. The most renowned co-operative theorist within the UFNB camp was William Irvine, a leading figure within

39 *United Farmers' Guide*, 8 December 1920, p. 3.

40 For more on the Rochdale principles, see MacPherson, *Each for All*, pp. 2-3. The only other Maritime-based co-operative to stick close to the Rochdale model was the British Canadian Co-operative Society in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton. See MacPherson, "Patterns in the Maritime Co-operative Movement", pp. 69-70.

41 Allan Trueman, "New Brunswick and the 1921 Federal Election", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1975, p. 67; *United Farmers' Guide*: 27 October 1920 (p. 3), 16 June 1920 (p. 5), 8 December 1920 (p. 6) and 23 February 1921 (p. 6).

42 *United Farmers' Guide*, 8 December 1920, p. 6. See also *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 December 1920, p. 3.

the United Farmer movement in Alberta who came east to serve as an organizer and propagandist.⁴³ Nonetheless, home-grown leaders such as Sam Hagerman were also essential in convincing New Brunswick farmers that co-operation, if practised in its proper form, could, and should, offer more than a few extra dollars in one's pocket. In a world where farmers found it increasingly difficult to control their economic fate, Hagerman spoke of co-operation as an idea "which [would] emancipate the farmer – a system of doing business that [would limit] what Capital could earn – a system owned and controlled by the community which it serve[d]".⁴⁴ But before this vision could be fulfilled, he believed that farmers needed to re-educate themselves to strive for mutual rather than individual success, a process that required a conscious decision to turn away from the values of competitive capitalism: "This is a work of mutual benefit. Unless we have the consciousness of mutuality we cannot successfully carry on a co-operative enterprise. . . . Our whole training by past business methods has prompted us to get the advantage of the other fellow. That is the whole tendency of modern business operated for profit. Now we are launching a system, the primary object of which is service".⁴⁵ Indeed, if this transformation of thought was not completed, Hagerman was convinced that the co-operative approach would prove futile: "We must realize that a co-operative business is operated not for individual benefit, but for mutual benefits, and unless we can maintain this realization of mutuality, co-operation will fail".⁴⁶

As the UFCCNB liked to portray itself as the proverbial "David" defending the interests of small farmers against the "Goliath" of big business, the *United Farmers' Guide* went out of its way to portray Sam Hagerman as a humble man of the people. "Born on a New Brunswick farm, almost pioneer in character", the agrarian journal stated in 1921, he had been "a half-grown boy before he could write his own name or read the simplest books". Overcoming this late start, he qualified for Normal School and acquired "sufficient training and education to take a low grade license to teach". He then became a travelling salesman of farm implements and fertilizers, and it was in this capacity that he "acquired an intimate knowledge of business and its relations to the farming communities". Later, working as a farmer himself, Hagerman "had come to the settled conviction that the dominant principle of competition – survival of the fittest in business – attached to itself so many barnacles of 'special privilege', unfair . . . trading, and powerful combinations, that its abuses were greater than its uses". Co-operation, on the other hand, offered a true "solution . . . [to the] great problem of distribution and profits".⁴⁷

Whether it was the conviction of its leaders, its adherence to the Rochdale

43 David Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910-1945* (Toronto, 1990), p. 283.

44 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1921, p. 7. For evidence of Hagerman's participation at UFCCNB meetings across the province, see *United Farmers' Guide*: 16 June 1920 (p. 10), 23 February 1921 (p. 6), 13 April 1921 (p. 6) and 1 July 1921 (p. 6).

45 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 September 1921, p. 7.

46 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 October 1921, p. 10. For evidence that the directors of the United Farmer co-operatives shared Hagerman's concern in educating the membership, see *United Farmers' Guide*, 13 April 1921, p. 6.

47 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1921, p. 7.

principles or the enthusiasm inspired by the successful co-operative activities of the United Farmers of Ontario, the United Farmers Co-operative Company of New Brunswick rose from humble beginnings to achieve rapid success. Indeed, Sam Hagerman loved to boast that, when the company opened, it had lacked the operating capital to purchase even a three-cent postage stamp, while a single chair and card table had served as office furniture.⁴⁸ Its first transaction was the purchase of a single railcar of flour and feed in 1918. A few car loads later, operations expanded to the point where a shed had to be rented to serve as a warehouse for the goods on hand. From there, the desire to be a part of a farmer-owned retail co-operative swept across the New Brunswick countryside and into neighbouring Nova Scotia. By January 1921, the UFCCNB, which was soon after renamed the Maritime United Farmers Co-operative Company (MUFCC) in reflection of the company's geographic expansion, boasted 23 branch stores and almost \$1,000,000 in annual sales.⁴⁹

Six months later the number of stores had risen to 30, but despite this continued expansion, success proved short-lived for the MUFCC. The fledgling company was unable to overcome the numerous internal and external challenges it faced as the 1920s progressed. Among the first obstacles to confront the co-op had been the concerted opposition of the established business community. Some retail competitors endured considerable losses in order to lure farmers away from the UFCCNB in its initial year of operation while others threatened to boycott wholesalers who dared sell to the farmers' company. A number of banks also refused to make loans to the UFCCNB and rumours that the farmers' stores were both incompetently managed and retained excessive profits were circulated widely.⁵⁰ In time, such tactics weakened the loyalty essential to the co-op's survival. As Sam Hagerman noted in the *United Farmers' Guide*, company stores were all too often undermined by shareholders whose commitment to co-operation ended the moment it failed to produce immediate economic rewards: "It is often asked if our shareholders are loyal to their movement? Well taking them as a whole, I cannot truthfully say that they are. Some are, and are standing by the movement loyally, but others want things to go their way every time and don't like reverses. . . . It is quite hard to make some understand that we can and do save them money. We hear not a few make the remark, 'Well we can buy goods just as cheap other places as we can at the Farmers Store.' I put it up to them this way: 'Could you if the Farmer Store didn't exist?'"⁵¹

The United Farmers were, at least in part, the victims of their own success in this regard. The expansion from one branch in 1918 to 30 by early 1922 was far too rapid. Even though many of the new stores were profitable in the short run, little or no time was given to properly educating new members in the co-operative principles that Hagerman and others had deemed essential to success.⁵² Was their emphasis on co-operative education thus little more than hollow rhetoric? Perhaps, but company

48 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1921, p. 7; 8 December 1920, p. 6.

49 *United Farmers' Guide*, 8 December 1920, p. 6; 5 January 1921, p. 3 and 6 April 1921, p. 5.

50 For more details on these events, see *United Farmers' Guide*: 21 April 1920 (pp. 7, 53), 2 June 1920 (p. 6), 29 December 1920 (p. 3), 5 January 1921 (pp. 3, 5) and 15 June 1921 (p. 7).

51 *United Farmers' Guide*, 16 February 1921, p. 6.

52 *United Farmers' Guide*, 5 January 1921, p. 3 and 15 June 1921, pp. 3, 7.

leaders generally assumed that the educational component of their enterprise would gain natural momentum as more and more farmers found the co-operative method to be of economic value. In either case, the fact remains that when the MUFCC hit hard times in 1921-22, few of its members exhibited the type of dedication to the company its founders had hoped to instil.

The economic collapse of the MUFCC was also greatly facilitated by a persistent shortage of working capital. Delegates to the company's annual meeting in 1921 were informed that local branches had combined to turn over approximately \$1,000,000 in retail trade the previous year. However, this business had been conducted with a paid-up capital of well under \$200,000, a situation which, as the *United Farmers' Guide* noted a few months later, was not sustainable in the recession of the early 1920s: "When money was easy, the manufacturers and wholesalers were willing to carry considerable amounts, and the banks were willing to be generous. Now that money is tight, everyone has had to curtail their credits".⁵³ The MUFCC's financial shortfall was also a product of Sam Hagerman's enthusiastic and, in retrospect, unwise policy of approving the establishment of new stores before they had accumulated sufficient capital. When questioned as to the wisdom of this approach, Hagerman had a defiant answer: "If we waited until there was enough capital to properly conduct a store, we would never start. If, however, we get started so that the shareholders get a practical lesson in co-operation, we can go back to those shareholders and get more capital".⁵⁴ The *United Farmers' Guide* approvingly noted that such an approach typified a man "obsessed with a conviction that he had a mission to perform", but Hagerman's tactics left the company in an extremely vulnerable position.

With a financial crisis looming, an emergency directors' meeting was held in late April 1921. After twelve hours of heated debate and some pointed criticism of Hagerman's performance as general manager, it was decided that if current expenses were to be met, shareholders would have to pay up the balance of their subscribed stock. Prominent UFNB figures such as Albert Chase Fawcett, leader of the United Farmer caucus in the provincial legislature, made personal appeals to the local branches, but by early 1922 the situation had worsened. Faced with growing creditor demands as well as significant internal division, a proposal to decentralize the MUFCC was put forward. Under this plan the assets and debts of head office were to be divided equally among member stores, while the shareholders of each branch were to become solely responsible for the debts and/or profits incurred by their local store.⁵⁵ The MUFCC would effectively be dissolved leaving the local co-operative stores to thrive or fail on their own.

Proponents of this strategy argued that it would enable fiscally sound branches to operate unhindered by the debts of others, but critics such as G.G. Archibald, editor and manager of the *United Farmers' Guide*, were adamant that any plan that put the welfare of individual branches ahead of the overall health of the company ran counter

53 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1921, p. 3. See also *Carleton Sentinel*, 7 January 1921, p. 6.

54 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1921, p. 7.

55 For more details on the decentralization plan, the crisis that precipitated it and the response to it, see *United Farmers' Guide*: 1 July 1921 (p. 6), 16 January 1922 (pp. 11, 20), 1 February 1922 (p. 2) and 15 February 1922 (pp. 2, 11) as well as *Carleton Sentinel*, 29 April 1921 (p. 1), 10 February 1922 (p. 6) and 24 February 1922 (p. 1).

to the very idea of co-operation. Independence for each local store would destroy the collective strength previously enjoyed by the UFCCNB/MUFCC: "The object of breaking the Co-operative into small societies is clear. If one takes a number of single strings they can be broken with little effort but when all the strings are united together and particularly when they are inter-woven into a rope or cable, they become almost unbreakable. The separate co-operative societies will be as single strings; the centralized society backed up with loyal effort will be an irresistible cable".⁵⁶ Decentralization was, nonetheless, approved in late February 1922, and initially there was some hope that the move might prove beneficial. The *United Farmers' Guide* took solace in the fact that each of the newly separate stores was talking of investing in a central buying agency. The local stores also made efforts to preserve features consistent with the co-operative ideal, including the policy of one-member, one-vote. It all proved too little, too late. A small number of the United Farmer stores did go on to enjoy long-term success, but their broader economic or societal influence was minimal. The vast majority of MUFCC stores, like the United Farmers' political fortunes in the Maritimes, met with failure in the mid-1920s.⁵⁷

In the opinion of many United Farmer members, however, the disintegration of their co-operative company was not merely a result of hard times and/or internal mismanagement. They believed the collapse of the MUFCC had, to a significant degree, been precipitated by the persistent and often vicious attacks launched by New Brunswick's Liberal government. The UFNB's conflict with the government began with the initial business transaction undertaken by the first UFCCNB store in Woodstock. In December 1918, the United Farmers co-op signed a sub-contract with the Department of Agriculture to acquire eight railcar loads of fertilizer that the province had purchased earlier in the year. With only \$2,500 in working capital, the UFCCNB arranged to have the cars arrive at a rate of one per week. This extended delivery process allowed company management to make cash purchases for each shipment. On one occasion, however, due to circumstances beyond the UFCCNB's control, five carloads arrived at once; this left the company stuck with a \$14,000 bill it could not afford to pay. Scrambling to avoid bankruptcy, the United Farmers convinced a reluctant Agriculture Minister J.F. Tweeddale to hold the five cars, and then release them on a one-per-week basis as per the original plan. But Tweeddale, for some reason, failed to notify the company's bank of this new arrangement. As the bank had no intention of carrying the United Farmers through a period of significant debt, the resulting confusion nearly brought an end to the UFCCNB before it had effectively begun. The company ultimately survived thanks to some furious negotiating on the part of Sam Hagerman, but the United Farmers never forgave Tweeddale or the provincial government.⁵⁸ Harkening back to this incident, they accused the Foster administration of having "done everything possible to kill at its inception the United Farmers Co-operative Co. of N. B.". ⁵⁹ Moreover, the UFNB

⁵⁶ *United Farmers' Guide*, 16 January 1922, pp. 11, 20.

⁵⁷ *Carleton Sentinel*, 24 February 1922, p. 1; *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 April 1922, p. 2; MacPherson, "Patterns in the Maritime Co-operative Movement", p. 71.

⁵⁸ *United Farmers' Guide*, 21 April 1920, p. 53 and 6 October 1920, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *United Farmers' Guide*, 6 October 1920, p. 18.

took special delight in defeating Tweeddale in the provincial election of 1920.

Evidence that the New Brunswick government and its allies sought to undermine the United Farmers' co-operative efforts is most apparent in the full-scale war of words that erupted between the *Maritime Farmer* and the UFCCNB executive. The *Maritime Farmer* had initially served as the UFNB's official organ, but the journal's decidedly lukewarm position with respect to the United Farmers' independent political stance inspired the creation of the *United Farmers' Guide* in the spring of 1920. This new weekly journal was jointly financed by the UFCCNB, the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association and the Winnipeg-based *Grain Growers' Guide*.⁶⁰ The brain trust at the *Maritime Farmer* – owner J. D. McKenna and chief editor Malcolm MacLeod – had little reason to rejoice at the prospect of a rival agricultural paper setting up shop in what had been an exclusive market. McKenna and MacLeod's growing distaste for the United Farmers and their co-operative activities was also a product of their close ties to New Brunswick's Liberal administration. MacLeod, a life-long Grit, was appointed Superintendent of Agricultural Societies shortly after Walter Foster was elected premier in 1917, while McKenna served as a Liberal MLA from 1922 to 1925. With the full backing of the provincial government, McKenna and MacLeod, through the *Maritime Farmer*, assumed the lead role in the effort to undercut the United Farmers' economic and political activities.⁶¹

The *Maritime Farmer* launched its editorial attacks on the United Farmers in February 1920. The primary objective of this campaign was to dismiss the United Farmer movement as little more than a ploy by Prairie grain growers to hoodwink eastern farmers into paying high wheat prices.⁶² Declaring their journal to be free of outside political influence, McKenna and MacLeod sought to portray the *Maritime Farmer* as the valiant defender of eastern Canadian farmers, urgently warning them not to be duped by the western interests that lurked behind the friendly face of the United Farmers:

The *Maritime Farmer* is about to utter HERESY. It believes that the farmers of the Maritime Provinces are being gold-bricked with one of the most insidious campaigns that has ever been undertaken in Canada. For years the *Maritime Farmer* has preached organization among the farmers. . . . But the *Maritime Farmer* has in view a different kind of organization to that which is being presently attempted in the Maritimes. . . . It did not have in mind an organization in which the farmers of these three provinces were to dance to tunes composed in Winnipeg. . . . The United Farmers of New Brunswick is an organization which pins its faith to a political constitution laid down absolutely **in the interests of Western farmers**.⁶³

60 *Maritime Farmer*, 19 March 1918, p. 363; *Carleton Sentinel*, 19 December 1919, p. 6.

61 Malcolm MacLeod and Cameron MacLeod Gibson, "Heaven is Herds and Crops: The Life and Career of Agricultural Editor Malcolm MacLeod, 1878-1935", *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, 6 (2003), pp. 22-30; Graves Papers, vol. VI, MC 1156, PANB.

62 *Maritime Farmer*, 3 February 1920, p. 296.

63 *Maritime Farmer*, 2 March 1920, p. 371 (emphasis in original). For similar statements see *Maritime Farmer*: 16 March 1920 (pp. 411, 415), 30 March 1920 (p. 454), 13 April 1920 (p. 492), 27 April 1920 (p. 527), 11 May 1920 (p. 578), 25 May 1920 (pp. 623, 628) and 8 June 1920 (p. 663).

The UFNB executive was naturally concerned with the *Maritime Farmer's* sudden editorial onslaught. The organization's secretary-treasurer, C. Gordon Sharpe, vehemently denied "that the Western provinces were trying to 'put something over' on the East. The West had been asked to help the United Farmers' Association and they had done so on request".⁶⁴ The newly founded *United Farmers' Guide* also took up the battle with the *Maritime Farmer*. Referring to its Sussex-based rival as the "chore boy of the big interests" or the "Sussex Annanias", the *Guide* openly insinuated that the *Maritime Farmer's* attacks were proof that the latter journal had sold-out to corporate forces, such as the Canadian Reconstruction Association (CRA), which sought to destroy the farmers' movement.⁶⁵ An offshoot of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the CRA's principal mandate was to prevent tariff revision; it had thus launched an aggressive promotional campaign aimed at discrediting the low-tariff proposals of the United Farmer movement. Yet while full-page CRA advertisements were published in the *Maritime Farmer* on at least four occasions, the *Guide* produced no conclusive proof that CRA money ever influenced the *Maritime Farmer's* editorial position.⁶⁶

Nor was the *Maritime Farmer* making an entirely groundless accusation when it asserted that the United Farmers were unduly influenced by western forces, as both the UFNB and the *United Farmers' Guide* did receive significant aid and direction from the west. The UFNB constitution was modelled after that of the Grain Growers' associations on the Prairies, and the UFNB had adopted the Farmers' Platform put forward by the Canadian Council of Agriculture (CCA), despite the fact that it had been drafted with little or no Maritime input.⁶⁷ Prominent western figures such as Progressive Party leader T.A. Crerar and George F. Chipman, editor and managing director of the *Grain Growers' Guide*, were keynote speakers at UFNB events. CCA secretary Roderick McKenzie helped organize UFNB locals, and William Irvine, a key advisor to the United Farmers' of Alberta, was brought to New Brunswick as a full-time co-operative and political organizer.⁶⁸ Finally, the Winnipeg-based *Grain*

64 *Carleton Sentinel*, 26 March 1920, p. 1. The effort Sharpe and others made to publicly defend the reputation of western farm leaders illustrates the extent to which the UFNB allied themselves with their Prairie counterparts. This support has at times been downplayed by scholars more interested in explaining why a broader Prairie-Maritime coalition failed to emerge in these years. See E.R. Forbes, "Never the Twain did Meet: Prairie-Maritime Relations, 1910-27", *Canadian Historical Review*, LIX, 1 (1978), pp. 18-37.

65 *United Farmers' Guide*: 21 April 1920 (p. 6), 2 June 1920 (p. 14) and 16 June 1920 (p. 6). According to the New Testament book of Acts, Annanias was an early Christian follower who tried to deceive the apostles by withholding some of the proceeds from a piece of land he had sold, all the while taking credit for having donated the full amount. When the scheme was revealed, both Annanias and his wife Sapphira, who went along with the attempted ruse, were struck dead by God. See Acts chapter 5, verses 1-11.

66 *Maritime Farmer*: 4 March 1919 (p. 635), 18 March 1919 (p. 687), 1 April 1919 (p. 731) and 22 April 1919 (p. 792). For more on the founding and work of the Canadian Reconstruction Association, see Tom Traves, *The State and Enterprise: Canadian Manufacturers and the Federal Government 1917-1931* (Toronto, 1975) and James Naylor, *The New Democracy: Challenging the Social Order in Industrial Ontario 1914-25* (Toronto, 1991).

67 UFNB executive officers T.W. Caldwell and C. Gordon Sharpe were present at a 1919 Toronto meeting that approved a new version of the Farmers' Platform; the original document, however, was drafted in 1916, and up-dated again two years later. There were no Maritime representatives present on either of those occasions. See *United Farmers' Guide*, 19 May 1920, p. 6.

68 *Carleton Sentinel*, 5 July 1918, p. 3 and 12 December 1919, p. 1. Irvine's time in New Brunswick was relatively short. He stayed only seven months before returning to Alberta. See Anthony Mardiros, *William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 80-3.

Growers' Guide owned a one-third share of the *United Farmers' Guide*, and seemed determined to ensure the latter's success at almost any cost, a pledge which naturally led the *Maritime Farmer* to question the western paper's motives.⁶⁹

Of course, each of the above instances could be readily explained as clear proof of the western agrarians' sincere desire to lend their eastern counterparts a helping hand. Moreover, ample evidence exists to suggest that the *Maritime Farmer's* attack on the United Farmers and their co-operative activities owed more to the economic and political self-interests of McKenna and MacLeod than to any outside force. The *United Farmers' Guide*, which claimed a subscription list of more than 15,000 by June 1920, posed an obvious commercial threat to J.D. McKenna and the *Maritime Farmer*.⁷⁰ McKenna thus had good reason to wish to undermine both the new publication and the United Farmers' movement that sponsored it, and what better way to do so than to accuse the UFNB of working against the interests of the very farmers it claimed to serve? The UFCCNB stores also stood to take money out of McKenna's pocket, as they drew business away from the co-operative activities undertaken by the *Maritime Farmer* and the New Brunswick Agricultural Societies United. McKenna managed the purchasing for both of these endeavours, receiving considerable financial compensation for this work.⁷¹ It was no surprise, then, that next to dismissing them as the puppets of western interests, the *Maritime Farmer's* most common criticism of the United Farmers centred on the UFCCNB. In particular, McKenna insinuated that the company's head office was retaining unjustly large profits at the farmers' expense; it was, in effect, just another middleman robbing the farmer of his just rewards.⁷²

Stung by these accusations, Sam Hagerman and other UFCCNB supporters dismissed McKenna's claims as utter nonsense and were quick to suggest that if anyone was using co-operation as a means to bilk farmers of their hard-earned cash it was McKenna. UFCCNB secretary Mrs. C.A. King's comments were particularly pointed. Acknowledging that head office retained 10 per cent of each store's subscribed stock as working capital, in addition to a share of net profits used to build a reserve fund, King laughed off McKenna's suggestion that these practices were akin to those of an exploitative middleman: "If head office is the middle man he is a pretty good fellow for besides paying a dividend . . . all surplus profits [excluding the reserve fund] go back into the pockets of the shareholders". King then defiantly proclaimed that the province's

69 *Carleton Sentinel*, 19 December 1919, p. 6; *Maritime Farmer*, 2 March 1920, p. 371.

70 The *United Farmers' Guide's* subscription claims for 1920 could not be independently verified, but a Montreal-based advertising directory recorded that as of 1923 the paper, which by then had left Moncton for Gardenvale, Quebec, had more than 18,000 subscribers. The *Maritime Farmer* had more than 9,500 subscribers in 1920, a figure which rose to 13,553 in 1922, and stood at 12,397 in 1923. See *McKim's Directory of Canadian Publications* (Montreal): 1920 (p. 147), 1921 (p. 149), 1922 (p. 42) and 1923 (pp. 36, 44).

71 *Maritime Farmer*, 4 December 1917, p. 135 and 27 April 1920, p. 527. As of 1923, McKenna's salary for his work with the NBASU was \$300 a year and he received a commission of 30 cents on every ton of goods handled. See Records of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Province of New Brunswick: Answers to Inquiries, 1918-32, 10 April 1923, p. 95, RS 124 A23, PANB.

72 *United Farmers' Guide*, 21 April 1920, p. 7 and 8 December 1920, p. 6. For examples of McKenna's less-than-charitable perception of the UFCCNB, see *Maritime Farmer*: 30 March 1920 (p. 449), 11 May 1920 (p. 577) and 22 June 1920 (p. 703).

farmers no longer had faith in anything McKenna printed and were beginning to question his own business practices: "If he thinks the farmers of this present day believe the dope his paper is printing, he only needs to . . . take a car ride and listen to a few remarks that show all too plainly the farmers are wide awake business men. He has been successful in the past in causing them to believe stories without the . . . ear-marks of the truth, enriching his barns and storehouses at their expense, but the time is at hand when an explanation . . . as to his profits might be feasible".⁷³

UFCCNB supporters also asserted that the co-operative endeavours of the NBASU and the *Maritime Farmer* were, by their very nature, second-rate. As a *United Farmers' Guide* editorial explained in the fall of 1920, these groups practised "Co-operation to save", while the UFCCNB was an example of "Co-operation to earn. . . . Under the former plan, goods [were] sold at cost plus cost of service, under the second goods [were] sold at a reasonable profit above cost sufficient to meet all normal business contingencies".⁷⁴ The latter plan was superior not only because it anticipated and prepared for a downturn in business, but it also required all shareholders to mutually bear the burden of any losses. Under the former plan, this responsibility fell primarily on the individual or small group which administered the organization. As a result, those "who ha[d] been learning how to get something for nothing [were] unwilling to take up the burden and what they were pleased to call co-operation fail[ed] as fail it must".⁷⁵

While McKenna's financial interests cannot be dismissed, it was his affiliation with New Brunswick's Liberal government that, more than any other factor, motivated the *Maritime Farmer's* uncharacteristically aggressive assault on the United Farmer movement. The *Maritime Farmer's* persistent efforts to disparage the United Farmers began shortly after the UFNB began nominating candidates for the provincial election of 1920, and continued until the Liberals regained power.⁷⁶ Indeed, the *Maritime Farmer's* assault on the United Farmers coincided precisely with a deal which saw chief editor Malcolm MacLeod, in his capacity as superintendent of agricultural societies, arrange for the *Maritime Farmer* to become the official organ of the provincial department of agriculture.⁷⁷ The paper, now chock-full of anti-UFNB rhetoric, was subsequently delivered free of charge to each of the province's more than 10,000 agricultural society members – just in time to influence voter opinion prior to the fall election.⁷⁸

73 *United Farmers' Guide*, 5 May 1920, p. 15.

74 *United Farmers' Guide*, 27 October 1920, p. 3. For similar commentary on the superiority of the UFCCNB's approach to co-operation, see *United Farmers' Guide*, 5 May 1920, p. 12 and 16 June 1920, p. 5.

75 *United Farmers' Guide*, 9 March 1921, p. 3.

76 UFNB candidates were first nominated in late December 1919. The *Maritime Farmer's* attacks on the United Farmers began in early February 1920 and continued into the summer.

77 *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1920, p. 141.

78 Free delivery of the *Maritime Farmer* began in February 1920, precisely the same time as the paper launched its series of anti-UFNB editorials. See *Synoptic Report of the Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick* (1921), p. 74 and *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1920, p. 155. This arrangement remained in place for some years. Between November 1921 and October 1922 the government purchased approximately 18,000 copies of the paper for free distribution, at a cost of almost \$4,500. See Records of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture: Province of New Brunswick, Answers to Inquiries, 1918-32, 27 March 1923, pp. 77-9.

The official explanation, of course, for the province's new partnership with the *Maritime Farmer* – which was affixed to each copy of the journal – made no mention of political matters; it stated that the partnership had been struck in response to the demands of farmers themselves: “*The Maritime Farmer* is being sent to you by direction of the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture, as a medium for the distribution of important agricultural bulletins to all members of New Brunswick Agricultural Societies. The adoption of a paper for this purpose was decided upon following requests from a large number of Agricultural Societies”.⁷⁹ The *United Farmers' Guide* was quick to point to this arrangement as proof that the *Maritime Farmer* had become little more than a tool in the provincial government's campaign to undermine the UFNB and its co-operative initiatives: “The plain man's interpretation . . . must be that the *Maritime Farmer* is the ‘house organ’ of the New Brunswick government. Apparently then the various attacks on New Brunswick Organized Farmers have had at least the tacit consent of the New Brunswick government? [*sic*]”⁸⁰

Despite the abuse heaped on the organization by the *Maritime Farmer* and other press outlets, the UFNB made a reasonably impressive showing in the provincial election of 1920. Without benefit of either a recognized leader or much centralized organization, and totally lacking in campaign funds, the United Farmers and their labour allies managed to win 11 seats and capture 26 per cent of the popular vote, roughly the same level of support which had brought the United Farmers of Ontario to power the year before.⁸¹

The New Brunswick government's efforts to undercut the United Farmers and their co-operative company did not cease with the Liberals' return to power in the election of 1920. Premier Walter Foster had no qualms in using the UFCCNB's emerging financial difficulties to his political advantage. At a meeting to discuss the establishment of a UFCCNB branch in Hillsborough, it was revealed “that during the course of a recent railway journey Premier Foster had said that the United Farmers Co-operative owed the banks one hundred thousand dollars and that the Company was practically insolvent”. Foster's assertion would, of course, soon be substantiated. Yet putting the obvious political rhetoric aside, the *Guide* no doubt spoke the truth when it suggested that Foster's comments stemmed from his understanding that the United Farmers' political fortunes were inextricably linked to the fate of the UFCCNB: “Premier Foster is . . . frightened of the United Farmers as a political force, and realizing quite truly that the mainstay of the Organized Farmers' movement will be the success of their commercial enterprises, he has aimed his cowardly blow at their Co-operative Company”.⁸²

79 A copy of this slip was produced verbatim in the *United Farmers' Guide*. See *United Farmers' Guide*, 28 April 1920, p. 5.

80 *United Farmers' Guide*, 28 April 1920, p. 5.

81 Trueman, “New Brunswick and the 1921 Federal Election”, pp. 75-6; Badgley, *Ring in the Common Love of Good*, p. 8. For an example of anti-United Farmer rhetoric in the province's daily press leading up to the election of 1920, see *The Daily Gleaner* (Fredericton): 27 September 1920 (p. 4), 30 September 1920 (p. 4), 2 October 1920 (p. 6), 4 October 1920 (pp. 3-4) and 6 October 1920 (pp. 6, 8).

82 *United Farmers' Guide*, 9 March 1921, pp. 3-4.

Supporters of the UFNB/UFCCNB were also dubious about the way in which the Liberal government dispensed aid to co-operative ventures. Although the province had long encouraged farmers to engage in co-operative activity, no aid or assistance was ever provided to the UFCCNB/MUFCC. The provincial government chose to continue financing its own co-operative endeavours, all the while ignoring what was arguably the most popular agrarian co-operative initiative in New Brunswick history. The *United Farmers' Guide* adamantly opposed the funding of what it deemed to be pseudo-co-operative activities. An editorial published in March 1922 declared that even if government-sponsored co-operative services were provided with the best of intentions, reliance on "spoon fed" state support was not true co-operation, and would prove detrimental to the long-term health of the co-operative movement:

One of the greatest dangers in the way of the United Farmers Movement in the Eastern provinces lies in the efforts which provincial governments are making to win over farmers by the appearance and form of support of co-operative movements. In some instances, government money is being spent in developing the practice of something that looks like co-operation. However, . . . [a]ny institution . . . which is being financed or controlled by a government is not co-operation. The personal individual effort and responsibility are lacking and so also the mutuality that grows out of a really vital practice of the doctrine of "each for all and all for each". Pap-fed co-operators are clutching at a shadow and like a shadow it will disappear. When the shadow disappears, there will be just another arrow of suspicion and distrust aimed at the heart of true co-operation.⁸³

To the editors of the *United Farmers' Guide*, such government action was little more than a clever ruse to "curtail closer organization among farmers. Some even go so far as to suggest that the real motive is to make good fellows of themselves in order to keep farmers from taking hostile political action".⁸⁴ The New Brunswick government was deemed especially guilty on this score: "[T]his . . . Government has . . . used every effort to create suspicion among the shareholders in the United Farmers' Co-operative Company and to undersell with an inferior product the fertilizers, seeds and feeds which the United Farmers have purchased and distributed among themselves". Moreover, the New Brunswick administration was accused of having "used governmental prestige and financial support to defeat the farmers' own efforts to help themselves".⁸⁵

The New Brunswick Department of Agriculture continued to increase its sponsorship of co-operative activity in the years following the downfall of the MUFCC, but all of this activity was focused on narrow economic goals.⁸⁶ Perhaps the

83 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 March 1922, p. 2.

84 *United Farmers' Guide*, 1 February 1922, p. 3.

85 *United Farmers' Guide*, 15 June 1922, p. 2.

86 Beyond the aid given to the work of groups such as the New Brunswick Agricultural Societies United and the New Brunswick Fruit Growers Association, the provincial government passed legislation incorporating other co-operative marketing associations such as the Poultry Producers of New

best illustration of what the future held for farmer co-operation in the post-MUFCC era came in a speech delivered by dairy association president A.J. Gaudet in February 1922. Only the second Acadian to serve as association president, Gaudet was convinced that the future of farming would only be secure once its practitioners embraced appropriate business strategies and, in his opinion, co-operation was good business and little else. Quoting at length the words of a prominent American co-operator whom he admired, Gaudet made clear his belief that co-operation had no legitimate place outside the realm of business: "Co-operation must walk upon its own legs. Its only salvation is independence. When it goes to tangoing [*sic*] into politics, flirting with feminism, chumming with pietism and winking at communism, destruction awaits it just around the corner. It is a business proposition pure and simple, not a tithe more not a whit less. It cannot convert earth into heaven, a country farm into New York Fifth Avenue. It waxes no magic wand . . . [b]ut it does . . . [take] care of the pennies, and through this care the dollars take care of themselves".⁸⁷ In line with this narrow, business-only definition, Gaudet was much more supportive of government-sponsored co-operative ventures than was the United Farmers: "I would strongly urge you to approve of the co-operative efforts made by the employees of the Provincial and Federal Departments of Agriculture and ask them not to lose any occasion to further spread the gospel of co-operation".⁸⁸

Not surprisingly, the UFNB's position with respect to the state's role in promoting co-operation hardened in response to its treatment at the hands of the New Brunswick government. In February 1922, the editorial staff at the *United Farmers' Guide* proclaimed that it saw no role for government in commercial activity. While it was good and proper to support agricultural experimentation, and to pass legislation beneficial to co-operative enterprises, "government interference with private business unless in the matter of control or inspection . . . [was] neither economical or [*sic*] efficient". Nonetheless, one suspects that the UFCCNB/MUFCC would have willingly accepted "government interference" in their affairs had it come in the form of financial assistance in their time of need. Indeed, although co-operative leaders throughout English-speaking Canada were generally suspicious of state intervention,

Brunswick and the New Brunswick Seed Potato Growers Association. Members of the provincial department of agriculture took a lead role in directing these organizations and also helped to found and promote co-operative dairies, egg circles and fertilizer purchasing clubs. See *Annual Report on Agriculture*, 1924, p. 8 and 1925, pp. 58-59 as well as *Maritime Farmer*, 23 February 1926, p. 9. Federal and provincial officials supported similar co-operative initiatives in Ontario as well; see Badgley, *Ringing in the Common Love of Good*, pp. 144-5. For evidence of the extent to which the administration and promotion of co-operative activities occupied the time of New Brunswick's agricultural representatives, see *Annual Report on Agriculture*: 1921 (p. 92), 1922 (p. 98), 1923 (p. 88), 1926 (pp. 87-96) and 1929 (pp. 66-73).

87 *Maritime Farmer*, 7 February 1922, p. 241. Gaudet did not identify the American co-operator whom he quoted, but it may have been Aaron Sapiro, a proponent of pragmatic economic co-operation who rose to prominence following the success of the Sun Maid Raisin Co-operative in California. For more on Sapiro, see MacPherson, *Each for All*, p. 73.

88 *Maritime Farmer*, 7 February 1922, pp. 241, 245. This philosophy soon proved personally rewarding for Gaudet, as from 1923 on he was employed first as a cow-testing promoter with the Dominion government's dairy branch and later as a provincial agricultural representative, where much of his time was spent encouraging co-operative endeavours. See *Maritime Farmer*: 6 February 1923 (p. 227), 1 April 1924 (p. 8), 6 December 1927 (p. 3) and 7 February 1928 (p. 4).

this rarely applied to instances where government officials facilitated the work of co-operatives through economic, legislative or practical aid, especially if these were provided without undue interference.⁸⁹ That the UFCCNB shared this perspective was evident when they had secured the services of G.R. Wilson, a representative of the federal Department of Agriculture, to assist in promoting the company's killing and grading station for poultry. Moreover, UFNB representatives often had words of praise for the federal government's work in organizing co-operative bodies such as the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Association.⁹⁰ But federal government support to the UFCCNB/MUFCC amounted to little beyond the Wilson collaboration, and the New Brunswick government had little interest in promoting the activities of a commercial enterprise sponsored by the official opposition.

Thus while a desire to disparage a heated political rival and the natural inclination to deflect blame from one's own failings no doubt account for some of the vitriol the United Farmers directed towards the Foster administration, the UFCCNB/MUFCC story may have been much different had the province been more supportive of the company. This becomes particularly evident when one contrasts the antagonistic attitude toward the UFCCNB/MUFCC with the level of state assistance provided the Maritime Livestock Board (MLB) only a few years later. Founded in March 1927, the Maritime Livestock Board unified the commercial activities of the 86 independent livestock shipping clubs throughout the Maritimes thereby preventing local buyers from keeping prices low by threatening to obtain stock elsewhere in the region should one set of producers be unsatisfied with an offer presented them. The *Maritime Farmer* gave the MLB story front-page treatment, and boldly declared its establishment to be "the biggest thing that has yet happened in Canadian live stock [sic] circles".⁹¹

Prominent members of the federal and provincial departments of agriculture, including F.W. Walsh, A.W. Peterson and Walter Shaw, took a lead role in organizing the new organization, and arranged for it to receive \$2,500 in annual government support – \$1000 was to come from Ottawa while the three Maritime Provinces were each to contribute \$500 – until such time as farmers could fund it themselves. State direction was also evident in the makeup of the MLB's initial board of management, which was comprised of six government officials and only three farmers. The investment of state funding and manpower reaped significant reward. By 1938, the MLB was in a position to finance itself, and government officials thereafter confined themselves to indirect assistance. Subsequently, the MLB, following several reorganization efforts, went on to form the basis of Co-op Atlantic, Canada's second largest regional co-operative wholesaler.⁹² Of course, government aid to the MLB was largely a product of the fact that the organization was, at least initially, a state-directed

89 Fulton and Laycock, "Co-operatives and Government", pp. 142-3; Fairbairn, "Big Capital", p. 243.

90 *United Farmers' Guide*: 9 June 1920 (pp. 5, 8), 29 September 1920 (p. 3) and 6 October 1920 (p. 18).

91 *Maritime Farmer*, 22 March 1927, p. 4; W.H. McEwen, *Faith Hope and Co-operation: A Maritime Provinces Story* (Moncton, 1969), p. 7; MacPherson, "Patterns in the Maritime Co-operative Movement", p. 76.

92 The government contingent on the MLB's board of management included the three representatives of the federal livestock branch working in the Maritime Provinces as well as an official from each of the three provincial departments of agriculture. Seven farmer delegates were elected to serve as MLB

organization that sought to use co-operative marketing as a means to fulfil two strictly economic aims: enhancing farmer efficiency and profitability and, more importantly, improving the quality of agricultural goods through standard grading practices thereby strengthening opportunities for domestic and international trade.⁹³ Similarly, the federal and Nova Scotia governments bolstered the fortunes of the Antigonish Movement in the 1930s, with Father Moses Coady's early organizational work amongst fishermen in the Maritimes entirely financed by the federal government. While its leaders espoused social transformation through adult education and co-operative action, they were fully conscious of the need to stay out of the political arena.⁹⁴

Many state officials were thus purposefully selective in their support of co-operative activity. While they could not help but admire the United Farmers' early successes in rallying New Brunswick agrarians to the co-operative cause, the UFNB's non-conformist political stance guaranteed that there would be little in the way of support from government sources. Thus one of the most promising agrarian co-operative organizations in the region's history was allowed to disintegrate with virtually no state response whatsoever.⁹⁵ While government assistance could not have assured success, nor eliminated the very real challenges the MUFCC faced as of 1922,

directors from the beginning, but only three of these men served on the board's managing body in the initial years. See *Maritime Farmer*, 22 March 1927, pp. 3-4; McEwen, *Faith Hope and Co-operation*, pp. 8-10 and http://www.co-oponline.com/english/at_work/who_are_we.html. The MLB was renamed the Canadian Livestock Co-operative (Maritime) in 1930 and was then reincorporated as the Maritime Co-operative Services Ltd. in 1944. See McEwen, *Faith Hope and Co-operation*, pp. 11, 31.

- 93 For evidence of the restrictive nature of government-sponsored co-operative endeavours throughout North America, see the following: Badgley, *Ringling in the Common Love of Good*, pp. 144-50; Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy*, pp. 210-11; Jeffery Taylor, *Fashioning Farmers: Ideology, Agricultural Knowledge and the Manitoba Farm Movement, 1890-1925* (Regina, 1994), p. 73 and McMath, "Populism in Two Countries", *Agricultural History*, 69, 4 (Fall 1995), p. 542.
- 94 On the leadership behind, and work of, the Antigonish Movement, see, for example, the following sources: Michael Welton, *Little Mosie from the Margaree: A Biography of Moses Michael Coady* (Toronto, 2001); Jim Lotz and Michael Welton, *Father Jimmy: The Life and Times of Father Jimmy Tompkins* (Wreck Cove, NS, 1997); George Boyle, *Father Tompkins of Nova Scotia* (New York, 1953); Anne Alexander, *The Antigonish Movement: Moses Coady and Adult Education Today* (Toronto, 1997); Daniel MacInnis, "Clerics, Fishermen, Farmers and Workers: The Antigonish Movement and Identity in Eastern Nova Scotia", Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1978; R. James Sacouman, "Underdevelopment and the Structural Origins of Antigonish Movement Co-operatives In Eastern Nova Scotia", *Acadiensis*, VII, 1 (Autumn 1977), pp. 66-85; Alvin Donovan, "'Sharing the Catch': The Origins and Development of the United Maritime Fishermen to 1938", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1989; Gregory Baum, "Social Catholicism and Nova Scotia: the Thirties", in Peter Slater, ed., *Religion and Culture in Canada* (Waterloo, 1964) and Scott MacAulay, "The Smokestack Leaned Toward Capitalism: An Examination of the Middle Way Program of the Antigonish Movement", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 37, 1 (Spring 2002), p. 52. The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture also lent its full support to the co-operative endeavours of the Antigonish Movement, under the direction of sympathetic officials such as F.W. Walsh. See Alexander, *The Antigonish Movement*, p. 84; Walsh, *We Fought For the Little Man*, pp. 80-94 and Sacouman, "Antigonish Movement Co-operatives In Eastern Nova Scotia", p. 70.
- 95 The provincial government did approve legislation allowing for the decentralization of the MUFCC, but critics argued that this only ensured the end of the co-operative as an effective economic tool. See *United Farmers' Guide*: 15 April 1922 (pp. 11, 20), 1 February 1922 (pp. 2, 17) and 15 February 1922 (p. 2).

the inaction, and often outright opposition, of state officials helped seal the co-operative's fate.

The United Farmers of New Brunswick (UFNB) and their co-operative company burst forth in the last months of the First World War to offer an alternative to the traditional political parties that many farmers believed had served them badly, and the sense of powerlessness they experienced in the marketing of farm products. Inspired by the larger movement across Canada, the UFNB quickly became a political and economic juggernaut. Indeed, the success of UFNB candidates in the New Brunswick election of 1920 stands as the greatest achievement in third-party politics in the history of the province. Almost as quickly, the United Farmers of New Brunswick faded to insignificance, a development historians have correctly attributed to such factors as the deep post-war recession that began in the spring of 1920, internal divisions and management problems, and the hostility of businesses, particularly the network of middlemen/buyers who controlled the trade in farm commodities. What has been missed in the scholarly treatment of the United Farmers movement in the province is the central role that the New Brunswick Liberal government played in undermining its potential.

Clearly, the federal government and provincial governments throughout Canada, both Liberal and Conservative, perceived the post-First World War farmers' movement as a threat to their own electoral success. They responded to the challenge in a variety of ways, including policy changes to placate farmers and the use of state agricultural bureaucracies as political instruments, in an effort to direct co-operative activities in directions that compromised the broader political and economic visions and ambitions of progressive farmer organizations. New Brunswick was one of the provinces where the state-directed effort to head off the United Farmers' movement was most successful. While the Liberal government of Walter Foster effectively used state support of narrowly focused, strictly business-oriented co-operative initiatives, it was the relationship of the party with the *Maritime Farmer* that proved most decisive in the effort to dampen support for the UFNB. Indeed, it was fortuitous that control over the content within the most influential component of the regional farm press resided within the Liberal party apparatus. For *Maritime Farmer* owner J.D. McKenna and its editor Malcolm MacLeod, political affiliation and commercial interests blended together seamlessly as they launched a bitter and protracted campaign against the rival United Farmers that started on the eve of the 1920 election. Ultimately, the treatment of the United Farmers of New Brunswick by the Liberal government and what amounted to an official party organ played a central role in decapitating the political and economic aspirations of the movement and contributed greatly toward reshaping the co-operative movement in the province in ways that would preserve the electoral hegemony of the traditional parties and their commercial allies.