
Spying on the Young in Depression and War: Article Review

Canada is known today as a liberal democracy that promotes itself to the rest of the world as a country that allowed its citizens to enjoy political freedom throughout the country's history. However, author Paul Axelrod reminds readers that the Canadian government's political views were not as free as the world may think. Rather he explains that the Canadian Government held quasi-totalitarian control and chose to utilize this power on many occasions. This was a time in Canada's history when the world was at war and governments depended heavily on propaganda to influence its citizens to support the country's political views so that antipolitical or socialist ideologies do not arise. Paul Axelrod claims that Canada had used authority created by several acts, and laws under the criminal code to disrupt political freedom, and justified these policies as a method of retaliating against political opposition within the country. The government had especially targeted universities, students, and youth groups as they had believed that these institutions and groups were key sources of communism and socialist opposition. Therefore they exercised state and police power by reports and recommendations provided by the RCMP and CSIS. Paul also says that during the depression whoever identified themselves as a communist were main targets of police surveillance, this was another use of authority to deter any citizen from having communist views, which clearly violated a person's political freedom.

The Canadian Student Assembly was formed by students and organized by the student Christian movement, it was a group that came together to discuss a wide range of educational and social issues within Canada. It openly opposed the idea of militarism and wanted better educational opportunities, and closer relationship with the French and English Canadians. They were closely watched by the RCMP especially after they had given opposition to conscription, and this was seen as a threat of subversion to the government. Many professors were known to have radical leanings when talking about external affairs and Canadian unity. It was expected for them to speak out in favour of radical resolutions, a letter sent by commander of the Toronto detachment to the commissioner wrote that government these professors were all regarded in University life as being men of extreme thought, if not definitely communist and this attracted the RCMP to closely monitor their actions. However, these allegations were false as none of these professors were communist.

Many of the professors that were accused of being a communist, were supporters of the non-communist, social democratic party CCF. Although some of the professors criticized British foreign policy and favoured civil liberties, Paul justifies that by saying their thinking was rooted in

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nationalism and liberalism, not socialism or communism. Paul's view on shedding light on to the true history of Canada and its political views is important as history should never be forgotten. The ways in which the RCMP gathered information, conducted surveillance, and spied on youth university groups as if they were radicals show us how much Canada has evolved over the years. It also shows us that Canada did not in fact have political freedom. On text it may have seen like it, but the actions of the government along with the RCMP proved that any suspicion of communism would hold that person under heavy surveillance, and risk them being labeled as a radical. It is important that history does not repeat itself, and that these lessons of the past remembered.

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