

## Developing a Denominational Structure: The Introduction of a Unified Budget

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Conrad Wright, during his 1983 Harvard Divinity School Alumni Day Address, complained about the inadequate attention paid by scholars to the development of ecclesiastical bureaucracies in American Protestantism. He noted,

Our neglect of the general topic of denominational organization is manifested in part by our ignorance of how the present denominational bureaucracies got to be the way they are. Most people take them for granted as obvious, and presumably inherent in the nature of things. Few seem to be aware of how recent a phenomenon they are. The Christian church survived for centuries without stated clerks, suffragan bishops, district executives, or general superintendents [. . .]. One will look long and hard for a New Testament model for that.<sup>1</sup>

The same could be said about the development of Canadian denominations, which has received even less attention, and many people appear unaware that the denominational structures existing in the last third of the nineteenth century looked significantly different than the structures do at the start of the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup>

This paper takes an extended look at one moment in the bureaucratic development of The Presbyterian Church in Canada: the changes occurring in 1912. The centralized finance and budgeting structures introduced at that time, it will be argued, gave the management of the mission of the Church to the developing church bureaucracy. This transfer led to a uniformity of practice which stifled experimentation and non-conformist outreach efforts. Most likely, limiting experimentation was not the intention of the rising bureaucracy, but in order to manage a rapidly growing and increasingly complex organization policies and procedures were established and applied. This organizational development resulted from a perspective which regarded the Church as a corporation producing a product. Efficient production was to be seen in the standardization of practices and systems across geographical regions and differing socio-economic realities. As long as grass-roots committees and other groups with arm's-length relationships to the church

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad Wright, "The Growth of Denominational Bureaucracies: A Neglected Aspect of American Church History," *Harvard Theological Review* 77.2 (1984): 178.

<sup>2</sup> In 1987, at Dr. John Moir's invitation, I presented my first paper to the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History. The paper, the result of work I did in Dr. Moir's graduate course on Canadian Religious Traditions, explored the history of the Knox College Student Missionary Society from its beginnings in 1845 to its heydays in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. The paper also documented the Society's rapid decline in the years immediately prior to World War I, a decline precipitated in large part by the bureaucratization of the Church's structures. After I presented my paper, the Rev. Dr. John Johnston thanked me for my paper and suggested those gathered could expect to hear more from me as I continued my research on the bureaucratization of the Presbyterian Church. I remember thinking, "I don't want to do research on that." What had drawn me to the KCSMS was not an interest in understanding the bureaucratization of the Church, but rather a fascination with the passion and vision for mission and outreach present among the students. However, over the last twenty-five years in doing my research, I have found myself stumbling over evidence that in the years immediately prior to World War I the Presbyterian Church made significant change in the way it did its work. This paper is the result of asking what happened and what the implications of that change were.



bureaucracy had access to funds which they could expend at their own discretion, the standardizing and homogenizing policies and procedures of the centralizing structures could be bent and even ignored allowing for the unusual and the experimental. Once centralized finance and budgeting was introduced such freedom was curtailed.<sup>3</sup>

The Presbyterian Church in Canada was not alone in developing a new organizational structure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Samuel Hays has argued a new "organizational society" came to the fore in the United States of America between 1897 and 1929. As evidence of this shift Hays points to phrases such as: "efficiency," "scientific management," and "business methods" becoming common in fields ranging from industry to commerce to education to religion during this period. Those individuals having this new "progressive" view of society believed the methods and the structures needed to shape society for good could be found. The shift to the "organizational society" was marked by three things: technical systems were developed and applied to all aspects of human endeavour; new associations were created among people on the basis of their function and occupation, thereby creating specializations; and the focus of attention moved from the local to the cosmopolitan.<sup>4</sup> These shifts expanded the geographical scope of people's lives from local to national, from congregational to denominational. Even as the variety of specialists increased, the room for variation within each specialty decreased. Specialization led to conformity within the specialty: the Presbyterian congregation in suburban Toronto operated the same way, with the same worship style, as the suburban Vancouver congregation.

In his work on North American denominations, Gibson Winter argues the "organizational society" impacted Protestant churches in three ways: functional specialization through the development of boards and agencies; the elaboration of an administrative staff at the national level of the denomination; and centralized control of fund raising and budgeting.<sup>5</sup> John Thomas, in his 1991 dissertation, explored these three dynamics within the Methodist Church of Canada between the Methodist Union of 1884 and Church Union in 1925. Thomas demonstrates that the first two of Winter's patterns had been implemented within Canadian Methodism by the first decade of the twentieth century. The third, centralized fund raising and budgeting, was not implemented in Canadian Methodism until 1919, after World War I.<sup>6</sup> The Presbyterian Church

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<sup>3</sup> This paper was written at a particular moment in the life of The Presbyterian Church in Canada as the structures that evolved over the last century appear to be financially unsustainable. While the paper does not enter directly into that 2012-2013 debate, the discerning reader may catch hints of the author's views regarding the future structures of the denomination.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Hays, "The New Organizational Society," *Building the Organizational Society: Essays on Associational Activities in Modern America*, ed. Jerry Israel (New York: The Free Press, 1972) 1-15.

<sup>5</sup> Gibson Winter, "Religious Organizations," *Large-Scale Organizations*, vol. 1 of *The Emergent American Society* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967) 408-91. A later version appeared as Gibson Winter, *Religious Identity: A Study of Religious Organization* (New York: Macmillan, 1968). See also David Dawson, "Funding Mission in the Early Twentieth Century," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24.4 (2000): 155-58. Dawson writes, "Following the lead of business and industry, churches developed models of efficiency, consolidation, and specialization that had the effect of producing the 'corporate denomination'" (155).

<sup>6</sup> John Thomas, "'A Pure and Popular Character': Case Studies in the Development of the Methodist 'Organizational' Church, 1884-1925," diss., York U, 1991). Thomas explores the developing theology of stewardship within the Methodist Church in his "The Christian Law of Living": The Institutionalization of Christian Stewardship in The Methodist Church (Canada, Newfoundland, Bermuda), 1884-1925," *Canadian Society of Methodist History Papers* (1991): 109-28. What Thomas' work does do regarding finances is provide a careful



in Canada, which moved to centralized finance and budgeting in 1912, that is before World War I, was the first Christian denomination in Canada to do so. While chronologically there was only a seven-year lag on the Methodists' side, World War I stands between the two dates, and the war was a watershed event for virtually everything in Canada. It has been argued Canada went into the war a colony and came out a modern nation state. Such a change in the national psyche impacted the churches as well. Thus by making their move to centralized budgeting in 1912 Presbyterians were anticipating changes yet to be seen in other Canadian denominations.

Research done for the Presbyterian Presence project, while exploring American Presbyterianism, provides some helpful ways of thinking about these organizational changes in Canada. Louis B. Weeks describes a process he calls "the incorporation" of the Church, as business models replaced communal decision-making styles in American Presbyterianism between 1880 and 1920. Weeks is gentle in his analysis arguing the proponents of "incorporation" did not see, and could not be expected to see, the long-term implications of replacing a decentralized communal decision-making structure with a centralized business model.<sup>7</sup> Craig Dykstra and James Hudnut-Beumler make a similar argument as they look at the broad sweep of American Presbyterian, arguing three stages of organizational life describe its denominational history: a Constitutional Confederacy was in place until sometime after the American Civil War when the Corporation started to arise, holding sway until the 1960s when it was replaced with the emergence of the Regulatory Agency. The Corporation was expansive and outward focused, creating cohesion within the denomination by inviting congregations and individuals to serve the mission of the denomination.<sup>8</sup> This paper explores how the rise of "corporation" thinking impacted the ways in which The Presbyterian Church in Canada raised and spent money.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada grew rapidly through the 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century, just as Canada itself grew. The Church's growth was seen in more congregations, more mission points, more church buildings, more theological colleges, more manses, more missionaries serving overseas, more of just about everything. The 2,942 congregations and preaching points of 1900 had grown by 1910 to become 4,215; growth of more than 40%, the bulk of which was in the West. In that same period the number of clergy serving in the denomination had risen by a third from 1,090 to 1,462. The denomination had

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analysis of the growth of stewardship language within Methodism and evidence of how that language was being framed to fit an increasingly middle-class and urbanized Church.

<sup>7</sup> Louis B. Weeks, "The Incorporation of the Presbyterians," *The Organizational Revolution: Presbyterians and American Denominationalism*, ed. Milton J. Coalter, John Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 37-54. Weeks' conclusion moves the conversation from the past into the present: "Much as Presbyterians might affirm a doctrine of the church that centers on 'the body of Christ,' 'the work of the Holy Spirit among people,' and God's sovereignty, they still contend with and exist within an American [we can add Canadian] environment of voluntarism and corporation-induced values. How to balance necessary organization with self-conscious distance from a complex, pervasive atmosphere of incorporation will itself be a complicated task. It seems one worth the effort, however, if a Presbyterian identity remains important within the Christian family" (53-54).

<sup>8</sup> Craig Dykstra and James Hudnut-Beumler, "The National Organizational Structures of Protestant Denominations: An Invitation to a Conversation," *The Organizational Revolution: Presbyterians and American Denominationalism*, ed. Milton J. Coalter, John Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 307-31.

sixty-four missionaries overseas in 1900; that more than doubled to 146 by 1910.<sup>9</sup> The Assembly Committees overseeing the mission work of the church both at home and overseas were, at first, led by volunteer convenors and committee members all who had other employment either as congregational ministers or in other professional occupations. As the church grew the committees and their convenors were stretched to the limit. The Home Missions Committee, Western Section, had been the first to try something different, asking the 1881 Assembly to appoint a Mission Superintendent. The General Assembly appointed the Rev. James Robertson to this role.<sup>10</sup> Robertson's office was wherever he was and he was everywhere across Western Canada. More activist than bureaucrat, his appointment nonetheless signaled a change in approach: there was space for mission or program specialists who were unattached to a congregation. At the time even some of the college faculty, for example the Rev. Dr. J. J. Proudfoot of Knox College, served congregations while teaching full course loads. Robertson's appointment was followed in 1892 by the Rev. R. P. MacKay's appointment as the full-time secretary of the Foreign Missions Committee of the western section of the church; a significant step towards the creation of a Church bureaucracy.<sup>11</sup> MacKay's work was done largely by mail as he connected with the growing number of missionaries overseas and addressed their policy and procedure questions. He needed an office from which to do this, and he eventually joined the church treasurer in the Confederation Life building in Toronto. From there things grew as the committee responsible for Sunday Schools and Young People hired a full-time secretary. And the Foreign Missions Committee hired an assistant to help MacKay. The Rev. John Somerville "became the salaried head of a business office" in 1906 when he was given "a permanent position in the Church offices." That the Assembly could speak of "the Church offices" indicates a distinct entity within the church had come into being. Somerville, as Chris Redmond has described, brought financial accountability to the life of the church and through his service on no less than seven national committees functioned as the communication link between various committees in the church.<sup>12</sup> An Assembly-level church office was coming into existence.

The growth of the Canadian Presbyterian church both at home and on the foreign mission field drove calls for better methods of collecting money from the people in the pews to fund this expansive mission. The demographic shift from rural and small town to urban changed how Canadian congregations functioned. Large urban congregations had staff beyond the minister, and expenses like utilities, maintenance, and mortgage payments on their large, prestigious buildings. Not only were urban congregations in the first decade of the twentieth century building large edifices to house their programs and staff, even small town congregations were replacing their clapboard and wood frame buildings built in the 1850s through 1870s with new large brick buildings. The total value of church property had risen from \$14.7 million in 1906 to

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<sup>9</sup> *Acts and Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1912): Appendix 551.

<sup>10</sup> For more on James Robertson see: Peter Bush, "James Robertson: Presbyterian Bishop of the West," *Called to Witness: Profiles of Canadian Presbyterians: A Supplement to Enduring Witness*, ed. John S. Moir, vol. 4 (Burlington, ON: The Presbyterian Church in Canada Committee on History, 1999) 38-51.

<sup>11</sup> For more on R. P. MacKay see: Peter Bush, "The Rev. R. P. (Robert Peter) MacKay: Pietist as Denominational Executive," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* 35 (2010): 13-42.

<sup>12</sup> Chris Redmond, "John Somerville in the General Assembly: Case Study of a Presbyterian Unionist," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* 13 (1988): 31-47.



\$21.1 million a mere four years later. The debt on church property had also risen to a total of \$2.8 million or 13% of the value of the property.<sup>13</sup>

No longer could congregations function financially from harvest to harvest, waiting for farmers to get their crop in and then make substantial annual donations to the church. In fact, a growing number of church members were not farmers. As a growing number of church members were paid weekly and as their congregations faced bills on a weekly and monthly basis, the pattern of giving changed. Through the first decade of the twentieth century the weekly offering envelope was introduced into many congregations. Such an introduction sought to create the habit of weekly giving to the church, and further gave to giving the appearance of being private. Everyone used the same kind of envelope but no one, except the counters, knew how much individuals gave. A variation on the weekly offering envelope was the duplex envelope, with its two pockets. The pockets could be separated from each other along the perforation in the center. Into one pocket was put contributions to the local congregation and in the other pocket contributions to "the schemes of the church." "The schemes of the church" being the work of the denomination both at home and overseas. Giving was thus regularized, standardized, programmed, and privatized, aspects befitting a corporatizing church.

Through the first decade of the twentieth century the committees and boards functioning under the General Assembly had no formal connections with one another, and there was no place other than Assembly where these entities interacted with one another. This decentralized approach was in part the result of each group taking responsibility for raising its own funds. In 1910 there were ten different "schemes of the church" to which congregations could contribute: Home Missions, Augmentation, Foreign Missions, French Evangelization, the theological colleges, Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, Widows and Orphans Fund, Assembly Fund, Moral Reform and Evangelism (which had been added to the schemes in 1907), and the Sunday School and Young Peoples' Committee. These groups competed with each other for financial support from local congregations, which in 1910 totaled \$904,335.<sup>14</sup> Through their letters and personal presence the secretaries, convenors, and committee members along with missionaries on deputation work and other staff employed by the committees encouraged congregations to give to "the schemes of the church." As an increasing number of committees and boards had full-time staff, many of whom worked out of offices in the Confederation Life Building in Toronto, the competition between the various funds for money became an increasing irritant. Further, clergy and congregations felt harassed by seven or more sets of requests arriving before them either by letter or in person. The question was asked, "Why not have a unified budget at the Assembly level of the church?"

Calls for the introduction of business methods into the finances of the church were heard at the Laymen's Missionary Movement gathering held in Toronto in 1909. Canada's Missionary Congress, the Laymen's Missionary Movement highpoint, held in 1909, spent an entire morning of the four-day conference discussing "How to lead the Church to its Highest Missionary Efficiency." The speakers highlighted the important role the congregation's pastor played as leader of the missionary focus of their church, and discussed the make-up of mission committees. Raising money received attention from a number of angles. Former mayor of Toronto, Thomas Urquhart, argued "In the conduct of all business enterprises, and in the management thereof, two

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<sup>13</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 551.

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things are necessary: 1. Education. 2. System."<sup>15</sup> The system was the weekly offering envelope for it was "businesslike and methodical and regular."<sup>16</sup> Mr. M. Parkinson, a Presbyterian layperson from an unnamed Toronto congregation, bore witness to the extraordinary impact introducing the weekly offering envelope had had in one congregation where contributions rose by 400%.<sup>17</sup> Together with a focus on proportionate giving (a scientific approach to giving), the weekly offering envelope would "solve all our problems of Church finances."<sup>18</sup>

These calls for the church to be more business-like impacted The Presbyterian Church in Canada. At the 1913 Pre-Assembly Congress a banner hung in Massey Hall, where the convention was held, depicting a conversation between a person dressed like a country squire riding a rocking horse and another person driving a car. The horse was named "Antiquated Methods"; the car was named "Business Methods in Church Finance." The driver of the car was saying "Get in, brother, and make some progress."<sup>19</sup> Progress was the goal, it being the element used to determine value. The car, the product of systematized and organized work in a factory, was superior to the rocking horse, which was most likely made in a workshop growing out of the seeming disorganization that exists in most workshops. Little else had to be said about how the denomination's leadership viewed the introduction of business methods to the church.

In response to the pressures to find more money to fund both the ministry of the local church and the mission of the denomination, the Assembly Committee on Systematic Giving called attention to offering envelopes as a means to increase giving to both congregations and the schemes of the church. The introduction of weekly offering envelopes, it was argued, needed to be accompanied by support from the minister and a systematic visitation of all households in the congregation. Following these practices would produce the product of increased contributions to the work of the church. By 1911, 456 congregations had adopted weekly offering envelopes and of those 370 were using duplex envelopes. Assuming those congregations which had adopted offering envelopes were predominately self-supporting congregations, this represented just over 20% of the self-supporting congregations in the denomination. Changing the giving patterns of congregations would take time. The committee was not discouraged by the slow rate of introduction. Even though the described system of "a thorough canvass of the members" had not always been used as part of introducing the offering envelope, only four of the 370 congregations using the duplex envelopes indicated significant problems.<sup>20</sup>

The new method by itself, the Systematic Giving Committee made clear, was not sufficient to increase giving or to deepen stewardship practices; those things happened only

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Urquhart, "The Best Methods of Missionary Finance," *Canada's Missionary Congress* (Toronto: Canadian Council of Laymen's Missionary Movement, [1909?]) 201. The 4,000 delegates gathered in Toronto March 31 to April 4, 1909.

<sup>16</sup> Urquhart 204.

<sup>17</sup> M. Parkinson, "The Weekly Offering Envelope," *Canada's Missionary Congress* (Toronto: Canadian Council of Laymen's Missionary Movement, [1909?]) 207.

<sup>18</sup> J. Campbell White's comment. White, President of the American branch of the Laymen's Missionary Movement, was the Chairperson of this session. See *Canada's Missionary Congress*, 206.

<sup>19</sup> "Appendix: Charts Shown at Congress," *Pre-Assembly Congress: Addresses delivered at the Presbyterian Pre-Assembly Congress, held in Massey Hall, Toronto* (Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions, 1913) among the unnumbered pages at the back of the book.

<sup>20</sup> "Report of Committee on Systematic Giving," *Acts and Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1911): Appendix 229.



when individuals and congregations experienced spiritual transformation. The 1911 report put it bluntly:

Better organization and business methods are needed, but no great advance in giving will be chronicled, there will be no undertaking of the work in the sacrificial spirit of Christ's Cross, until there comes to our people a new vision of things unseen and eternal, and a new constraint of love from Him who though He was rich, for our sakes became poor.<sup>21</sup>

The committee believed that such a revival had yet to take place since on average Presbyterians gave five cents a week to the schemes of the church. Such a level was half what the Committee believed to be a reasonable target. The committee concluded many Presbyterians gave nothing to the work of the wider church, and those who did give gave little and irregularly; few people were giving sacrificially, and few "wealthy members" were "investing any adequate portion of their means in the effort to win Canada for Christ and give the gospel to every creature."<sup>22</sup> To address this problem a five-point plan was introduced. First, ministers needed to preach and teach so members were prepared to do nothing less than sacrifice for the cause of Christ. A discipleship program was to be introduced, the goal of which was "to have everyone who names the name of Christ come into fellowship with that Christ by learning that it is more blessed to give than to receive." The third step was the introduction of the duplex envelope because it was the best means to "secure frequent and regular contributions." Fourth, the level of giving expectation needed to be raised through developing accountability groups within the congregation where members encouraged one another to raise "the standard of giving." And finally, "those possessed of large means" needed to be confronted with the "finest opportunity for investment" namely service to Christ's kingdom.<sup>23</sup> The plan was a call to spiritual renewal and lived discipleship regarding the financial resources at one's disposal.

While in 1911 the committee recognized spiritual transformation as an essential part of seeing giving increased, they were still proposing a system to push ahead the hoped-for spiritual transformation. It is true that training of any kind requires having goals and planning to reach those goals, and training in living the spiritual life is no different. However, often spiritual growth happens in unexpected ways, coming out of unplanned moments. The danger of building a system to enhance spiritual growth is the serendipitous moments of unexpected grace may get programmed out of existence or labeled as outside the prescribed pattern. The accountability groups hoped for would have been a place where such serendipity and surprise could have been welcomed and celebrated.

The call to spiritual renewal was accompanied by changes to how the boards and committees of Assembly would communicate their financial needs to congregations. Instead of each of the Assembly's committees sending their requests to Synods and Synods dividing each of those requests among the Presbyteries and the Presbyteries dividing each of those requests among the congregations in their bounds, in 1911 permission was given to the Committee on Systematic Giving to calculate the whole amount required by all the committees of the church and divide that total among the Synods. Thus Synods would receive only one figure to divide

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<sup>21</sup> "Report of Committee on Systematic Giving," *Acts and Proceedings* (1911): Appendix 229.

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among Presbyteries and Presbyteries only one figure to divide among congregations. This change was in fact the first step in creating a unified budget. Nineteen eleven was also the year the budget for all the schemes of the church combined reached \$1 million. Having de facto created a unified budget, the Committee asked and received permission to circulate the 1912 allocation figures to Synods enough in advance that Presbyteries could inform congregations of their allocations for the 1912 year prior to congregational annual meetings in January 1912. In order to do this the Committee on Systematic Giving was using estimates not yet approved by the Assembly, for Assembly would not meet until June of 1912 to approve the 1912 budget.<sup>24</sup> Taking these actions to their logical conclusion the Committee asked Assembly to request all committees and presbyteries in the church to send their views on "the amalgamation of all funds for the prosecution of religious work" to the Committee by 1 April 1912.<sup>25</sup>

The creation of centralized finance and budgeting meant changes to how the committees and boards of the Church functioned and the way they related to congregations and individual members. Thus following the 1911 Assembly there was significant conversation within some committees of the church regarding the proposed change. The Foreign Missions Committee was pleased with the results of the experiment underway between the 1911 and 1912 Assemblies, declaring it "a decided improvement on the old plan." The Committee went on to note that R. P. MacKay, Secretary of the Committee and Moderator of the Assembly that year, spent the entire fall of 1911 visiting congregations and presbyteries promoting the unified budget and the advantages of weekly giving.<sup>26</sup> MacKay was a pietist with an extraordinary ability to re-frame administrative and financial matters as spiritual issues. He was therefore providentially the Moderator of the Assembly at this critical administrative moment in the life of the church.<sup>27</sup> The Home Missions Committee was supportive but required some assurances, namely: the Home Missions Committee would be represented on the yet-to-be-formed finance committee and the policies and procedures of the Home Missions Committee regarding the management of its mission mandate would not be fundamentally altered.<sup>28</sup>

The Board of French Evangelization was not as sanguine about the merging of fund-raising efforts, wanting recognition of the distinct challenges and needs of mission efforts among French-speaking Canadians. The board asked that: the Synod of Montreal and Ottawa be given special funds which the Synod could designate for the support of mission among French-speaking Roman Catholics; second, the special superintendent appointed to the Synod be fluently bilingual and would have the same status as the other superintendents across the country; and finally, the Mission School at Pointe-aux-Trembles receive a grant directly from the Assembly and the school be empowered to make direct financial appeals to congregations and Sunday Schools. The request for a direct appeal to congregations undermined one of the central reasons for having a unified budget: all financial appeals to congregations would come from one source

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<sup>24</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1911): Minutes, 89, 90. In 1912, the Committee on Systematic Giving estimated the total Unified Budget at \$1.1 million. The budget was changed by the 1912 Assembly to \$1.2 million. But there is no evidence that the Committee on Systematic Giving revised the figures they had supplied to Synods in the wake of the Assembly decision. Therefore the Committee's report to the Assembly in 1913 speaks of the 1912 budget being \$1.1 million. The Committee ignored the instructions of the Assembly.

<sup>25</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1911): Appendix 232.

<sup>26</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 266.

<sup>27</sup> See Bush, "The Rev. Dr. R. P. MacKay."

<sup>28</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 6.



and all the funds given by congregations would be distributed by the yet-to-be-created Finance Committee. The Board of French Evangelization was evidently concerned the distinct nature of ministry among French-speaking Roman Catholics would be lost under the homogenizing influence of centralized direction and management.<sup>29</sup>

Members of the Assembly's Committee on Systematic Giving had visited many presbyteries and synods between the 1911 and the 1912 Assemblies, explaining the changes proposed and the system for allocating to each congregation what they were expected to give to the unified budget. The year-long experiment had gone well, with giving to the national programs of the church having risen. Committee members participating in the 1912 pre-Assembly Missionary Conference held in Ottawa were again able to present the rationale for the change to General Assembly commissioners and were able to report to the General Assembly that those attending the conference had supported the changes. Twenty-eight presbyteries had responded to the remit asking their opinion on "the unification of the schemes;" eighteen were in favour, eight were opposed, and two reported their "indifference" on the issue. Given this support and the support from three of the committees of the Church, the recommendation from the Committee on Systematic Giving was to move ahead with the unification of the schemes.<sup>30</sup>

The tone of the committee's 1912 report was in marked contrast to its 1911 report. Where the 1911 report had framed the call to give in spiritual terms, an outgrowth of gratitude to God and an obligation to share what had been so abundantly provided, the 1912 report was about methods and processes. The corporatizing system was on full display. The standard method of introducing systematic giving was a banquet or series of banquets to interest people in the new method; a motion at the annual meeting accepting "the congregation's allocated share of Budget"; and an every member canvass by laypeople in the congregation with "the aim being to have each person earning an income promise to give a certain amount, however small, weekly through the envelopes provided." Following this method would lead to an increase in giving to the budget of the denomination and a growth in the local congregation's resources.<sup>31</sup> When the method did not work the cause was one of three things: the minister's failure to fully support the change to systematic giving and duplex envelopes; the lack of vision among key lay leaders in a congregation who were "looking backwards [. . .] self-satisfied with doing a very little"; or particular local circumstances of economic difficulty.<sup>32</sup> The committee assured the report's readers that progressive-thinking clergy and laypeople following the methods outlined by the committee would see dramatic increases in congregational giving.

The committee also introduced recommendations regarding the management of the Assembly level of the Church. A new Finance Board of The Presbyterian Church in Canada was to be created, replacing the Committee on Systematic Giving. The chairperson of the Board and twelve others, among whom there would be representation from each Synod, were not to be members of any of the committees presenting their budgets to the Finance Board. The other twenty-two members of the board would be representatives of the committees of the Assembly, the principals of the colleges, and the editor of the *Record*. Both the Home and Foreign Missions committees had two representatives on the Board, an acknowledgement of their size and

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<sup>29</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 70.

<sup>30</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 264-73.

<sup>31</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 268.

<sup>32</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 267-68.

importance. The board was given the power to hire an individual to carry on its "executive work." In proposing the creation of the Finance Board, the committee was aware of the power being given to the Board "to which is entrusted in so large measure the financing of all the Schemes of the Church."<sup>33</sup>

The Finance Board had become a super-committee through which all funding decision would flow. The Eastern section of the Church (the Maritimes) had its own treasurer and processes, so the impact of the changes was somewhat muted although still felt in that part of the country. Given the makeup of the new board, a place had been created where the committees and boards of the church were compelled to meet and, it was hoped, work out together how they would do the work of the Church. The board was one more level of structure, further distancing the General Assembly from the staff responsible for carrying on the work of the Church. In hiring someone to manage the day-to-day financial leadership of the Church, the Assembly was recognizing that specialized skills and abilities were required in the leadership of the denomination; skills having little to do with the pastoral ability required in congregational life. The Finance Board would manage all requests to congregations for funding: direct appeals from committees and boards were no longer allowed. The Finance Board had the power to re-write the draft budgets of committees, thereby choosing if they wished, to privilege particular work of the church and disadvantage other work.

The development of centralized budgeting meant national committees knew what was being paid to the secretaries and other staff of all the other committees. Since all staff members working for the Church were to be paid from one source, bringing equity to the salaries paid was a priority. The 1912 Assembly made some changes to deal with a few glaring problems, and mandated the Finance Board to create "a permanent scale." With the Finance Board setting the salaries, the various boards and committees of the Assembly lost a tool by which they could express appreciation or disapproval of the work of their staff.<sup>34</sup>

In bringing together the mission work of the Church under one budget the logical decision was to re-organize some of the responsibilities between the Home and Foreign Missions Committees. Until 1912, work in Canada that was obviously cross-cultural, was largely regarded as foreign missions. Thus work among the Chinese immigrants, the Native people of Canada, and Jewish immigrants all fell under the Foreign Missions Committee. Even work among Francophones had its own Board, distinct from Home Missions. The Assembly, with the agreement of the Home and Foreign Missions Committees and the Board of French Evangelization, created a Board of Home Missions. This newly minted entity was responsible for all the work previously called home missions, plus ministry among the Native people, work among the Jews, and the work of the Board of French Evangelization. The school at Pointe-aux-Trembles had its own board appointed by the Assembly and therefore reported directly to the Assembly.<sup>35</sup> The work among the Chinese immigrants remained a responsibility of the Foreign Missions Committee because of links between the Chinese community in Canada and regions in China where the Presbyterian Church had missionaries. Disrupting those links it was believed would hamper the mission work in Canada. In this shift, ministries that had been recognized as

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<sup>33</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): Appendix 272-73.

<sup>34</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): 65.

<sup>35</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1912): 64-65, Appendix 271-72.



cross-cultural were re-imagined as home missions work thereby losing their links to cross-cultural mission thinking.<sup>36</sup>

As these changes were being made, one of the rationales presented was more money would be raised for the mission of the Church. Given that these changes took place in 1911 and 1912, being completed only two years before World War I, it is not possible with any accuracy to say much about the long-term impact the changes had on giving to "the schemes of the church." The war and with it the imposition of federal income tax, the focusing of economic efforts towards the building of war materiel, and the loss of family income with men serving overseas in the military all reduced the funds available for donation to the church. That leaves 1913 as the only complete post-unified budget year with which any helpful comparative work can be done. The table at the end of this paper contains data in addition to what is discussed below.

The amount of money given to the schemes of the Church had been rising steadily through the late nineteenth century and on into the first decade of the twentieth century. The increases came from two places. First, as there were more communicant members there were more people giving and so more money was raised. Second, on average each Presbyterian gave more to the "schemes of the church" with each passing year. This increase needs to be read against the annual rate of inflation. The years 1909 and 1910 demonstrate the impact of inflation of the real (after inflation) funds available to the fund "the schemes of the church." In 1908, \$667,914 had been given to "the schemes of the church;" that amount jumped by 25% in 1909 when \$835,860 was given. About 6% of that increase was due to more members in the denomination. In 1909, the average Presbyterian Church member gave \$2.99 to the schemes of the church, an increase of 19% over the previous year. With inflation at just under 3% in 1909, this was a real increase (after inflation) in giving of over 15%—a significant one-year jump. The following year, in 1910, giving to "the schemes" grew to \$904,335, an 8% increase. Of this increase 3% was due to more members, and there was a 5% increase in average giving to the schemes rising to \$3.14. However, with inflation running at 4.6% the purchasing power given by each person simply remained constant.<sup>37</sup>

In 1911, R. P. MacKay and A. S. Grant, the recently appointed General Superintendent for Home Missions, as noted above, spent the last six months of the year touring the country promoting systematic giving and the mission of the Church. Total giving to that mission endeavour rose by 10% to \$997,315, falling just short of the \$1 million goal. The average Presbyterian gave \$3.37, an increase of 3.6% (after inflation) over the previous year. The discussion stewardship at the General Assembly and the MacKay and Grant fundraising campaign appears to have encouraged increased giving, although not to the level of increase seen in 1909.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indian: Two and a Half Centuries of Partnership in Missions Between Protestant Churches and Government* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), 208; Peter Bush, "'Spoken with Native Languages': Presbyterian Evangelistic Efforts Among the Native People of the Prairies, 1908-1909," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History* 33 (2008): 29-42; Peter Bush, "The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission to Canada's Native Peoples, 1900-2000," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36.3 (July 2012): 113-20.

<sup>37</sup> *Acts and Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1913): Appendix 530.

<sup>38</sup> *Acts and Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1919): Appendix 518.

The Assembly in 1912, excited by the opportunities to do mission and hopeful that the promises of systematic giving would be realized, increased the 1912 goal from the \$1.1 million recommended by the Committee to \$1.2 million. In the end \$1,132,513 was given, a 13.5% jump. This was just over twice the rate of inflation, which was running at about 6.25% in 1912. The average member gave \$3.76, an increase of 6.5% above inflation, over the previous year.<sup>39</sup> Again the work of MacKay and Grant played a role, as did the significant amount of conversation the changes would have caused. A conversation about stewardship raises people's awareness of their own giving patterns, and may result in some people re-examining what they give. If no conversation about stewardship is taking place, fewer people are likely to think about it.

Contributions to the unified budget surpassed \$1.2 million in 1913, for a 6% increase; after inflation this was about a 4% increase. The membership of the denomination rose by 4%. Factoring out inflation and membership growth, the average Presbyterian did not increase what they gave to "the schemes of the church" in 1913 over what they had given in 1912.<sup>40</sup> The intense focus on stewardship present in 1911 and 1912 was not repeated following the 1912 Assembly, and less attention on stewardship questions meant a lessened awareness of the issue. Second, 1912 was the first of the Church Union votes. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate what impact the vote might have had on Presbyterians giving patterns, it is a factor that needs to be remembered in this conversation.

The unified budget may have made it easier to raise funds since committee and board staff had less need to go out and cultivate donors. Further, the competition among the agencies of the Church was reduced. But the evidence is less than compelling that offering envelopes, and in particular the duplex envelope, significantly increased the amount of money available to carry out the mission and ministry of "the schemes of the church." The envelope system by itself was just a system; changing what people gave was, as the Committee on Systematic Giving said in 1911, a spiritual issue. When attention was given to discussing the spiritual dimension there was an increase in what the average Presbyterian gave.

Three brief case studies follow which seek to demonstrate how the shift to a unified budget and the development of "corporation" thinking changed the mission life of the Church.

#### *Knox College Student Missionary Society*<sup>41</sup>

The Knox College Student Missionary Society (KCSMS) was the most influential student organization at Knox College from the college's founding until World War I. When the denomination would not provide adequate support to send Jonathan Goforth to China, the KCSMS found the funds to send him. During the school year the Society provided supply preachers to congregations in and around Toronto, as well as volunteers for the various city

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<sup>39</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1919): Appendix 518.

<sup>40</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1919): Appendix 518.

<sup>41</sup> For a longer discussion of the Knox College Student Missionary Society see Peter Bush, "Sending the Gospel: The Development of the Knox College Student Missionary Society, 1845-1925," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* 12 (1987): 49-70. Knox College was not the only theological college with such an organization. Presbyterian College in Montreal and Queen's University also had influential Student Missionary Society's whose histories follow a similar trajectory to the one at Knox College.



missions Presbyterian congregations operated in Toronto. The flagship program of the Society was the provision of student ministers to congregations across Ontario and to the west.

The Society raised the funds to support these students through the donations of students and faculty, and more significantly through appeals to congregations in urbanizing Ontario. In 1901, the Society supported twenty-four summer student ministers on a budget of \$5,090; in 1910, forty student ministers were being funded on an income of \$14,330. The KCSMS along with the other student-led missionary societies in Presbyterian theological colleges reported to the General Assembly through the Home Missions Committee.

The unifying of national committee budgets squeezed out other Presbyterian entities from circularizing congregations with financial appeals. The funding model on which KCSMS was built was undercut in one fell swoop. With limited funds of their own and the previous source of fundraising blocked, the Society had no means of generating the monies needed to support summer students. The leadership of the KCSMS along with the leadership of the other colleges' student missionary societies met with the General Superintendent of the Home Missions Committee, the Rev. Andrew S. Grant, in early 1912. The result was "a closer relationship" between the student societies and the committee. This closer relationship gave the Home Missions Committee the power to choose which congregations would be assigned to which college, and from a list of names provided by the student societies the Home Missions Committee would assign students to the charges. The Home Missions Committee would accept the responsibility of ensuring there were adequate funds to pay the summer students. Further, the student societies would no longer receive space in the reports published in the *Acts and Proceedings*, their work would be included in the description of the Home Mission work.

The decision to move to a unified budget cut the ability of the KCSMS to fund its operations thereby ending the independence of the Society. By bringing the appointment of students to summer charges within the system of the Home Missions Committee the KCSMS was turned into a shell of its former self, sending summer students in name only. The process was entirely in the control of the Home Missions Committee. While World War I would end the KCSMS as a student society, being merged with the Theological and Metaphysical Society to become the Missionary and Theological Society (M&T), the development of a "corporation" church in 1912 had left it fatally wounded.

#### *Independent Greek Church*<sup>42</sup>

As early as 1898 Presbyterian Church leaders were aware of and were seeking to expand ministry opportunities with and to the Ukrainians arriving on the Canadian prairies. Connections were made between John Bodrug and James Robertson which led to special courses being offered to assist young Ukrainians in getting the training necessary to become teachers recognized by the Manitoba government. Further, with no Ukrainian priests present to serve the newly arrived immigrants, Bodrug and some twenty other Ukrainians who had had conversions to Protestantism or had leanings in that direction received rudimentary theological training at Manitoba College. By 1905 the Independent Greek Church had been born. The denomination within the Presbyterian Church was "Greek" in the sense that it used the Greek rite in worship and not as a statement of ethnicity or language. Services in the Independent Greek Church were

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<sup>42</sup> For a further discussion of the Independent Greek Church see Peter Bush, *Western Challenge: The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission on the Prairies and North, 1885-1925* (Winnipeg: Watson Dwyer, 2000) 141-50.



kept to an hour and a half, had a sermon, and used a modified form of the Greek rite. The buildings in which they worshipped looked like Ukrainian Orthodox buildings. At its peak the Independent Greek Church claimed to have twenty-four pastoral charges and 24,000 members.

The experiment eventually failed. It has been suggested it failed because priests from the Ukraine finally arrived, and the Ukrainians returned to their historic expression of the faith rather than remain part of the denomination within a denomination. Alternatively, the suggestion has been made that the democratic values of the Presbyterian Church could no longer be suppressed and the Ukrainian community reacted by leaving the Presbyterian fold. John Webster Grant argued the cultural divide between Canadian Presbyterians and the Ukrainians was simply too great to be bridged, and the collapse was inevitable because of the cultural division.

These explanations fail to account for the events of 1912. Defining the exact nature of the relationship between The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Independent Greek Church had always proven problematic. Many Presbyterians believed the denomination was part of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, while others argued there was an arm's length relationship. Reports about the Independent Greek Church appeared regularly in the *Acts and Proceedings* of the Assembly, and the Presbyterian Church oversaw the development of a Ukrainian hymn-book and catechism. Things were equally unclear to the leadership of the Independent Greek Church. Bodrug believed it was an independent denomination, while other Ukrainian leaders saw it as part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. As 1912 brought a more business-like approach to the church, this confusion had to be clarified.

The Board of Home Missions described what happened:

For some time The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been rendering assistance to the Independent Greek Church, and each year the Home Mission Committee set apart an apportionment for this purpose. The work assumed such proportions that the assistance proved inadequate. The Ruthenian [Ukrainian] ministers continued to urge for larger salaries and that homes and church accommodation be provided. The Board declined to spend money on property not vested in the Presbyterian Church, and hesitated to guarantee salaries to workers not our own, and consequently not under the control of the Board.<sup>43</sup>

The Board of Home Missions, which was established in June 1912, had by August ended an experiment the Home Mission Committee had been operating for nearly a decade. The lack of control over the funds expended was a critical concern, and so the Board cut its support to the Independent Greek Church and imposed a new accountability model. The Board would establish Presbyterian Missions in Ruthenian Settlements which would be placed "under the supervision of Presbyteries." This chain of authority treated the work within the Ukrainian community as though they were Anglo congregations: they were to look like, be like other Presbyterian congregations. Those individuals who had been serving as ministers in the Independent Greek Church were interviewed in a process to their becoming ministers or missionaries of the Presbyterian Church. The experiment had been regularized out of existence in an effort to ensure effective accountability of both the financial expenditures and the product produced.

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<sup>43</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1913): Appendix 7.



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<sup>43</sup> *Acts and Proceedings* (1913): Appendix 7.

The brief account that follows is provided as an exception to the pattern described in the previous examples, an exception whose contrast from the above highlights the ways in which the Church was corporatized in 1912.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada showed interest in the mission to the Jews as early as 1859 by sending a missionary to Palestine. In the 1890s Presbyterian congregations in Montreal sought to reach Canadian Jews. Then in 1907 the Foreign Missions Committee received permission from the Assembly to begin a "Mission to the Hebrew people in Toronto." In 1908, S. B. Rohold arrived from Scotland to begin the work in Toronto, and in 1909 he was ordained a minister in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

With the changes of 1912, the Mission to the Jews became a responsibility of the Home Missions Board. The impacts noted in the previous case studies were not evident in the Mission to the Jews. The Christian Synagogue in Toronto was dedicated while the Assembly was meeting in the city on Saturday, 7 June 1913. Saturday was the day the Christian Jewish community met for worship. When Rohold addressed the Assembly that year he said, "Remember, we do not want the Jew to become a Gentile [. . .]. I have not left my people! I have not become a Gentile!" Rohold's missiological approach was to affirm that a Jew could remain a Jew and be a follower of Jesus Christ. The mission to Canadian Jews affirmed Jewish practice, refusing to support any attempt to assimilate into Presbyterian Gentile patterns; all the while being under the supervision of the Home Missions Board.

How was it then that the Mission to the Jews was not forced to follow the patterns of the corporatizing Church? The Mission to the Jews had funders who gave their money to The Presbyterian Church in Canada and designated it for the Mission to the Jews. The mission was fully funded through designated giving, and the donors included some influential figures in Canadian Presbyterianism including: the Rev. J. McP. Scott; Principal MacLaren of Knox College; and the Rev. A. B. Winchester of Knox Church, Toronto. With such financial and political backing for the mission in place, the business models that had been imposed on the less secure mission ventures were held at bay and Rohold was free to walk this non-traditional mission path.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

The General Assembly's adoption of centralized fundraising and budgeting along with the related structural shifts changed the Church in unforeseen ways. The "incorporation of the church" changed the way mission was done, dramatically limiting the ministry experiments that had been previously possible including no longer giving freedom to distinct cultural groups within the Church to inculturate the gospel in their own context. The centralization of funding decisions had led to the centralization of other forms of decision-making. The use of emerging business practices in the management of finances opened the door to the use of business

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<sup>44</sup> A longer discussion of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's mission to the Jews can be found in *Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (2010): 330-35.

<sup>45</sup> While the imposition of business models did not impact the Mission to the Jews in 1912, by the 1930s the relationship between the Mission and the structures of the Church were so strained that Morris Zeidman took the Scott Mission out of the denomination.



practices in determining how to do ministry and mission. The models used to find the money were the models applied to the use of the money in mission and ministry.

The leadership of the Church had other options besides turning to centralized fundraising and budgeting. The Church had for decades functioned in a de-centralized manner and while it was inefficient and cumbersome at times it meant the committees of the Church had the freedom to respond to mission opportunities in unconventional ways. The decentralized approach led to a variety of models and ideas being explored, rather than the one homogenous model being imposed on all. The Church could have developed a plan to raise funds through a unified effort and then allowed the committees and boards to spend the funds given to them in ways that each committee thought best; thereby creating space within which the committees of the Church were free to best carry out the work of the Church. Further, given the experience of the Mission to the Jews, the Finance Board could have allowed groups like the Knox College Student Missionary Society to nurture a collection of dedicated donors to support work that paralleled or supplemented work already being done within the denomination. Making such links between donors and mission would likely have found new money being given in support of the work of the Church. Both of these approaches would have required space within the corporate church model. The model was unable to do that, given its commitment to the values of uniformity and efficiency. The modernist drive towards conformity had no room for the non-traditional or the difficult to categorize.

Confronted with the financial challenge of finding funds sufficient to do the work of the denomination, the leadership of the Presbyterian Church turned, not unexpectedly, to the methods of the business community. It was money they were trying to raise, and the business community dealt with money. Finding in the business world the values of efficiency and systematization, the Church adopted them. In the process of this adoption de-centralization was replaced by centralization; appreciation for diversity was replaced with a call for conformity; and freedom for experimentation was replaced with systematization.

Comparison of Total Givings to the Schemes of The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
and Average Giving Per Communicant Member (rounded to closest half cent),  
in Actual \$ and in Constant 1900 \$  
(1900, 1905, 1908-1913)

Year	Total given to Schemes of Church	Membership (Communicants)	Average per Member	Inflation Rate	Total given Schemes in constant 1900 \$	Average/Member in constant 1900 \$
1900	\$ 461,597	213,671	\$ 2.16		\$ 461,597	\$ 2.16
1905	\$ 405,615	241,511	\$ 1.68		\$ 368,239	\$ 1.52.5
1908	\$ 667,914	269,688	\$ 2.51.5		\$ 551,539	\$ 2.07.5
1909	\$ 835,860	279,556	\$ 2.99	2.8%	\$ 674,625	\$ 2.41.5
1910	\$ 904,335	287,944	\$ 3.14	4.6%	\$ 703,763	\$ 2.44.5
1911	\$ 997,315	295,935	\$ 3.37	3.8%	\$ 753,828	\$ 2.54.5
1912	\$ 1,132,513	301,465	\$ 3.76	6.25%	\$ 817,404	\$ 2.71
1913	\$ 1,203,396	314,832	\$ 3.82	2.0%	\$ 856,205	\$ 2.72

Based on data from *The Acts and Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1908): Appendix 511; *Acts and Proceedings* (1913): Appendix 530; *Acts and Proceedings* (1919): Appendix 518; "Board of Inquiry into Cost of Living (Government of Canada)," *Report of the Board* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1915) 138-40, 510-11.