The Political Economy of Rockefeller Support for the Humanities in Canada, 1941-1957

For these purposes a hundred million dollars were voted to the Council. Unlike most countries where assistance is voted annually, here the Council was entrusted with a capital sum. This has advantages. It makes it possible to plan ahead and to carry out a planned programme. In this respect The Canada Council resembles one of the great American foundations, which have so richly nourished and strengthened the universities in the United States and Canada.¹

– Brooke Claxton (1957).

It was Mr. King who led us to this point. And his leadership has been so completely accepted that today only the Communists and a diehard remnant of Tories go about talking of "American Imperialism." Well, no, this isn't quite correct. There are also those academic intellectuals in our universities who are still thinking up nasty wisecracks about American imperialism regardless of the fact that most of their own pet research projects are apt to be financed by money from Rockefeller or Carnegie or Guggenheim.²


The long-awaited opening for business of the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences in the spring of 1957 marked the end of one era and the beginning of another for the arts and letters in Canada. Since the early 1920s private American philanthropy had been an important contributor to the making of Canadian culture. The Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, in particular, made substantial institutional grants to Canadian universities, to public and private galleries, and to libraries and museums. They supported individual Canadian artists and scholars directly with grants and fellowships, by sponsoring art associations and research councils, and by funding special projects that enabled recipients to carry out their research and to publish their work. Together, the American foundations contributed almost 20 million dollars to the economy of Canadian
culture. After its formation, it was the new federal state-funded Canada Council that provided the life-blood for Canadian cultural and intellectual endeavors. In this new era, in the new environment of public patronage, the Canada Council reigned supreme.

The shift in the political economy of Canadian culture cannot be over-stated. To begin with, the formation of the Canada Council brought with it a tremendous increase in cultural funding. The new council boasted an initial endowment exceeding $100 million, the sum realized from succession duties on the estates of Izaak Walton Killam and Sir James Dunn and passed on, in turn, by the federal government. Of the 7,300 foundations in the United States at the time, only seven –Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, Duke, Kellog, Pew, and Harkness– could boast of larger endowments. Speaking at the combined meeting of the Empire Club of Canada and the Canadian Club on 17 October 1957, Brooke Claxton, the first Chairman of the Canada Council, proudly pointed out that “even measured in American terms” his organization, was “a sizable operation.” And as Dean Rusk, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, observed in the first meeting of Canada Council, the new body had at its disposal the resources to spend as much in its first four years on the arts, humanities and social sciences in Canada as the Rockefeller Foundation had spent in the previous 45 years.

To those who had been lobbying the federal state for support for the arts and letters for decades, it was an even more substantial alteration to the architecture of Canadian culture that the “power of the purse” now resided in Canada. It had long been a source of embarrassment to cultural nationalists that the likes of the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and, of late, the Ford Foundation were, as one British commentator put it in 1933, “paying the shot” for the development of Canadian culture. As Maurice Lebel and J.F. Leddy, leaders of the
Humanities Research Council of Canada (HRCC), advised the Canadian Government’s Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (popularly known as the Massey Commission after its chairman, Vincent Massey) in the summer of 1949, “it is significant commentary on the maturity of our culture, that...[the HRCC] should have been financed almost entirely by grants from the United States.”\(^7\) Echoing this message nearly a decade later, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent told his fellow parliamentarians that the time had come to nationalize support for the arts and letters:

> Up to the present time little relatively has been done in Canada in the form of financial contributions from governments or from munificent individuals for the encouragement of the arts, the humanities and social sciences....[T]he main source of such encouragement in Canada [for the arts] has come from other countries. In this respect I think many of us share the view expressed in the Massey report that “we have not much right to be proud of our record as patrons of the arts.”\(^8\)

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Even today, as public support for culture and scholarship in Canada is coming under attack, when increasingly we speak of a new public-private mixed economy of culture, “new managerialism,” the “free market,” and “value for money,” and when Canadian universities vie for the title of “the Harvard of the North,” the idea of private American wealth contributing so heavily to the fabric of Canadian culture seems, well, a little bit “foreign.” That both the HRCC and its sister council, the Canadian Social Science Research Council --forerunners to today’s apparently almighty state-funded Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)-- were not only funded almost exclusively by private American foundations for their first 20 or so years but were also directly modeled after such American research councils as the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies would, I
suspect, shock most Canadian scholars. Equally puzzling to Canadians brought up in an environment of government-funded arts councils, research councils, museums, and galleries is talk of the Canada Council as a foundation patterned after the “big” private American foundations –bigger, better, Canadian and publicly-funded to be sure -- but a foundation nonetheless. Adding insult to Canadian nationalist injury, was the presence of Dean Rusk, one of the “Deans” of what sociologist C. Wright Mills has coined the American “Power Elite,” and a number of other leaders of American philanthropy as honoured guests at the first meeting of the Canada Council –their attendance in recognition both of past contributions to the making of Canadian culture and of their knowledge of culture making generally. After all, historians, and cultural commentators, not to mention what has been so thoroughly naturalized as our own Canadian “common sense,” all tell us that such organizations as the Canada Council and SSHRCC are the cornerstones of the federal state apparatus which, since the late 1950s, has been so carefully constructed to protect Canadian culture against incursions from the South. As Jody Berland succinctly summarizes, key to the mythology of Canadian identity “is a complex apparatus of agencies and institutions [nurtured as part of a paternalistic federal state] which for over half a century has sought to administer culture as part of the larger enterprise of defining the nation’s borders.” Surely, the contributions of private American philanthropy to the making of Canadian culture should serve to complicate our essentialistic and (largely) ahistorical notions of contrasting national identities and cultural economies. Where does this fit, for instance, in the matrix of Canadian-American difference --in the now mythologised juxtaposition of an American culture fueled by the free market and a Canadian one sustained by state support?

In the broader project from which this paper is drawn, I look back through the clouds of
what I suspect is a nationalist-inspired historiographical amnesia to an era when the Canadian state's involvement in culture was still fairly limited and when there were few alternative sources of funding—to a period during which the contribution of private American philanthropy to Canadian culture and higher education was of a formative and essential nature. In that project I argue that, in many ways, the national elite consolidation that reached a high-point with the formation of the Canada Council, and with the establishment of other means of state support for culture, was facilitated by the American foundations' support of the efforts of Canadian artists and intellectuals to organize and rationalize the cultural sphere. Viewed in this light, the model of state support for the arts and letters that emerged in Canada from the late 1950s through the 1960s must be conceptualized not simply as a Canadian rejection of the American model of private philanthropy but as the product of a mixed economy of culture and, specifically, of partnerships between the American foundations and a Canadian cultural elite. In this paper I focus on the involvement of the Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Division in Canadian projects from the early 1930s to the late 1950s. I briefly survey the broad range of Rockefeller involvement in the humanities at the local, regional and national levels, suggesting both the motivation for a Canadian program, as well the long term impact on the rationalization and professionalization of the humanities in Canada. For the sake of clarity, I divide my summary discussion of the Foundation’s Canadian program into two categories: 1) support for research as well as infrastructural development aimed at fostering cultural interpretation of Canadian locales and regions and 2) support for nationally-focused research and for national research infrastructure in the social sciences and the humanities. History on the ground, of course, is never so neat and tidy—these tendencies were just that. What the Foundation was looking to do
was to support social research in Canada and to integrate Canadian scholars into broader regional, national, continental, even trans-Atlantic systems of intellectual production.

* * *

“Cultural Interpretation”

In the early 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression, the leaders of the Rockefeller Foundation began to express their concern about the social and cultural implications of the boom-and-bust rhythm of industrial capitalism. Able to provide leadership in the development of public health, medical education and scientific knowledge generally, the Rockefeller managers had come to the realization that they were losing ground in the free market of ideas. At a time of extreme economic crisis, they feared that unregulated mass production of information posed a grave challenge to the moral and spiritual health of the nation and, in particular, to older, “traditional” notions of community. While Rockefeller philanthropy through the General Education Board (GEB) and the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial (LSRM) had played a fundamental role in establishing the prominence of the humanities disciplines in North American universities, it had done little, as one officer put it, to bring the “humanities from books, seminars and museums into the currents of modern life.”12 Rockefeller philanthropy, it was felt, had placed millions of dollars into the hands of the “elder statesmen” who dominated the traditional fields of humanistic study. “While advancing human knowledge,” a Rockefeller officer later noted, “we were strengthening the aristocracy of scholasticism.”13

In 1935, in an effort to address this situation, Rockefeller Foundation Director for the Humanities, David Stevens, and his Associate Director, John Marshall, established a new program in what they referred to as “cultural interpretation.” Stevens and Marshall looked to
reach deeper into American society, not to operate “above” the emerging mass culture, but rather to bring the Foundation’s work in the humanities “more directly into contact with daily living” and to gain a clearer idea of “the ways in which the American public now gains its culture.”

The officers saw as their target nothing less than a reformulation of the humanist tradition that would make it directly relevant in Depression-era America. As cultural leaders who wanted to maintain the existing social hierarchy, men like Marshall and Stevens saw humanism as a way of thought that could be used to combat the sense of rootlessness and the accompanying crisis of authority brought on by the tragedy of the Great Depression. The resulting program was designed to influence how Americans created, as Stevens put it, their “own forms of mental, emotional and spiritual freedom.”

By funding artists and intellectuals engaged in community theatre, educational film and radio, and in the collection of regional folklore, the Foundation attempted, in the words of one officer, to combat the assumption that “culture was something foreign” and to foster “a larger appreciation of those elements in American life that constitute our national heritage....” The primary concern was for the survival (or indeed the re-creation) of a cultural identity at a time when older notions of community were being challenged by great social, economic, and technological change. In taking measures to create or re-create local, regional and national heritages, of course, the Foundation and the cultural producers it supported were engaging in the selection and ordering of the elements of that heritage.

Under this new program, grants were given to the Library of Congress in support of the institution’s development of its folklore and regional history collections, including Alan Lomax’s Archives of American Folk Song and material gathered by the Federal Writers' Project. Furthering the move from the "antiquarianism" and "scholasticism" of the earlier
program, and attempting to influence a broader constituency, the Rockefeller Foundation delved into the mass communications field of radio. Seeking to bring "informed public opinion...into constructive relations with the industry," the Foundation funded the establishment of experimental educational radio organizations such as the Chicago Broadcasting Council, the Rocky Mountain Radio Council, and the World Wide Broadcasting Foundation of Boston.

Perhaps the most innovative work supported under the new humanities program in the later 1930s was conducted by Paul Lazarsfeld’s Office of Radio Research at Princeton University, and later, at Columbia. Bringing together experts in public opinion and social psychology, including for a time Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno, the Office of Radio Research explored "the entire field of listener response and listener interest" in an attempt to discover "the genuine interests of radio listeners and [to evaluate]...the possibilities of cultural broadcasts under present circumstances."

While interested in experimental projects in the use of new media, the officers of the Humanities Division were also particularly interested in the innovative use of a very old medium – theatre. Providing valuable training for personnel, community drama centers at the University of North Carolina, Cornell University, the State University of Iowa, Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Play House, Yale and Stanford University were also selected for Rockefeller support. Offering greater potential for audience participation than anything in film or radio, these projects brought together young writers, actors, producers and used local history and folklore as source material. Drama, it was noted in an internal Foundation report, was "perhaps the strongest force for giving a modern spirit to humanistic studies."
Two primary objectives of the new Rockefeller humanities program of cultural interpretation paradoxically led to its exportation to Canada. On the one hand, to Marshall and Stevens, “American life” was not restricted to territory within the political boundaries of the nation-state. In their eyes culture flowed freely across the American-Canadian border. As Marshall later observed, “[i]f the cultural history of the United States were to be studied, the basis had to be not political units, not the nation, but the human regions that made up North America.” In this they reflected the attitudes of most representatives of American corporate philanthropy of the era. Indeed, for much of the interwar period the Rockefeller Foundation and its near New York City neighbour, the Carnegie Corporation, treated Canadian intellectual and cultural infrastructure as part of a broader North American network. Examples of this sort of continental cultural integration abound, and include both foundations’ support for Canadian universities; the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s support for texts and conferences on relations between Canada and the United States; The Rockefeller Foundation’s support for the the Frontiers of Settlement studies of the early 1930s, the Carnegie Corporation’s support for Canadian museums and galleries (most prominently the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Toronto); and its sponsorship of the first national meeting of Canadian artists in Kingston in 1941 and the resulting formation of the Federation of Canadian Artists.

On the other hand, Canada's status as an independent nation made it – particularly after the start of the Second World War and the advent of closer and more coordinated relations between Canada and the United States – an object of the Foundation’s desire to improve “cultural understanding amongst nations.” Indeed, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Humanities Division’s turn to Canada was a product of a more generalized internationalized perspective
which was pervasive in the higher echelons of Rockefeller philanthropy—a perspective that not only fostered the sense of common continental cultures but was responsible at the same time, as William Buxton puts it, for the project of “forging a new transatlantic community on a cultural basis.”

As had been the case earlier in the century when the Foundation had extended its public health and medical education programs north of the border, Canada was thus treated both as a collection of northern regions of a continental culture and as a foreign nation.

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Between September 1941 and November 1942, Marshall toured Canadian cultural centers, engaging in a search, he later noted in his diary, for individuals and institutions that could, with the helping hand of his organization, contribute to “a better interpretation of Canadian tradition.” As was the case with the foundation's efforts to fertilize traditions in the United States, the building blocks of a Canadian national tradition were thought to be “the rich regional cultures” of North America. In keeping with the metropolitanism that infused all Rockefeller philanthropy, each of these “human regions” was seen to emanate from a metropolitan base that served as the center of overlapping transportation, economic, and educational systems. Paradoxically, these regional cultures—while, apparently the components of North American "national" cultures—were not necessarily bounded by the political border that formally separated Canada and the United States. In other words, Marshall came to Canada with the expectation that Foundation’s Humanities Division would expand its program in cultural interpretation of American regions into a broader regional analysis of the North American continent. This desire not only reflected the way Rockefeller Foundation officers
perceived the broad sweep of North American history, but also their reading of the present
(geopolitical) situation—a situation marked by an ever-increasing economic and military-
strategic integration of Canada and the United States.

Marshall, however, came away from his fact-finding mission with a very different and far
more complex analysis of the Canadian scene. In each of the cities and universities he toured,
the officer discovered thinkers who, though clearly in need of financial backing for their projects
and willing to discuss his ideas about North American cultural regions, had a variety of agendas
of their own to pursue. The existence of these elite networks and the strengths and variety of
ideas expressed by their members caused Marshall to reconsider the Humanities Division's
approach to Canadian development. According to Charles Acland and William Buxton, he came
away convinced that Canada could not be "viewed as a horizontal mosaic extending northwards
from the United States." Canada, these writers conclude, "was now considered as a distinct
region of its own whose metropolitan elites were to receive and administer the largesse of the
Rockefeller Foundation." 30

Clearly Marshall was impressed by the men he spoke with on his Canadian mission. This
was not surprising given the nature of his tours. As was the case with all surveys conducted by
Rockefeller philanthropies, the process of cultural selection began long before the officer
actually set foot in Canada. Following the, by this time, well-established pattern of the
Foundation survey, Marshall established his itinerary in a manner that would ensure he would
spoke with men who would listen. With very few exceptions, all of Marshall's contacts were
men. 31 All, moreover, were members of an urban-based national elite which had been coalescing
since the early 1920s. Employed, for the most part, at major Canadian universities or cultural
institutions, members of this elite, like the managers of American philanthropy in their own
country, enjoyed firm connections to the state and business elites. They, like Marshall, assumed
that it was their right and duty to provide leadership. In addition, almost every one of Marshall's
contacts had some previous exposure, however indirect, to American corporate philanthropy.
Most were employed at institutions that had received major contributions from American
foundations in the 1920s and 1930s and many had been the recipients of Carnegie, Rockefeller,
or Guggenheim awards. In addition to the social composition of the group and the previous
contacts its members had had with American philanthropy, there were other compelling
explanations for the generally warm reception Marshall received on his mission. Canadian
intellectuals may have been suspicious of Marshall's sense of the precise sources and parameters
of North American regional cultures, but most shared the Rockefeller officer's zeal for
imagining, defining and structuring cultural spaces in North America. In a rapidly changing
modern environment altered by continual waves of immigration, by urbanization, by economic
depression and by war, many intellectuals in Canada were also struggling to maintain or
reformulate the foundations of community and identity. Many of Marshall’s Canadian contacts
had been involved in the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations (the Rowell-
Sirois Commission of 1937), or were currently involved in the Advisory Committee on
Reconstruction chaired by McGill University Principal Cyril James.

In any case, Marshall’s positive impressions echoed those of Rockefeller Foundation
Social Science Division officers, particularly those of Canadian-born Associate Director Anne
Bezanson, who, since the late 1930s, had been working closely with a group led by University of
Toronto economist Harold Innis and John Robbins, Chief of the Education Branch of the
Dominion Bureau of Statistics, to establish the Foundation-sponsored Canadian Social Science Research Council as the dominant force in the development of the social sciences in Canada. Given positive assessments by the likes of Marshall and Bezanson, both divisions increasingly attempted to work with and through national bodies in much the same way as the foundations had been doing in the United States since the early 1920s.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that Marshall gave up on his idea of cross-border regionality or of the importance of cultural regions within larger political units. Marshall's evaluation of Canadian culture and of Canadian metropolitan elites led him and the Foundation to a variety of conclusions about how to approach the Canadian scene. In the provinces of western Canada, in the Maritimes and in French-speaking Quebec, Marshall discovered what he perceived to be cultural regions—regions that to varying degrees shared attributes with and could benefit from contacts with geographically contingent American regions, but that were distinct regions nonetheless. In these areas, Marshall believed, the Foundation would do well to fund and encourage projects—much like those already established south of the border—aimed at sharpening the collective awareness of regional heritage, tradition and identity.

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**The Maritimes and Western Canada**

Ideally, influence was exerted simply by privileging Canadian individuals whose approaches already meshed well with Foundation objectives. Canadians who fit the bill were given support for their projects and often provided with fellowships for study at American
projects supported by the Foundation. Even before Marshall’s tour to western Canada, the Rockefeller Foundation funded Alberta playwright and Banff School of Fine Arts instructor Gwen Pharis Ringwood to study community theatre at the Rockefeller–sponsored Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina headed by Frederick Koch. Following Marshall’s visit, the Foundation supported historian A.S. Morton's efforts to create a provincial archives at the University of Saskatchewan. Under Morton's direction, the primary research materials he had gathered for his history of western Canada and for his history of the fur trade were organized and catalogued for use by future scholars. In addition, Morton contributed rich collections of business records and pioneer narratives and helped retrieve from Ottawa copies of public documents from the province's territorial period (1870-1905). As Acland and Buxton point out in their work about the Rockefeller Foundation’s program of support for Canadian libraries and archives, this intervention was critically linked “with the writing of regional history and the sense of cultural definition that was to follow from this.”

Marshall was equally impressed by the potential of the Canadian Maritime region for cultural interpretation. There the Foundation supported Nova Scotia folklorist Helen Creighton, providing her with a fellowship to fund study at the Summer Institute of Folklore at Indiana University and at the Library of Congress’s Archive of American Folk Song in Washington during the summer of 1942. In addition to arguing about the pronunciation of "zees" and "zeds" with preeminent American folklorists, including Alan Lomax, Stith Thompson, and John Jacob Niles, it was during this summer that Creighton began her transformation, as Ian McKay puts it, from "a British-style 'Ballad Stalker'...[to] an American-style folklorist." With further Foundation support over the next few years, Creighton conducted research for a book, Folklore
of Lunenburg County, she published with the National Museum of Canada in 1950. Also in the summer of 1942 the Foundation awarded Clyde Nunn, the director of St. Francis Xavier University radio station CJFX, a grant-in-aid to fund visits to Rockefeller-sponsored projects at the University of Iowa, the Rocky Mountain Radio Council in Denver, and Paul Lazarsfeld's Columbia University Office of Radio Research. Although the size of the grant was relatively small, its influence was enhanced by the relationship of Nunn's project to previous initiatives undertaken by American foundations. Throughout the 1930s St. Francis Xavier’s renowned Antigonish experiment in adult education depended on the Carnegie Corporation for the majority of its operating revenue. Under Nunn, CJFX became a leader in the field of educational broadcasting. Its operations coordinated with St. Francis Xavier University's extension program to promote adult education in rural Nova Scotia.

At a conference organized by Marshall for the Humanities Division to investigate possibilities for cross-border cultural interpretation of an Eastern Maritime Region held in Rockland, Maine, in August of 1942, the officer was most impressed with Alfred Bailey, a young historian from the University of New Brunswick. In the immediate aftermath of the conference, Marshall wrote University of New Brunswick president N.A.M. MacKenzie and noted that "everyone went away with the feeling that Bailey was a man of unusual promise who ought to get all possible support and encouragement." Keeping Bailey in New Brunswick – "a place," Marshall had previously noted, “where he in many ways belongs” – to develop a regional studies program became a top priority in Rockefeller Foundation humanities program. Foundation support for Bailey was given not only to help the historian establish his career but also to entrench the study of regional history at the University of New Brunswick.
Responding to what Marshall had perceived to be the "lack of institutional bases" on which to establish Canadian cultural interpretations, the Foundation also funded limited-term appointments of American scholars at Canadian universities for the purpose of establishing new programs or strengthening existing ones. While Marshall had not perceived a strong sense of Canadian national identity in the north-west, there was, in his assessment, great interest in regional identity. Marshall was particularly interested in the uniquely varied arts program at the University of Alberta’s Banff School of Fine Arts. There, writers including Gwen Pharis Ringwood, Elsie Park Gowan, Rowena Hawkings and John MacLaren were successfully developing a western Canadian literature and theatre based on local history and folklore. Similarly, painters W.J. Phillips, H.G. Glyde and André Biéler were engaging the physical environment of the mountain west as subject matter for instruction and in their own practice. To shore up this programme both at Banff and at the Universities home campus in Edmonton, American folklorist Robert Gard, a veteran of the Rockefeller-sponsored New York State Play Project at Cornell University, was brought to the University of Alberta to direct the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project in 1943. While in Alberta, Humanities Division Director David Stevens later noted, Gard showed his ideas on drama so successfully that an entire province of Canada gained an enduring awareness of its place in a living world. I know of no demonstration more swiftly executed in a merging of history, folklore, and people for a unique expressiveness of an environment.  

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“French Canada”

In approaching the region he called "French Canada" Marshall perceived a society that in some senses was a model for his concept of North American region. Here was a community
with a deeply-rooted sense of cultural heritage and a clear self-consciousness. Clearly, the Foundation's assistance was not required—as it had allegedly been in Alberta—to make citizens aware of their common cultural inheritance. What was lacking in the region, Marshall felt, was exposure to the rest of the continent. And this was an area—particularly where it concerned the relationship of the province to the United States—in which the Rockefeller Foundation had a vital interest. Accordingly, shortly after his visit in January 1942, Marshall convened a conference in New York City to bring together scholars and intellectuals from Quebec with their American counterparts. Partly as a result of this conference, Marshall and Humanities Division Director David Stevens agreed to send Everett C. Hughes, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago and a former member of the sociology department at McGill University, to teach in the School of Social Science at Laval University for the 1942-1943 academic year. Hughes tenure at Laval was subsequently extended to include the next academic year. At Laval Hughes did his best to bring to the study of Quebec's culture "some closer knowledge of certain methods of study developed by sociologists and social anthropologists of the English-speaking world." In return, he hoped he would gain "some further understanding of the role of the intellectuals in a rich, traditional culture such as yours." Participating in seminars and directing individual studies, Hughes felt he would be in a good position "to diplomatically present to students, staff, et al. some American methods, ideas, literature etc." Working with Father Georges-Henri Lévesque, Director of the School of Social Science at Laval, Hughes created a program for future research and instruction at the school. Published in the form of a pamphlet at the end of Hughes's stay, the Programme de recherches sociales pour le Québec directed faculty and students to sociological research at the grass-roots level. After Hughes's return to
Chicago in 1944, the research program he established was continued under the direction of his former student at the University of Chicago, Jean-Charles Falardeau.\textsuperscript{50}

The tangible results of the interaction between Canadian cultural producers and academics and the Rockefeller Foundation during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s are impressive. The Foundation's support for Gard’s Alberta folklore project contributed to the already impressive growth of the Banff School at a critical stage in its development and brought the school that much closer to realizing the goal of establishing the arts as a vital component of regional life. The flurry of activity that surrounded the folklore project also provided the impetus for the creation of the University of Alberta's new department of fine arts – a department that, like no other in Canada at the time, included divisions in visual arts, music and drama. The collaboration between the Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Division and Helen Creighten proved enormously fruitful for all involved. As so often is the case with Canadian cultural producers, status and recognition received outside Canada led to greater acceptance in Canada.\textsuperscript{51}

At least partially as a result of the Rockefeller Foundation's and the Library of Congress stamps of endorsement, the National Museum of Canada not only published Creighton's volume on Lunenburg,\textsuperscript{52} but also hired her to continue work on her various collections. Nova Scotia’s Department of Education in Nova Scotia helped her publish a second volume of songs and ballads of Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{53} In the decades that followed, Creighton's flame burned ever brighter.

On permanent staff at the National Museum in Ottawa by early 1949, she published numerous scholarly and popular articles on folklore. In 1964, benefitting from the Canadian federal state's commitment to cultural funding –a commitment that not coincidentally resembled that exhibited by American foundations in an earlier era– she received a Canada Council grant to help her
permanently record and transcribe her entire collection of folk songs and tunes. If the Foundation's goal was to subtly foster the growth of a common scholarly community in North America and to thus create common cultural practices, attitudes and policies, then, as Ian McKay suggests, "Helen Creighton's file can only be regarded as an outstanding success story."

The Laval intervention had both short and long term implications. Jean-Charles Falardeau, left in charge of the School of Social Science following Hughes’s departure, later emerged as a crucial figure in the development of a French Canadian sociology. The department at Laval, in turn, was at the center of that development until well into the 1960s. In a broader sense, Laval was at the heart of the development of the post-war generation of Quebec City intellectuals. As importantly, the Hughes exchange cemented the relationship between the foundation and Father Georges-Henri Lévesque. During his stay at Laval, Hughes had advised Marshall that the Foundation should "continue to work with Père Lévesque...on the ground that his activities, and all that they stand for, will have increasing importance in the life of the province." Hughes's prediction was an accurate one. Not only was Lévesque to play a large role in the development of the province, but, as one of five members of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts and Letters and, later, the first Vice-Chairman of the Canada Council, he was an important influence on the cultural and intellectual life of postwar Canada. The inclusion of Lévesque in the Foundation's ever-expanding network of influence may well have been the most significant aspect of Hughes's visit to Laval.

The ambitious regional and provincial studies program Bailey had envisioned for the University of New Brunswick did not become a reality, at least not in the short term. Bailey remained at Fredericton, as MacKenzie and Marshall had hoped he would, and enjoyed a long
and distinguished career as an administrator and teacher at the University of New Brunswick. Although Bailey subsequently published more poetry than ethnohistory, he was, nonetheless, an early and vigorous proponent of both regional and social history in Canada. Funding for Bailey should also be considered support for N.A.M. MacKenzie's leadership and an effort to further solidify an already strong relationship with an important figure on the Canadian scene. In 1944 MacKenzie left New Brunswick, as Marshall expected he might, to take up the presidency of the University of British Columbia. The move extended the Rockefeller Foundation’s influence at the increasingly important west coast university. The enhancement of the relationship between MacKenzie – like Levesque a future member of the Massey Commission and, later still, a key member of the Canada Council – and the Rockefeller Foundation is one of many examples of how the Foundation's influence was woven into the fabric of Canadian culture and power structures.

It would be a gross exaggeration to claim that support for projects of local and regional interpretation alone constituted even an attempt by the Foundation at the scientific management of Canadian culture. In conjunction with the activities of the Carnegie Corporation in Canada and with the Foundation's efforts to facilitate national organization of the humanities and social sciences in Canada in the 1940s, however, the support for regional studies and for the creation of regional infrastructure was a significant intervention in Canadian culture. This was particularly true at a time when, due to the constraints, first, of economic depression and, then, of the war effort, there was much talk but very little action on the need to support culture and scholarship in Canada.

The financial support and the access to American expertise the Rockefeller Foundation
provided was an invaluable aid to Canadians who were in the process of defining Canadian local and regional traditions and cultures. Foundation initiatives designed to develop the study of cultural history, sociology, and folklore had a lasting impact in Canada, both in terms of making the work of Creighton, Bailey, and others possible and by influencing how these individuals approached their areas of specialization. In negotiating this support, the Foundation was also involving itself in, and lending its support to, the emerging network of Canadian institutions, associations and individuals coalescing around the impulse to structure and lead Canadian culture. In this manner, the Rockefeller Foundation contributed, in no small way, to the emergence of MacKenzie, Leveque, Bailey and Creighton as cultural authorities –thus helping them in their ascension to positions of leadership and influence.

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“Nation”

Whereas, on the one hand, Marshall felt he had discovered cultural regions in “French Canada,” the Maritimes, and the Canadian North-west, in the metropolitan centers of central Canada, on the other hand, Marshall thought he had found a nation. In Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and even Kingston, Marshall immediately assessed his hosts as being of "national" stature. These men, it went almost without saying, were too busy with existing research, and matters of national or even international administration to be concerned with local and regional matters. Playing the part of a cultural diplomat, Marshall treated F.R. Scott, S.D. Clark, Raleigh Parkin, and, particularly, Donald Creighton and Harold Innis as important members of a friendly, but foreign, national elite. They, to be sure, were worthy of support. But their concerns and their research were not exclusively "regional" in nature. These men, it seemed, to Marshall, had
the “stuff” to build a national culture.

There are a number of possible explanations for this contrast. In a simple sense it can be explained as a reflection of the realities and disparities of Canadian Confederation. Needier individuals from newer and/or less financially secure institutions were willing to do more to attract the support of the American foundation. Marshall's presence undoubtedly provoked –as the visit of a foundation officer invariably would– energetic attempts by university officials and scholars to ascertain what he wanted to hear and what sort of projects he would recommend for support. If regional analysis and regionally-based projects were important parts of the Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Division's program, many Canadians may accordingly have surmised that these were worth pursuing. Considering the history of regional discontent with central Canadian dominance, it is also not unlikely that exploring regional histories and traditions and even accepting a greater north-south orientation was considered a small price to pay to win Rockefeller support. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the support of American foundations for regional cultural producers and their institutions was a critical stimulus and an empowering agent in the construction of strong regional cultures that stood as counter forces to a hegemonic central-Canadian-based nationalism.⁶⁰

Marshall's perceptions, however, were also influenced by the history of Rockefeller Foundation involvement in Canada and by the ideological position of the Foundation. Since the beginning, Rockefeller officers had assumed that Toronto and Montreal occupied a position of dominance roughly equivalent to that of the metropolitan centers of the north-eastern United States. This assumption represented not only an acceptance of how things were, but also an evaluation of how they should be. Since the early 1920s the Foundation had relied on the advice
of men like Vincent Massey, later the first Canadian-born Governor General, and William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada’s longest serving Prime Minister, and had deemed central Canadian institutions such as McGill University and the University of Toronto as truly national centers of education and research. With large contributions to the general endowment funds and to the medical schools of these two institutions, the Foundation made a concerted effort to strengthen the positions of these two institutions at the top of the hierarchy of Canadian higher education. To the Rockefeller Foundation, Ontario and English-speaking Montreal were not regions, they were, simply, "Canada." Of course in accepting this hierarchy, which also designated the rest of Canada as the nation's "regions," the Foundation was naturalizing the dominance of the central-Canadian elite and thus contributing to the institutionalization of a central-Canadian regional ideology of Canadian nationality.

As crucial to Foundation strategy as the development of national “centres of excellence” in central Canada was the focus on the development of national research councils in the Social Science and the Humanities. Since the early 1920s Rockefeller philanthropies had channeled much of their support in these fields through such American research councils as the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies. From the late 1930s to 1957, when the Canada Council was formed and the principal of federal state support for scholarship in the humanities and the Social Sciences was realized, the officers of both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation worked with Canadian scholars to build national councils consciously modeled on American precedents and designed to support scholarship in the social sciences and humanities in Canada. In addition to funding the daily operations of both the Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Social Science
Research Council, American foundations covered the bill for the councils’ scholarly aid programs.

The impact of both the operating funds and the foundations’ support for research and publication was nothing less than astounding. It is not an exaggeration to say that works published with the aid of American philanthropy established canons in several academic disciplines. In my own discipline of history, the narrative of national development, which remained orthodoxy until well into the 1970s, was established in this period. A short list suggesting the magnitude as well as the disciplinary and ideological range of works includes J. Bartlett Brebner’s *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain*; Harold Innis’s *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy*; Donald Creighton's *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850*, *Dominion of the North*, his two-part biography of Sir John A. Macdonald,\(^6\) and his tribute to Innis;\(^6\) Arthur Lower’s *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest*, as well as his *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada*; Innis and Lower’s, *Settlement and the Forest and Mining Frontiers*; W.L Morton’s *The Progressive Party of Canada*; C.B. Macpherson’s *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System*; several volumes related to the official William Lyon Mackenzie King biography project;\(^0\) and S.D. Clark’s *Movements of Political Protest in Canada, 1640-1840*.\(^6\) It would be difficult to think of a major work in the social sciences and humanities that did not receive foundation support either directly or via the research councils. Even a cursory glance at this list reveals the importance of foundation funding to the emergence of a national leadership group in the social sciences and the humanities which included such disciplinary and interdisciplinary “founding fathers” as economic historian Innis, historians
Creighton and Lower, and S. D. Clarke.

Particularly privileged in the division of spoils were members of the University of Toronto’s Department of Political Economy which was led by Innis until his death in 1952. This was, of course, no accident. Very early in the process, Rockefeller officers from both the Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions had decided that this unusual grouping of scholars was Canada’s primary “centre of excellence” for social, economic and political research. In addition to privileging the “men of Toronto” in the distribution of grants and supporting their efforts to build national research infrastructure in the form of the HRCC and the CSSRC, following Innis’s death, the Rockefeller Foundation favoured the department with sizable legacy grants in honour of the man they knew simply as “Innis of Canada.”65 It was these scholars, particularly Innis himself and Creighton, that their colleague in political scientist, Frank Underhill, had in mind when he referred to those “academic intellectuals...who are still thinking up nasty wisecracks about American imperialism regardless of the fact that most of their own pet research projects are apt to be financed by money from Rockefeller or Carnegie or Guggenheim.”66

* * *

Conclusion

In a lot of ways it is the bigger picture of the impact of private American philanthropy in the Canadian cultural scene that concerns me, not merely the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Division, or even the entire Canadian operations of the Foundation, but the broader scope of American philanthropic activity in Canada, including interventions by the Carnegie Corporation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Guggenheim
Foundation, and by the 1950s, the Ford Foundation. This broader influence—as I have suggested elsewhere, and as Bill Buxton, and Charles Acland have also argued—has not been given the scholarly attention it warrants in the historiography of Canadian cultural and intellectual development.

For the non-Canadianists in the audience I will attempt to summarize the established orthodox narrative of Canadian cultural policy in a nutshell-like paragraph. The story goes something like this: The development of federal state support for arts and scholarship in the 1950s and 1960s was the culmination of a long, quintessentially Canadian (tinged, of course with an appropriate measure of British Toryism) fight to beat back the incursions of American culture—cultural incursions that went hand-in-hand with a century of increased continental economic integration and the tightening of a war-time military-strategic relationship between Canada and the United States that was cemented and symbolized with the defence agreements at Ogdensburg and Hyde Park in 1941 and 1942 respectively. The Massey Commission and the formation of the Canada Council to fund artistic production and scholarship in the humanities and the social sciences, were crowning moments of retaliation and defence in a glorious fight for Canadian cultural sovereignty and survival.

Good dual national that I am, I will say that there is some truth in this grand narrative of Canadian cultural survival. That Innis, Creighton, and scores of other Canadian academics relied heavily on the support of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation does not, of course, make them "puppets" whose work was "animated" by American wealth. Certainly, in Creighton's case, the fact that most of his important work was assisted by Carnegie Corporation and Rockefeller Foundation grants for publication, for research, and for release time from
teaching commitments did not in any simple or obvious manner bias his analysis. In his later years he made very sure that his reputation for anti-American sentiment was unquestioned and well-deserved. The same might be said of the manner in which Innis had used his role as the Rockefeller Foundation's adviser on the social sciences and the humanities in Canada.

It is quite possible that, particularly in Creighton's case, the practice of repeatedly appealing to Americans for support only enhanced the sense of urgency he felt to find Canadian sources of support. Nonetheless, as Frank Underhill reminded readers of the Canadian Forum in 1950, these men and the structures they helped establish depended on American support in this critical era of development, and that irony is too tantalizing to ignore. With needed funds and with the knowledge of how to build research councils and research centers, the foundations set the parameters for Canadian development in the days before the creation of the Council. Even the Canada Council itself—that supposed bulwark against the negative influence of American centred mass culture—was patterned after models built in New York City. It is not an exaggeration to argue, as does Paul Litt, that "the Canadian cultural elite was as much affected by American high culture as the general population was by American mass culture." It is a testament both to the desire and ability of the American foundations to embed their influence within such mediating bodies as the research councils and to the chauvinism of nationalist historians that the history of Canadian cultural structures has been so effectively "cleansed" of this element of American cultural imperialism. It is as if the "arts and letters" was the one aspect of Canadian culture too pure to be sullied by American influence.

In making the case for the significant role played by the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation in the making of modern Canada, I have tried to interrogate and
transcend simplistic notions both of American/Canadian difference and of the border between
the "public" and "private" spheres. From a narrow cultural nationalist perspective it would have
been appealing to add American philanthropy to the colony-to-nation narrative of Canadian
history by telling a glorious tale of Canadian agency and resistance to American cultural
imperialism. In such an epic, Massey, Brown, McCurry, Innis, Creighton, and all the rest, took
the wealth of the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation and "ran with it" to
strengthen the foundations of the Dominion. Elements of this story ring true. Members of the
Canadian elite did use their ties to American philanthropy to pursue their own agendas and to
supplement their power. It is equally true that aspects of the cultural policies that emerged in the
1950s and 1960s did not greatly resemble the politics of culture in the United States. The system
that emerged was, as a whole, unique to Canada. The reality of the matter, however, was that
there was no fundamental contradiction between the agendas pursued by the Canadian cultural
elite and the foundations' pursuit of the scientific management of culture.

In the larger project from which this paper is drawn I discuss the relationship between
American philanthropy and Canadian culture in terms of cultural and intellectual hegemony. I
am not arguing, in other words, that this was ever a case of the Rockefeller Foundation forcing
Canadians to do research or establish programs. Instead my research indicates a case of
providing support for those who wanted the same things and who thought, or who were willing
to think, the same way as the foundations' leadership. In this way, intellectual freedom was not
threatened by coercion but, more specifically, by an unequal distribution of rewards and benefits.
As sociologist Clyde Barrow observes, "research grants, stipends, and consultantships in turn
play a significant role in the opportunities for publication, promotion, and tenure that influence
individual positions within the university. An "unequal system of rewards and incentives," Barrow continues, may not formally prevent radical research and teaching, but does serve to authorize the ideas of individuals who choose to "play the game." In extolling the virtues of intellectual freedom in a liberal society we would do well to heed one Canadian historian's recent reminder that "not all 'discourses' circulate equally."

Barrow's warnings about the limited parameters of intellectual activity sanctioned by the foundations inform my discussion here. I take the position that within the academy there existed what Barrow refers to as a "negotiated range of theoretical free space between absolute autonomy and totalitarian control [that] is real and substantial." Scholars existing in the environment created in large part by the big foundations laboured in this "theoretical free space" and were thus "relatively autonomous." They were not, however, free to pursue the full range of intellectual curiosity. And all ideas, moreover, did not receive equal support and sanction.

What is even clearer is that "private" foundation funding bought influence in an area all agree is in the "public" domain. In doing so, the private foundations provided leadership in what Raymond Williams refers to as a "central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective." In the process, American foundations were exerting power over cultural expression in Canada that at least equaled that contained within the formal political structures of the state at the time. Don’t get me wrong. If I am to assess the results of the collaborations between American foundations and Canadian intellectuals in terms of “good” and “bad” I would say that the overall influence was extremely positive. Put simply, I believe in university departments, research councils and their support for scholarship, artist associations, museums, and galleries. But this doesn’t mean that the existence of these has nothing to do with
the relative cultural power of the donors and recipients of grants. To function, hegemony requires the active consent of the “client” – or the receiver of patronage in this case. The relationship of influence and consent must be constantly renegotiated for hegemony to exist. Thus, a hegemonic relationship not only allows for, but in fact requires that the “client” benefits from the patron-client relationship.

That a Canadian such as Donald Creighton (to choose just one prominent example) skillfully gained from the support provided by the foundations does not negate the fact that during the pre-Canada Council era the Americans held the “power of the purse” in such pivotal Canadian projects as the Canadian Social Science Research Council, the Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Canadian Museums Committee, and the Federation of Canadian Artists. Creighton recognized the benefits to Canadian researchers and their associations, as well as the negative aspects of dependency on foundation funds when, in 1955, as chair of the Humanities Research Council of Canada, he pleaded with Rockefeller officials for an extension of a Foundation grant. Stating that the loss of funding would mean an “abrupt break in the continuity of the work upon which our academic community has come to rely,...” and noting that his position was "a very embarrassing one," Creighton asked Marshall whether the Foundation could "help us out for another year...." When the initial response was no, Creighton wrote to Foundation president Dean Rusk and observed that he fully understood Rusk's "reluctance to do once more what the Canadians apparently refuse to do themselves."^74 (pp. 325-326)

Creighton, the Massey commissioners, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and host of others recognized the positive impact of American philanthropic activities on the Canadian arts and letters. At the same time, however, they also recognized the troubling nature of being
dependent on private American foundations. Of course, they did not use the term “cultural hegemony” to characterize the source of their ambivalence to foundation support for the arts and letters in Canada. They spoke instead of their concerns for Canadian cultural sovereignty and self-determination. But the message was clear. The products of the relationship—the arts councils, the publications, the artists’ conferences, the research councils, and the support for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences—were all to the good. The dependency on American foundations was not.

Notes


3 Claxton, “The Canada Council,” 3, Claxton file, memoranda, CCR.

4 “One Hundred Million Dollars for What?” 8.

5 “The Canada Council: Minutes of the First Meeting,” 19-20, CCR.

6 S. F. Markham to H.O. McCurry, 11 August 1933, RG 7.4 C, File: December 1932 - August 31, 1933, National Gallery of Canada Archives (hereafter NGCA).

8 House of Commons, Debates, 18 January 1957, 393.


12 “Humanities - Program and Policy: Extract from DR 486, Report of the Committee on Appraisal and Plan, December 11, 1934,” p. 72, RG 3, Box 2, Folder 9, RF, RAC.


14 “New Program in the Humanities,” 10 April 1935, pp. i-ii, RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 10, RF, RAC.

16 “Program in the Humanities, March 1934,” RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 9, RF, RAC.


18 "New Program in the Humanities," p. 15.

19 Fosdick, 245-6. See also *The Humanities Budget* (Extract from Director's Report on Program), Trustees Meeting, 11 December 1935, RG 3, Series 911, Box 2, Folder 10, RF, RAC.


21 William J. Buxton, "The Emergence of the Humanities Division's Program in

22 “New Program in the Humanities," 11.


25 “Program in the Humanities, March 1934.”

26 Buxton,“John Marshall and the Humanities in Europe: Shifting Patterns of Rockefeller Foundation Support.” In "American Foundations in Europe," a special issue of Minerva 41:2 (2003), 152. Buxton traces the Foundation’s internationalist position to Rockefeller Foundation Director Raymond Fosdick’s early involvement in and support for the League of Nations. Fosdick had served under Woodrow Wilson as senior American representative to the League. Although he resigned the post after the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles,
Fosdick continued to promote the League. He also convinced John Rockefeller Jr. of its value and Rockefeller later provided valuable financial support to the League. See Buxton, “John Marshall and the Humanities in Europe,” 149, n. 65.


29 Fosdick, The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation, 256.


31 Acland and Buxton correctly attribute this to the "largely unstated masculinist assumptions that underpinned the philanthropic and academic practices of the period." See "Continentalism and Philanthropy," 84, n. 63.


33 A History of the Canadian West.
34 A History of the Canadian West to 1870-1871.

35 Marshall, "Canada: Diary of Visit," "Second Part: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and
Vancouver, October 20-30, 1941," pp. 12-14, RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 27, Folder 264, RF,
RAC.


37 Helen Creighton, A Life in Folklore: Helen Creighton (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd.,
1975), 131.

38 Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia


40 Acland and Buxton, "Continentalism and Philanthropy," 86.

41 John G. Reid, "Health, Education, Economy: Philanthropic Foundations in the Atlantic

42 Acland and Buxton, "Continentalism and Philanthropy," 86.

43 Marshall to MacKenzie, 2 September 1942, cited in Acland and Buxton, "Continentalism and
Philanthropy," 84.

44 Marshall, "Canada: Diary of Visit," "Fourth Part: The Maritime Provinces, April 22-30,
1942," p. 28, RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 27, Folder 264, RF, RAC. This was not the first time
that officers of an American foundation worked with local officials to make the environment in Fredericton more attractive for Bailey. In the mid-1930s the Carnegie Corporation provided the New Brunswick Museum with several grants to support Bailey's employment at the institution. See Earnest R. Forbes, *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes* (Halifax: Acadiensis Press, 1989), 56.


47 Hughes to Lévesque, 4 August 1942, RG 1.1, Series 427R, Box 26, Folder 259, RF, RAC.

48 Hughes to David Stevens, 20 May 1942, RG 1.1., Series 427R, Box 26, Folder 259, RF, RAC.


51 McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, 76.
52  Folklore of Lunenburg County.


54  Fellowship Cards: Creighton, pp. 4-5, RF, RAC.

55  McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, 78.


58  "Interviews: JM (John Marshall), Laval University, Quebec, 30-31 December 1942," RG2, Series 427, Box 239, Folder 1655, RF, RAC.


63. See Brison, The Memory of Mackenzie King: American Philanthropy, “a Canadian biography and Canadian History,” submitted to the Canadian Historical Review for review.

64 J. Bartlett Brebner, North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1945); Harold Innis, The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1940); and Donald Creighton, Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937).

65. Bezanson to Willits, 18 November 1952, RG 1.2, Series 427S, Box 16, Folder 160, RF, RAC.

66 "Concerning Mr. King," 122.

67. In addition to receiving Rockefeller and Carnegie support, Creighton held a Guggenheim fellowship in 1941. He used this fellowship to work on Dominion of the North.


70 Ibid.


72 Universities and the Capitalist State, 252.


74 Creighton to Rusk, 15 June 1955, RG 1.1, Series 427S, Box 32, Folder 325, RF, RAC.