

SD Clark, 1910-2003

Samuel Delbert (SD) Clark, a founder of Canadian sociology and first Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto, was born in 1910 in Lloydminster (Alberta). He received a BA and MA from the University of Saskatchewan, in political science and history. When the Depression threatened to cut short his studies for lack of funds, Clark accepted a scholarship from the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire to study in England. He chose the London School of Economics (LSE), largely because of its radical reputation. After returning to Canada in 1933, Clark earned an MA from McGill University (in 1935). He completed a doctorate at the University of Toronto in 1938, and began teaching in the Department of Political Economy there. Clark was heavily indebted to the ideas of his intellectual mentor at Toronto, Harold Innis, whom he had first met at the London School of Economics. Clark studied under Innis and then, for over a decade, they were colleagues at U of T. Years spent studying at LSE and McGill also influenced Clark's later work as a sociologist.

Clark remained at the University of Toronto for the whole of his long career, with only brief visits to other institutions. Under Clark's leadership, the Department of Sociology was founded in 1962 and Clark chaired the Department until 1969. During his Chairmanship, Clark hired promising young scholars for the new department and the University of Toronto became the leading producer of new Canadian PhDs in sociology. A generation of sociologists taught by Clark and his early colleagues continue to influence Canadian sociology. Clark became Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto in 1976 and received an honorary degree in 1988 from the University he had served so well. After retiring from University of Toronto, Clark taught briefly at the University of Edinburgh, Lakehead University, and Dalhousie University.

Clark became known for studies interpreting Canadian social development as a process of disorganization and re-organization on a series of economic frontiers. His scholarship won him acceptance when Canadian academics were still skeptical of the new discipline of sociology. Under Clark's direction, a series on the Social Credit movement produced 10 monographs by Canadian scholars. In the 1960s Clark's interest shifted to contemporary consequences of economic changes, especially suburban living and urban poverty.

Clark's publications — mainly books — include *The Canadian Manufacturers Association* (1939), *The Social Development of Canada* (1942), *Church and Sect in Canada* (1948), *Movements of Political Protest in Canada* (1959), *The Developing Canadian Community* (1962), *The Suburban Society* (1966), *Canadian Society in Historical Perspective* (1976), and *The New Urban Poor* (1978). Clark was elected president of the Royal Society of Canada (1975-76). In addition, Clark received the Tyrell Medal from the Royal Society of Canada (1960), and was named honorary president of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association (1967) and Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy.

A man of great integrity, Clark took scholarship and sociology seriously. Though he railed (in writing and person) at a wide assortment of sociological foes — Parsons, Marx, survey researchers, symbolic interactionists, etc. — Clark was always ready to give someone a hearing, just so long as that person was also serious and scholarly.

So armed, Clark invented a uniquely Canadian sociology that helps us understand Canadian history and politics. His analyses of social change contain lovingly presented histories of religious, political and economic life in dozens of Canadian communities. Clark spoke often about people from the Maritimes and Ontario dragging their pianos across the Canadian Shield and the Prairies, to places far away — specks on the map like Lloydminster, where Del was raised. These pianos were ties to Western civilization, to be cherished in frontier outposts across Canada. Clark's people had a problematic relationship with the cultural metropolis. In Clark's world, people on the frontier both loved and hated the centres of culture and finance. On the Canadian frontier, people re-invented themselves with the help of new religions and social movements. They played their Eastern pianos and looked for new ways of living. Ignored and yet dominated by bankers in the large Eastern cities — in Toronto, Montreal, New York, and London — they formed new political parties and made trouble for the Establishment. Clark's people never won but they never gave up.

Clark's approach is essentially Canadian. He sees Canada as a vast set of hinterland communities, itself the hinterland of competing world powers. In Clark's story, hinterlands, by their nature, love and hate the heartland. In Clark's hinterlands, people struggle to overcome the disabilities of distance, poverty, and outside control. The results can be progressive, like the founding of the CCF, or regressive, like the founding of Social Credit. This struggle continues in what Canadian sociologist Rex Lucas called the "minetowns, milltowns, and railtowns" that dot Canada's landscape. The result is continued regional conflict and the repeated emergence of populist parties.

Clark's work gives us an understanding of this clash of civilizations — of hinterland against heartland — and the continuing struggle for political and economic power. His story takes place in one small community after another. In the end, Clark does *not* have a single, simple theory about social change. However, he has an understanding of social change that serves us well in making sense of the world since 9/11. Clark could have predicted that, in thousands of communities across the world, traditional and seemingly powerless people will reassert themselves time and again, with mixed results. The central powers respond and the process repeats itself.

We will miss this fierce, dedicated and creative defender of sociology about Canada, written for Canadians.

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*Assisted by information from Dennis Magill's *Paradigms and Social Sciences in English Canada*, the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, and comments by William Michelson, current holder of the SD Clark Chair in Sociology at the University of Toronto.

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