

A Puppy-Dog Tale: The United Church of Canada and the Youth Counter-Culture, 1965-1973

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In May 1967, in a speech to the Ontario Welfare Council, a prominent United Church official remarked that Prime Minister Pearson “appeared to be a puppy-dog on LBJ’s leash.”¹ That official was Rev. J.R. Hord, Secretary of the Church’s Board of Evangelism and Social Service, and he was commenting on the Canadian government’s silent complicity in the Vietnam War. Hord was widely regarded as a loose cannon in the United Church of Canada, and his tendency “to formulate policy in the headlines” did not endear him to more senior leaders in the denomination.² Nevertheless, this incident illustrates the dilemma that the United Church faced in the 1960s: how to fulfill its prophetic role by speaking out on relevant issues, to remain engaged as the Church in the world. It is my contention that being relevant and engaged in the 1960s meant that the Church had to address the issues and concerns of the youth counter-culture. The Vietnam War was only one such concern.

The relationship between Canada’s Christian churches and the youth counter-culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s is important, because it raises the perennial question of whether the church is primarily a “priestly (legitimizing)” institution or a “prophetic (critical)” one.³ In other words, does the church function as the religious arm of the dominant social, political and cultural system, or does it oppose – even subvert – that dominant system? From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, one sees a decline in the priestly role of Canada’s mainline churches and a concomitant rise in their prophetic role.⁴ But that decline is most evident in the

1960s, for it is then that the church loses its place of privilege in the dominant culture. According to John Webster Grant and others, this was the decade that witnessed the death of Christian Canada.⁵ Similarly, it is chiefly in the late 1960s that we see Canada's mainline churches, particularly the United Church of Canada, shift markedly towards the political left, towards a more critical activist Christianity. The church was losing its priestly authority, but was assuming its prophetic mantle.

The period of transformation for the church coincides with another remarkable development in Canadian society: the emergence of the youth counter-culture, including both the psychedelic counter-culture of the hippies, and the political counter-culture of the New Left student movement. While much has been written about the relationship between liberal Christianity and the Canadian left in the early twentieth century, historians of Canada's 1960s counter-culture such as Doug Owsram, Cyril Levitt and Myrna Kostash give only a passing nod to the role of religion.⁶ This is regrettable, because there is a clear link between the rise of the youth counter-culture and the transformations that occurred within the Canada's mainline churches, especially the United Church of Canada. There was significant interaction between the Christian churches and the various institutions of the youth counter-culture, and they had an impact on each other. This interaction helped shape the counter-culture at the time, and to a much greater extent, it shaped the churches themselves for decades to come.

In this paper, I am going to explore three questions. First, how did the United Church of Canada relate to the counter-culture? Second, what influence did this engagement have on the United Church itself? Third, was it successful in relating to the youth of the 1960s and early 1970s – and why or why not? I will argue that in dealing with the youth counter-culture, the United Church built on its history of openness to progressive social change. I will show that there were strong links between the United Church and the New Left student radicals, as well as to the hippies. Some United Church youth were actively involved in the New Left, and many United Church officials offered both verbal and tangible support to the student leftists and hippies. The evidence will show that the Church was transformed by its attempt to remain relevant to youth – to their culture, to their issues. Finally, I will offer some explanation as to why the Church failed to retain young members, in spite of the fact that by the standards of the counter-culture, it was the most politically and socially progressive mainline Protestant denomination in Canada. Geographically and

temporally, the focus of this paper will be Toronto, between 1965 and 1973. Toronto was the site of the headquarters of the United Church of Canada and its chief publication, *The United Church Observer*, and it was also the location of some important counter-cultural institutions, such as the Yorkville hippie scene, the Toronto Anti-Draft Project, and the Toronto branch of the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA).

Before I turn my attention to the specific interactions between Toronto's youth counter-culture and the United Church of Canada, let me clarify the meaning of the terms "counter-culture," "New Left," and "hippies." The sociologist Theodore Roszak coined the term "counter-culture" in his 1968 book, *The Making of the Counter-Culture*. Roszak argued that in the dominant culture, experts manage all aspects of life, and "the prime goal of the society is to keep the productive apparatus turning over efficiently."⁷ This productive apparatus, however, included the war machine, institutionalized racism, and a dehumanizing business culture. The counter-culture, then, was the conscious rejection, predominantly by youth, of all institutions of social control, and of the values embedded in these institutions. For the hippies, this "great refusal," to use Herbert Marcuse's term,⁸ meant "dropping out" of society. The hippies were wary of all power structures – even radical ones – and they sought liberation through alternative spirituality, drugs and sexual freedom. In contrast, for the student radicals of the New Left, the "great refusal" was political, and it involved collective action to confront the corrupt system, tear it down, and in its place, to create new, radically egalitarian structures.

Did the counter-cultural youth perceive religion to be part of this corrupt system? This is a question of critical importance. Last year, at a conference in Kingston on the Global Sixties, a keynote speaker confidently assured his audience that the New Left (or "The Movement," to use the sweeping, monolithic term that he preferred) rejected all religious faith then, and continues to reject all religious faith today.⁹ Even a cursory review of the history of "The Movement" in Canada shows that this statement is false. It is true that many of these young people saw organized religion as supportive of the status quo, or, at best, irrelevant. But others within the counter-culture were willing to make common cause with progressive church members or organizations on issues of common concern. Moreover, some prominent members of the New Left were themselves actively involved in progressive churches.

The United Church of Canada is important here because historically, it was the most socially and politically progressive of Canada's major

Christian denominations. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Church leadership could best be characterized as “moderately progressive” or “small-l liberal” in its social positions.¹⁰ Philosophically, the Church’s position was that God worked in the world, and thus, it was the Church’s duty to speak prophetically on secular issues, and to engage with the wider world. In the twentieth century, the church definitely shifted from an emphasis on theological Christianity to a greater emphasis on ethical religion.¹¹ As such, the Church was moving from a traditional conversion-oriented understanding of evangelism towards a “new evangelism,” which, one could argue, was hard to distinguish from social service or social activism. Not surprisingly, the key proponents of the “new evangelism” were executives of the denomination’s Board of Evangelism and Social Service in the late 1960s, especially Rev. J.R. Hord.¹²

This trend towards a greater involvement in secular affairs, and towards a post-dogmatic, activist faith, was reinforced in 1965 by the publication of two influential books. The first of these was Pierre Berton’s *The Comfortable Pew*. The Anglican Church of Canada commissioned this work, because Anglicans wanted an outsider’s view of their institution and its shortcomings. The result was an indictment, not merely of the Anglican Church, but of all mainline Protestant churches in Canada. Berton criticized the church for being out of touch with modern society, and argued that it needed to become more up to date in both its medium and its message, more secular in its focus, less restrictive in its teachings on sexuality, and less concerned about literal belief in the supernatural. Moreover, he demanded that the churches take clear, unequivocal stands on current social issues. These changes were necessary, he contended, if the church were to remain relevant in “the new age.”¹³ Berton’s critique received serious attention in the United Church of Canada, particularly by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service.¹⁴

The other influential work was *The Secular City* by Harvard theologian Harvey Cox. Cox argued that urbanization and secularization were two closely related phenomena, and that churches have been wrong to criticize them. Rather, the church should embrace the secular city, for God was present and active within it, and embrace social change. “Theology . . . is concerned *first* of all with finding out where the action is,” he wrote, “Only then can it begin the work of shaping a church which can get to the action. This is why the discussion of a theology of social change must precede a theology of the church.”¹⁵ The kind of church that Cox envisioned was radically different from the traditional model. His

alternative model had little regard for denominational distinctiveness or traditional dogma, but very high regard for social action in the secular sphere. Not surprisingly, the strong influence of *The Secular City* on the United Church was most evident in the work and publications of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service. When the Board published a book about churches that were carrying out exciting community outreach projects, its title (*Churches Where The Action Is*) was a clear reference to Cox's book.¹⁶

Thus, in the 1960s, many within the United Church of Canada were eager to engage with secular society, to speak about relevant issues, and to discern where the "action" was. They were eager to build on the church's progressive, social gospel heritage. Consequently, the denomination was uniquely positioned to reach out to the youth of the counter-culture, to dialogue with them, and in some cases, to make common cause on shared issues of concern.

The United Church's involvement with the youth of Yorkville began in the late 1950s, with the work of Stewart Crysedale, minister of St. Paul's Church, Avenue Road. Crysedale established a social club for inner-city teens, many of them involved with gangs. By 1963, concerned members of several area churches (especially Walmer Road Baptist Church) became involved in this outreach project, and the Yorkville Area Community Services Association was formed. The C.S.O. was inter-denominational, but its director was United Church minister Rev. James E. Smith, and it continued to operate out of St. Paul's United Church, Avenue Road, on the edge of Yorkville.¹⁷

Initially, its prime concern was young people in inner-city gangs. However, this changed as Yorkville became, in Smith's words, a "Mecca for hippies."¹⁸ Yorkville's "hip scene" dates back to the 1950s, and by the early 1960s, the area boasted a core of bohemian residents, as well as several successful coffee houses featuring folk music and alternative art. Throughout the decade, middle-class teenagers and young adults from the suburbs were drawn to the area, attracted by the intense media coverage, by the ready availability of drugs, and, in general, by the excitement of "making the scene." Influenced by the counter-culture emanating from the Haight-Ashbury district in San Francisco, and Greenwich Village in New York City, these young people began to remake Yorkville into a site to perform hippie identity.¹⁹

As interest in church's Drop-In Centre dwindled, Smith focused his attention on the budding Yorkville scene. Initially, it proved impossible to

draw the hip youth into the church. "Then we remembered that alienated kids relate to natural leaders," Smith recalled. In the search for a natural leader, the centre recruited Mike Waage, a charismatic and articulate seventeen-year old hippie from New York's Greenwich Village, who had moved to Yorkville in 1965. Waage was able to draw the hip youth to the centre, and under his leadership (and with the assistance of a little coercion and intimidation) they displaced the working-class "Greaser" youth who had been the organization's main clientele.²⁰ Soon, the church basement underwent major expansion and renovation. The hippies carried out the work themselves, digging out forty loads of clay, and converting an unused coal-bin into the "Cross-Beat Coffee Cave." Writing in 1966, Stewart Crysedale described the resulting space:

[It is] equipped with record player, microphone, amplifier and speaker. The Kingsway Kiwanis Club put up \$1,000 to partition the large club-room and provide a pool table. A Disc Jockey's room was built into the main club-room like a miniature radio station. In another part of the dungeon, they created the "Lazy U," a cozy social centre, fitted out with booth-seats and tables, ranch-type lamps and décor, and television. Nearby is the "Wells-Fargo Supply Depot," a snack counter for pop and light refreshments."²¹

The Drop-In Centre became a site for recreation, free meals, showers, employment counseling, and other practical services. It also became the principle hang-out for Yorkville's hip youth, a place to dance and listen to music. In Stuart Henderson's portrait of "a typical Saturday night":

The record player blasting the new Stones record. Multicoloured teens dancing, meeting, grooving, stunning and high. Longhaired politicos leaning intensely over chess or cards, guitar cases by their sides . . . Teenaged boys and girls clutched in nervous and bold free love. It was a scene, a happening and a gong show rolled into one. The Centre had lost its original mission, to be sure. But, in the process, it had gained a new, significant status within the ever growing hip Village scene, and with it, a new mission altogether. For the next three years the Church Drop-In Centre would be known to many as a central, and among the most significant, sites for hip activity. It became, in the words of David DePoe, "like our community centre."²²

Inadvertently and inevitably, the Centre also became the location for many drug deals. Toronto's Chief of Police referred to it as a "dope-dealer's post," and a neighbouring minister derided it as "the Church that sold dope." As Smith recalls, "the whole mass media got into the action . . . C.S.O. staff took O.D.'s out of the centre on stretchers nightly while others 'talked down' their friends on acid. The Press grooved on getting pushers to sell them dope on the steps of the church. The staff spent much of its time policing the crowds."²³ While the staff members were vigilant in their efforts to prevent drug use on the site, it is undeniable that drug use was present and pervasive. For example, even though Mike Waage was a valued and effective counselor with the Centre, Smith fired him for doing LSD one evening, and refusing to promise never to do it again. (Incidentally, at the time, he was doing LSD with a number of other staff members of the Centre, who all promised not to do it again, "but probably did it again promptly afterwards," Waage recalls.²⁴)

Under these circumstances, it is remarkable that the congregation of St. Paul's, Avenue Road continued to permit the Centre to operate on its premises. While church records do not contain any complaints specifically about allegations of drug use, there is evidence that congregants were uncomfortable with the operation of the organization. At a meeting of the church's official board in November 1967, a committee was struck to examine the relationship between the C.S.O. and the church, "including an assessment of the work being done by the C.S.O. on the one hand and on the other hand difficulties which are encountered in connection with the maintenance of the normal affairs of the congregation."²⁵ At a subsequent meeting in January 1968, the board decided that while "the association of St. Paul's-Avenue Road United Church with the C.S.O. will continue," the church would discontinue its financial support of the organization. It also resolved that "our congregation suggest to Mr. Smith that further specific attempts be made to induce the youth to take greater care of the premises both inside and outside of the building."²⁶ There were also complaints about unauthorized use of church space, and about noise.²⁷

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that up until 1968, the church did finance this controversial Centre, and even after 1968 – even after all of the negative press given to the Yorkville scene – it permitted the C.S.O. to continue operating in the basement of St. Paul's. For whatever its difficulties, the Centre was carrying out needed work. For example, its counselors (many of them, hippies themselves) served as mediators between anxious parents and runaway youth, and often they were able to

effect reconciliation.²⁸ From the point of view of church people, this sort of work was consonant with the “new evangelism,” it was about going “where the action is,” and acting in the name of Christ (even if several of the counselors and volunteers were not Christian). At the same time, from the point of view of the youth themselves, the church was a space that they could claim as their own. In Henderson’s words, “hanging around at The Church was itself becoming understood as a countercultural activity.”²⁹

The role that the United Church of Canada played in the Yorkville scene is not only evident in the work of the Community Service Organization. It is also evident in the denomination’s support of the Diggers. Formed in 1967 by the controversial Company of Young Canadians worker David DePoe, as well as several of Yorkville’s prominent hippie leaders and law student Clayton Ruby, the Diggers aimed to meet the needs of incoming hippies, and to advocate on their behalf when they encountered mistreatment by police and civic officials.³⁰ Consequently, David DePoe and the Diggers sometimes found themselves at odds with police and the municipal government. Their role in the protests and City Hall sit-in during the summer of 1967 is a story told elsewhere.³¹ But it is worth noting that some United Church leaders were sympathetic to these radical actions. In October 1967, after the summer protests, Arch McCurdy of the United Church’s Board of Evangelism and Social Service sent a letter to the Company of Young Canadians, commending David DePoe. McCurdy wrote that “Depoe had been providing . . . effective leadership although, of course, he is often misunderstood by the public.” McCurdy also noted that the United Church Board of Evangelism and Social Service, “in recognition of the needs of the young people in Yorkville, is providing financial support for a worker in the district whose function is to identify with the youth and provide help when and where it is sought.”³² The community worker hired by the United Church was Brian “Blues” Chapman, an artist who had moved to Toronto from San Francisco, and who was himself a Digger.³³ His primary function, we are told, was “to give counsel and assistance to drug-using youth in” Yorkville.³⁴ It speaks to the progressiveness of the United Church that it was willing to select a hippie – with no connection to the church – to carry out this work. It is also noteworthy that when the Diggers established Digger House as a hostel in Yorkville for “dispossessed young people,” the United Church’s Committee on Experimental Ministries granted them \$5000.³⁵

The United Church’s work among the Yorkville’s hippies was not conversion-oriented. Smith wrote that the hippies rejected the institutional

church, and that their desire “was to be an honorary member of every religion except Christianity.” Nonetheless, he clearly saw much in them that was Christian, for he wrote that “the Hippies do live the life of a servant community.”³⁶ Religious affiliation and dogma were not of primary importance in this ministry; such was the nature of the “new evangelism,” which was more concerned with *doing* the work of Christ. And while Smith’s assessment of the Yorkville hippie scene wasn’t always a positive one, the program that he led wasn’t merely one of condescending assistance to a needy population. Rather, the C.S.O. was an example of the church working *with* the hippies; its ministry straddles the boundaries between social assistance and social activism. And the hippies appreciated what the church did. According to Smith, “the hippies . . . said on behalf of all alienated youth that of all the agencies, the Church has responded the most.”³⁷

The United Church’s engagement with the New Left students took place on at least two levels: that of young United Church people themselves, and on the level of Church leadership. Some United Church young people were very active in the students’ campaigns for progressive social change. For example, Doug Ward was president of the University of Toronto’s Students’ Administrative Council while studying theology at Emmanuel College. Later, in 1966-1967, Ward also served “as president of the Canadian Union of Students in 1966-76 – a year when student governments on four campuses dropped out of the union, more or less on the grounds that it was taking stand on social issues that were none of its business.” Another University of Toronto SAC president was Tom Faulkner, a devout, active United Church member, who would later enter the ministry. Though he described himself as “a long way from being a radical” and a “pseudo-liberal,”³⁸ many of Faulkner’s actions as president were surprisingly radical. Under his leadership, the council supported attempts to grant funds to help draft-dodgers, and “to have war-material-producing industries banned from recruiting employees on campus,” as well as other controversial measures. Faulkner also favored changes to the university’s power structure.³⁹ And Emmanuel College student Richard Hyde served as the first fulltime student president of the Student Christian Movement,⁴⁰ an organization that had played a significant role in the Canadian New Left.⁴¹

Perhaps the best example of the new politicized attitude of United Church young people was the establishment of Kairos, which, in 1965, replaced the old Young Peoples’ Union as the organization for young

adults in the United Church. Unlike the old YPU, Kairos was explicitly concerned with social and political issues. Some of its members also belonged to the Student Union for Peace Action, a radical New Left group active on Canadian campuses between 1965 and 1967. Indeed, SUPA saw Kairos as part of “left/liberal protest action on campus,” along with the Student Christian Movement, New Democratic Youth, and others.⁴² In 1965, leaders of both Kairos and of the Anglican Young People’s Association met with officials from the Canadian Young Communist League. “When someone suggested this was flirtation with subversives, the Kairos officer replied, ‘The Kairos movement is far too radical to be subverted by the sedate people of the Canadian Communist Party.’”⁴³

In their desire to combine radical Christian theology (for example, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, Cox) with a radical critique of society, some Kairos members may have felt more affinity with SUPA than with the United Church. Writing in the *SUPA Newsletter*, Bron Wallace reviewed the 1966 Kairos Summer Event, and raised some intriguing questions about the Church and its relationship with Kairos: “Is there a place for a youth movement which is still connected with a rather irrelevant institution? What is that place? How do we relate to the Institution? Do we relate or do we get out?” Wallace didn’t claim to have the answers, but her concluding remark was not encouraging: “leave the United Church to its mourning.”⁴⁴ She was not alone among Kairos members in expressing a cool attitude towards the institutional church. The organization’s leaders indicated that they had little interest in church structures, and that their continued involvement in the United Church would “depend upon whether they find a place of meaningful participation,” and whether “people . . . become involved around issues – specific local issues and issues like Viet Nam, Rhodesia, Latin America, Czechoslovakia. People had to begin to participate in a real way . . . not be involved in a mechanistic, paternalistic way.”⁴⁵ But was this shift taking place?

In the late 1960s, it was certainly taking place at the leadership level, especially within the Board of Evangelism and Social Service. As was noted earlier, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in general, the Church’s political position could best be characterized as “moderately progressive.” In 1965, its statement on the Vietnam War was critical, but rather tepid, and it was contradicted by a pro-war feature in the *United Church Observer* by columnist Willson Woodside.⁴⁶ But in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the United Church moved distinctly to the left. Key individuals in the Board of Evangelism and Social Service played an important

role in this shift, particularly Rev. J.R. Hord, the Secretary of the Board, but also associate secretaries Arch McCurdy and Gordon Stewart. All three expressed their admiration for the New Left students. When Gordon Stewart was asked if “God may be working through some young people who are antagonistic outside the church,” he replied, “He may very well be.”⁴⁷ Arch McCurdy ended a favorable review of “Youth and the Protest Movement” with the assertion that protest “is positive. To protest evil is to proclaim good. For the church to engage in protest is to be consistent with its historic witness. In today’s terminology, Jesus was a Radical and the disciples constituted the New Left.”⁴⁸ And in an address on “Youth” published in the *United Church Observer*, Ray Hord observed that although he was “discouraged by the large numbers of conformists among the young,” he was “a little more optimistic about the ‘hippies’” and “much more optimistic about the future . . . when I see the student radicals on the New Left.”⁴⁹

The issue that served as the link between Hord and those optimism-inducing hippies and student radicals was the war in Vietnam. This issue also succeeded in generating ample media attention, and also helped to goad his denomination into taking a more critical, activist role on social and political issues. When Hord succeeded J.R. Mutchmor as Secretary of the Board in 1963, his superiors might have expected that he would continue his predecessor’s legacy of denouncing vice, such as alcohol consumption and gambling. Instead, he “changed the whole approach of the board.” Hord refused to distinguish “between moral issues and social problems. Poor housing, unjust working conditions, international aggression – they all were moral issues to him.”⁵⁰ Such was the rationale that led him to speak out strongly on the Vietnam War, and Canada’s complicit role in it.

By mid-1966, his pronouncements on Vietnam were generating some discomfort. However, he generated real controversy during his speech on 18 May 1967, when he described Prime Minister Pearson as “a puppy-dog on LBJ’s leash.” He argued “that Canadians should not support ‘Americans who are bombing the hell out of those poor people,’” and added that since “God is on the side of the hurt, the maimed, and the defenseless,” then “God must be on the side of the Vietnamese.”⁵¹ The day after Hord’s “puppy-dog” remark, his words were in the morning papers. Hord’s remarks upset senior church leaders, especially Wilfred Lockhart, then Moderator of the United Church, and Ernest Long, Secretary of the General Council. This was partly because Pearson was “a United Church

hero and son of the manse.”⁵² There was another reason, too:

There was apparent agreement between the moderator and Long that the comment hurt the church in Ottawa especially since a delegation from the church’s International Affairs Committee was to visit Paul Martin the next week. Though some persons, especially political journalists, take a somewhat cynical view of how productive are the visits of church delegations to astute politicians, this was to be an official call.⁵³

Lockhart acted quickly, issuing a hasty apology on behalf of the United Church, dissociating the Church from Hord’s “personal” remarks, which he called “unworthy and unjustified.”⁵⁴ However, not everybody was in agreement with the Moderator, and many rushed to Hord’s defence and wrote supportive letters. As one of his friends wrote, “I wonder who apologized for Amos and Elijah?”⁵⁵ The implication in the latter question is clear: Hord had taken up the mantle of a prophet, and was calling his denomination to do likewise.

Hord’s “puppy-dog” remark was probably not as controversial as his next move. At some point in 1967, he asked his assistant to make contact with Mark Satin of SUPA’s Toronto Anti-Draft Program, which offered aid to American draft resisters in Canada. His assistant replied, “talked to Mark Satin as you requested. He was quite interested in what we were doing and obviously quite willing to co-ordinate any efforts.”⁵⁶ Ultimately, this led to a decision in late September 1967 by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service to grant \$1,000 to the Toronto Anti-Draft Program.⁵⁷ The sum was not exceedingly large, but the symbolic value of the donation was greater than the monetary value. The Board was taking a stand, because it supported the right to conscientiously object to war. By making the grant, it was leading by example, and encouraging ordinary church members to support the cause.

Once again, Hord and his colleagues on the Board had created a media event without the approval of General Council or of the Moderator. Within days, Wilfred Lockhart had over-turned the Board’s decision.⁵⁸ But Lockhart’s quick action did little to quell the backlash from conservative church members. Hord received a flood of letters, many of them from irate laypeople, threatening to withdraw financial support for the Church. “The Church is meddling with the liquor laws,” one writer complained, “and now this meddling with American draft dodgers is, as far as I am concerned, the last straw.” “If even one penny of my miniscule contribu-

tion to the work of the Church is directed toward this project,” wrote another, “I would be inclined to withdraw it entirely.” Another letter-writer railed against the character and behaviour of the war resisters:

Have you discussed the behavior of these young men with any responsible young people in Canada? (Not the coffee-house, demonstrator type, but the reliable young people the church expects to be its backbone in the future.) Many young Canadians frown on the entry of these men to Canada. I have heard the following comments, “They’re cowards, these types.” And “In Canada they just criticize Canadians. I wonder what kind of men they will grow up to be.”⁵⁹

However, Hord also received a flood of supportive letters, many of them from ministers, peace activists, and well-known public figures, including June Callwood, Senator Keith Davey, and Stanley Knowles. Significantly, he received a strong letter of support from N. Bruce McLeod, the future Moderator of the United Church: “If ‘powers that be’ think that actions such as your board has recently taken alienate support for the Church – they are mistaken – there are far more people daily alienated by the *up-tight fearfulness of a Church that is afraid to stick its neck out.*”⁶⁰

Hord’s controversial actions were important for two reasons. First of all, they won Hord the respect of the counter-culture. When he died suddenly in March 1968, his funeral was attended by “Quakers, hippies, inner-city workers and opponents of the Viet Nam war.” Incidentally, one of the speakers was Digger Brian “Blues” Chapman.⁶¹ Secondly, one could argue that his actions galvanized the left in the Church. In 1969 and 1970, the Church moved much more boldly on the issue of the Vietnam War, working in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Churches and the Toronto Anti-Draft Program to aid American war resisters in Canada.⁶² Some individual ministers also supported war resisters in their congregations. Moreover, the Church developed a heightened awareness of the developing world and the difficulties it faced,⁶³ and it became less hesitant to speak prophetically about such matters. It is clear that by engaging with the New Left, especially in the form of its assistance to draft dodgers, the Church was transformed.

But the Church was transformed in other ways too. By the late 1960s, the counter-culture had become mainstream. While this development had more to do with marketing of style than ideological substance, on some level, the attitudes, values and fashions of the counter-culture

were now those of the dominant youth culture.⁶⁴ And the Church was eager to engage with these youth for a very important reason: by the late 1960s, it was evident that the Church was losing members,⁶⁵ and particular attention was given to the fact that teenagers were not coming to church.⁶⁶ There were notable exceptions in some successful congregations,⁶⁷ but the statistics were undeniable.⁶⁸

Ironically, the Church was failing to retain its youth in spite of the fact that it devoted a great deal of attention to youth issues throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. They were covered extensively in the *United Church Observer* by Harvey L. Shepherd, who himself had been a very active participant in SUPA. Youth issues were clearly a priority for Moderator N. Bruce McLeod.⁶⁹ And stylistically, the church strived to be hip. The church's new "Live Love" logo for 1970 was a hot commodity in Yorkville.⁷⁰ The church publication for youth, *Collage*, wasn't merely hip, it was psychedelic.⁷¹ And it would be hard to find a major city where a United Church wasn't running a coffee house (called something like "The Psychedelic Inn") or where a church wasn't engaged in new forms of "experimental worship," or trying out livelier music. Nevertheless, it seemed that the progressive United Church was losing its youth. Even more ironically, conservative churches such as the Pentecostals were growing, and had no problem retaining their youth.⁷² And the evangelical Jesus People Movement grew phenomenally in 1971 and 1972.⁷³ So how do we explain this irony? Why didn't the United Church gain – or at least retain – the counter-cultural youth?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that the rank and file of United Church members were not as progressive as some of its clergy, and even many of its clergy were merely moderates. For example, a poll taken of United Church members in 1968 showed that a majority of lay members did not approve of extending financial aid to American draft dodgers.⁷⁴ And a 1972 poll showed that a majority of decided lay members planned to vote Conservative in the upcoming election, though ministers were more inclined to vote Liberal.⁷⁵ Furthermore, from the viewpoint of a hippie or student radical, even the most progressive, sympathetic characters within the church – men like James Smith or Ray Hord – were still very conservative; they still opposed recreational drug use, free love and anarchist politics. In spite of the highly visible left within the Church, the average United Church probably didn't seem like an appealing place for a counter-cultural young person.

The other part of the answer is the ironic consequences of seculariz-

ing the faith. In the 1960s, the Church embraced the theology of Harvey Cox and his notion that God was at work within the secular city. By de-emphasizing dogma and taking controversial stands on social issues, the church was taking up its prophetic mantle. And in doing so, it sent out the implicit message that ethics were more important than theology. The consequences were fairly predictable; after all, if young people are told that they can find God and righteousness in the secular world, why should they bother looking for them in the Church? In contrast, the Pentecostals and the Jesus People offered something that was distinctly *different* from the secular world – different values, and a different culture. God and righteousness could *not* be found in this world. As a consequence, fortunately or unfortunately, they thrived. The theology of the secular city was a recipe for speaking and acting prophetically, disseminating Christian values among the wider world, and being “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” However, it was not a recipe for institutional growth.

To conclude, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the United Church of Canada built on its progressive heritage to reach out to the new youth counter-culture. In the process of engaging with hippies and student radicals, the denomination itself was transformed. The Church leadership moved decidedly to the left in these years, though this did not draw those counter-cultural youth into the institutional Church. Nor, it seems, did it prevent a decline in membership or attendance, most notably among young people. This does not mean that the Church was wrong to assume a prophetic role, to speak on relevant issues, and to go “where the action is.” By doing so, it generated controversy and criticism within the denomination, but it affirmed its commitment to social justice and peace, and to a progressive interpretation of Christianity. One can argue that this pattern recurred several times in the decades that followed, but that would be the subject of another paper.

Endnotes

1. *Globe and Mail*, 19 May 1967.
2. Kenneth Bagnell, “The view from the firing line,” *United Church Observer*, 1 September 1967, 13.
3. I have adapted these terms from Hans Mol. For him, the priestly and prophetic functions of religion are not dichotomous, but complementary. I have chosen to use the terms in a more dichotomous sense (Hans Mol, *Faith and Fragility: Religion and Identity in Canada* [Burlington, ON: Trinity Press, 1985], 247,

260-264).

4. Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Re-making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 4.
5. John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), 215-218. See also Catherine Gidney, *A Long Eclipse: The Liberal Protestant Establishment and the Canadian University, 1920-1970* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); and Miedema, *For Canada's Sake*, 4.
6. Doug Owrarn, *Born At The Right Time: A History Of The Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 218-219, 225; Cyril Levitt, *Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 8; and Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1980), 10.
7. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968), 7.
8. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xiii-xiv, 63.
9. Dimitri Roussopoulos, in a panel presentation on "The Many Meanings of Liberation" at "New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness" Conference, Queen's University, Kingston, 13 June 2007.
10. Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, 171-172.
11. Henry Gordon MacLeod, "The Transformation of the United Church of Canada, 1946-1977" (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1980), 226.
12. Kenneth Bagnell, "What's All This So-Called New Evangelism?" *The United Church Observer*, 15 April 1966, 16-19, 40.
13. Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew: A Critical Look at Christianity and the Religious Establishment in the New Age* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1965).
14. For the United Church's response to Berton's book, see Pierre Berton et al, *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot: A Symposium on the Church and the World* (The Board of Evangelism and Social Service, The United Church of Canada, 1965).

15. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 109.
16. Stewart Crysdale, *Churches Where The Action Is: Churches and People in Canadian Situations* (Toronto: Board of Evangelism and Social Service, 1966).
17. Crysdale, *Churches Where The Action Is*, 9-11; James E. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish: A Search For Live Options in Yorkville* (Toronto: Yorkville Area Community Services Association, 1972), 2-9; and especially Stuart Henderson, "Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto, 1960-1970" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 2007), 167-180.
18. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish*, 9.
19. A more thorough account of the rise and eventual demise of Yorkville's hip scene is contained in Henderson's "Making The Scene."
20. Henderson, "Making the Scene," 266-268; and Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish*, 9-15.
21. Crysdale, *Churches Where The Action Is*, 11-12.
22. Henderson, "Making the Scene," 272.
23. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish*, 10-11.
24. Henderson, "Making the Scene," 394.
25. Minutes recorded 1 November 1967, Minutes of the Official Board, 1951-1970, Records of St. Paul's, Avenue Road (Toronto), United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
26. Minutes recorded 10 January 1968, Minutes of the Official Board, 1951-1970, Records of St. Paul's, Avenue Road (Toronto), United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
27. Letter, Rev. Francis Stevens to Rev. James E. Smith, dated 1 November 1968, found in the Session Minutes, 1963-1970, Records of St. Paul's, Avenue Road (Toronto), United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
28. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish*, 15-16.
29. Henderson, "Making the Scene," 392.
30. Henderson, "Making the Scene," 297-301.

31. Standard accounts are: Owram, *Born At The Right Time*, 210-215; Pierre Berton, *1967: The Last Good Year* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1997), 169-172, 183-184; and *Flowers on a One-Way Street* (National Film Board of Canada, 1967). For the most recent treatment of this episode, see Henderson, "Making the Scene," 321-337.
32. Letter, Arch McCurdy to Gerry Gambill, dated 12 October 1967, Incoming Correspondence 1965-1967, Company of Young Canadians Fonds, McMaster University Archives, Hamilton, Ontario.
33. "Honor Hord," *United Church Observer*, 1 April 1968, 33-34.
34. *United Church of Canada Yearbook – Volume II* (1968), 128.
35. In comparison, the Anglicans only donated \$200, while the Catholics and Presbyterians gave nothing ("Church Digs Diggers," *United Church Observer*, 1 March 1969, 33; and Henderson, "Making the Scene," 445).
36. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish*, 21-22.
37. Smith, *I Wish I Was A Fish*, 31.
38. *The Varsity*, 17 March 1967, 25.
39. On Ward and Faulkner, see Harvey L. Shepherd, "Then Why Does He Have To Upset Everybody?" *United Church Observer*, 1 May 1968, 10-12, 20.
40. Jocelyn Dingman, "Takeover at the SCM," *United Church Observer*, 15 June 1967, 10-12.
41. Gidney, *A Long Eclipse*, 107-111.
42. *SUPA Newsletter*, 12 August 1966, 12.
43. Kenneth Bagnell, "The end of the Beat Generation," *United Church Observer*, July 1965, 11.
44. *SUPA Newsletter*, 5 October 1966, 9-10.
45. Harvey L. Shepherd, "Is There Room For You In Kairos?" *United Church Observer*, 1 March 1969, 29.
46. Willson Woodside, "Should the Yanks go Home?" *United Church Observer*, 1 June 1965, 22-23, 28.
47. Bagnell, "What's All This So-Called New Evangelism?" *United Church Observer*, 15 April 1966, 40.

48. *Twenty-Third General Council: Record of Proceedings* (United Church of Canada, 1968), 388.
49. "Youth: Excerpts from the Final (Uncompleted) Address of the Rev. J.R. Hord," *United Church Observer*, 1 April 1968, 11.
50. Patricia Clarke, "Ray Hord: A Prophet Ahead Of His Time," *Mission Magazine* (1981), 13-14.
51. *Globe and Mail*, 19 May 1967, 27.
52. Clarke, "Ray Hord: A Prophet Ahead Of His Time," 14.
53. Kenneth Bagnell, "The view from the firing line," *United Church Observer*, 1 September 1967, 13.
54. "Moderator apologizes," *United Church Observer*, 15 June 1967, 21-22.
55. Letter, Rev. C.B. Hickman to Ray Hord, 21 June 1967, Box 62, File 316, Board of Evangelism and Social Service Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
56. Memo, Tim Smith to Ray Hord, undated, Box 44, File 1, Board of Evangelism and Social Service Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
57. *Toronto Star*, 26 September 1967, 1.
58. *Toronto Star*, 30 September 1967, 1, 15.
59. Letters from John Townson, R.C. Patterson, and Mrs. B.E. Conquergood, all addressed to Hord, all dated 27 September 1967, Box 43, File 1, Board of Evangelism and Social Service Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
60. Letter, N. Bruce McLeod to Ray Hord, 4 October 1967, Box 43, File 3, Board of Evangelism and Social Service Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
61. "Honor Hord," *United Church Observer*, 1 April 1968, 33-34.
62. "Consultation on U.S. Draft Age Immigrants to Canada," 8 May 1970, Box 43, File 9; and "News Release of the United Church of Canada," 2 April 1971, Box 43, File 8, Board of Evangelism and Social Service Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.
63. Clarke, "Ray Hord: A Prophet Ahead Of His Time," 15.
64. Henderson, "Making the Scene," 501-502; and Levitt, *Children of Privilege*, 98-99.

65. "Disappointment," *United Church Observer*, 1 June 1967, 11.
66. N. Bruce McLeod, "Why Won't They Go To Church?" *United Church Observer*, 1 November 1969, 20-22, 40.
67. "Sarnia, Ont.: Youth Power Succeeds," *United Church Observer*, 1 June 1969, 7.
68. In fact, "decline in church attendance and membership and the rise in leakage date from 1959" (MacLeod, "The Transformation of the United Church of Canada," 216).
69. N. Bruce McLeod, "Youth in the Church," *United Church Observer*, January 1973, 6-7.
70. "It's Love, Love, Love," *United Church Observer*, 15 February 1970, 7.
71. Patricia Clarke, "Would You Call This Magazine Religious?" *United Church Observer*, 1 December 1969, 12-15, 40.
72. K.B. Birch, "Why Have All the Students Come," *Pentecostal Testimony*, November 1972, 11.
73. David Di Sabatino, "The Spiritual Sixties and the Jesus People Movement," introduction to *The Jesus People Movement: An Annotated Bibliography and General Resource* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 3-18.
74. "How You Vote On Vietnam," *United Church Observer*, 15 March 1968, 16-18, 46.
75. "The United Church Votes Conservative," *United Church Observer*, July 1972, 20-21.