

BEATRICE BRIGDEN: THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF A SOCIALIST
FEMINIST 1888-1932

BY
ALLISON CAMPBELL

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History
University of Winnipeg,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ABSTRACT

This biography traces the life of Manitoban Beatrice Alice Brigden (b.1888 - d.1977) from her early childhood to her mid-forties (1932), when she was a recognized political and social activist and an executive member of the newly formed political party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Based on her extensive collection of personal journals, work-related correspondence and political writing, this thesis examines aspects of Brigden's personal life and experience, to identify important influences, understand her motivation and perspective. It identifies traits she held in common with many of her contemporary social reformers and suggests that much of Brigden's life fits the familiar pattern taken by many men and women - that of moving from religious reform within the Church, to social reform, to political reform.

By presenting personal details, the biography adds to our understanding of the ordinary lives of young girls and women in Manitoba in the early decades of the twentieth century. It also examines Brigden's rather unusual career as a "social purity worker" to explore both the practical reality of the job and its influence on her political development. Finally, it offers insight into the attitudes of similar women active in some of the social and political reform movements of the time; insight which requires an examination of formative years, not merely the

reconstruction of a successful adult career.

Brigden was active in, or at least witnessed many important historical developments in western Canada in the 1910's - 1930's; the Winnipeg and Brandon General Strikes, the Labor Church movement and the birth of the CCF. She also organized two grassroots groups focusing raising political awareness and the participation of women in the political process, the People's Forum Speakers Bureau and the Labor Women's Social and Economic Conference.

Brigden's gender is as much a part of her story as her religious and ethnic background and their influence on her choices is discussed. Her biography also sheds light on women's role in grassroots organizations, specifically those devoted to social and political reform. While offering some answers to the question of what makes a reformer, this thesis ultimately suggests that Brigden's high level of participation and involvement in politics may not be unusual for women, but previously overlooked and undervalued by earlier historians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people whose assistance and encouragement I would like to acknowledge. Dr. Vera Fast brought the Brigden Collection to my attention in response to my request for "something interesting relating to women's history in western Canada". The staff at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba were most helpful and suggested other material such as the interviews of Brigden and James and Mable Aiken. The staff at the Brandon University Archives also provided assistance with newspaper sources and records relating to Brigden's years there. I am especially grateful to Don Aiken, who agreed to be interviewed and generously loaned private papers relating to his mother's involvement in the Labor Women's Social and Economic Conference. His information allowed me to fill gaps in Brigden's own records and gave personal insight into some of the attitudes and motivation of Brigden and her contemporaries.

I would also like to thank the friends and colleagues who offered everything from reading suggestions to patient, critical discussions. They provided the necessary encouragement and empathy that helped sustain my own enthusiasm.

Special thanks are due to my advisor, Nolan Reilly. His patient support and guidance has helped shape my unstructured personal enthusiasm for Brigden into what I hope is a more readable, informative and purposeful discussion.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

It would hurt me greatly to be disloyal to the Methodist Church it has given me opportunities and I can't forget.(sic) But I can think of a greater offence and that is to be disloyal to the common people to whom I belong: and no amount of College training or official position or Government House dinners can make me anything else than a daughter of the common people. The dialect of the common people is in my speech and the burden of their ignorance and helplessness, their worth and their aspirations is on my heart and I never expect to forsake them.¹

So declared Beatrice Alice Brigden in 1919, in a lengthy, emotional letter to T.A. Moore, General Secretary of the Methodist Church Department of Social Services and Evangelism, her supervisor while she was employed as a social service worker with the Methodist Church from 1914 to 1920.

In the decade that followed her statement of solidarity, Brigden resigned from her position with the Methodist Church and went on to play a leading role in the Brandon Labor Church (there called the People's Church), established a Speakers Bureau to address labour issues and organized a series of Labor Women's Social and Economic Conferences. The latter linked non-partisan education and lobby groups which became a training ground for many

¹ P.A.M. Beatrice Brigden Collection, Box 4, Correspondence. Brigden to T.A. Moore, General Secretary of the Methodist Church, Department of Social Service and Evangelism, 26 July, 1919. All further correspondence cited, except where noted, is between Brigden and Moore, and will be noted by the author of the letter and the date.

political activists, providing experience and opportunities for women in an encouraging, supportive and dynamic atmosphere.² Eventually, Brigden expressed her identification with the "common people" through political action, first speaking in support of a Progressive candidate, and later running as Brandon's farm-labour alliance candidate in the 1930 federal election. In 1933, she was one of only twenty-one women attending the Regina Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Conference (out of one hundred and thirty delegates)³ and later became CCF provincial party secretary.

Brigden did not begin her life as a "daughter of the common people." Her transformation from a secure, sheltered idealist to a social activist, feminist and socialist was both an emotional and intellectual evolution with identifiable stages which this thesis will identify. Her family, religious background and education gave her much in common with many of her contemporary social reformers. Her mother, Sarah Jane Wood, was a Quaker of United Empire Loyalist stock, while her father William's family were English Protestants who left England for Ontario, Canada in 1856. William Brigden and a brother moved with their families to farm in western Manitoba in 1889. Beatrice,

² Although the women did not officially support any particular party, their politics were clearly left-wing and members included Communists and Labor party members.

³ Joan Sangster, "Women and the New Era" in Brennan, ed. Building the Co-operative Commonwealth. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre), p.93.

born in 1888, spent her childhood in rural Manitoba until 1910, when her family moved to Brandon. Her interests during this time included temperance work, the Women's Missionary Society and religious oriented youth groups.

While still a young woman, Brigden expressed a desire for education and a career. Believing such goals to be incompatible with marriage, she turned down offers of matrimony to focus her energies on a course of work and study that eventually led her into the political arena. Brigden's insistence on furthering her education was slightly prophetic, in light of historian Anne Scott's research on American "notable women" born between 1607-1950. In order to achieve some level of recognition or power, Scott found that "one thing (the women) must do is get some education...(especially at the college or university level, and)...avoid matrimony all together...or arrange to be divorced or widowed or marry a much older man who will provide the money and not try too hard to control his wife."⁴

Brigden began her career, as did many women and men in social reform movements, in the church. Here, women's talents in the service of God and community were welcomed, if somewhat restricted in application. Membership in youth, temperance, and missionary groups exposed her to discussions

⁴ Anne Firor Scott, Making the Invisible Woman Visible. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press), 1985, p.315.

of social problems and the role of the Methodist Church in their solution. It also introduced her to the influence of the social gospel ideas of Salem Bland, William Ivens, A.E. Smith and James Woodsworth.

Her awareness of social problems was further developed by her college education at Brandon College, and later, the Toronto Conservatory of Music. Typically "gentlewoman's" courses in music, elocution and oil painting were supplemented by the study of psychology and sociology, as well as opportunities to visit factories and speak before the workers there. This combination gave her the understanding, the confidence and skills which enabled her to assume a high profile among her peers. She became a Sunday school teacher and was soon occupying executive positions in organizations where she previously held only membership. She also became known for her public speaking abilities at such events as church concerts and WCTU "At Home" evenings.

The combination of education and religious training led to an offer of work with the Methodist Church in 1914. For almost seven years, she travelled across Canada - alone - to lecture on behalf of the Social Service and Evangelical Department of the Methodist Church. During this period, she visited factories and mining towns, and became involved in debates ranging from the role of the Church in temporal matters, to the relationship between socialism and

Christianity, to "race suicide" and sex education. She met unwed mothers and prostitutes, visited Jane Addams at Hull House, Chicago, and was invited by Nellie McClung to speak in Edmonton. She was met by a variety of audiences, warm and receptive, as well as suspicious ones. She was welcomed by some ministers and refused meeting by others afraid of her radicalism.

When Brigden resigned her position with the Methodist Church in 1920, she was frustrated with the conservative attitudes that had forced out the likes of Woodsworth and Ivens. Furthermore, in her eyes, the church had failed the "the common people" when it did not offer any useful guidance or support to the strikers of the Winnipeg and Brandon General Strikes of 1919. She was also convinced that her status as "only a woman" limited her opportunities in the church and was concerned that the wages allotted women in her position were inadequate to provide the financial security she sought as a single, independent woman. Although she left the Church, she did not abandon her social gospel ideals of brotherhood, cooperation and moral responsibility for social problems. These values continued to guide and inspire her political views for the rest of her life.

Education and concern for women remained major themes as well. Like many social gospellers, Brigden believed informal education through reading and study groups - would

enable people to inform themselves and make the "right" choices in both their daily life and at the polls. She devoted much of her time to working with women, to encourage and enable them to participate more fully in political life.

Recognizing that women often felt uncomfortable in a mixed audience, that they had different needs and agenda than traditional male political groups, she formed the Labor Women's Social and Economic Conference (LWSEC) study groups. Delegates from local groups met from across the prairies once a year to report, debate, pass motions and set new goals. These groups were independent and essentially non-partisan, and can be considered direct descendants of the earlier women's groups formed to support women's missionary efforts, female suffrage and the development and establishment of Women's Institutes.⁵

The example of Brigden's life is important for what it reveals about the women who challenged both the social and political limitations of their lifetime. Political history has a tendency to focus on the powerful and influential leaders, often politicians. Women are not historically part of this group. Only recently have historians begun to look "backstage" in politics. An examination of the extensive grassroots network of women reveals the participation of women in these organizations not only as support groups, but

⁵ Begun by Adelaide Hoodless, the Institutes focused on education and practical training for women, especially concerning homemaking skills and childcare. Cheryl MacDonald, Adelaide Hoodless: Domestic Crusader. (Toronto: Dundurn Press), 1986.

as a separate phenomena, often with a different but very legitimate history. Linda Kealey, Joan Sangster and Georgina Taylor⁶ each examine how women's experience in politics differed from men, how women set their own agenda, organized separate autonomous groups, influenced general policies and struggled for a fair share of the political power.

This same divided character is found in the social gospel movement, in its actual structure as well as its written history. The division is so noticeable that Valerie Regehr, in her recent thesis examining the historical context of Brigden's social gospel theory, describes the social gospel as having two faces, a male and a female one. The female face often included lay theologians and those in supportive roles, resulting in a kind of a "movement within a movement."⁷ Richard Allen's The Social Passion⁸ ignores this element in his work, offering instead a detailed study of the official controversies and church conferences related to the social gospel and focusing on the leaders of the

⁶ Linda Kealey, "Canadian Socialism and the Woman Question, 1900-1914." Labour/Le Travail, 13, 1984. Joan Sangster, Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left 1920-1950. (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart), 1989. Georgina Taylor, "'The Women ... Shall Help to Lead the Way': Saskatchewan CCF-NDP Women Candidates in Provincial and Federal Elections." in J. William Brennan, ed. Building the Co-operative Commonwealth. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre), 1984.

⁷ Valerie Regehr, "Beatrice Brigden: Her Social Gospel Theology in its Historical Context", M.A. thesis, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Spring, 1989, p.116.

⁸ Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1971.

movement. Ramsey Cook's The Social Regenerators⁹, is a more theoretical work, discussing the influences on the social gospel movement, but still concerned with major male influences; Charles Darwin and his theories of evolution, John Bengough's satirical writings. Even A.E. Smith, who worked with Brigden and knew her well enough as her minister to write a letter of reference to Moore, only alluded to her as a nameless social worker in his autobiography All My Life.¹⁰

Women's experiences and perceptions in the social gospel and related political reform movement need to be further explored. Veronica Strong-Boag and Alison Prentice¹¹ both challenge the traditional periodization of historical interpretation by using a life cycle timetable to explore important events and influences in a woman's life. Their examination of the experiences of Canadian women - childhood, education, work, and adult life, help historians understand the influences and attitudes of Brigden and her contemporaries.

The example of Brigden's life is part of a new way to consider women's power and influence, suggested by Anne

⁹ Ramsey Cook, The Social Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada. (Toronto: University of Toronto), 1985.

¹⁰ Albert E. Smith. All My Life. (Toronto: Progress Books), 1949.

¹¹ Veronica Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939. (Markham: Penguin), 1988. Alison Prentice, et. al. eds. Canadian Women: A History. (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich), 1988.

Duffy's work.¹² She redefines the idea of power to include the less visible decision makers and helps reassess the value and impact of work done by women like Brigden - who, because they were not part of the traditional political hierarchy, are too often ignored.

The works by Nancy Hall and Wendy Mitchinson¹³ on women in church organizations continue this theme of women's expression and exercise of power overlooked by a preoccupation with political or economic power. Hall and Mitchinson reveal a previously underestimated tradition of women's groups, ranging from auxiliary organizers to missionaries and their supporting societies, to the first deaconesses who struggled for the full recognition of ordination. Their arguments establish the church as an important influence for the development of women's independence and new opportunities, and it certainly was so in the case of Brigden. The latter three works portray women's groups, not as secondary actors, or supporting groups, but as useful and powerful, and supportive of women's movement towards independence. They were also the foundation of later, more public women's organizations.

¹² Anne Duffy, "Reformulating Power for Women," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 23(1), 1986.

¹³ Hall, Nancy. "Not By Might Nor by Power but by My Spirit: Women workers in the United Church of Canada 1890-1940," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba 1986. Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Toward Independence", Atlantis, vol.2, no.2, Spring 1977.

Joan Sangster¹⁴ refers to these and similar groups as "grassroots movements" but it must be remembered that the women were more than backstage fundraisers. They were public speakers and office holders who worked to bring women's issues, such as birth control and working conditions, to wide audiences. The groups to which Brigden belonged, religious and political, fit these definitions.

There has been some tentative recognition of Brigden's importance in recent historical studies. Her name has been mentioned in a few political histories such as Clark's Brandon Politics and Politicians,¹⁵ and David Lewis's political autobiography The Good Fight, where she is mentioned merely as part of a light and humorous anecdote.¹⁶ Vera Fast's research on the Labor Church¹⁷ gives Brigden the recognition due to her contribution to programs within the church and the leadership role that fell to her after Smith and his family moved to Ontario.

The most indepth study of Brigden has been conducted by Joan Sangster. She used Brigden for an individual case

¹⁴ Sangster, Joan. Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left 1920-1950. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989. "The Making of A Socialist Feminist: The Early Career of Beatrice Brigden, 1888-1941." Atlantis, vol.13, no.1. fall 1987. "Women and the New Era" in Brennan, ed. Building the Co-operative Commonwealth. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1985.

¹⁵ W. Leland Clark, Brandon Politics and Politicians. (Brandon: Brandon Sun), 1981.

¹⁶ In Lewis's lengthy autobiography, Brigden's work is mentioned once. Her report that CCF women's groups were studying birth control and that the number of members were growing by leaps and bounds, provided "unintended comedy." David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1901-1958. (Toronto: Macmillan), 1981, p.101.

¹⁷ Fast, Vera. "The Labor Church in Winnipeg" in Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West, ed. Butcher, et. al. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press), 1985.

study to explore her political development and contributions, especially in reference to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.¹⁸ Her brief acknowledgement of the influence of Brigden's religious background, an influence common to many of her contemporary social reformers, deserves further exploration, as does Brigden's own perception of attitudes and events. Sangster's longer analyses on women on the political left also include passing reference to Brigden.¹⁹

The brevity of Sangster's article means that some important aspects of Brigden's life are ignored, and others are glossed over. The conflict between marriage and career, ambition and family responsibility was an ongoing struggle, as Brigden's self-doubts and uncertainty make clear. Also lost in Sangster's discussion is the firm connection between the tradition of women's autonomous work in the church and Brigden's own career. The importance of Brigden's early community work, teaching, Sunday school, reciting in public, and lecturing is also overlooked.

Sangster noted the influence of Brigden's church work on her political development. But she overemphasized Brigden's ignorance of the working class and her desire to remake them in the middle class mould. As a result, Brigden's own awareness of her ignorance and her call for

¹⁸ Sangster, "The Marking of A Socialist Feminist."

¹⁹ Sangster, Dreams of Equality and "Women and the New Era."

help from within the community, her anger at the simple solutions proposed by those who wanted to confine their reform efforts to a single class, is understated.

A short article is unable to discuss fully Brigden's work experience, which reveals a wealth of information about a little known career. We are left unaware of her overwork, her suspicious critics, and the physical and emotional hardships that contributed to Brigden's sense of independence. Brigden's stress on education for self-help, the value and necessity of women's work has not been noted as an early characteristic, because Brigden's early years have not been closely studied. A longer work can consider these aspects in greater detail, allowing more of Brigden's story to be told in her own words. It is the details that allow us to compare Brigden's experience with other women, to appreciate her uniqueness and commonality.

Brigden deserves an in-depth study, but even this biography cannot hope and does not intend to show all aspects of her life. Instead, working mainly from the wealth of primary documents comprised of Brigden's own journals, letters and articles, Brigden's formative years will be examined. This period can be broken into three stages: first, her early life, family environment, education, personal influences (1888-1914); second, her career with the Methodist Church (1914-1920); and third, her early political activism which culminated in her membership

in the CCF in 1932. Guided by Brigden's writings, as well as a few comparative examples of her contemporaries, influences and turning points in Brigden's political development will be identified. Her changing attitude toward social problems, her developing political awareness are possible to trace through important events in her life, some of which she identifies herself, and through the choices she deliberately and less consciously made. The roles played by her family background, her gender and single status will also be examined in an attempt to gain both a historical and personal appreciation of the evolution of a socialist feminist in Manitoba in the 1910-1920's.

Although this is an individual biography, there are two levels that emerge in exploring Brigden's life. There are the details specific to her own personal experience and the insight they offer into the lives of many other women growing up in the same period, facing similar questions and challenges.

On the one hand, much of Brigden's early life as recorded in her diaries seems ordinary. Her school, church and social activities are among the countless, unextraordinary experiences shared by so many of her contemporaries. She provides details of their common daily lives, household work, social lives and self-images. At a basic level, she offers a reassuring portrait of a young woman at the turn of the century - articulate, opinionated

and determined to think for herself. Two lasting characteristics emerge during this part of her life. She was determined to obtain an education and find a career, and she struggled to reconcile these ambitions with the expectations for women to marry and raise a family. On the other hand, Brigden is also an example of one socialist-feminist's development. From her letters and diaries we can follow its evolution, find incidents and quotations to support theories about the influence of religion, the development of her socialism and her awareness of feminism.

Brigden's experiences in her first career as a social service worker were a testing ground for her emerging views on what society should be like, and how the Church should work to bring about that society. It allowed her to compare social theories with the social realities of the people she met, and did much to develop her sense of independence and confidence.

The final section of the this thesis considers Brigden as a politically active woman. She had shifted her allegiance from the Methodist Church to the Labor Church by 1920, an action which signified her growing interest and identification with the working class and labour movement. This interest had begun early in her career, as she sought to understand the economic side of what was often considered spiritual or moral problems, and culminated in her decision to run as Brandon's Farm-Labor candidate in the 1930 federal

election. Throughout Brigden's intellectual and political growth, there remained two constants: her involvement with women's organizations and her search for a society represented by the social gospel ideal - a society of justice, equality and freedom from economic oppression.

Her writings, both private and public, are useful in exploring the links between the social gospel influence and her socialist politics, and reveal the feminist ideas that she articulated without labelling them so. By studying Brigden in the context of the various groups in which she worked, we realize Brigden was not working in isolation, but in a changing, yet ever present female network, which, while supporting and participating in the general arena of church or politics, recognized their own needs and established their own agenda. Just as many social gospel ideas reappeared in CCF political mandates, many maternal feminist issues appeared as social gospel goals and CCF concerns. The influence of these grassroots organizations on larger, more mainstream movements deserves more recognition.

Brigden's diaries and letters are the source of most of the information on her early life, and even her writings are part of a female tradition. Women's private records are often the only women's records available to historians, and much of their writings, especially diaries, share similar characteristics. They are often fragmented, and focus on

the personal²⁰, to reveal women's lives in their own setting, defining importance "in their own terms."²¹ Many times this means family or personal events are stressed over the larger arena of military or political ones, other times the collections are surprisingly reticent about personal emotions. It is fortunate to be able to work with Brigden's own writing. For all the problems of perspective they may present, it is balanced by the fact that we have access to Brigden's own perceptions of her life. Her writings are documents created by the main actor, a situation less common in women's history than in some other fields. Diary writing is also part of both the Quaker (spiritual recording) and middle class Victorian women's tradition²², both heritages which Brigden claimed.

Her diaries are a complete, unedited record of a woman from the age of sixteen to twenty-two years. There is some evidence that Brigden, or perhaps her sister Anne (called Dell), who left the collection to the Public Archives of Manitoba, had reread them. There are spelling and grammar corrections, a more mature hand adding in last names in ballpoint ink, and a few lines crossed out, neatly, in pencil, which of course can still be read, as can the intention to have them omitted. Except for these few

²⁰ Jelinek, Estelle. The Tradition of Women's Autobiography. (Boston: Twayne Pub.), 1986, p.135.

²¹ Trofimenkoff, Neglected Majority, vol.1, p.8.

²² Conrad, Margaret, "Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada 1750 - 1950" in Trofimenkoff, ed. Neglected Majority, p.42.

additions, the collection of journals stand as they were written, over seventy five years ago.

The first journal begins in October 1904, when Beatrice was sixteen and continues faithfully until October 1914, when the entries for September and October of that year became hurried and irregular, and the comments brief and not especially informative. Fortunately, her seven year correspondence with T.A. Moore began about this time, and the energy that previously went into her private journals was now channelled into candid letters with her employer. These letters continued for about six years and are an enduring record of their official relationship as well as their friendship.

From the time she left Brandon to begin her studies for the church, Brigden was encouraged by Moore to write. "You say 'write me very fully and frankly concerning your present feelings and thought.' Don't know what you mean but as nearly as I can analyze my feelings, I intend 'to stick'...and learn all I can and tell as many people as possible."²³

Brigden's reports served to keep Moore and his department informed about ministers and their communities, and their reaction to her and the church program for which she worked. They were full of practical details. At a more personal level, the letters allowed Brigden to express her

²³ Brigden to Moore, Jan.13/14.

frustrations to a sympathetic ear and to receive encouragement and affirmation of the importance of her work.

The letters, being partly official in intent, are less personal than the diaries in some ways. However, there remains an unmistakable Brigden "voice" in them, forthright and eloquent. Her introspection continues, having moved from personal tragedies and events, to the broader social questions raised by those she encountered in her work.

The employer - employee relationship must have dictated part of the nature of the correspondence. It was not until the Methodist Church had lost Ministers like Smith and Woodsworth to the labour movement, and Brigden was specifically asked for her opinion on the strike, that her condemnation moved from criticizing individuals or specific events or attitudes to a broader target of the Methodist Church itself. Other letters to other correspondents during this period might have revealed Brigden's philosophic differences much earlier and much more forcefully.

Brigden's political ideas found fullest expression not in her correspondence, but in a series of articles written in the early 1930's for the ILP Weekly News, and later, the Manitoba Commonwealth, as well as a collection of labour articles and newspaper reports written by Brigden and kept in her personal scrapbook. Addressing young children, women, and partisan audiences in turn, Brigden revealed her socialism to have retained her social gospel values and

expressed feminist viewpoints which were not always marked by a maternalist perspective. For example, Brigden's support for women's equal right to participate in the work force, and right to birth control and a choice in the spacing and size of their family was radical for its time.

Historian Mary Kinnear warns of the shortcomings of biographic history, of being distracted by the "written literary evidence of the minority" and stresses the importance of quantitative data to "clothe conceptual frames." She also recognizes the importance of trying to understand "not only why and how a woman wishes to break through the limits enclosing her...but also learn how she expanded, evaded and coped with those limits, too."²⁴

Brigden's voice is an excellent guide to some of the ideas and attitudes of women involved and evolving in social reform, especially in the period 1910-1930. Just as biographies are a useful tool to illustrate broader trends and issues in history, they are also "a reminder that historical narrative is ultimately the concretion of individual life stories."²⁵

²⁴ Mary Kinnear, ed. in introduction to First Days Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History. (Regina: University of Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre), 1987. pp.viii, ix, xv.

²⁵ Mendelson. Sara, The Mental World of the Stuart Women. (Harvester Press, 1987), p.11.

CHAPTER TWO

BEATRICE BRIGDEN: THE EARLY YEARS 1888-1914.

It's not to be wondered at that women marry. How nice to have someone to confide every thot(sic)to and to share theirs as well. That is what I should like most of all. But I'm afraid that is not for me so I'll get all the education I can and perhaps help someone else.²⁶

Brigden's early years were spent in south western Manitoba, near Lauder and Melita. In 1910, the family moved to Brandon which became Brigden's home until 1930, when she moved one last time to Winnipeg. Her youth seemed an ordinary one, taken up with visits to friends and relatives, church meetings and youth groups. But through her journals, she expressed restlessness and ambition, linked with a desire to serve her community, in a Christian sense. To this end, she sought education beyond what was offered in rural Manitoba and eventually travelled to Ontario to study. While her education and church work were developing the skills which were to serve her in her as yet unchosen career, Brigden considered the conflict in her life between marriage and education. Unwilling to divide her energies between the two, she initially chose education, thinking merely to postpone what seemly to be an inevitable event.

The link with Brandon and Brigden's active and at times controversial life is worth noting. Her "formative years"

²⁶ Brigden journals, 11 March, 1905.

were spent in and around Brandon, where she became acquainted with William Ivens, Albert E. Smith and James Woodsworth through the Church, and attended the readings of Nellie McClung.²⁷ Brandon was also the site of a strong, well-organized Labor Church and a Baptist College, some of whose staff helped to organize the Labor Church. In 1919, Brandon was the scene of the longest and most cohesive sympathetic strike in support of the Winnipeg General Strike and later elected labour representatives to parliament.²⁸

II

Brigden described her family as "Old Ontario Protestant stock (who) represented the early...wave of Ontario settlement in the west."²⁹ Her London born grandfather Henry Brigden, a journalist, married Ann Pigeon in 1852, and four years later, with two children born to them, they moved to Canada. The family settled in Roslin, near Belleville Ontario, and established what became an important base for the Brigden family as the following generations moved west. Families and individuals returned for lengthy visits, and

²⁷ Ivens was an occasional guest speaker at Church events, Smith was a Methodist minister there, Woodsworth was stationed in the area early in his career and McClung had public readings in Brandon.

²⁸ Tom Mitchell, "Brandon 1919: Labour and Industrial Relations in the Wheat City in the Year of the General Strike," Manitoba History, Spring 1989, p.2.

²⁹ Beatrice Brigden, "One Woman's Campaign for Social Purity and Social Reform" in Allen, ed. The Social Gospel in Canada, Conference Papers, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, History Division, Paper #9, National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, 1975, p.37. Also in the Brigden collection, P.A.M.

Brigden returned twice, once with her family for a prolonged visit, and once on her own to attend the Toronto Conservatory of Music.

Beatrice's father William, the third of seven children, was the first of the family's Canadian born children (b. 1859). He was married to Sarah Jane Wood in 1886, a Quaker of United Empire Loyalist descent, whose family in North America went back to 1680. William and Sarah relocated west to Manitoba a few years after marriage. Sarah gave birth to seven children in seven years, although twin girls born in 1891 died at ten months, and the first born, a son, died after a brief illness when he was eighteen years old.

Brigden's diaries leave an impression of a close and caring, but not excessively pious family. She was very fond of her oldest bother, Stillman (b. 1887). Her two sisters, Annie Bardella (b. 1889) and Mabel Pigeon (b. 1893), were often Brigden's companions. They all attended Methodist Church services together and the younger sisters followed Brigden into church activities and church sponsored youth groups. In her journals, she wrote of their participation with pride. The girls also took music and art lessons, accompanied one other on long walks, afternoons spent sketching and visits into town. When one of her sisters was ill, or away visiting, she wrote of her concern and loneliness.

Brigden's younger brother Parry (b. 1892) was the focus

of sisterly concern from Beatrice, and his soul was the object of passionate temperance prayers when she suspected him of using tobacco. She caught him reading her diary one day and "gave him a lecture, but it was like sowing seed on a rock."³⁰ Despite their differences, Brigden missed her brother when work or social events took him away from home for long.

The influence of Brigden's mother seems to have been subtle but long lasting. The Quaker emphasis on sexual equality and education affected how Sarah treated her children, and her own interest in politics set a role model for them. Together with the family, she attended speeches and volunteered her help and home during a voter registration. Another important influence was Sarah's pacifism, an integral part of Quaker belief. Brigden recalled long and earnest discussions between her mother and Woodsworth while the young minister was stationed in their area. Brigden's own pacificism became evident shortly after World War I and found full expression in her later years through international peace organizations such as the Women's League for Peace and Freedom and the Voice of Women.

Although a Quaker, her mother attended Methodist services with the rest of the family. Brigden was raised in the Methodist Church but returned to the faith of her mother in her later years, enjoying the services and the company of

³⁰ Brigden journals, 24 April, 1907.

Friends. She kept her mother's Quaker bonnet which had been worn until Sarah married, and Brigden herself had a Quaker funeral. This combination of Quaker and Methodist beliefs may have contributed much to Brigden's sense of service and involvement in the church. As historian Wendy Mitchinson has observed

with the exception of the Society of Friends, the Methodist connection gave the most scope to women within the church...Wesley himself...had permitted them to pray in public, speak out in class meetings and opened to women all offices of the church excluding the ministry.³¹

Brigden's father also contributed to the formation of his daughter's values. He was a member of the Patrons of Industry, an agrarian organization with a "tradition of education and self-betterment."³² He subscribed to a number of journals, encouraged political debate among the children and was proud to see his wife and daughters exercise their newly-won franchise. The entire family often attended political meetings, as much for the education as for their entertainment value.

He was able to provide the family with material security and a comfortable standard of living. After selling what seems to have been their large and successful farm for \$20,000 in 1906, he invested in property in Brandon. There he bought a house and two lots and invested

³¹ Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Toward Independence," *Atlantis*, vol.2 #2, Spring 1977, p.68.

³² W. Young. *Anatomy of a Party*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1969, p.51.

in a druggist business.³³ His daughters received art and music lessons, and Beatrice was eventually able to study at the Toronto Conservatory for a year. The family had a gramophone, a car which she learned to drive, and a telephone. He also seemed to have been an agent for a piano company for a while, and the family owned a piano.

The Brigden home was a temperance home and Brigden's father was known as a "temperance crank" by some of the neighbours who did not ascribe to his beliefs. Although the Brigden women were not members of the WCTU, Brigden was likely influenced by her father's stand, and she became interested in temperance work at an early age and remained so for the rest of her life.

The Brigdens were also concerned for their children's education. At one point they raised Beatrice's age by six months to make her eligible for a school that was planned if a minimum number of school age children lived nearby. Apparently, the addition of the instantly aged Brigden was needed to meet the quota.

Having begun her formal education rather precociously, it is no surprise that Brigden was an avid reader, and she kept a record of the books she read. At a time when theatres and even novels could be considered dangerous,³⁴

³³ Brigden, "One Woman's Campaign," p.8.

³⁴ Michael Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects: Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada." Canadian Historical Association Papers, 1970, p.95.

the titles which Brigden read show both an adventurous taste and a tolerant family. They included the standard Pilgrim's Progress, numerous titles by Dickens, works by Ralph Connor, nature and animal writers E.T. Seton and Anna Sewell (Black Beauty), as well as more sensational writers like Victor Hugo, Arthur Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard and the controversial Olive Schreiner. While most of these authors had admirable moral aims, many of their plots included references to murder, drug use and illegitimacy, as well as graphic scenes of poverty. Clearly, no attempt was made to shelter Brigden's literary experience of life.

Brigden was a member of an extended family. In addition to the Ontario relatives, there was a host of Manitoba aunts, uncles and cousins. Her journals record frequent visits back and forth and close companionship at holidays and other times. The Brigden household was filled with music and games, club meetings and church groups. She recalled one evening at home as "a wild time as usual - ping pong and dancing...parchesa(sic)and crokinole."³⁵ It was a temperance household, but not a solemn one.

Housework held little attraction for Brigden. She belittled her domestic skills such as sewing, complained about having to cook and called housecleaning "horrid work." Stronger than her distaste for domestic work was her sense of duty as a daughter. Her comments against the work

³⁵ Brigden journals, 2 Nov., 1904.

usually coincided with periods of her mother's illness, when the burden of the work fell upon her.

Brigden was seventeen years when Stillman, the eldest child, died suddenly.³⁶ Although a doctor was called out, he could do nothing for him and Stillman hovered in and out of consciousness for five days. Brigden was with him when he died. The large funeral two days later attested to his popularity and a rather heroic note was added to the proceedings when members of the football club he had helped organize only a few months earlier were his pallbearers.

While signs of mourning were expected, the Brigden family imposed certain restrictions on its public behaviour. Concerning her first time back to church, Brigden wrote, "it seems very sad without Stillman with us at church, but I am a Brigden and I'll try and suffer in silence."³⁷ Brigden was very close to her brother emotionally and there was only a year's difference between their ages. For months after his death, Brigden's diaries reveal that her thoughts were frequently on Stillman, grieving his death and idealizing his memory.

A year later, Brigden's loneliness was compounded by the family's move to Napinka. Reluctant to leave familiar surroundings, she had difficulty making new friends at

³⁶ Brigden journals, 23 June, 1905. The cause of death was not disclosed in her journal. There was previous mention of typhoid and a note of severe headaches.

³⁷ Brigden journals, 9 July, 1905.

first, and hints of an uncompromising and perhaps less than tactful personality emerged as she recorded her feelings.

Still grieving for Stillman, she wrote

It is so hard to be sad and lonely when others seem so happy and carefree with so many to love them and so many to love. I try to be nice and kind always. I am not a favourite...I suppose I have not yet successfully put on the hippocrate's(sic)veil which they say makes the most charming person.³⁸

She compared other men, both acquaintances and suitors, to the idealized memory of Stillman. Of course, they could not measure up to her standards and for a time, Brigden seemed to prefer the partnership of Stillman's memory to an intimate relationship with a living man. "I wonder if there will ever be anyone I like half as well as Stillman. I don't care if there isn't. I am quite happy without some man tagging after me."³⁹

Brigden's visits to the gravesite enabled her to maintain a kind of relationship with him which revealed an odd kind of jealous possessiveness. "He shared my joys and sorrows long ago, why not now? No other girl claimed his affections as I - he was mine then, he is mine now."⁴⁰

Eventually she recovered from her grief and the frequent visits to his grave were replaced by trips made on special occasions to decorate the site and wonder, in a general

³⁸ Brigden journals, 13 May, 1906.

³⁹ Brigden journals, 29 Dec., 1906.

⁴⁰ Brigden journals, 23 Sept., 1906.

sense, who would care for the graves of their "dead ones" when she was gone.

In Brigden's mind, Stillman's death did have one positive aspect. It removed him from the temptations and dangers of the world that appeared to threaten even her own family. Delighting in the visit of a relative's child, Brigden happily shared her bed with the baby, cuddling and playing with him. Then the contrast between the infant's innocence and the warnings she heard from church pulpits occurred to her.

What a bouncy babe he is - I love him as if he were my own...What if he should grow up a bad man? (B)e good and pure like you are now. I sometimes think my heart will break if Parry is led away. Only the other day a package of tobacco and a half smoked cigarette fell out of his pocket...(He claimed they belonged to someone else)...Oh, I want to die when I see my bonnie brother, a tobacco chewer and smoker, a drinker perhaps and then what these evil habits lead to, a gambler and a thief or perhaps even worse...a libertine. Oh, I hope and pray that he will keep himself clean and pure for some worthy woman. How thankful I am that Stillman is safe.⁴¹

Brigden's mourning did not characterize the rest of her life, but it may have influenced certain aspects of it. It is possible that her grief kept her from forming, at least for a time, close relationships with other young men. However, by depriving her of an older brother through whom to live vicariously, Stillman's death could have strengthened Brigden's independence, as it did for Elizabeth

⁴¹ Brigden journals, 30 Oct., 1906.

Cady Stanton, American suffragist. Stanton's only brother died when she was eleven, and she recalled how, reacting in part to her deeply grieving father, she worked hard to replace or equal the son, including the pursuit of her education.⁴² Brigden may also have worked hard to win, at least in her own mind, the continued approval of her much loved brother.

Brigden's reaction to Stillman's death was not a particularly unusual one for that period. For example, some of the journal entries of author Katherine Mansfield were addressed to her dead brother "Chummie."

Expressing a sense of immediate communion with him, she vows to write every day. Chummie, dead, belongs completely to her...he has no other existence beyond his responsiveness to her. His readiness to understand is...the complementary shape to her need to express.⁴³

Even before the death of Stillman, Brigden was expressing restlessness with the confines of small town and rural Manitoba. She dreamed of escape, of a life of purpose. Two avenues for that were marriage and education. Her first proposal came from an unnamed suitor. Missing her brother and preoccupied by the extra work of a harvest team, Brigden recalled the offer.

Cooking over a hot stove for a lot of ungrateful men is know(sic)fun. Sometimes I wish I had taken (name deleted) proposal and married him. He would

⁴² Jelinek, The Tradition of Women's Autobiography, p.113.

⁴³ Robert Fothergill, Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries, (London: Oxford University Press), 1974, p.125.

have used me like a queen but I can't help but think he was beneath me, still if I had married him, I should have probably been happy with him in the home he would have made for me at _____. I suppose instead of the fancy free schoolgirl I am now I should have been _____'s dignified little wife for of course we would have been married long ago. Poor boy, I wonder if he has forgotten me already. I hope he has for I'm sure I could never care for him in the right way. None of the family know of this I could never bear to tell even mother yet...I have never written of this affair before - I must stop or I will be getting sentimental and I hate sentimentality.⁴⁴

Even though her mystery love would have, in Brigden's imagination, treated her like a queen, Brigden was unable to accept the proposal. It did not seem to her that her youth stood in the way, although it is debatable whether her family would have allowed her to marry while so young. It was rather that by her own standards, the marriage would have been unsuitable because she could not care for him "in the right way." To Brigden, marriage was a special, serious relationship between two people, not something to be undertaken for the sake of convenience or to escape an undesirable situation. The proposal may have been little more than a youthful fantasy, but it revealed Brigden's opinion that marriage should be by choice, to the right partner and contain at least some romantic feelings.

A few years later, a casual companionship with Charley Molison, a friend of Stillman's, eventually progressed to the point where, once again, Brigden had to confront "the

⁴⁴ Brigden journals, 17 Sept., 1906.

marriage question." He attended the same church as Brigden (his appearance or absence carefully noted in her diaries), and friends teased them about being a couple. Their friendship was part of a larger friendship of a group of young people. They worked together on a church Christmas concert, but had not really singled one another out as steady company. Since Molison had known her brother before his death, he was probably sensitive to Brigden's melancholy. Brigden declared, "I like him fine - of course, I don't intend to marry him anymore that he does me."⁴⁵

But like her contemporaries, she knew marriage was more a case of inevitability than choice, and she entertained the idea of Molison as a romantic possibility, while trying to deny her interest. "Got a couple of sugar smiles from C.M. hope to goodness he's not badly stuck for (I) positively am not - yet - still I think I shall marry someday, but not for a good long time yet - not til I get a good education."⁴⁶ She put her intellectual interests before her romantic ones, and was aware of the difficulties of pursuing an education, or perhaps even a career, once married and caring for the family that inevitably followed.

The friendship continued even after the Brigdens moved to Napinka, and developed, at least on one side, into something more serious. Her confused feelings troubled her.

⁴⁵ Brigden journals, 20 Nov., 1905.

⁴⁶ Brigden journals, 31 Dec., 1905.

Insisting that they were just friends, she scolded herself for leading him on with softly spoken words, smiles and attentive listening "that come so naturally to me that I scarcely realize what I done(sic). But Beatrice Brigden this has got to stop ... I think I'll go away somewhere."⁴⁷ Finally, on the "fatal 10th of July" Molison proposed to Brigden on the way home from the local Sports Day. She reacted with surprise, annoyed at his confidence and persistence. She refused and decided it would be best to avoid him for awhile. She ended the entry angrily, writing "I hate men anyway." Months later, she recalled the conversation:

I can still hear it yet - that half sad, half hopeful, 'I suppose you never knew before Beatrice that I loved you' (It meant) so much to him, so little to me. And then he begged me to try just a little to care. I am sure I should like to have obliged him, but it was impossible. I wonder if there will ever anybody I like half as well as Stillman?⁴⁸

Brigden struggled to come to terms with her reluctance to marry and scolded herself after witnessing a neighbour caring for a sick child. She is "certainly an example of motherly and wifely devotion - take that will you Miss Brigden."⁴⁹ But Brigden was not afraid of being single, although she seems to have had few admirable role models.

⁴⁷ Brigden journals, 1 June, 1906.

⁴⁸ Brigden journals, 29 Dec., 1906.

⁴⁹ Brigden journals, 6 Oct., 1905.

"I don't think because one is single it is necessary to become crabbed and cranky like Miss G. or Miss W. I don't intend to."⁵⁰

After her refusal of marriage, the relationship with Molison continued on a friendly basis. They attended sporting events together and met at skating parties, and he seemed to have accepted the limitations Brigden put on their friendship. "I am fond of the lad,"⁵¹ she admitted, but preferred to consider him a pal rather than a partner. Another gentleman, Mr. P. received regular notation in Brigden's diaries, visiting for tea, playing tennis, until he, like Molison, realized Brigden was not interested in marriage.⁵²

Brigden's last recorded marriage proposal came in 1912 from Harry C., and left her "simply dumbfounded - it seems almost absurd when I never even went out with him."⁵³ The two did share an interest in church work, and his marriage offer to Brigden may have been inspired by a search for a suitable minister's wife, since he joined the ministry a few weeks after proposing.

With her record of refusals, it might be inferred that

⁵⁰ Brigden journals, 6 Aug., 1906.

⁵¹ Brigden journals, 1 Feb., 1908.

⁵² Her sister seemed to share Brigden's lack of interest in matrimony at this time, as Mr. P. learned when she showed Dell a photo of himself and his brother, "to see if Dell would not like his brother - I think she was not greatly impressed but said he would do in a pinch." Brigden journals, 17 Aug., 1908.

⁵³ Brigden journals, 6 Aug., 1912.

Brigden did not like or feared that idea of marriage. On the contrary, she wrote of the comforts and companionship to be found in a good marriage. "One can't help but wish for a strong arm to help over the rough places and at night when tired with the snarls and tangles of the day to be folded close while some sympathetic ear listens to it all."⁵⁴

Personal freedom was also important to Brigden. When one of her friends married, she called it a good match and was happy for the couple, yet declared in her journals that "her (friend's) fiance Jack was all to her, my freedom is more to me."⁵⁵

In contrast to her avoidance of marriage, Brigden spoke frequently of wanting an education. She enjoyed learning and saw school as an important personal goal, perhaps even as a means of escape. In September 1905, she received news that two of her friends would be enrolling in a business course at Brandon College, which offered courses in typing, shorthand and stenography. Her mother was against the idea, but could not sway Brigden's growing preoccupation with finding a career outside of home.

Anne C...and Chris are going to attend business college in Brandon. I thot(sic)of trying to go but mother is opposed. So I will try and go to school this winter and try for the entrance in July. I must be something. I feel if I should stay here on the farm I would be a cross old maid

⁵⁴ Brigden journals, 11 March, 1906.

⁵⁵ Brigden journals, 6 Aug., 1906.

at thirty.⁵⁶

There was no practical reason for Brigden to continue her studies. She came from a financially comfortable family whose company she enjoyed and was in many ways a marriageable young woman. Furthermore, Brigden's mother's health was uncertain, and Brigden helped out at home, struggling to keep from resenting her mother as one of the barriers to further education.

Determining that she was going to be neither a cross old maid nor a dignified little wife in the near future, Brigden concentrated on her education. Her school work was going well, and she received "very good marks on everything" during the 1906 Christmas exams. As well, her parents were supportive of some of her other interests. Although business college was out of the question, they offered elocution and more music lessons, and for the time, Brigden could settle for those:

Father says I can take elocution lessons as soon as opportunity affords. That sounds encouraging...Mother is not well and I am afraid that I will not be able to go to school much longer. But if we get a piano in the spring, I can take lessons and Father says painting and elocution, so I wouldn't be so bad(sic)off.⁵⁷

Brigden seemed to distinguish between learning for its own sake and skills which she considered personally useful. Promises of lessons to develop the more ladylike skills such

⁵⁶ Brigden journals, 17 Sept., 1905.

⁵⁷ Brigden journals, 28 Nov., 1906.

as music and painting would be diverting and distracting, but ultimately failed to satisfy her. "Napinka is such a crazy little place. I don't like it one bit. I would like to get away to learn something."⁵⁸

She entered her final year of school that fall, after passing spring exams in geography, composition, physiology, agriculture, bookkeeping, spelling and geometry. Of the six students in her class, only one other besides Brigden had passed.⁵⁹ The final year added classes in literature, math, algebra, composition, history, drawing and botany.

During this time, her talent for public speaking was gaining recognition. She was called on to give more readings and recitals at church events for Epworth League and Christmas entertainment. Brigden clearly enjoyed the attention. "I gave 'A Scene from the Last Days of Pompeii'...and received so many compliments so I hope it was enjoyed. I could have hugged the crowd, they gave me such perfect attention."⁶⁰

Personal acclaim temporarily soothed some of her dissatisfaction. Still, she wondered "if I will ever get out of this way of mine, where I feel restless."⁶¹ This occasional restlessness was far removed from her unhappiness

⁵⁸ Brigden journals, 1 Dec., 1906.

⁵⁹ Brigden journals, 27 July, 1907.

⁶⁰ Brigden journals, 28 Oct., 1907.

⁶¹ Brigden journals, 19 Nov., 1907.

the year that Stillman died, and Brigden concluded that 1907 had been

a glad old year...My successful midsummer exam and countless other things have made me my old self again. Now I can laugh for the mere joy of living, of loving and being loved by those that are dear. The vacancy my laddie has left is not filled but I have learned some deep lessons while the wound was healing.⁶²

Brigden's attention also focused more and more on her church activities. She and her family hosted Women's Missionary Society meetings, she had acquired a regular Sunday school class to teach, and she was often called upon to sing solos in the choir. She was part of the entertainment program when the Methodist and Presbyterian churches held anniversary celebrations, which included various recitations. Once when Brigden's performance was greeted with calls for an encore, she observed, "how easy some crowds are."⁶³ Her modesty did not hide the enjoyment she felt in performing for an audience.

No sooner did Brigden seem to be settling in from the move to Napinka than the family uprooted itself again, this time to travel east to Ontario. Both families had relatives there, and a visit with her mother's side meant a reacquaintance with her Quaker roots.⁶⁴ The family stayed long enough for Brigden and her sister to attend

⁶² Brigden journals, 31 Dec., 1907.

⁶³ Brigden journals, 12 Oct., 1908.

⁶⁴ There is no journal for the year in Ontario. Most likely, she was still writing, considering the novelty of the journey and the many relatives that she would be meeting for the first time.

Belleville's co-educational Albert College, founded by Reverend Albert Carmen, Sr. Here Brigden finally found, at least temporarily, the larger and more stimulating environment for which she yearned. There were greater educational opportunities, more towns and cities to visit, and the companionship of a ready made family of relatives.

Upon their return to Brandon in 1910, Brigden lost no time in continuing her studies, specifically elocution classes offered through Brandon College and taught by Miss Trotter, herself a graduate of Albert College.⁶⁵ Trotter used poetry readings and dramatic recitations in her class and sometimes assigned political topics as speech subjects as well. Brigden's practical training was supported by theory courses such as Voice Culture, Foundations of Expression and Harmonic Gymnastics. The course work was building Brigden's confidence and ability and nurturing a latent interest in public speaking. This professional training would prove useful when she began seriously to consider career choices a few years later. Meanwhile, Brigden's growing expertise was recognised when she was invited to Saskatchewan to help judge an elocution competition.

Her diploma was awarded by the Department of Expression and Physical Culture, which, according to the 1913-1914

⁶⁵ Eileen McFadden, "'...equal to the most efficient Ladies College of Canada,' Baptist Education in the Rural West: Brandon College 1880-1920." Unpublished paper presented at the Manitoba History Conference, University of Manitoba, 1988, p.13.

college calendar, aimed to "secure a thorough mastery of mind, voice and body essential to all speaking professions..(to)...conquer self-consciousness and secure command of one's power under all circumstances."⁶⁶

Brigden's later career achievements would prove testament to the success of the department's teaching.⁶⁷

Brandon College was an important influence on the formation of Brigden's attitudes and ambitions. Its approach "was to provide cultural and spiritual fulfillment opportunities and to broaden career path options."⁶⁸ It taught theology and arts as well as commercial courses and "Lady Principle" Ernestine Whiteside acknowledged the "stern reality" of women competing with men for work. In addition to the College's high academic standards, it stressed Christian values, "service to humanity...(and aimed to surround the student with)...positive Christian influences and distinctly Christian ideas."⁶⁹ These ideas received a more radical interpretation than they might have had elsewhere, as a few of the professors at Brandon College later helped organize the Labor Church there.

At the time of her graduation, Brigden was eighteen

⁶⁶ Brandon College Calendar, 1913-1914, p.54, Brandon University Archives.

⁶⁷ For all her serious studies, Brigden never lacked a sense of humour. When the College hosted a masquerade dance, she attended dressed as a Quaker. There she "promenaded with a jester, a courtier and a Queen's own rifleman and came home with a priest" all while dressed in the costume of her maternal ancestors. Brigden journals, 17 Feb., 1911.

⁶⁸ McFadden, p.13.

⁶⁹ McFadden, p.6.

years old. She had received professional training at a College that might have been custom-made for her, combining an emphasis on Christian ideas and service with an awareness of women's career interests. It must have opened her eyes to new ideas and certainly the examples of the professional women on staff gave Brigden food for thought. In addition, there was her year in Ontario, the total result being a more self-confident, well-travelled, and educated young woman ready to take the first steps to leadership in the woman's community of church reform work. Her education may have set her somewhat apart from some of her contemporaries, but she continued to share their values. She behaved with outward modesty about her talents and was willing to use them in the service of the community through the church.

It was a logical progression given her history and the limited opportunities open to women, to turn her talents and energies to the service of the church. As Marilyn MacPherson has noted, "there was a legitimacy about belonging to a church women's organization. Even the most patriarchal father or husband could not object to women in the household participating in such a Christian effort."⁷⁰ For Brigden, church work offered respectability to her ambitions, as well as answering certain personal and spiritual needs. Church work was also, as it was for so

⁷⁰ Marilyn MacPherson, "Head, Heart and Purse: The Presbyterian Women's Missionary Society in Canada 1876-1920," in Butcher, ed. Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West. (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press), 1985.

many women, an important source of training and skill development, administrative and leadership experience. As well as increasing her personal horizons, the experience challenged her larger perception of the relationship between the Church and society.

She met women who volunteered a few hours of their time in charity work and missionaries and deaconesses who devoted their entire lives to the Church. These encounters validated Brigden's own ambitions and exposed her to different attitudes about the relationship between the Church, its congregation and the changing role of women. The deaconesses, for example,

translated Social Gospel ideology into concrete programs of relief...to the poor, the homeless and the immigrant...Most of the reading material...expressed the belief that some fundamental societal changes must occur before the individual could be improved...With exposure to these kinds of critical ideas, deaconesses were placed in the forefront of the social reform thinking of their day.⁷¹

Their feminism was less obvious, appearing as goals of improved opportunities, better education and more recognition for their efforts. If they were not radical reformers, they were at least independent, and these organizations were "crucial to the development of the women's movement in Canada."⁷² Out of these apparently conservative groups came more radical social critics and

⁷¹ Nancy Hall, "'Not by Might, Nor By Power, but by My Spirit': Women Workers in the United Church of Canada 1890-1940," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1986. pp.41, 57.

⁷² Alison Prentice et. al., ed. Canadian Women: A History, (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich), 1988, p.172.

reformers, including Brigden.

Where Brigden had previously been part of the general membership of organizations, she began to assume positions of leadership in some of them. In addition to continuing with choir and the Women's Missionary Society, she was elected President of the Epworth League and Assistant Secretary of the Royal Templars, a temperance organization.⁷³ She attended a session of evangelical meetings sponsored by the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, and she and her sister Dell spent a week at a church camp near Killarney. Her interest in reform work was emerging at this time through the church, and temperance activities, all traditional areas of women's interests and part of their assigned role as reformers of society. Brigden's friends and sisters were members of the choir and Epworth League and her mother also belonged to the WMS, so Brigden's involvement in religious activities was readily sanctioned by all.

Brigden usually attended three services on Sundays. As well, she taught Sunday school classes, one of boys and one of girls, the latter were "supposed to be the worst in the school, but I liked them fine."⁷⁴ She learned different approaches to her students and devised games to encourage

⁷³ The Epworth League was a youth group with religious aims, which turned its attention to social problems around 1905. Among the study materials used by the group were works by Woodsworth. Regeher, p.68.

⁷⁴ Brigden journals, 10 April, 1910.

friendly competition, but was able to enforce discipline when necessary. She became friends with many of her pupils, and they sometimes visited her at home, invited in as a group for taffy pulls or tea and games. When the Herbert Booth Mission first opened and witnesses were invited up to the front to testify their faith, Brigden was gratified to see one of her Sunday school pupils make his way to the front.

Brigden participated in the Epworth League at a number of levels, from Literary Convenor to third Vice President. Part of the attraction was its sociability, featuring such events as autumn corn roasts, which Brigden described as "loads of fun, big crowds, met a good number of people."⁷⁵ She and Dell occasionally sang at the meetings and Brigden assisted with the Junior department.

The League organized debates on contemporary issues such as immigration policy and women's suffrage. They also heard a variety of speakers, one of who addressed the League on socialism, which, according to Brigden, was "a splendid talk" and very well received by the audience.⁷⁶

The League did not restrict its activities to its membership circle. One evening it entertained at the local Ruthenian school. In return, the students sang in Ukrainian

⁷⁵ Brigden journals, 22 Aug., 1910.

⁷⁶ Brigden journals, 17 Aug., 1911. Unfortunately, Brigden offered no information on his name or the points he made during his talk.

for their guests. Another time, members visited an Indian industrial school, where Brigden was impressed to meet a "young man who is returning to his people as a missionary and sang for us in Cree."⁷⁷ These are Brigden's first recorded encounters with cultures outside her own Anglo-Saxon experience. She seemed sincerely interested in them and commented favourably on the Ukrainian and Cree students retaining their original languages. These experiences offered Brigden a chance to examine her own ideas about the attitude of the Church and its missionaries to such issues and immigration and cultural integration.

She also devoted much of her time to the WMS and Sunday school promotion. Brigden was "more than astonished" to be elected President of the Missionary Circle and she was Brandon's delegate at the WMS conference held there. There was no shortage of speakers to address the Circle, including missionaries from posts as far away as Brazil and Japan. They met with the Circle to inform them of the progress and necessity of the work, which received much of its financial support from the Societies. Through this work, Brigden met many women, many of them single, who found both personal and professional fulfillment in the service of the Church.

Even summer holidays could have religious overtones. In August, 1911, Brigden attended a week long church camp at Souris, a combination of lectures and study sessions broken

⁷⁷ Brigden journals, 21 March, 1910.

up by swimming and boating. Camp attendance in this instance was made up mainly of young boys, and Brigden found the girls there rather distant. However, with her sister and a few friends, they managed to enjoy themselves and made an impression on the others. "We had a good deal of fun with our yell, Mr. S. who is South African calls us 'Savages' and the name sticks."⁷⁸

The sessions also made a more serious impression on her. She noted the visit by "Reverend Woodsworth from the All People's Mission."⁷⁹ The Epworth League and WMS would have made Brigden familiar with Woodsworth's work, which was already the subject of church sermons and lectures by visiting missionaries. Other issues discussed at the camps included immigration, Sunday school and Epworth League methods, WMS work and voice culture.

Her interest in temperance work continued to grow, supported by her own family's example, her membership in the Royal Templars, and frequent sermons and lectures on the topic. In view of the success of her public recitals, temperance work was within her ability and the acceptable scope of activities for women.

It would be wrong to imagine all of Brigden's interests as church-bound: she was involved in many activities outside the religious sphere. She attended political

⁷⁸ Brigden journals, 10 Aug., 1911.

⁷⁹ Brigden journals, 22 July, 1908.

meetings and debates, maintaining the family reputation as politically aware, even though women were not yet entitled to vote. She joined the local Art Club and was often in the audience for musical or literary events. She heard Nellie McClung read from The Second Chance, and being a voracious reader herself, was confident enough to opine that she preferred McClung's earlier work, Sewing Seeds in Danny.

Brigden's interests and ambitions seemed to propel her beyond the small arena offered by Brandon. In 1911, she acted on her desire to study to "be something", and decided to move to Toronto to attend the Conservatory of Music. Due to the planning involved in such a choice, it was obviously not a sudden decision. But out of personal reticence or a reluctance to discuss something so important to her before it actually came about, Brigden gave no hint of her plans and no detailed reason for her return east.

Relatives near the Toronto college meant that Brigden would not be without the friendship or guidance of family ties, lessening any reluctance on her parents' part to let their daughter leave home alone. They were no doubt proud of Brigden's amateur career as a public speaker and may have decided her talents deserved to be further developed. They may also have noticed her restlessness at home and her ambition as well.

This trip was the fulfillment of years of ambition, to go to school, to 'get away.' Perhaps she already had a

career in mind. Only twenty-three, she now seemed committed to her single status and courting couples among her friends were more likely to make her feel alienated than romantic. Commenting on one particular church gathering, Brigden wrote that "all the lovers (were) here tonight. I was strictly out of it."⁸⁰ If Brigden was passing up marriage, something concrete and serious would have to take its place. Going away for special courses was one way to emphasize her commitment to the "marriage alternative."⁸¹

Despite her excitement, Brigden left Brandon with understandably mixed emotions. "Hated to leave", she wrote, "mother in particular"⁸². Her reluctance was fueled by close feelings towards her family, but there must have been some guilt as well, as the oldest daughter leaving behind family responsibilities, including a mother with uncertain health.

The year of school in Ontario provided the first opportunity for Brigden to experience independence. Boarding at the college, she was free of relatives' censure,

⁸⁰ Brigden journals, 2 July, 1911.

⁸¹ Many of Brigden's contemporaries felt the same conflict between marriage and career. Charlotte Whitton, director of the Canadian Council of Child Welfare and mayor of Ottawa for five terms, also believed that "singlehood gave greater scope to women with career aspirations...For women who chose to pursue a career, it was often believed necessary to forgo the prescribed path of marriage. In an age without sophisticated birth control methods, and even more critical, without the moral and social justification that allowed a combination of career with motherhood, there were few alternatives. Women either married or pursued full-time careers. Only in exceptional cases were they able to combine both. "Rooke and Schnell, No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia), 1987. pp. 48, 56-57. Agnes MacPhail also rejected marriage in order to continue her work, but was sensitive about her single status "in an era when marriage was highly valued." and publicized her proposals. Prentice, ed. Canadian Women. pp.280-281.

⁸² Brigden journals, 27 Sept., 1911.

even though they were near enough to provide company at Christmas. The first few days at the college were inauspicious. There was no one to meet her when she arrived, so Brigden proceeded to settle herself. "My trunk came up shortly and was left in the hall and I was forced to carry my goods piecemeal to the third storey. Such was my welcome here."⁸³

Over the next few days she registered for classes, including voice theory, Shakespeare, literature and physical culture. She met her roommates, fellow students and instructors, and found them and the school "lovely. I know I shall like them very much."⁸⁴

Brigden enjoyed both the academic and social aspects of university life and found that even quiet Sunday afternoons held potential for fun. Friends gathered in each others' rooms to sew and play cards, and in one instance, Brigden and two others "made fudge over the gas jet and other not very Sunday things."⁸⁵ She and the other students met for dances and snowshoe parties in addition to visiting churches and missions.

The Methodist Church was still a focus of her life, but she was exposed to different religions, attending a Catholic Easter Mass and visiting a Jewish Mission home. When school

⁸³ Brigden journals, 29 Sept., 1911.

⁸⁴ Brigden journals, 4 Oct., 1911.

⁸⁵ Brigden journals, 22 Oct., 1911.

work was not so pressing, she took advantage of the attractions of the large city; live theatre, department stores and sightseeing.

Toronto also offered a glimpse of the less attractive side of urbanization, notably overcrowding, poverty, and poor working conditions. Where Brigden had previously given recitals in local schools or at church teas, she and her fellow students now went to read and speak to the women and men employed in the factories. She gave no report of the audience's reaction, but it is likely that the college aimed to provide "uplifting entertainment" for the workers, rather than educate the students or encourage serious dialogue. As these events sometimes took place over the lunch period, it is interesting to consider just how welcome this "entertainment" would have been.

The tours of some of the factories seemed to inspire her with a kind of faith in progress and modernization, although she later claimed that it was her stay in Toronto that first awoke her social conscience, as she came to lament the "utter lack of factory inspection, unsanitary conditions, (and) slavery of low wages."⁸⁶ In this she echoes the experience of other reformers such as Woodsworth and Jane Addams. The woman who had once responded to the possibility of her brother's use of tobacco with prayer was now learning of more serious material problems requiring

⁸⁶ Brigden, "One Woman's Campaign," p.43.

more than prayer.

Toronto also offered a wide exposure to those who were working to alleviate these problems. Visiting one of her cousins who was a nurse, Brigden received a tour of the hospital where she worked and met a role model in this woman who had a socially commendable, Christian spirited career. Brigden also attended graduation ceremonies for a deaconess training school and found it interesting to see "all those girls dedicating their lives to work for others."⁸⁷ Instead of listening to individual missionaries addressing study groups, Brigden now had the opportunity to attend a conference of missionaries, complete with films outlining their work. She was presented with actual career options; nursing, missionary and deaconess work. All these were women working hard to alleviate the problems that caught Brigden's attention.

The Conservatory courses challenged her and she worked hard to maintain her third place standing. By the end of the exams, she wrote, in the manner of students everywhere, "By today, I didn't care if I ever passed or not,"⁸⁸ so grateful was she that the intense regime of studying had come to an end. After a year at the Toronto Conservatory of

⁸⁷ Brigden Journals, 25 April, 1912.

⁸⁸ Brigden Journals, 18 May, 1912.

Music, she received her diploma.⁸⁹ With proof of her qualifications, some months of relative independence, a headful of new encounters and inspiration, Brigden returned to Brandon, anxious to see her family once again.

By this time, Brandon's Methodist Church had acquired a new minister, Reverend Albert E. Smith. Brigden first mentioned hearing him at the annual summer camp, where she had a class of pupils while her sister was assigned the Junior group. The arrival of Smith coincided with the first summer camp that Brigden wrote about with any kind of religious interest. "We are all enjoying ourselves immensely. Mr. Smith is simply grand... gave a splendid devotional address."⁹⁰ Attending his regular sermons were just as inspiring. "A rainy Sunday. Went to church all day. Mr. Smith is so interesting that I never want to lose a word."⁹¹ At this point it is difficult to know if anything in Smith's attitude pointed to his future Communist involvement, but Brigden was certainly appreciative of his sermons. His wife Mable would have met the Brigden women through the WMS.

Another speaker who challenged Brigden's perception of the church's role in was Reverend William Ivens. She heard

⁸⁹ This large parchment, still framed in her collection at the P.A.M., testified to Brigden having completed the Artist's course, with "instruction in Expression and Physical Culture, and honourably passed the various examinations in that Department as prescribed in the Conservatory calender, this Diploma is granted, entitling her to be styled an Associate of the Toronto Conservatory of Music.

⁹⁰ Brigden journals, 5 Aug., 1913.

⁹¹ Brigden journals, 17 Aug., 1913.

him at a year end Epworth League convention, where he spoke on the summer school program. She found his comments "perfectly crazy, the preachers were wild. He took so many cuts at them."⁹² Smith and Ivens, like Woodsworth, became role models for Brigden. They belonged to the more radical social gospel wing of the Church which supported the labour movement and later became actively involved in politics. Their emphasis was more on temporal than spiritual concerns. Woodsworth, by this time, had resigned from the ministry and Smith and Ivens were to find their beliefs less and less compatible with official Methodist guidelines. When the 1919 General Strike intensified the divisions in ministerial ranks, Brigden unhesitatingly chose to support the dissident ministers and made a few harsh observations of her own.

With her Conservatory training, Brigden soon moved beyond Christmas church concert recitals. At one successful performance, she noted that "the people were all surprised at my youth. (She was twenty-five years old). One kindly disposed old soul rose and requested the audience not to call me back so often. 'You'll kill the poor dear child.'"⁹³ She enjoyed performing and the attention it brought her and the various causes for which she performed, but it was her combination of religious involvement and speaking skills that finally led to the long awaited career

⁹² Brigden journals, 1 Dec., 1913.

⁹³ Brigden journals, 27 Oct., 1913.

opportunity. At the 1913 church summer camp, she met Mr. Clark, who was a "boy's worker" with the Methodist church department of Social Service and Evangelism. He had noticed Brigden's talent and

in many conversations...urged me to take on a similar task among girls, to lecture and counsel on sex hygiene and social problems. It seemed both an adventurous and chancy undertaking for a single young woman barely into her twenties, but I allowed him to mention me to Dr. T. Albert Moore, Clark's superior.⁹⁴

Late that September, Brigden received a conditional offer of work from Moore on behalf of the Social Service and Evangelical Branch of the Methodist Church. Moore had been a speaker at the summer school and Brigden had likely heard of the Social Service work in Toronto.

Moore asked for Brigden's personal and professional references and wanted to know more about her background and religious beliefs. He noted that he would not be able to meet her until the middle of November, but Brigden was so interested in the work that she turned down another, unspecified offer of work in order to remain free for the position with the church.

In her letter to Moore, she described her religious background with specific references to her mother, who was "a Quakeress by training and we were educated likewise that the only life was the Christian life." She recounted a series of revival meetings which, in addition to "several

⁹⁴ Brigden, "One Woman's Campaign," p.44.

months of serious thought" brought her to consciously and deliberately reaffirm her faith and try and live according to "Christian law." As for "winning others for the Master," Brigden offered only her sister Dell as one whose faith was "the direct result of my personal work and prayers." She had been shy about speaking to others about her religious faith, but claimed that it grew "easier the oftener I speak for Him." Having moved four times in the past three years, she was uncertain who to offer as a reference, and finally asked Smith to write on her behalf.

She was much more confident concerning her professional qualifications, stating that her reference for the public readings "will not flatter and I am not afraid of the truth." Furthermore, she asserted that a "half despised art course has proved value at last and if I enter this work, I shall perfect myself in the drawing from memory every vital organ of the female body."⁹⁵

While waiting for the chance to meet with Moore to discuss the job, she created a series of lectures for young girls, presented at the Assiniboine Avenue Methodist Church. The talk, euphemistically entitled "The Marriage Tie Among the Birds", foreshadowed the work she would soon undertake with the Methodist Church on a wider scale.

Moore wrote to Brigden again in October to advise that he would be in Brandon in the middle of November. In reply,

⁹⁵ Correspondence, Brigden to Moore, 22 Sept., 1913.

she told him of her latest lecture series and the response which renewed her enthusiasm and sense of purpose. "The increased attendance, the general interest manifest - the teas and sad stories of some, keeps 'the work is worthwhile' running constantly through my head."⁹⁶ The response to her lectures was gratifying, strengthening her confidence if not her ego as well. "Perfectly astonishing how the girls have turned out, fifty girls present...(At the end of the short series)...the girls begged me to continue but my work crowded me too close."⁹⁷

When Moore asked for details about her lectures, Brigden modestly replied that she referred to them as talks. "It is less formal and my talks are scarcely worth of such a dignified term." She sent him an outline, explaining that it was incomplete, as

I am searching for suitable illustrations and shall have to adapt my discussion of venereal disease to the illustrations I am able to possess. Am not sure how you will view the introductory pages, but in teaching I have found Nature a never ending source of analogy. To me, an illustration from nature causes an intellectual approach to a subject usually coarse in aspect, partly through lack of words to express our thoughts without conveying a vulgar meaning and partly through the mental attitude presented to such discussions.⁹⁸

These few details offer a tantalizing glimpse of what seems to be a rather candid presentation on sex education,

⁹⁶ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 Oct., 1913.

⁹⁷ Brigden journals, 6 Nov., 1913.

⁹⁸ Correspondence, Brigden, 22 Sept., 1913.

likely presented in the context of family centred topics of sexual purity, marriage, child and health care. The Methodist Church promoted a series of sex education books, and it is probable that Brigden patterned her lectures on some of these, or similar publications in which common nature analogies, birds, flowers, and fish illustrated aspects of human reproduction.⁹⁹

Brigden defended the idea of a young, single woman as an able teacher and noted that "it has been my invariable observation that the people who discourse most learnedly on happy marriages and properly trained children are those who are neither married nor have children."¹⁰⁰ This lack of practical experience was not considered a handicap as many of the social reformers of the time were turning to so-called objective, scientific methods to analyse all and any aspects of life.

Just after her lecture series for young girls ended, Moore met with Brigden and offered her a position in his department, an offer succinctly noted in Brigden's journal. "Dr. Moore came over this a.m. and we made final arrangements that I should go as a lecturer with the Social and Moral Reform (department) of the Methodist Church."¹⁰¹

Brigden readily accepted Moore's offer of employment.

⁹⁹ Bliss, "Pure Books," p.89.

¹⁰⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 22 Sept., 1913.

¹⁰¹ Brigden journals, 14-15 Nov., 1913.

Her journals are silent on how she arrived at that decision, how she felt about it or what influence her parents may have had on that choice. At twenty-five, Brigden no longer noted her parents' support or discouragement, as she had done with the elocution lessons and business school. The timing of the job offer coincided with an Epworth convention in December, so the news interested many people, personal friends and co-workers who were "all in a commotion" over Brigden going away. She received congratulatory speeches and had to reply in an address at the convention.

The year had been a full and challenging one for her, but her "summing up" of 1913 rang with self confidence, optimism and religious faith. "It has been a hard year in so many ways - so many arrangements to make but it has been the best year, too. He has never left me forsaken and I can trust Him so much more now the New Year begins."¹⁰²

The new year brought Brigden's departure. And as with the Toronto College venture, she had some ambivalent moments. She was leaving more than family and friends. Her membership in the various clubs and groups had given her a familiar and comfortable role, as well as support and context for her work. "Down to the Mission to the League. Said good-bye to them all. They were most kind in their good-byes and it cost me something to leave that little band

¹⁰² Brigden journals, 31 Dec., 1913.

of workers."¹⁰³ The final Sunday at home was full of people phoning or visiting Brigden to wish her well. As with other decisions about her personal life, Brigden worried about its effect on her mother. "Mother seems to feel so badly I hate to go."¹⁰⁴

Health problems aside, it must have been difficult for Mrs. Brigden to see her daughter leave home. One son had died and the other had moved away to Saskatchewan. One daughter was now married and had moved to Port Arthur. That left only Mable and Beatrice at home. Now, Beatrice was leaving, the one who wrote so sincerely of her concerns and responsibilities towards her mother.

She did not mention her father's feelings. However, he had actively supported her desire for music and elocution lessons, so it was likely that he was very proud of his daughter's new career. Even if the family had not supported the general idea of a woman having a career, it was hard to criticize Brigden's particular choice. It was the opinion of many that women had certain "feminine" or "maternal" influences, and these could be used in the service of God.¹⁰⁵ It was difficult to see a church career as a selfish choice, because these women were doing God's work, a task for which their gender made them especially suited. On

¹⁰³ Brigden journals, 5 Jan., 1914.

¹⁰⁴ Brigden journals, 18 Jan., 1914.

¹⁰⁵ MacPherson, "Head, Heart and Purse," p.50.

Monday, 19 January 1914, Brigden left Brandon for La Crosse, Wisconsin where her training as a Methodist social service worker would officially began.

CHAPTER THREE**BRIGDEN AND THE METHODIST CHURCH 1914-1920**

The Department of Social Service and Evangelism of the Methodist Church: The objective of the Department shall be the application of principles of the Gospel of Jesus to the Economic, Political, Social and Moral relations of life, and the promotion of Evangelism throughout the Church.¹⁰⁶

Brigden was to spend almost seven years travelling across Canada and Newfoundland to speak on behalf of the Methodist Church. Many of her experiences during this period sound like the same story repeated over, with only names and locations changed. Whether it was 1914 or 1920, her work continued to surprise and, at times, offend some of her audience. The reactions varied from town to town, and despite being on the road for six and a half years, she was as likely to meet with opposition in her first year of work as she was in her last. The same could be said for the ministers' reactions. Some welcomed her and gave her every assistance to attract a large audience, others resented her presence and treated her with little respect.

There are two areas in which there was a clearly identifiable and chronological evolution. The most obvious was Brigden's progress as a professional social service worker, from a newly hired employee reading a book a day in a magazine office in La Crosse, Wisconsin, to an author of

¹⁰⁶ From letterhead of Brigden's introductory form letter, 1916.

social service pamphlets. As her abilities grew, so did her recognition and her confidence with audiences. The same obstacles reappeared, but they were met with a more competent and capable worker. The other change, less obvious but more profound, was her political awakening.

When the established church failed to address the "economic, political (and) social...relations of life" to Brigden's satisfaction, she took the next, and for women, newly available step of political action. Her church experience politicized her, but her social gospel goal to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth, remained with her. This political awakening was one of her reasons for her eventual break with the Methodist Church to work with Smith in Brandon's Labor Church. Like many others, she would find "larger fields of service outside the orthodox church."¹⁰⁷

The lecturer position was well suited to Brigden's interests and demonstrated abilities. In addition to her academic training, she had proven herself a capable speaker on stage before a variety of audiences. Having served in various executive positions, and been a long term member of temperance and missionary organizations, Brigden was a proven dedicated member of the Methodist Church and was well aware of the aims and the structures of the Church. In many ways, it was as if the job was custom made for her.

Brigden was both intelligent and ambitious. Even in an

¹⁰⁷ Correspondence, Brigden, 27 April, 1920.

era of limited work choices, Brigden would have chosen some kind of career. The term career is used here not in the sense of a specific job, but to refer to her life's work. Simply stated - Brigden wanted to help others. Her religious background encouraged her to search for a way to be of service, and she linked her religious values to solving practical problems. Her life's work was to help others - through moral and practical education, and eventually through political power.

Brigden did not preach or even assist the ministers in any direct way; in fact, some of her work did not address specifically theological issues. As the name Social Service and Evangelical Department implies, Brigden's role emphasized the social service aspect of the church. With her training, and the church sponsorship to give her work credibility, she was to guide and instruct young girls and women in religious matters and moral behavior. According to her promotional material, Brigden's position seems to have been the woman's equivalent to that of Clark who lectured on "The Life Problems of Boys and Young Men", and who had recommended her to Moore.

Brigden's position with the Department of Social Services was a recently created one. The 1911 official letter of introduction for Clark spoke of the newly appointed "Standing Committee on Evangelism" and of a motion authorizing the department to "employ...under its auspices

and direction...Moral Reform Evangelists as Specialists in Social Reform work, for such time and in such spheres is necessary."¹⁰⁸ When Brigden was hired, there seemed to be few, if any, other women working for the Methodist Church as lecturers. In addition to continually having to promote the work, many practical details had to be worked out by Brigden herself. As well, the distance and speed of her travelling imply that only a few were responsible for the whole of Canada and Newfoundland.¹⁰⁹

Because of the novelty, there was little to guide Brigden on practical matters. She often wrote her own lectures and promotional material and was frequently responsible for arranging her own schedule. Because of her growing experience and her forthright manner in describing it, Moore came to rely on Brigden for guidance in certain situations and willingly gave her a free hand to proceed as she thought best.

Brigden was hired at a salary of fifty dollars a month, plus board and room and travelling expenses. This was raised later to sixty dollars a year, an increase she was not expecting during the period of wartime austerity.

¹⁰⁸ Methodist Church of Canada, Photocopy from United Church Archives, University of Toronto, Department of Temperance and Moral Reform 1902-1926, Box 4, File 63, Clark's form letter, 15 June, 1911. See appendix.

¹⁰⁹ The amount of independent decisions, the lack of prepared material, the reaction to and misunderstandings of the work, the uncertainty over privileges to which she was entitled (for example, no one knew if Brigden qualified for the 'deaconess discount' on her train fares) and the informality of her year-end report all lead me to believe that there were very few lecturers. An archivist at the United Church Archives in Toronto was unaware of files on any other woman working in the same capacity as Brigden. Correspondence, Mark van Stempvoort to researcher, 26 June 1989.

However, she viewed herself as self-supporting and was therefore concerned about the money. When she later wrote her letter of resignation, she accused the church of being unconcerned with single women's economic difficulties.

Brigden sent in a monthly expense report, and received her paycheque and expense money through the mail. Frequently, the money was late, sometimes by more than a month. As a result, Brigden was sometimes forced to use the donations from the local churches which she normally forwarded to the head office in Toronto. Brigden usually sent these donations in shortly after receiving them, so there was never a large emergency fund on which to rely. One of the more strongly worded inquiries after her wages was in June 1917, when Brigden warned the office to "please send expense money by return mail or else I may be left by the side of the road when July 1st arrives."¹¹⁰

Unlike the organized courses for deaconesses, Brigden's preparation for social service work was informal and largely self guided. She arrived in La Crosse, Wisconsin in January 1914 and was boarded with the Steadwell family, friends of Moore and associated with the World Purity Organization. For over a month she "read carnivorously" on the origins of reform work, "regulation of vice and the psychology of sex," searching beyond attitudes of individual responsibility to arrive at an understanding

¹¹⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 12 June, 1917.

of the "economic side" of reform.¹¹¹

Brigden's interest in the economic aspect of the reform movement foreshadowed some of the conflict that would emerge between Brigden and the Methodist Church; it also explains her interest in politics, which would specifically address economic questions. Considering influences of moral development, Brigden began to look seriously at living and working conditions and less at religious practices or ethnic background.

Steadwell published a magazine called The Light and his office served as Brigden's makeshift study, where her routine was arranged around folding and cutting sessions for the publication. Practical training during this period consisted of "reading voraciously" and attending seminars and meetings (Brigden does not offer any further details). To balance this intense regime were numerous dinners and sleigh parties, including a farewell party when she left for Chicago, en route to Toronto.

Brigden was one of the many social reformers inspired by the secular settlement movement in Canada, England and the United States. In Chicago she hoped to visit Jane Addams, well known for her work at Hull House. She hoped to spend three days in Chicago to see "as much of Hull House and the other institutions of like nature as I could see in

¹¹¹ B.D., 2 March, 1914.

a short time."¹¹² To her disappointment, she was only able to arrange a one day stop in Chicago and even that was not spent entirely at Hull House. Steadwell "thought that there could be no particular value in such a visit"¹¹³ when Brigden suggested her plan to him, but Brigden thought otherwise, and outlined her reasons for wanting to visit Addams in a letter to Moore.

I admit to a little partiality to women workers among women and in my reading and observation, much as I have admired the many splendid men in the work, there has come to me the picture of a man and a woman working side by side, the man nearly always overshadowing her best efforts, then one day they come to the end of the road, but she skips on alone up the little path he failed to see. Sometimes she goes quite far, the distance depends on who she is. The path, I suppose, is womanly sympathy and her guide...(is) her capacity to love.¹¹⁴

At this point, Brigden's feminism showed the influence of WMS, WCTU and church attitudes concerning a women's "special" or maternal qualities and responsibilities. It was also a reflection of her largely female audiences, and the focus on their maternal qualities of family love and devotion to duty. Signs of a more equality based feminism were in evidence too. For a brief time, Brigden attempted to hold meetings of special interest to young boys and men, reflecting her attitude that men's moral standards should be

¹¹² Correspondence, Brigden, 16 Feb., 1914.

¹¹³ Correspondence, Brigden, 28 Jan., 1914.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the equal of women's.

She had been hired as a 'public speaker' but the Church seemed to have a very generous interpretation of what that entailed. In addition to addressing a variety of audiences, Brigden worked at church sponsored summer camps, wrote promotional pamphlets, developed a series of more entertainment-oriented recitals to raise more funds and attract a larger audiences for the social service lectures. One minister invited her to address her congregation from the pulpit, but took the precaution of dictating a sermon for her. Brigden recognized in his action the familiar concern that "the people must not be shocked."¹¹⁵ She was also involved in supporting specific projects like homes for unmarried mothers and spoke on their behalf to raise public awareness, acquire funds and material items for them. Three such engagements were Halifax, Newfoundland and briefly, Winnipeg.

After her training period in Wisconsin, she arrived in Toronto early in March 1914, but it was not until June that she began to work on her own. In the meantime, she embarked on a series of visits to missions and church groups, sometimes to observe sometimes to speak. She continued to study in her spare time and even managed to attend the theatre which she enjoyed so much.

The first week of actual work began badly. Recovering

¹¹⁵ Correspondence, Brigden, 12 Mar., 1918.

from "la grippe" (influenza), she began a schedule of two to three speeches a day, before Epworth Leagues, mothers' meetings and Bible classes. Before the end of the month, engagements had to be cancelled because of problems with her voice.

She spent much of the summer of 1914 canvassing for the Girls' Home in Halifax. As well as church congregations, Brigden also approached businessmen for funds and met with some success. Not all of the ministers were receptive to Brigden's canvassing or her more general lectures. Even when they were, problems still occurred. The story of the Maritime summer is a saga of rainy weather, cancelled meetings, appearing at the wrong church and being driven cross-country to address another congregation on short notice. After a particularly frustrating week, Brigden refused one "kind offer" to make another unscheduled evening address and "went to the woods and picked flowers instead."¹¹⁶

The attendance and the interest of the congregation at the meetings were gratifying, and Moore provided a sympathetic ear for Brigden's difficulties. "He is very indignant at the way I have been banged around. It was most cheering to get a little sympathy."¹¹⁷

Armed with an official introductory letter and

¹¹⁶ B.D. 28 June, 1914.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 12 June, 1914.

publicity pamphlets, Brigden canvassed churches for bookings and arranged her schedule according to replies and train schedules. Many ministers were slow to reply and some even refused her outright without even seeking the opinion of their congregations or women's committees. Although scheduling was done from Toronto at first, Brigden soon found it best to organize the itinerary herself, always careful to leave open a few dates for bookings on short notice. This independence must have relieved both Moore and Brigden, for it is obvious that having Moore arrange western dates from Toronto left something to be desired. One set of instructions shows the confusion typical of that system.

I have a letter from Rapid City in which Mr. N. is very anxious to have you, but desires to consult with the bishop. He is to let me know later. Perhaps if you were to write him he would write you directly...I have no word from Hamiota as yet regarding September 20th. Mr. T. of Crandall has written stating that he cannot arrange for you at that place for...the following week and I am sending a letter to Mr. Wilson at Rivers for that week. I am not sure whether I told you that Wolseley, for Oct. 18 was arranged. Today I have a letter from Mr. Ivens, of Pipestone, explaining that he cannot arrange for you there. I am therefore entering Lauder for Sept. 13.¹¹⁸

Brigden's introductory letter stated that she worked specifically with girls and mothers. It was her own intention though, to include men and young boys whenever possible, and she hoped the recitals as well as the general meetings would encourage their attendance. One particular

¹¹⁸ Correspondence, Moore, 22 Aug., 1914.

boys' meeting was especially encouraging. She delayed attending a tea in her honour in order to speak to a group of about twenty boys, aged around ten or eleven, and she reported to Moore that "the boys were worth twenty teas...They never moved a muscle while I talked. I shall always plan for a boys' meeting after this."¹¹⁹

She does not seem to have carried through her intention to include boys' meetings as a regular feature. This may reflect the societal double standards which saw women as the guardians of virtue, and said little on the role or responsibility of men. On the other hand, the Methodist Church already had Clark who worked specifically with boys and men. As proper as it would have been for Brigden to address young boys as a mother figure, there is no question that she would not be allowed to address an older male audience.

The typical schedule for a week consisted of between eleven and thirteen talks, including a public recital, public meetings, and separate addresses for mothers, girls under twelve and girls aged twelve to seventeen. The schedule, of course, was open to last minute adjustments because of problems with travel arrangements or meetings cancelled due to conflicting activities, or inclement weather. Entire weeks were lost during fall harvest, spring seedings, winter blizzards and the influenza epidemic of 1918.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 31 Aug., 1914.

Brigden frequently was boarded at the local manse and there were many times when she was warmly received. One family went so far as to invite in a woman whom they thought would be suitable company for the incoming church worker. "They expected me to be old, grey, wrinkled, angular, a typical old maid and feeling incapable of entertaining me...invited in an old lady, a grandmother, so that I might feel at home."¹²⁰

After her first few months of work in Nova Scotia, she left for the more familiar towns of Manitoba, stopping in Port Arthur for an emotional reunion with her sister and brother-in-law. "Dell and I didn't do a thing but talk all day...(L)eft...this evening (with) Dell and Fred both in tears. We had a lovely time together."¹²¹ The rest of that year was spent in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where, especially in Manitoba, Brigden felt herself the subject of considerable curiosity.

Without copies of her lectures, her actual work can only be inferred from her notes and Church promotional material. Brigden's male counterpart was introduced with a letter praising his success in "winning the confidence of Boys and Young Men and leading them to determine to live pure and chaste lives, as well as to practice total abstinence from intoxicants and to renounce cigarettes and

¹²⁰ Ibid., June 8/14.

¹²¹ Ibid., July 8/14.

tobacco and...profanity."¹²² Brigden had always expressed deep beliefs in temperance work and we may assume much of her work was similar to Clark's. A surviving handwritten copy, undated, of one of her lecture schedules is too vague to draw any final conclusions; but the titles, 'A Widening Sphere', 'Ruler of a Kingdom', 'She Buildeth Her House', point to religious themes, and lectures praising a woman's role and influence in family life. A suggested title for the pamphlet she was to write, 'Methods for Mothers in Creating in the Child's Mind a Right Attitude toward Sex', was replaced by 'Stories of New Life' but it shows that discussions of sex education were also part of her program.

This subject was a difficult one to discuss, and sometimes the audience cast suspicion on Brigden's own morals for addressing it. Her work was further hampered by the presence of similar lecturers, including a woman speaking on 'White Slave Traffic.' Those attending that lecture were "solemnly warned never to encourage such a person again."¹²³ Another damper on Brigden's reception was a supply minister who spoke on "the Social Evil and needless to say, had not the remotest idea how to go about it."¹²⁴ Once the bad impressions left by poorly trained or incompetent speakers were overcome, the audience generally

¹²² Clark's form letter by Moore, June 1915.

¹²³ Correspondence, Brigden, 3 May, 1915.

¹²⁴ Correspondence, Brigden, 3 May, 1915.

appreciated her specialized training and experience. Many were relieved to find she treated the discussions in such a "refined and womanly manner", to which Brigden asked, "Can there be people who speak of such things in any other way?"¹²⁵

She expressed her concern for the proper environment for children, and was annoyed to see young children teased about "beaus...and being in love."¹²⁶ She emphasized the importance of treating sex and marriage as serious and sacred concerns at all times and spoke of the body as "the temple of God's wonderful spirit."¹²⁷ The need for guidance and setting a good example for young people was also stressed. She outlined suggestions for practical study and a

series of expressional activities designed to give expression to the rapidly expanding social instinct of the 14 - 17 year old girl. Taking into consideration the activities suggested by moving pictures, modern novels and short stories, etc., there never was a time where girls needed so wholesome an outlet for their energies...I would suggest a broad reading course, deeper community study and training leadership, keeping in mind the characteristics of adolescent girlhood and that all point to the fact that she will be a homemaker later on.¹²⁸

Some audiences surprised her with their willingness to

¹²⁵ Correspondence, Brigden, 24 Feb., 1917.

¹²⁶ Correspondence, Brigden, 22 May, 1915.

¹²⁷ Cranbrook Herald, undated. Part of collection of handwritten excerpts kept by Brigden for use in promotional reviews and literature.

¹²⁸ Correspondence, Brigden, 31 Aug., 1915.

listen and their desire for information and advice of all kinds. She fielded a variety of questions, ranging from dealing with children's lies to choosing fashionable hairstyles to the appropriateness of kissing one's fiance to a request for a verdict on Bellamy's Looking Backward.¹²⁹

She feared that her introduction pamphlet overemphasized her "elocutionary powers" as a main attraction, but this was soon recognized as an advantage. When one minister suggested that she present a mixture of educational lectures and entertaining recitals, she passed the idea on to Moore for his opinion, adding that "I read a couple of numbers at the end of my address. We think many sober thoughts through the week and it is just as well to leave people with the corners of their mouths turned up."¹³⁰

The suggestion of adding more public recitals was also made by a branch of the WCTU, and Brigden wondered

if I do go back (and give a recital) during an idle week, would people be likely to think the Methodist Church had gone into the concert business or would it mean an evening for the young people of that town that could only lift their thoughts. If I can touch people in that way I ought to do it I suppose.¹³¹

She also remarked that an evening of lighter tone made an enjoyable break for her, as well as offering an opportunity

¹²⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 15 May, 1916.

¹³⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 31 Aug., 1914.

¹³¹ Correspondence, Brigden, 23 Jan., 1915.

for the community to investigate her before she began the more serious lectures. After some thought, Moore agreed with Brigden's viewpoint and approved the idea, with the suggestion that she collect a fifteen dollar fee plus her expenses for the speaking engagement.

Moore encouraged her to reach out to her audience, with personal talks between lectures and by correspondence.

I hope you are arranging to have girls keep in correspondence with you. The personal touch means a very great deal and if they will write you...after you leave...it gives you a special leverage to help them go forward in the better and purer life.¹³²

Brigden answered as many letters as she could and found much there to encourage her as many wrote to praise and thank her. After meetings, Brigden was often accompanied back to her room or to the train by some of the girls to continue the discussions or hold more private, confidential talks. From the leader of a group of "gum-chewing, late hour, street friendship type of girls" came this compliment as they accompanied her back to the station after one meeting:

You bet we were glad you came, that's the sort of thing we've been talking about behind the school and behind the barn in the dark for years, we never thought you could (illegible) so much light on it before - we hope you live a long time and tell other girls, for every girl ought to know.¹³³

¹³² Correspondence, Moore, 10 Sept., 1914.

¹³³ Correspondence, Brigden, 20 Dec., 1915.

Some parents were skeptical because of Brigden's youth and single status, seeing her as "a young person who doesn't quite know what she is talking about."¹³⁴ But they recognized her training and were at least willing to observe her for her methods, since Brigden was "used to talking to girls and (had) thought more about such matters."¹³⁵

Some requested copies of Brigden's lectures, which were unavailable. However, Brigden had a sample collection of books available from the Toronto office, ranging in price from 55c to \$1.10, for which she collected the money and ordered from Toronto. But as Brigden pointed out, a dollar was expensive in

hard times, especially to people whose only knowledge of literature (?) (sic) is the two for a quarter variety...After hearing only two addresses, mothers who have not read and will not purchase large books are incapable of passing such knowledge on. Our work then is of little account.¹³⁶

She also noted that the fear of the material being not quite 'appropriate' prevented some purchases.

The books she sold supported and likely guided much of Brigden's own presentations. As with her own promotional material, the Christian values of the authors, including doctors (men and women) and ministers, were stressed. While the main theme of the literature was sex education,

¹³⁴ Correspondence, Brigden, 10 Aug., 1914.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Correspondence, Brigden, 11 June, 1915.

discussions were included about other health issues including diet, exercise, and general hygiene. Brigden stressed the importance of sex education to prevent immorality, and at least one of the books she sold argued that such knowledge reduced many of the needless fears connected with sexuality and childbirth. Authors avoided euphemistic terminology, although analogies from nature were still common when discussing more general ideas like "the calling for a mate." They argued the importance of accurate information, insisting that there was no excuse for ignorance in this modern, scientific world. "(I)t seems inconceivable that any woman would neglect to so fully inform herself on these matters that both she and her child could have all the benefits of the investigations of science."¹³⁷ Lowry, for example defended sex education by comparing the human body to a machine which required proper understanding, use and care. Married life and child care, like any other career, required specialized training.¹³⁸

Brigden's sources still supported the views of the maternal feminists, who portrayed women as the moral guides responsible for moulding the character of their children and society. They stressed that all women had a natural desire to be mothers. However, at least one title that she sold spoke in favor of parents being able to choose how many

¹³⁷ Lowry, p.88.

¹³⁸ Lowry, p.6.

children to bear, and carefully suggested that

if the means for the prevention of pregnancy are necessary to the health and happiness of the human race, let us change the law so we can have the best of these preventatives and allow reputable physicians to give whatever information they can to prevent the wholesale misuse of a law by the unscrupulous, - the law breakers.¹³⁹

Some authors encouraged parents to educate their daughters, to encourage their intellectual development and nurture their ambitions. A career woman was not unsuitable for marriage, although philanthropic and the ubiquitous "club work" was suggested as well. Lowry recognized the reality of working women and linked economics with social problems, arguing that "when wheels of progress make it possible for every working girl to have a comfortable home and sufficient nourishing food, many of the social problems will right themselves."¹⁴⁰ This is a viewpoint which Bridgen would strongly argue in her political career, and may have become part of her presentation at this time as well.

In response to requests for copies of her own lectures, Bridgen offered to write a pamphlet for mothers which the Methodist Church could publish. Moore was interested in the idea and she submitted an outline to him. Her intention was to keep a conversational tone and illustrate it with diagrams of chicken embryos and plant development. One of

¹³⁹ Lowry, p.113.

¹⁴⁰ Lowry, pp.53-54.

her aims was to put mothers at ease when talking with their children, especially women who were concerned that they could not handle "so delicate a question without years of training."¹⁴¹

The pamphlet, Stories of New Life was eventually written, approved and printed. It sold for 25c and proved a popular title addition to the already existing material that Brigden carried. As a result of that work, she was approached to write a second pamphlet, this time to promote the Epworth League.

In addition to these extra writing projects, Brigden was invited, through Moore, to attend the Church's summer school sessions as a speaker at Red Lake, Souris and Sandy Lake. Moore advised her of the offer and reported his own response to the minister, which read, in part, "I am sure she would be willing but I question the advisability to placing so heavy a responsibility on her...Please let both her and myself know what service you desire of her."¹⁴²

There was an undercurrent of concern that neither side should pay more than its fair share and the Sunday school eventually agreed that they would pay no less than \$20 a week to the Department which claimed Brigden's expenses to them were \$30 a week.¹⁴³ Ironically, when Brigden gave a

¹⁴¹ Correspondence, Brigden, 25 Sept., 1915.

¹⁴² Correspondence, Brigden, March 18/15.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

special recital suggested by Moore to "add to the interest of the school...and greatly help on the financial side of their effort,"¹⁴⁴ the collection taken at that event nearly equalled her wages for that week.

So far as I was concerned...my lectures were practically free. The cook and myself were the only two who managed to pay expenses but the men continue to patronize and take a sort of fatherly interest in our little women's affairs.¹⁴⁵

Generally, women's organizations such as the WCTU and homemakers' clubs offered the most sympathetic support for her work. Brigden found that "almost every town has a homemakers' club of some sort and that means nearly every woman in the town and surrounding countryside is a member."¹⁴⁶ One of the clubs in Saskatchewan sponsored a mothers' meeting which attracted an audience of 160, some of whom "had driven as many as 20 miles"¹⁴⁷ to attend.

Even the presence of these women's groups did not guarantee a warm welcome. One town's WCTU, Brigden believed, "simply asked me to come because it is their painful duty to do some good as they pass through this world but they planned from the beginning that no one would be interested."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Correspondence, Moore, 18 March, 1915.

¹⁴⁵ Correspondence, Brigden, 15 July, 1916.

¹⁴⁶ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 Oct., 1914.

¹⁴⁷ Correspondence, Brigden, 18 May, 1915.

¹⁴⁸ Correspondence, Brigden, 6 Feb., 1915.

The ministers that opposed her gave a variety of reasons. A few, as noted above, were not ready to take a woman's contribution seriously, an attitude that Brigden was quick to perceive. After one encounter she wrote to Moore that she has "only succeeded in adding another Presbyterian minister's everlasting disapproval to my now lengthening list. Mr. R. despises anything progressive and even more so anything done by a woman."¹⁴⁹ Some were "quite out of sympathy with our work and hold a chronic grudge against the Conference for afflicting them with such men as W.S. Reid, A.E. Smith...and now Clark Lawson, a young man who talks about 'Social' things."¹⁵⁰

The traditional viewpoint of the Methodist Church was that it was their duty to point the way for the individual's salvation. There was little concern with the growing injustices of the industrial world attracting the attention of many social gossellers, the poverty, the child labour and slum housing.¹⁵¹ These were not religious issues to the conservative members of the Church, but to the more radical, these injustices were the Church's concern. Divine laws, they argued, were meant to be applied to economic and social conditions, as well as spiritual ones. As society grew and evolved, they believed, so should the Church, to meet the

¹⁴⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 6 Feb., 1915.

¹⁵⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 7 Feb., 1916.

¹⁵¹ Cook, p.115.

changing needs of those it served.

Brigden joined those who were looking beyond the faults of personal shortcomings and attributing the cause of social problems to broader societal ills, asking the Church to extend its interests and sphere of influence. They believed that "evil was so endemic and persuasive in the social order that...there could be no personal salvation without social salvation."¹⁵² In short, the Church must have a hand in reforming the society or individuals could not help but be lost.

Brigden was gradually developing the perspective that began when she first sought to learn about the economic side of reform in her readings as a social service worker in training. Moving away from personal criticism, Brigden turned her attention to the environment and social conditions behind the social problems she witnessed. This attitude became more obvious after spending the winter of 1916-17 in mining and lumber camps in Alberta and British Columbia, where she deplored one small town which offered nothing of "an uplifting nature outside of...schoolwork and a newly organized mission circle."¹⁵³ She described the hopelessness of another town with a large population of illegitimate children, offspring of the NWMP stationed there and the general demoralization caused by the presence of the

¹⁵² Allen, p.17.

¹⁵³ Correspondence, Brigden, 25 Nov., 1915.

penitentiary and 'morbid' hangings that took place there.¹⁵⁴ Moore replied that her letter was "one of the strongest arguments as to the influence of environment that I have read."¹⁵⁵

Her experience in mining communities led her to declare that

eight hours work, bent double, hundreds of feet below the surface for the winter months and enforced idleness for the balance of the year does not produce the best in the way of manhood and the same recklessness was evident amongst the girls.¹⁵⁶

Still, she was careful to criticize the circumstances, not those harmed by them. She was sincerely interested in the miners and visited them in their homes. In one town, she even went down into the mine to see the conditions in which they worked. Realizing that her ignorance of the daily lives of such people stood in the way of effective work, she urged the church to assign more women to work in such places and suggested that the workers be from the communities concerned.

She wrote to Moore that for the Church to do "effective work among these miners and their families, we must have people who think and speak their dialect."¹⁵⁷ In spite of her reading and courses in psychology and sociology, she was

¹⁵⁴ Correspondence, Brigden, 18 April, 1916.

¹⁵⁵ Correspondence, Moore, 6 May, 1916.

¹⁵⁶ Correspondence, Brigden to Moore, 22 Jan., 1917.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

becoming aware of her own shortcomings. Her "ignorance of the people and their ways,"¹⁵⁸ deeply concerned Brigden and she knew that this lack of understanding on her part greatly reduced the effectiveness of her influence. Ideally, the church and community workers should come from within, bringing understanding and a sense of trust, rather than imposing reform ideas from the outside. The philosophy of self-help, as illustrated by the Cree minister she met years earlier, returning to teach other natives, may also have been a consideration.

While speaking in Newfoundland in 1918, she listened to the general concern over the morals and behaviour of the "domestics" and was frustrated by the lack of awareness of the complexities of social problems on the part of her audience and the simplicity of the solutions offered.

I was to mysteriously banish them (the domestics) from the streets, add all their names to the various church rolls and guarantee that they would keep straight. That was (the extent) of the social problem. I finally managed to make the committee see that the Domestic problem is only a byproduct, and that we would do a very foolish thing to confine our efforts to a class.¹⁵⁹

She felt it was "unfortunate that the people cannot see that they have a personal responsibility for the conditions as they are."¹⁶⁰ It was this frustration that was gradually

¹⁵⁸ Correspondence, Brigden, 24 Feb., 1917.

¹⁵⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 12 March, 1918.

¹⁶⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 4 March, 1918.

turning her toward the socialist voices within the social gospel movement.

During her period of employment with the Church, she continued to separate political aims from religious ones. However, this division was not reflected in the attitudes of many of the more radical social gospellers, who were examining the relationship between Christianity and socialism and debating if it were possible to follow one and reject the other. Brigden would later come to agree that the two were very similar.

Brigden won the grudging admiration of the secular socialists on at least one occasion and they were greatly astonished "that a church had taken any interest in the work-a-day life of the people...One...said, 'Thank God the Methodist Church has opened its doors to that sort of thing at last.'"¹⁶¹ For her part, Brigden replied that the Methodist Church had never been closed to "that sort of thing" and she found it a "pity that so many of the really fine men and women (her socialist critics) are not using their ability in the church."¹⁶² Ironically, many socialists actually were doing just that.

Brigden soon became more critical as the Methodist Church's conservative perspective towards its responsibility for society increasingly clashed with her own beliefs.

¹⁶¹ Correspondence, Brigden, 1 Feb., 1916.

¹⁶² Correspondence, Brigden, 1 Feb., 1916.

There were numerous signs of her growing socialist sympathies, such as her concern for the working class and her view that the church (or the government) had a responsibility to care for its people. Although she still was reluctant to be identified with the socialists, she resented one church group's attempt to capitalize on her work for their own gains. They timed her visit to coincide with their anniversary celebration, hoping to raise attendance, and perhaps the collection, at their own events. Learning of this plan, Brigden informed Moore that she was "socialist enough to dislike the exploitation of my labours."¹⁶³

She also subscribed to the Industrial Banner, Ontario's regional labour paper. It was critical of trusts and combines and spoke in favor of small merchants and manufacturers. It also supported the movement for eight hour days and argued on behalf of equal pay for men and women.¹⁶⁴ At one point, Brigden ceased receiving her copies and wrote to the Toronto office of the Methodist Church to ask them to forward the issues to her.

Personal beliefs aside, it could be a handicap if any of her ideas were connected with socialism while she was working for the Church. She described resistance to her

¹⁶³ Correspondence, Brigden, 9 Oct., 1915.

¹⁶⁴ Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working class," Labour/Le Travail, Spring 1984, vol.13, pp.59-61.

talks from mothers who had raised ten children without her advice, and "good fathers (who) topped off all arguments by saying, 'she's a socialist.'"¹⁶⁵ This may have kept her expression of any developing socialist philosophies to a minimum.

In addition to her awareness of social and economic inequalities in society, Brigden's awareness of a kind of class system within the church was growing. She commented on the different (i.e. superior) attitudes and approaches of the eastern trained ministers, implying that the prairies should be served by workers trained there. She encouraged the Church to put more resources into the rural communities, often given, in her opinion, short shrift. There were other portions of the congregation whom Brigden felt were neglected by the Church, especially the working class and immigrants. She was in agreement with the social gospel workers who rejected vague promises of "future blessings" for the working people and sought to make religion relevant to present day concerns. Brigden was feeling a growing identification with those whom she called "the common people" and realized that much of the reform work was irrelevant to their experiences. Encountering so many people in such a variety of personal circumstances, Brigden began to see beyond labels as she listened to their stories, and came to understand and appreciate their opinions.

¹⁶⁵ Correspondence, Brigden, 15 Oct., 1917.

Brigden mocked the prevailing sense of propriety among worshippers that was frequently such a barrier to her work.

In one report to Moore, she informed him that

the people here are a very satisfied people. I succeeded in horrifying and shocking a number of them. One young lady walked very indignantly out of one of my...meetings...When a discussion was suggested they all hung their heads...I have been told I am the bravest woman in Canada - particularly in my readings...for my recital. So you see I have been enjoying the pleasures of martyrdom in the eyes of this pious people.¹⁶⁶

She resented the time spent at formal teas and dinners, especially when they all "stood around with cups of tea and said it was cold today but would probably be better tomorrow. Oh, well, even that gave me opportunities."¹⁶⁷

Her comments led Moore to sympathize that such superficially concerned people may "one day get their eyes open...and as you say, be less pious and more practical in their piety."¹⁶⁸

Brigden was not afraid to confront self-righteous attitudes. In May 1919, speaking before a WMS in Winnipeg on behalf of the local Girls' Home, she was impressed by the spectacle of

two thirds of the madames (who) forgot their dignity and the 'furrin'(sic)heathen and arrived at my side 'neck by neck' to know if they could get 'maids' at the home. Their agility was just as noticeable when I said

¹⁶⁶ Correspondence, Brigden, 3 May, 1915.

¹⁶⁷ Correspondence, Brigden, 30 Jan., 1915.

¹⁶⁸ Correspondence, Moore, 12 May, 1915.

we didn't supply maids but there were some babies to adopt.¹⁶⁹

This incident in the last year of her church work shows her well-developed social awareness and her ability to challenge conservative attitudes. It was also a typical example of her good humour 'in the face of adversity' that characterized so much of her correspondence with Moore. What was also present but less obvious in her writings was the physical fatigue she was experiencing more frequently, and her intellectual frustration with the more conservative element of both the Methodist Church and its congregation. When the General Strike occurred that year, Brigden was ready to side with the strikers and their leaders against the attitudes expressed at the Methodist Convention in Winnipeg held coincidentally during the strike.

Brigden had been working in the Brandon area since the fall of 1918. An influenza epidemic through the fall and winter had restricted her travel. In early spring, the epidemic broke out again, and that, and spring seeding, preoccupied most rural Manitobans. Brigden was therefore holding only a few meetings in the Brandon area. She decided to spend the early part of May in Winnipeg to speak on behalf of a Girl's Home there, and meet with some WMS groups.

¹⁶⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 19 May, 1919. This confusion is not entirely the fault of the women in Brigden's audience, for there was also a Winnipeg "Girls' Home" which served as a hostel for newly arrived immigrants and assisted in placing women in domestic work. Marilyn Barber, "The Servant Problem in Manitoba," in Kinnear, ed., First Days, Fighting Days. However, it does seem to point out a lack of attention during Brigden's speech.

Brigden's attitude in the early stages of the Winnipeg and Brandon strikes were surprisingly non-committal in view of her later comments. She merely noted that the strike cut down on the attendance at her Winnipeg meetings, since the streetcar transportation was disrupted and alternative transportation was expensive.¹⁷⁰ However, as the events of the Winnipeg General and Brandon sympathetic strike unfolded, Brigden's support for the action became more evident. Just as the strike symbolized the worker's own movement from strike to direct political action,¹⁷¹ the Strike was a catalyst to the solidification of many of Brigden's own ideas. Her conscious, deliberate commitment to the labour movement, and her decision to work with the Brandon's Labor Church, grew out of her analysis of the strike.

After attending the Methodist Conference in Winnipeg that summer, Brigden returned to Brandon where a general strike was in progress. By this time, there were twenty-five union locals active in Brandon. Retail clerks, brewery workers, civic and federal employees were among the groups with union representation.¹⁷² Although not mentioned in her correspondence, Brigden would have noticed signs of

¹⁷⁰ Brigden correspondence, 19 May, 1919.

¹⁷¹ Tom Mitchell, "Brandon 1919: Labour and Industrial Relations in the Wheat City," Manitoba History, p.2.

¹⁷² Tom Mitchell, "Brandon 1919: Labour and Industrial Relations in the Wheat City," Manitoba History, Spring 1989, p.2. See this article for further details of the Brandon strike.

labour unrest in the months prior to the strike, since she was working so close to home. Early labour/management conflict emerged in February of 1919, with a successful strike by civic employees to protest continuation of wage and staff cuts begun in 1915-17. Their action helped inspire other Brandon labour groups to undertake "the longest and most cohesive sympathetic strike"¹⁷³ in support of the Winnipeg General Strike.

Still employed by the Church, Brigden became Moore's eyes for the events. He asked her specifically about the role of Smith and the Labor Church and she replied "in confidence" as he had written her. Recognizing that the information might go further than Moore (for example, to some of the other Church committees), she gave Moore permission to use the letter if it could assist him in any way. She would have been less likely to express such a sentiment if she had known Moore was cooperating with the NWMP in gathering information for their files on the Labor Churches.¹⁷⁴

It was an angry and disappointed Brigden who wrote Moore at the end of July. By this time she had seen much admired ministers personally and professionally attacked at the Methodist Conference that summer for their support of

¹⁷³ Mitchell, p.274.

¹⁷⁴ From May 1920 - April 1922, Moore corresponded with Lt. Col. Hamilton of the RCMP, which had been gathering information on the Labor Churches since 1919. Moore received information from them, as well as supplying it. Allen, The Social Passion. p.170.

the Strike. Smith had resigned after his request for a year's leave to organize a Brandon Labor Church had been denied, in proceedings Brigden described as marked by unfair voting procedures and damaging false rumours about Smith.¹⁷⁵

Smith had been treated no better by the Methodist Church in Brandon. They labelled him a Bolshevist and accused him of inciting strikers to loot and vandalize downtown shops. Brigden, who had attended most of the public meetings with her family and heard nearly all of his speeches, had a different opinion of Smith which she relayed to Moore in a lengthy, personal defense and explanation of the Strike, the Labor Church and Smith's involvement in them.

Smith emerged as something of a hero in Brigden's account. She denied any irresponsible behaviour on the part of Smith, refuted the Bolshevik label attached to him and informed Moore that Smith was the only man who tried in any way to give leadership and wise council to the strikers.¹⁷⁶ "Mr. Smith... easily became a much sought after and well loved comrade and advisor of the men who were making real sacrifices for their cause."¹⁷⁷

She reported that the Strike was the occasion, but not

¹⁷⁵ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

¹⁷⁶ Her view of Smith's role is supported by Mitchell's account of the Strike, "Brandon 1919."

¹⁷⁷ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

the reason for the formation of the Labor Church. The majority of the congregation was working class, predominantly employed on the railroad, and she was very hopeful that the Labor Church would prove more welcoming to them than had the Methodist Church. Concerning the treatment of an ex-convict and some Ruthenian immigrants who had attended a service at First Methodist Church, she recalled that "such loud remarks were passed about their undesirability that none of them ever returned." She stated that the movement was not to be lightly dismissed and admitted that her own ideas were sympathetic with Smith's.

"In spite of any or all disagreeable features the strike laid bare the big heart and idealism of the workingman and also showed us very plainly where the Gov's(sic) and leading local church officials stood...so such time as I am in Brandon, I shall work with the Peoples' Church."

Brigden had seen the community coalesce into two separate sides as a result of the Strike and it was clear that she and the Methodist Church no longer stood on the same side. However, it would take another year and other considerations before she finally resigned.

One of the factors that contributed to her resignation was her failing health. Previously, she had tried to cope with health problems by taking week long breaks during harvest and periods of bad weather. As well, she sometimes extended her annual month-long holiday, citing the need to recover from nervous exhaustion and "revive the brain fag of

a work at times very depressing."¹⁷⁸

She had referred once to problems with inflammatory rheumatism, and doubtlessly an eleven month schedule contributed to a certain amount of physical and nervous exhaustion. The doctors she consulted warned her of the damage inflicted by the pace and intensity of the work and advised her to slow down. Brigden passed this information on to Moore.

It is with much reluctance that I feel obliged to write that my doctor strongly advises me to "take it easy" this year...I can now see that my regular strenuous life would be impossible. Indeed, I must never work so hard again - it is too expensive. My doctor bills have been almost equal to a year's salary - to say nothing of the months of pain and although I am steadily gaining, it will be some time before I can go on such long trips.¹⁷⁹

She asked if it were possible to undertake a trial period of reduced assignments, with less travelling and a salary adjusted accordingly. If this plan met with his approval, she trusted him to make whatever financial arrangements he thought fair. If the offer of part time work was not suitable, she expressed her willingness to resign, because she wished to "do the best for the greatest number...not my own selfish interest."¹⁸⁰

She also spoke of "opportunities...to apply in a practical way, some theories that I have been formulating in

¹⁷⁸ Correspondence, Brigden, 10 June, 1915.

¹⁷⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 21 Aug., 1919.

¹⁸⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 21 Aug., 1919.

my mind - an opportunity which you know I have often desired."¹⁸¹ This opportunity likely referred to her abovementioned work with the Labor Church.

While waiting for Moore's reply, Brigden joined her parents (her mother's health was also cause for some concern), for a much needed holiday in California over the winter of 1919-1920. There she became alarmed at the extent of the American military build-up and described her fears in a letter to Moore:

...their military preparation and enthusiasm foreshadows another world war...huge ship yards turning out battleships and submarines - a fort to crown the hill - navel and military training quarters, marine hospitals, an airbase and seaplane construction works - five great battleships on guard...and everything is 'the largest and best equipped in the world' and I am inclined for once to believe the truth is being told - everywhere one hears 'away with Wilson, he prevented war' and 'keep ahead of the Japans(sic) advancement' - there is something sad about it all. Do you suppose the churches' lukewarm teaching on brotherhood and social righteousness will ever avert the catastrophe?¹⁸²

Brigden's pacifism, so much a part of her later life, was only beginning to emerge at this time. During the course of the WWI, she had supported Canada's involvement and had been glad to "do her part" when the opportunity arose to give a recital at a soldiers' convalescent home. "Their shattered nerves and bodies and...loneliness"¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Correspondence, Brigden, 21 Aug., 1919.

¹⁸² Correspondence, Brigden, 14 Jan., 1920.

¹⁸³ Correspondence, Brigden, 24 May, 1917.

moved her to pity, but their sacrifice seemed a necessary one to her at that time. She even had criticized severely the moral tone of one town by pointing out that "the men have not even roused sufficient interest in the outside world to go to war."¹⁸⁴

Brigden's political beliefs were guided by Ivens and Woodsworth, as well as her religious background, including Quakerism. Her support for the war, however, was likely influenced by the attitude held by so many other Canadians at the time - that the war was a kind of Christian mission - a last resort for desperate times.¹⁸⁵ After WWI ended, she added the Church's apparent lack of commitment to peace and disarmament to her list of differences with them.

Brigden's offer of part time work was accepted by the Methodist Church and she offered to hold a few meetings in British Columbia and Alberta on her way home, if Moore would arrange the schedule for her in advance. But the work did not remain part time for long, and soon Brigden was working a full time schedule again, travelling to a different town every week and undertaking the long journeys that had contributed to her early illness. Even if the work had remained part time, her dissatisfaction and frustration with the Church's attitude was constant. Finally, the physical

¹⁸⁴ Correspondence, Brigden, 18 Jan., 1916.

¹⁸⁵ Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1984, p.349.

and emotional fatigue, homesickness and her uneasy alliance with the Methodist Church took their toll. When Moore wrote to Brigden in the summer of 1920 to enquire after her plans for the rest of the year, she replied with a letter of resignation.

In explaining her decision, she named her health as one of the reasons. In fact, other factors were equally important in making the decision. First, there was the ever present concern with her mother's declining health. Second, Brigden had grown weary of defending her work from the frequent attacks of conservative Methodists. Even Moore can be included in this group, for although he remained supportive of Brigden's work in the face of others' criticism, he disagreed with her about the validity of the Labor churches, which represented much of Brigden's own beliefs. Finally, she was concerned about her financial security. Still single at 31, she reminded Moore that she was

obliged to earn my own living and if possible provide for my own old age. Being just a woman, I am fully aware that the church will not interest herself in such practical matters... (Furthermore) my enthusiasm for the orthodox church has been greatly modified. My work this spring was rather shockingly 'radical' to numbers of people, whatever that means. I judge that a statement of conviction or fact is 'radical' to an amazingly large number of church people - I am not very heroic and think it well to withdraw before dismissal comes 'forthwith'... It is with great regret that I cease to work with you. Never have I received greater kindness at the hands of anyone than I have received from you. Your warm, personal interest made many a hard task possible

and I shall always remember (you) with
gratitude.¹⁸⁶

Moore accepted her resignation with regret and repeated his confidence and satisfaction with her work. He asked her to keep in touch with him and to let him know if he could be of any assistance in the future. She thanked Moore for his kind words, but after six and a half years on the road, her characteristic optimism and enthusiasm were all but absent in her reply. She wrote "I do not know when I shall venture forth again nor what at...The prospect for achievement here is so slender, the struggle scarce seems worthwhile. That is not very heroic, but I am far more human than heroic just now."¹⁸⁷

Despite her disillusionment and criticism of the Methodist Church, Brigden did not abandon the idea of religiously inspired social reform. She was really only leaving one church to join another, the People's Labor Church in Brandon, in which she was to have an important role.

¹⁸⁶ Correspondence, Brigden, 12 July, 1920.

¹⁸⁷ Correspondence, Brigden, 23 Oct., 1920.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM LABOR CHURCH TO LABOUR POLITICS 1919-1930

Recalling her political development in her memoirs, Brigden described how

people often set politics up in opposition to religion, but that was hardly the case for me. Politics is working together to fulfill the needs of others as you would have them fulfill yours. Put that way, it describes my religion as much as it does my politics. For the first time in my life, I began to think of myself as a socialist.¹⁸⁸

The decade between Brigden's resignation from the Methodist Church in 1920 and her candidacy in 1930 was a period of reorganization in her life. It was a time of endings - her job and her identification with the Methodist Church, the death of both her parents, and the beginning and ending of two projects important in Brigden's life, the Labor Church and the People's Forum Speakers Bureau. It was also the decade in which she developed her political ideals and experience, beginning as a speaker and organizer, and ending as a labour candidate and one of the original members of the CCF.

After Brigden resigned from her position with the Methodist Church, she had two immediate needs. The first was to try and recover her health. The second was to find another vehicle through which she could work to fulfill her

¹⁸⁸ Brigden, "One Woman's Campaign", pp.56-67. She is referring to the period following the strike, possibly after her resignation.

social gospel beliefs. Once home in Brandon, she found interests within the local community. She did some teaching, continued public speaking engagements, joined the Labor Church, known in Brandon as the People's Church, worked with women's groups and eventually entered politics via the Progressive Party and the CCF.

The Labor Church was the link between Brigden's social gospel beliefs and political action. It offered her a familiar role as she ran childrens' programs and study groups that "kept the rust from getting too deep".¹⁸⁹ With its socialist minister A.E. Smith and a largely working-class congregation, it also exposed her to further politicization, a politicization that had begun with her independent reading as a social service worker in training.

Despite the lack of documentary evidence, it is likely that the Labor Church in Canada was patterned after the movement in Britain, and to a lesser extent, in the United States.¹⁹⁰ The Labor Church movement was begun by John Trevor in Manchester, England in 1891. Trevor was "convinced that God was working through the labour movement"¹⁹¹ and formed the Church to support this work. Books and leadership for the North American churches came

¹⁸⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 23 Oct., 1920.

¹⁹⁰ Vera Fast, "The Labor Church in Winnipeg." in Butcher, ed. Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 1985, p.237. This article also provides a fuller discussion of the origins and philosophy of the Labor Church movement in western Canada.

¹⁹¹ Fast, p.237.

from England, and Brigden also mentioned a connection with Chicago, noting that the Brandon Labor Church followed "the plan of Dr. Soares (?) and others connected with the Chicago University."¹⁹²

The Labor Church was part of the radical wing of the social gospel movement, with a concern for justice focused on the labour movement. At times it pursued a more political than religious direction. This link between labour politics and the Labor Church is especially clear in western Canada, where the birth of the Labor Church was directly related to the Winnipeg and Brandon strikes in 1919.

Earlier debate within the Methodist Church foretold the split that led to the formation of the Labor Churches in Canada. In 1910, Dr. Albert Carmen, Methodist General Superintendent warned that Methodism was "surrendering (its) soul to the monied middle class."¹⁹³ More directly, Woodsworth quoted a Roman Catholic Archbishop who lamented that the "working classes (have) become alienated from the churches, especially from the Protestant churches, (and) a very large proportion of well to do men and women who belong to the so called cultured class have lost touch with church work".¹⁹⁴ Woodsworth then added his own criticism of the relationship between church and worker, claiming that the

¹⁹² Correspondence, Brigden to Moore, 26 July, 1919.

¹⁹³ Cook, Social Regenerators. p.23.

¹⁹⁴ Woodsworth, My Neighbour. p.100.

Protestant church was mainly composed of "capitalist classes, employers, salaried persons, farmers and those engaged in personal service of such person."¹⁹⁵ William Ivens went even further with his criticism, preaching in his final sermon at McDougall church that the re-Christianization of the Church and of society would take place only through the common people, the world of labour.¹⁹⁶

At various General Conferences, the Methodist Church had demonstrated an interest, at least in theory, in the relationship between the church and the working class. The 1914 Social Service Congress, attended by ministers and members of government organizations, discussed "labour problems and the church and industrial life."¹⁹⁷ Comments were also raised supporting the church's role as a leader to keep alive the "healthy spirit of social unrest."¹⁹⁸ The 1918 Methodist General Conference called for a system of "co-operation and service" and criticized the method of "production for profit."¹⁹⁹ Despite this critical analysis, there were still those in the church who divided religion from broader social concerns, and church members

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.107.

¹⁹⁶ Allen, Social Passion, p.84.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.22.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.28.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.34.

who raised these issues were faced with "resentment that social gospel minister were trying to teach economics."²⁰⁰

In her study of the Winnipeg Labor Church, Vera Fast found many religious aspects to have political overtones. In general, the services were characterized by informality and freedom of expression,

(with) devotional exercises and a platform open to all, labour hymns (including, at least at one Winnipeg Church, "The Red Flag"),²⁰¹ clapping, audible expressions of approval or not...Topics and speakers were endlessly varied and each branch was free to choose both...Labor church services have been described as political meetings held in a religious setting.²⁰²

J.S. Woodsworth's "First Story of the Labor Church"²⁰³ offer some general hints about theological details of the Church. These ideas were similar to Brigden's criticism of the Methodist Church and anticipate her later political writings. According to Woodsworth's pamphlet, the Labor Church emphasized the "Spiritual interpretation of life" and called for the teachings of Christ "to be applied to the complex condition of our modern industrial life...(to help in the) establishment on the earth of an era of justice, truth and love." It spoke out against war and stressed that "education,...not the sword is to be the instrument of our

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p.79.

²⁰¹ Interview with Don Aiken, 3 Feb., 1990.

²⁰² Fast, pp.238-9.

²⁰³ J.S. Woodsworth. "The First Story of the Labor Church and Some Things for Which it Stands: An Address in the Strand Theatre, Winnipeg, 5 April, 1920." Issued by the Labor Church Offices, Winnipeg, U of M Archives and Special Collections.

emancipation." It was critical of capitalism and claimed to work towards "replacing the present scramble for existence by a co-operative commonwealth in which each will have a chance."²⁰⁴ Woodsworth further described the Labor Church movement as "a revolt against denominationalism and formality and commercialism."²⁰⁵ This was the kind of discussion sought by Brigden and other radical social gossellers, who "viewed society as so saturated with evil that personal salvation without social reconstruction was impossible."²⁰⁶ Many of her earlier criticisms were finally addressed, if not answered, by this new movement.

The Brandon Labor Church had its origins in the Methodist Conference held in Winnipeg in the summer of 1919. There, A.E. Smith requested leave for a year to organize a Labor Church. His request was denied. Smith then resigned and went on to establish the People's Church in Brandon. Brigden was angered by the decision of the Conference and noted the political aspirations of Brandon MLA Stephen Clement, in attendance at the conference. Clement was against the establishment of the Labor Church and believed that if Smith gained too much popular support, he would be a powerful threat in the next election.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Woodsworth, "First Story," pp.12, 13, 16.

²⁰⁵ Woodsworth. "The First Story." p.8.

²⁰⁶ Fast, p.233.

²⁰⁷ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

According to Brigden, "the (Brandon General) strike...proved the occasion, not the cause...for the organization of (the People's) Church."²⁰⁸ In fact, preparations for it were already underway when the strike began. Woodsworth's People's Forums in Winnipeg were already well established and during the winter of 1918 - 1919, a People's Forum was formed in Brandon. This Brandon group included Ivens, Smith and several professors from Brandon College who met to discuss the possibility of starting a People's Church.²⁰⁹

Brigden was committed to Brandon's evolving Labor Church movement from the start. She attended its first service in June of 1919, which Smith organized in response to a call by strikers for a religious service.²¹⁰ Smith addressed the crowd and led hymns in Rideau Park before a crowd estimated by Bridgen at 2,000. He was hired as the church's official minister at an annual salary of \$3,000 (minus \$40 a month for rent of a "large, well furnished house"²¹¹).

A number of sites were considered before a permanent location for the church was found, and Brigden felt a large venue was needed, since Smith would have, "ere long, the

²⁰⁸ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

²⁰⁹ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

²¹⁰ Allen, p.84.

²¹¹ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

largest congregation in town, if that is not already true."²¹² Permanent quarters were established at 319 Tenth Street and advertisements in the church section of the newspaper invited one and all to "come along and support a church that supports the people's cause. All People Welcome."²¹³

Much of the support for the church came from Smith's former congregation at the First Methodist Church, but Brigden claimed that the People's Church membership was "entirely working class." It reached about 300 members in 1921, having grown from the 125 who had first signed pledges of support at the mass meeting June 1919.²¹⁴ Brigden noted the preponderance of men in the congregation, which may have reflected their political, rather than religious interests.²¹⁵

"Religious Education" meetings were held Sunday mornings, with evening services centering on discussions of the Social Gospel, sometimes linking it to political theories. Ideas and formats were interchanged and suggested by related or affiliated groups and Woodsworth sometimes referred to the Winnipeg Peoples' Forums as Peoples'

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Brandon Daily Sun, 22 July, 1922.

²¹⁴ Allen, pp.165, 167.

²¹⁵ Conversation with Tom Mitchell, 30 Jan., 1990.

Churches.²¹⁶ Like the People's Forum, the Brandon congregation participated in discussion groups and question and answer sessions with an open selection of topics. Brigden led a children's section and a women's study group. There were also choirs and drama groups as well as history classes taught by Smith.²¹⁷ The congregation was frequently addressed by members of parliament, including Smith, Ivens, Robert Forke, Progressive member of parliament, members of the One Big Union and communist groups.²¹⁸

A number of women seemed to be included in the ranks of the more visible participants, at least as guest speakers, if not in established positions of authority. Many had husbands or brothers in the labour movement. Fred Dixon's sister, Mrs. Flett, spoke on a woman's duty to use the vote in the fight against injustice. Agnes Macphail addressed Winnipeg congregations and Brigden was also included on the list of speakers.²¹⁹

Women's roles in the Labor Church seem to have been restricted to the same kind of roles assigned women in other organizations - educational work and work with women and children. For Brigden, this was familiar territory after

²¹⁶ Allen, p.82.

²¹⁷ Smith, All My Life, p.72.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.68.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.240.

her years in the Methodist Church. However, this time she had a more constant audience and by running regular classes and study group meetings was able to act on her own recommendations to recognize womens' separate experience and meet their different needs and interests.

In a letter to Moore in 1919, she described how she supported Smith's plans avidly, for he was "attempting the thing that I have thought about for the last ten years and talked about for five."²²⁰ She saw the Labor Church movement as a legitimate church, one that would address the neglected needs of the ethnic and working class community and still provide the familiar, social function of a church. She was not yet radical enough to relinquish the church as a source of moral and religious guidance and saw Smith acting where "the organized church...missed her opportunity."²²¹ She predicted, somewhat after the fact, that the Labor Church movement "will receive leadership from the ranks of Methodism. ...It is a part of the genius of the Methodist Church to produce such."²²²

Brigden had been attending Labor Church services even before she resigned from her position with the Methodist Church, and told Moore, who was against the formation of the separate church, how "past prejudices fled from me when I

²²⁰ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

glanced around and saw what an opportunity was afforded."²²³

The congregation included a number of railway workers and immigrants, among them an "Austrian Greek Catholic," and a local criminal. That Brigden was making a philosophic commitment, not merely seeking to expand the church's audience, was clear when she tackled the argument of Moore and others that there was no need for a church specifically devoted to the working class.

Moore denied the class affiliations of the Methodist Church and argued that such categorization was irrelevant. He reminded her of his "very deep interest in the working people" and his "earnest anxiety for their well being." He claimed that much of his life had been "given for their betterment" and argued that

(i)f we are to organize Labor churches as such, we ought to organize Capitalist churches, as well as local churches for every separate class. Because of this conviction, my frank opinion is that the Labor Churches are a mistake. I love the idea of a People's Church (note his use of the other name) and would always stand for that principle, because it opens the door as wide as the universe and gives an invitation broad enough to include all kinds, classes, and sorts of people.²²⁴

Moore was understating his attitude when he said that he disagreed with the idea. However, his advice to the NWMP, compiling files on the movement, was to refrain from a

²²³ Correspondence, Brigden, 26 July, 1919.

²²⁴ Correspondence, Moore, 31 July, 1920.

direct attack on the organization, and he recommended that it be allowed to "die of its own inadequacy."²²⁵

But to Brigden, the class approach in analyzing the problems of society made sense. She had seen mining communities where the miners considered the church irrelevant to their own experience. She had heard the Methodist Conference declare that the church was interested in the plight of labour and then seen the ranks divide over the General Strike. She had seen her fellow Methodists resign or be fired for their strong labour support, especially when it involved supporting the strikers. With the examples of long time friends and role models, and her own observations and experience, Brigden accepted and endorsed the need for the Labor Church in order to address the specific needs of the working class and immigrants.

The Labor Church in Brandon faced a leadership crisis when Smith began to devote increasing amounts of time to broader political organizing. In 1923, these interests and his failure to reach any reconciliation with the Methodist Church resulted in him and his family moving to Toronto, where he had been invited to organize a Labor Church. Shortly thereafter, he and his wife Maude became official members of the Communist Party²²⁶ and Smith claimed to have abandoned all religious forms. Yet he was delighted later

²²⁵ Allen, p.170.

²²⁶ Allen, p.176.

to visit Armenia with its 2,000 year history of Christianity and remained interested in the parallels he found between Communism and Christianity throughout his political career. His progress from Methodist minister to Communist politician has much in common with Brigden's own development and indicates how easily and thoroughly secular politics could incorporate social gospel ethnics.

Smith's early "fanciful but vague religious emotionalism" developed into a clear social vision and desire to establish a "just social order." He looked to changes in "productive work and the distribution of its fruit by organized scientific methods...(to)..."heal the ills of mankind."²²⁷ This faith in science and new technology was also emerging in agrarian organizations and was soon to be echoed by the CCF and Brigden's political columns.

Like the founder of the British Labor Churches, Smith believed that the "labour movement...was the chosen instrument of the Christianization of the Social Order".²²⁸ Early in his career as a minister, his discussions took on a political tone. Even as pastor at the First Methodist Church, which Brigden attended, Smith's sermons had focused on "economic morality," identifying poverty as the greatest

²²⁷ Smith, p.63.

²²⁸ Cook, p.166.

evil and profiteering as the greatest sin.²²⁹ His sermons would have inspired Brigden and validated her own ideas of the role of the Church.

Brigden's memoirs are ambiguous about the role of Communism in the congregation after Smith and his family left Brandon.

Communist families in Brandon, like the Broadhursts and the Mitchells, became more active in the church after he (Smith) left, perhaps thinking they could take it over. They caused no trouble, however, and the fact was that most people were not particularly fond of them. The church itself did not last beyond 1927 or 1928.²³⁰

Even without Smith, the Brandon Labor Church was one of the longest surviving Labor Churches in Canada. While he was minister, Smith was absent a number of times to organize churches in the other provinces, and the Brandon church lasted at least three years after he moved to Toronto. Therefore, more credit for the continuation of the church must go to Brigden and other, as yet unrecognized workers.

Brigden does not elaborate on her role after Smith's departure, but she certainly had the experience to assume an influential position and was already teaching and organizing programs within the church. Fast supports the idea that Brigden assumed a major responsibility in the Labor

²²⁹ Allen, p.166.

²³⁰ Brigden, "One Woman's Campaign", p.59.

Church,²³¹ but Allen claims that "what happened to the Brandon People's Church after Smith left is not known."²³² Smith himself seems to have forgotten the debt to Brigden and his memoirs only vaguely allude to her involvement, listing her among those members of a church committee which included city aldermen, a teacher, an accountant, a musician, a mechanic and "a trained social worker who took charge of the work among the children and women."²³³

Brigden shared many of Smith's ideals, but likely found his official conversion to Communism too extreme. Her later politics show some reluctance to be identified with communists. But Brigden was not one to argue over terminology if beliefs were compatible, and Smith's emphasis on brotherhood and the need to change society in order to save it reflected many of her own ideas. As she explained in her memoirs, "Social Christianity, in my opinion, is much nearer to the teachings of Jesus than the old orthodox way of looking at things. This is part of what Mr. Woodsworth was saying, and Mr. Smith, and Ivens, too."²³⁴

Although the Church itself failed, the movement in general could claim certain achievements. It

raised pertinent questions on social, economic and moral issues; it gave women a much more prominent place

²³¹ Fast, p.240.

²³² Allen, p.167.

²³³ Smith, p.62.

²³⁴ Brigden interview.

in its organization than was common for that day; it provided fellowship and strength to immigrants, labourers, strikers, the unchurched, the 'Oppressed.'²³⁵

For those who had not entered the Labor Church movement with the critical experience of Brigden, it also ensured that "they could never think in the same narrow way again."²³⁶

Brigden was among those for whom "the Labor Church was their last formal religious expression."²³⁷ She followed the same pattern as her male counterparts, from religion to politics, and like Woodsworth especially, retained the values of her religious background and expressed them as political aims. Unlike her male counterparts who moved directly from the Labor Church to political candidacy, it was not until 1930, after a number of years of organizing women at the local and provincial level, that Brigden finally consented to stand for election herself, as Brandon's first federal labour candidate.

While the Labor Church absorbed a great deal of Brigden's energies in the early 1920's, she still found time to devote to other social and political interests. As her political beliefs cannot be separated from her earlier social gospel values, her political activity is best appreciated in the context of her concern with women.

²³⁵ Fast, p.248.

²³⁶ Fast, p.248.

²³⁷ Ibid., p.173.

Brigden did not label herself a feminist in the same way that she identified herself as a socialist, but her ideas and activities clearly reveal her feminist sympathies, especially in politics. She was adamant about a woman's right to participate fully in political life and to that end, she sought to provide educational opportunities and personal support for women. She argued for the need and the right for women to work in separate groups. This was a reflection of their different interests as well as their desire for autonomy. The emphasis on women working with women was a theme that began in her religious work and was to repeat itself time and again in Brigden's life, including her political work.

The end of Brigden's association with the Methodist Church coincided with a period of rising independent labour politics. The 1920 provincial election was noted for labour entering "the largest number of candidates they were ever to sponsor in a Manitoba provincial election,"²³⁸ including Smith as the Brandon Labor Party's successful candidate. Despite the Conservative Brandon Sun's efforts to damage Smith's chances with a "red scare," warning voters that he had links to Russian Revolutionists, and was not to be considered a true representative of Brandon's labour interests,²³⁹ Smith won the election with 2007 votes.

²³⁸ Orlikow, p.200.

²³⁹ Brandon Weekly Sun, 24 Aug., 1920.

Stephen Clement, the Liberal incumbent who had earlier expressed a concern that Smith's rising popularity would affect the election, came in a distant second with 1403 votes. J. Kirkaldy, running as an independent, but generally understood to have strong ties with the Conservatives, trailed with 1245 votes.²⁴⁰

There is no sign that Brigden was involved in any aspect of Smith's campaign. By the time of the election, she had resigned from her job and was a member of Brandon's Labor Church. If she did not actively support Smith's campaign, she was at least supportive of Smith's personal politics and the idea of political involvement. No doubt an interested observer in the 1920 election, she was an active participant in the 1921 federal election.

Brigden had two invitations to participate in the 1921 election. The Dominion Labour Party approached her to stand as their candidate, an opportunity she turned down. Perhaps she felt that she lacked the necessary experience to make a successful run or thought that with the People's Church, caring for her aging parents and teaching some classes for "subnormal" children under the aegies of the schoolboard²⁴¹ she was too busy to undertake anything else. She may also have felt that the political world would not be particularly supportive towards a woman politician, and there was a lot

²⁴⁰ Clark, p.100.

²⁴¹ Brigden interview, 1972. Manitoba Museum Library.

of groundwork yet to be laid in organizing and encouraging women's participation as candidates and voters.

The second invitation gave her the opportunity to enter politics at the ground level. She was asked, and agreed to work on Progressive candidate Robert Forke's campaign.

Brigden's support of a Progressive candidate can be considered as another step in her political evolution. Her earliest sense of identification was with farmers. Her father had supported agricultural organizations, and her own early life experience made it easy for her to relate to farmers. The Progressive's political philosophy was similar to many of Brigden's beliefs. It stood for "co-operative" values, and spoke against class distinction in favour of an "ethic of comradeship."²⁴² Like Brigden, some Progressives worked to build a moral case for their political ideas, arguing that cooperation was the expression of the true social law. The flexibility of terms like "socialism" and "cooperation" was demonstrated by later CCF members who found the two terms "virtually interchangeable."²⁴³ If Brigden wanted to become involved in politics, the appeal of a Progressive candidate is obvious.

Brigden must have been in her element working on the campaign. Although she had made little direct reference to

²⁴² David Laycock, "Prairie Populism and the Idea of Cooperation. University of Saskatchewan Centre for the study of Cooperatives", 1985, p.24.

²⁴³ Ibid.

the suffrage movement, she and her mother had attended McClung's Mock Parliament in Winnipeg and Brigden felt she would have made a good suffragist herself.²⁴⁴ Since childhood, Brigden had attended political meetings of all stripes and had an intellectual interest in the political issues long before she could vote. Forke's campaign efforts were doubtlessly enhanced by the presence of a dynamic, articulate speaker and a face familiar to many in Brandon.

Election propoganda paid court to the recently enfranchised women voters, calling on them, to make their voices heard "so that it will be realized that the Canadian woman intends to make the Dominion a better place to live in and must be reckoned with in all vital problems of the Day."²⁴⁵ Meetings were held especially for women voters and women addressed political meetings on behalf of their chosen candidates.

Forke was well known in the area. A local farmer, Pipestone reeve for twenty years, a member of the Patrons of Industry and the Manitoba Grain Growers, he was supported by the Liberals although he ran as a Progressive. A small group of anti-conscription Liberals, however, "committed to fighting the farmers at every step..."²⁴⁶ (i.e. offering alternatives to the Progressives) supported the nomination

²⁴⁴ Correspondence, Brigden, 29 Nov., 1915.

²⁴⁵ Brandon Daily Sun, 26 Nov., 1921.

²⁴⁶ Clark, p.101.

of Cox, a local printer and president of the Brandon Trades and Labor Council, hoping he would attract the labour vote from the Progressive camp.²⁴⁷ The third candidate was Conservative Col. C. E. Ivans. Forke won a clear victory and was re-elected in 1925. By this time there is no sign of Brigden, but her long-time friend Edith Cove was active on the "ladies committee" of the Brandon Progressive Political Association.²⁴⁸

Forke's Liberal tendencies may have eventually alienated Brigden. Both Liberals and Progressives supported Forke in the second election, and he finished his political career with a ministerial appointment as the Minister of Immigration and a Senate appointment in 1929.²⁴⁹ Clark described Forke's career as illustrative of the trend back towards old, established parties, leaving the role of protest candidates to labour candidates who began to show "signs of political rejuvenation in that very year."²⁵⁰

As the Progressives began to look more like the Liberals, Brigden must have been reminded of her growing differences with the Methodist Church which had led to her resignation. This, along with her participation in the Labor Church, a sign of Brigden's developing identification

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p.102.

²⁴⁸ Brandon Daily Sun, 27 Oct., 1925.

²⁴⁹ Clark, p.110.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

with the working class, inspired her to shift her energies into independent labour politics.

It was around this time that Brigden organized the People's Forum Speaker's Bureau.²⁵¹ The formation of the Bureau reflected Brigden's renewed interest in public speaking. It also showed her continuing belief that great gains could be made if "the people" were educated about political, economic and social issues. This education would equip them to affect changes themselves, an important aspect of Brigden's philosophy. Not connected to any specific political party, but clearly having an independent labour party orientation, the list of speakers available from the Bureau included John Queen, Frank Underhill, Anna Louise Strong and J.S. Woodsworth, as well as speakers from as far away as Great Britain.

The Forum acted as a kind of resource centre, sending speakers across western Canada from British Columbia to Ontario. One pamphlet promoting Brigden's appearance included endorsements from such groups as the Brandon Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Order of Railway Conductors. The selections listed are not easy to identify, but the titles, "Adventures in Brotherhood," "The Workingman to the Capitalist Class" make clear the group's sympathies. One of Pauline Johnson's poems, "The Cattle

²⁵¹ From a Speakers Bureau pamphlet dated Sept., 1925. Brigden collection. P.A.M. Brigden does not elaborate on the duration of the Bureau and little material has been found to determine when the organization disbanded.

Thief," lamenting the death of a native deprived of his traditional lifestyle, was also included in the repertoire.

In addition to public speaking, Brigden returned to her other main interest - working with women's groups. She organized a series of annual meetings called the Labor Women's Social and Economic Conferences (LWSEC), which seem to have been a kind of training ground for many future CCF members.

In 1922 I felt an urge to write women all over the west with a view to establishing some links or ties with each other. There was an enthusiastic response. In November of that year were organized the Labour Women's Social and Economic Conference. I became the general secretary and each year organized a two-day conference. Many intelligent, forward looking women participated, including a number with experience in the labour and suffrage movements in Great Britain. By the time the Conference merged with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, it had held sessions in every major centre in western Canada.²⁵²

Brigden recognized that women's role in social and political reform was by necessity different from men's. She was aware of differences in men's and women's experiences ranging from their political education to self-confidence in politics, where, after all, women had few role models.

It was in an attempt to address this imbalance that

²⁵² Brigden, *One Woman's Crusade*, p.58. Orlikow's interview with M. Aiken put the date of the first conference in 1924, as does Sangster in *Dreams*, p.84. A 1931 conference program from Mable Aiken's collection identified as the Nineth Conference verifies 1924 as the date of the first official conference. In view of Bridgen's organizational interests, it is possible that a smaller event did take place in 1922.

Brigden organized the LWSEC.²⁵³ Begun in Brandon, it eventually grew to include several branches in western Canada, and held annual conferences hosted by the various branches in turn. The Conference was important for the personal and the practical support it offered to women as voters, lobbyists, and in a few instances, as electoral candidates. Although Brigden claimed the women's energies were redirected into the CCF party once it was formed, there is some evidence that branches lasted into the late 1930's.²⁵⁴

Brigden occupied a variety of executive level positions in the LWSEC and thus maintained an influential role in the organization. She helped organize and promote its conferences. Her involvement enabled her to build on her considerable experience in public speaking, benefit from further learning opportunities and receive increased public exposure. Since the records of LWSEC are sparse, Brigden's experience is important to guide our understanding of the importance of the organization, of what it offered Brigden specifically and what it offered to its other politically interested members generally.

The LWSEC attracted women of a variety of political beliefs. The hallmark of the organization was the

²⁵³ Minutes of the Labor Women's Social and Economic groups have yet to be located. Current records consist mainly of newspaper clippings from private collections of the participants such as Brigden and Mabel Aiken, and souvenirs in the forms of programs.

²⁵⁴ Sangster, "Women and the New Era," p.110.

independence accorded each local, reflecting Brigden's personal belief in locally controlled, decentralized political organizations. There was no official "party line"- no obligation for one branch to agree with another. Each group was independent and at the annual conference resolutions were decided democratically.

Some locals were less structured than others. For example, the Winnipeg branch, formed in January of 1930 to host the annual conference kept only minutes, and claimed to have no official by-laws or rules. But according to one Winnipeg member, Mabel Aiken, "we always knew that we were socialists and we'd always keep in the foreground that we had to go by the principles of socialism."²⁵⁵ Brigden had friends in the Winnipeg branch, which she joined in 1930 when she moved there.

Between annual conferences, the women met in small groups to study, discuss books or hear invited speakers. Those not deeply committed to a political philosophy still found common ground within the LWSEC as they aimed to criticize "inequality ... injustice and unkindness and cruelty, and (criticize) where we thought public servants weren't doing a good job."²⁵⁶ Each group selected, researched and discussed their own issues and raised public

²⁵⁵ Manitoba Historical Society interview, M. Aiken interviewed by Orlikow, transcript. (Now held in P.A.M.)

²⁵⁶ MHS interview, Aiken/Orlikow.

awareness through such events as lectures and letter writing campaigns. If the Winnipeg local was typical, the groups were small enough to meet in members' homes and followed a traditionally female structure. "It wasn't organized in a formal or academic manner, it was strictly as the opportunity offered, as time allowed."²⁵⁷

"As time allowed" was an important factor in ensuring the greatest participation. Brigden was one of the few single women in the Winnipeg branch, so the concerns of childcare, the need to disrupt household routine as little as possible and keep the support of their husbands were issues for most of these women.²⁵⁸ Like the women involved in the Labor Church, many LWSEC members were related or married to men in the Manitoba Labor movement. This did not necessarily result in the men supporting the LWSEC and some of them objected to women forming a separate group. "Mr. Farmer wasn't very keen on it but when he saw the publicity we were getting and what a lot of strides we were making along different lines...we were just alright."²⁵⁹

The annual conferences were more structured than the local meetings, in spite of the struggle to organize and pay

²⁵⁷ Interview with Don Aiken, Feb. 3, 1990.

²⁵⁸ An undated membership list for a Winnipeg groups included Lucy Woodsworth, Mrs. John Queen and Mrs. Fred Tipping. Many of the names on the Winnipeg list did not include the women's Christian names, merely the title Mrs. before the husband's first and last names. A search through Henderson's Directories to attempt to identify these women personally revealed that the Directories followed this same tradition.

²⁵⁹ MHS, Ibid.

for some of them, especially during the Depression. Some union and labour representatives actively supported their endeavours with financial donations. In preparation for the 1931 Conference held in Saskatoon, the Winnipeg group solicited donations from sympathetic city organizations to help pay transportation costs for their delegates. In response, they received both financial and moral support. The Secretary of the Winnipeg Musician's Society enclosed this note with a donation. "We believe that you are doing a good work for the workers and decided to forward the...sume(sic) of \$10.00 to you, believing that it will add to your funds a little and help you...before your next conference day."²⁶⁰

The LWSEC delegates were joined by other guests attending the conferences, including "good will delegates" from as many as thirteen different affiliated organizations, as well as union and labour party members. Those attending travelled from all across the prairies, representing branches in Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Brandon and Kenora, which did not have an official group.²⁶¹ Some of the sessions were open to the public, for example, the 1929 Conference banquet, which was attended by labour aldermen, the local TLC president,

²⁶⁰ F.A. Tallman, Secretary Treasurer of the Winnipeg Musicians Society, to Mabel Aiken, 3/4/30. Correspondence in personal collection of D. Aiken.

²⁶¹ MHS, Ibid.

teachers and principals.²⁶²

Generally, the Annual Conferences, although not particularly large (on average, about 40 women attended each year from 1924-1929), received considerable attention and publicity. The three day sessions were discussed in newspaper reports, complete with photographs, delegates' reports, executive election results, summaries of speeches and motions discussed and passed. Most of these reports seem to have been provided by the delegates and some of the articles have a distinct Bridgen voice to them, although only a few are clearly credited as her submissions.

As shown by these articles, the LWSEC studied a wide range of issues from women's wages to legal, accessible birth control. The choice of topics and the perspectives expressed repeatedly reveal the organization's feminist slant. On some issues, they were joined by other, ad-hoc women's groups, organizing around issues that affected them personally. The members may not all have been politically oriented or active,

"but they were interested in a number of problems that were current at the time and they saw this group as (one) that could perhaps bring some solutions to problems to public notice and to the notice of the provincial, municipal and federal governments."²⁶³

Some of the early proposals put forth at conferences,

²⁶² Edmonton Journal, 25 March, 1929.

²⁶³ Don Aiken, 3 Feb., 1990.

such as those promoting state controlled hospitals, dental and medical care, and unemployment insurance appeared in later CCF policies. Members also called for labour and farm women to work together and referred often to the new economic plan of cooperation, based on "production for use, not profit." The high debts of farmers and other agricultural problems such as soil erosion, lack of irrigation facilities also concerned them. One particularly enthusiastic conference report, probably written by Brigden, sent labour's greetings to

farm women everywhere...shoulder to shoulder let them greet the world crisis with faces towards the dawn, let them cry together 'the old world is dead - long live the new.' Only when we do this can we see the poverty, misery, crime, war and disease disappear, and peace, love and the abundant life for all prevail.²⁶⁴

The LWSEC analysis of the social and economic problems of the rural and working class found them "fundamentally the same."²⁶⁵ The women discussed plans to tackle these problems and supported cooperative marketing schemes, provincial and national ownership and control of resources. While demanding the establishment of a national unemployment insurance plan, some women blamed recent immigrants for the job shortage. However, even this aspect, too, deserved government attention and perhaps new policies.

²⁶⁴ Western Producer, 4 April, 1931. Although unsigned, the article's style and content contains much that typifies Brigden's other writings, including the comparison between farm and labour problems, and the phrase "abundant life for all."

²⁶⁵ Western Producer, 4 May, 1931.

The LWSEC harshly criticized police for harassment of workers' demonstrations and petitioned the federal government for the right of free speech after Toronto passed a law forbidding the use of 'foreign' languages in addressing public meetings.²⁶⁶ They were also interested in developments in the Soviet Union, and one conference featured the report of a delegate's recent trip to that country. They also put forth a motion in favour of dropping the trade embargo against Russia.²⁶⁷

As well as national and regional concerns, the LWSEC turned attention to issues close to home; education and youth. They discussed the values they wanted represented in the school system. Possibly due to the influence of Brigden, who was on the Educational Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and other like minded women, peace issues soon found a place on the agenda. Instructing children for a peaceful world became a priority. The LWSEC called for textbooks that would emphasis peace, deleting all references that glorified militarism.²⁶⁸ Unappeased by the argument that cadet training was a useful part of the physical education program, the women wanted it to be banned from school.

To make education as accessible as possible, they

²⁶⁶ Alberta Labor News, 7 Sept., 1931.

²⁶⁷ Western Producer, 4 May, 1931.

²⁶⁸ Prentice, ed. Canadian Women, p.282.

promoted the idea of free school textbooks. They debated the validity of the present curriculum and expressed concern that the best education would emphasize moral and independent thinking over rote learning and preparation for standardized exams.²⁶⁹ Not willing to rely on the school system nor wait for the desired changes to be made to the curriculum, they organized political youth groups. The Brandon branch, guided by Brigden, worked to educate the young members through "mock council meetings, debates, reading of labour plays and social evenings."²⁷⁰

The links between the LWSEC and other labour oriented groups is illustrated by the similarity of the above plans with the labour platform of Vancouver school trustees and city councillors in the early 1920's. Like the LWSEC, they also campaigned for free textbooks, with more Canadian content, and an end to cadet training. Candidates shared the LWSEC concern that an emphasis on university preparation over a more holistic education aimed to improve all the students' intellectual and creative abilities only benefitted the few that went on to university. One city councillor whose stand was similar to the LWSEC's on most of these issues was Angus MacInnis, son-in-law of J.S. and Lucy

²⁶⁹ Edmonton Journal, op. cit.

²⁷⁰ Edmonton Journal, op. cit.

Woodsworth.²⁷¹ Brigden's long held belief that education could play a major part in social reform seems part of a general opinion held by many of the working class that children could "use education as a liberating experience."²⁷²

The LWSEC also entered the contentious debate on the role of women in socialism. Some socialists believed that a focus on feminist concerns would shatter the class unity needed to build a socialist movement. For example, trade unionist Helena Gutteridge rejected the feminist label in preference to calling herself a trade woman.²⁷³ Grace MacInnis and Dorothy Steeves also identified primarily with the economic struggle and believed that socialism, with its redistribution of wealth and fair economic opportunities, "would ensure economic independence and thus freedom"²⁷⁴ for women. Many were seduced by a vision of a coming socialist world free from the exploitative economic system. It was thought this system forced women to seek employment outside the home and prevented them from devoting themselves to their natural and desired roles as wives and mothers. Women's contribution to society was kept in the context of a

²⁷¹ Jean Barman, "Knowledge is Essential for University Class but Fatal to Class Privilege": Working People and the Schools in Vancouver During the 1920's," Labour/Le Travail, #22, fall 1987, pp.25-26, 29.

²⁷² Barman, p.53.

²⁷³ Sangster, Dreams, p.119.

²⁷⁴ Susan Walsh, "The Peacock and the Guinea Hen: Political Profiles of Dorothy Gretchen Steeves and Grace MacInnis" in Prentice and Trofimenkoff, Neglected Majority. p.152.

stable family and home life, a theory supported by the idealized concept of a "family wage," whereby the amount earned by the male heads of household enabled him to support a wife and family on one salary.²⁷⁵ These attitudes were shared to some degree by many LWSEC members, although certainly not by all, as the many conference debates and discussions on the rights and conditions of working women indicated.

Brigden considered most women in the traditional role of wife and mother, but she also saw them as political and economic equals of men, not merely maternalistic reformers. She argued for the right of women, married or single, to work outside the home.

The LWSEC encouraged women workers to join unions and become involved in local branches of the Trades and Labour Council. It also subjected current working conditions to study and discussion. One detailed report established that a single woman, living on her own, needed to earn about twenty dollars a week and noted that apprentice positions often paid half this amount. The LWSEC also uncovered situations where minimum wage laws were not being followed, and outlined studies that showed 75% of married women working outside the home were doing so out of "dire

²⁷⁵ Linda Kealey, "Canadian Socialism and the Woman Question, 1900-1914," Labour/Le Travail. *13, 1984, pp.78, 83.

necessity."²⁷⁶ These investigations and resolutions dealing with working women shows that the LWSEC overcame its ambivalence to declare its support for all working women, and call for economic equality with men. Brigden was not only sympathetic towards these ideas, considering her leadership role in the LWESC, and her own marital and economic status, she was likely instrumental in formulating many of these resolutions. In summing up one conference, Brigden reported that "equal rights for women, married or single, in the world of industry was another principle strongly advocated."²⁷⁷

The LWSEC also raised the question of legal access to birth control, and Brigden's contrast between "voluntary motherhood" and the "everpresent fear of childbearing" leaves little doubt as to her stance on this issue. Brigden argued that women who were able to "enjoy the privileges of voluntary motherhood" could achieve some measure of economic independence, and contrasted this favorable situation with the former "traditional marriage (where) her whole personality was engulfed by toil and the everpresent fear of child-bearing".²⁷⁸

This was a subject with which Brigden was familiar, since the debates on eugenics, race suicide and other

²⁷⁶ Edmonton Journal, op. cit.

²⁷⁷ Winnipeg Free Press, 31 March, 1930.

²⁷⁸ Winnipeg Free Press, 31 March, 1930

morality issues had been among the concerns of the Social and Evangelical Department of the Methodist Church. Her work on their behalf had put her in contact with hundreds of women, and revealed to her the confusion, shame and desperation of women with little or no information on birth control and no legal access to it. She disagreed with the argument that such information was corrupting in itself, and countered that access to this information would enable women (and men) to make intelligent, morally correct choices about their own lives. The conferences debated the issue more than once, and referred it back to individual branches for further discussion. Even when they agreed in principle, they debated how best to organize the promotion of birth control information and clinics.

Birth control was one of the issues in which the LWSEC was joined by other women's groups. At least one Winnipeg branch member also belonged to an informal women's group which debated the establishment and administration of birth control clinics. They argued with Dr. Speechly who favored clinics attached to and controlled by hospitals, to be run as philanthropic organizations with the backing of Kaufmann's rubber company in Toronto. The Winnipeg branch of the LWSEC opposed this plan and wanted separate clinics established throughout the city, a plan they contended would provide greater accessibility and a larger number of facilities. They hoped to interest enough doctors and

nurses to run the clinics on a part time basis, with funding provided by the city Department of Health and federal health authorities.²⁷⁹ Given Brigden's emphasis on local and accessible programs in general, and her belief in government accountability, she most likely supported the latter plan.

The women were not always able to agree on how to implement and administer these programs, but their attitudes were still ahead of those expressed in men's or mixed associations on the subject. When the women of the Saskatchewan branch of the United Farmers of Canada put forth a resolution calling for legal access to birth control in 1928, the main convention in 1930 (which included men), rejected it.²⁸⁰

Eugenics was part of the LWSEC's discussion on birth control. Historian Joan Sangster believed its inclusion as a conference topic was a sign of growing conservatism within the LWSEC²⁸¹ but Alison Prentice has noted that "only a minority of reformers thoroughly supported eugenics; its premise that heredity determined all was contrary to the belief in social change."²⁸² This belief was shared by many of the members of the LWSEC, including Brigden, and the delegates were unable to agree on an official stand on the

²⁷⁹ Don Aiken.

²⁸⁰ Sangster, Dreams, p.86.

²⁸¹ Sangster, Dreams, p.30.

²⁸² Prentice, p.193.

eugenics question.

It is unclear when the LWSEC officially ended. Brigden claimed the women's energies were redirected into CCF party once it was formed, and for Brigden, the CCF certainly claimed her political energies. But there is evidence of conferences continuing as late as 1936 and 1937.²⁸³ With independent branches, it may have taken a number of years before all the groups disbanded or redirected their interest. Many of the LWSEC women joined the CCF, but as specific party ideologies replaced the more general loyalties of the LWSEC, there was division within the ranks and suspicion on the part of some women that the CCF was a middle class party.

Working within their local groups and at the national conferences, the LWSEC became

"a valuable forum in which social democratic and sometimes Communist women could share ideas and work together...It created a network of communication that later aided the growth of the CCF and helped inspire the formation of CCF women's groups."²⁸⁴

Working on their own meant that these women were able to set their own agenda. It also gave them a sense of comfort and security not always available in other, mixed groups. Brigden was one of those comfortable enough to work effectively in mixed groups, and in fact, she later held an

²⁸³ Sangster, "Women and the New Era," p.110.

²⁸⁴ Sangster, Dreams, p.84.

executive position with the CCF. But when she suggested at one conference that the LWSEC be more open to men's participation, there was considerable discussion and "the matter was left over as not being in the best interests of the Women's Conference at the time." Later, a Winnipeg member put it more succinctly. "When the men were around, we were always sort of overpowered by them."²⁸⁵

The LWSEC was an important political and educational resource for its members. As well as looking at such "women's interests" as health and education, the Conference publicly discussed and debated the issues surrounding family limitation. It helped develop theories of reform into political analysis, moving beyond mere criticisms of morality to bring an economic analysis to social problems. It called for state responsibility in working towards solutions and ameliorating conditions until the solutions were found. It was a place where women developed organizational, leadership and speaking skills and worked together to study, analyze and critique economic and political structures. Within the LWSEC, the women found a secure, comfortable environment in which to discover and nurture these skills.

It was while a member of the LWSEC that Brigden decided to accept another offer to run for political office, this time to represent Brandon's farm-labour party in 1930. Her

²⁸⁵ Orlikow/Aiken interviewed.

acceptance may have reflected her political confidence, especially after years with the LWSEC. She may also have felt a kind of obligation to run in light of all her exhortations to women to involve themselves in politics. Another concern was to ensure that the farm-labour viewpoint was represented. As well, both of her parents had died by this time, and she may have felt more free to travel and campaign. However, the motivation behind Brigden's invitation to run might have been less noble. As the election results will show, Brigden's role looked rather like that of a "sacrificial lamb" in a riding already considered lost.

She ran against Col. Major Beaubier, the Conservative candidate and T.A. Crerar, who had the support of both the Liberals and Progressives. Both men had run in previous elections. Full page advertisements in the Brandon Sun extolled the virtues of Beaubier and his party's policies and the editorials predicted a Conservative win. Radio broadcasts of Crerar's and Beaubier's public meetings were reported in the paper but read more like amenable party meetings than scenes of debate and political discussion. There was no mention of either Brigden's presence or platform, save for small advertisements. Yet she was not without her supporters. William Ivens and Woodsworth were featured speakers at a public meeting held in the "Farmer-

Labour Committee Rooms."²⁸⁶ Beaubier won a clear victory with half of the votes cast in his support (8,512). Crerar trailed by over 2,000 votes with 6,457, while Brigden only received 1,331, not even enough to enable her to reclaim her deposit.²⁸⁷

Her failure in the election cannot be blamed on lack of experience as a public figure. She was well known locally because of her years of social and political involvement in Brandon and her work with the Speaker's Forum, the Peoples' Church and the LWSEC. Her most serious handicap was the constituency itself, especially because Brandon's politically weakened working-class movement was no longer strong enough to support a candidate.²⁸⁸

Brigden was one of ten women running for federal election that year. Only one, Agnes Macphail, was elected (in Macphail's case, re-elected). After the campaign, six women including Brigden offered their personal analyses of the election in an article entitled "Why I Failed to Win the Election" which was published in Chatelaine that fall.²⁸⁹ The women commented positively on their experience and the support offered by their respective parties. Some (especially the farm or farm-labour candidates), believed

²⁸⁶ Brandon Daily Sun, 18 July, 1930.

²⁸⁷ Clark, p.249.

²⁸⁸ Clark, p.114.

²⁸⁹ "Why I Failed to Win the Election," Chatelaine, Oct., 1930, pp.18, 37-38. All quotations are taken from these pages.

the newness of their parties kept them from winning seats, and Brigden specifically criticized the voters for their reluctance to support a new party over voting for the "winning side." She also blamed "the general ignorance of the electorate" and the divided interests of the "agricultural and industrial workers (who) have not yet come to understand their common social and economic interests."

The women's comments also gave a sense that the gender of the candidates influenced the outcome of the election. Iola St. Jean, Independent, believed that some men saw women candidates "as rivals, and believe the rights which they are claiming will take their power away." Another candidate blamed her election failure on the Conservative mentality "sweeping the land. It was most natural that, in the stampede (to Conservatism) anything so comparatively new as women in parliament was absolutely overborne." None of the women ran specifically as women's candidates, or claimed to represent women's issues, yet many of them commented that women voters failed to give their support where it was needed. Whether this support should have been for the candidates as party representatives or as women is not clear.

Mrs. Donald MacDonald (her Christian name was not given), an Independent-Progressive-Liberal from Northumberland, Ontario, was the most articulate on the

question of gender and the election.²⁹⁰ MacDonald claimed women candidates were one of two cases - those who brought in large amounts of funds, not necessarily used on their behalf, and those

endorsed by a party convention in a hopeless constituency where the machine, after vainly attempting to secure a male candidate in order to avoid acclamation for the other party, makes a pretended generous gesture, saying 'of course, let a woman have a chance'.

She saw women intimidated by the political arena due to their lack of experience. MacDonald also blamed "men's overwhelming superiority complex (for) most women's equally overwhelming inferiority complex."

Brigden, for all her work and declarations to rally, prepare and politically educate women, practically ignored the gender question in her discussion of the election. Yet her concurrent work with the LWSEC shows her to be in agreement with much of the MacDonald's closing comments.

Women should have gone to the political kindergarten before going to school with all the old political bosses and machine workers. They were told, in act if not in words by the men their limitations...Had women formed a woman's party ten years ago; had they learned to study along with other women the political and national problems; had they learned to come to conclusions of their own on all matters of welfare and prosperity and to vote for whatever party would best bring about the results they desired, today women would indeed be a factor in politics.

This emphasis on education, intellectual development

²⁹⁰ Her comments support Joan Sangster's and Georgina Taylor's theories that women candidates were rarely given a winning constituency.

and independent thought was exactly what Brigden was supported through the LWSEC. She took it for granted, of course, that education and independent thought would lead women to the correct (i.e. socialist) choice.

Although Brigden lost the election, her comments and those of the other candidates seem to show the experience as a challenging, exciting one for them. And to hear other women discuss the barriers they felt as a result of their gender could only have strengthened Brigden's conviction that her work with the LWSEC was both useful and necessary. That the candidates mentioned other obstacles beside gender - party politics, funding, practical difficulties, shows their political awareness and their confidence in themselves. Once their organizational and financial problems, which were also shared, to a lesser extent by the male candidates, were solved, the women felt they had every chance to become elected. In the meantime, it was up to women like Brigden and MacDonald, who came from families where "politics formed just as much of our mental food as daily porridge of our physical," to break down the first barriers and lead the way.

The second half of Brigden's life, both chronologically and politically, began with her move from Brandon to Winnipeg, which remained her home for the rest of her life. Just as her concern for her parents influenced her decision

to leave her work with the Methodist Church, so their presence in Brandon, and their declining health influenced Brigden's decision to remain in Brandon for as long as she did.

Brigden's father died in December 1925; her mother, who suffered a small stroke as a result of his death, died in May 1927. The responsibility of looking after the estate fell to Brigden, but by 1930, these were neither family nor family affairs to keep her in Brandon. Her politics had been rejected in the recent election and her church ties had been broken. Perhaps it was again time to seek broader horizons.

Winnipeg was a logical choice for Brigden for a number of reasons. She knew women there involved in the LWSEC, including Edith Cove,²⁹¹ and had a married brother living there. She stayed with Parry and Hazel when she first moved to Winnipeg, but was soon on her own and making connections throughout the political community. She was elected General Secretary of the LWSEC and also made contact with the Independent Labor Party in Winnipeg. If the decade of the 1920's was a series of endings for Brigden, the 1930's saw her finding her niche in Winnipeg, in its organizations and politics, especially the CCF.

The photo of the first National CCF Convention in 1933

²⁹¹ The longstanding friendship between Cove and Brigden dated back to Brigden's Labor Church period. Sangster, "The Making of A Socialist Feminist," p.24.

shows Brigden in the second row, almost directly behind Woodsworth. She was one of three national council members representing Manitoba.²⁹² She was also one of the three women elected to the National Council, a committee of twenty from across western Canada and Quebec. The other two were Sophie Dixon from Saskatchewan and Agnes Macphail, Ontario M. P.

Brigden joined the CCF as a mature, experienced delegate with set expectations and values. At the time of the Regina Conference, she was forty-five years old and now convinced that political action through the CCF was the means to bring about social justice.

Brigden helped to organize this new party because its policies reflected beliefs she had formed over the previous nineteen years. Lacking a labour or working class background herself, she found the joint farm/labor/socialist membership a comfortable milieu. Maintaining her religious values was possible in a party led by Woodsworth and claiming former ministers such as Ivens and T.C. Douglas in its ranks. As a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, it was also important to her that the CCF mandate emphasized peace. In short, the CCF defined road to the New Jerusalem - cooperation, nationalization, sharing of wealth, healthcare, and a concern for the basics

²⁹² Report of the First Annual CCF Convention, Saskatchewan CCF Research Bureau, vol.1, no.2, Aug., 1933, p.20. From Mabel Aiken's collection, courtesy of Don Aiken.

of human life such as enough food and adequate housing - contained ideals and plans she already advocated.

About the time that she joined the CCF, Brigden began contributing occasional articles to various labour papers, including the ILP Weekly News and the Manitoba Commonwealth.²⁹³ These articles are the clearest statements of Brigden's fully developed philosophies on socialism and feminism, and illustrate the uninterrupted link between her social gospel values and her politics. Within these columns, written when Brigden was in her mid-forties, are the basic attitudes and opinions that she had developed over the past twenty years. They contain no surprising ideas or attitudes radically different from those of Brigden as a twenty-four year old social service worker. Rather, they illustrate her political progressions and identify values that she had always and would always hold; concern for justice, education (including children's) as a means for social change a sense of Christian ethics to guide her political direction.

The Weekly News column, entitled "Boys and Girls Corner," aimed to educate young readers about the basic ideas of socialism. The series in the Commonwealth, called "Knowledge is Power," was directed at a more adult audience, and it is through this column that Brigden's feminist

²⁹³ These are kept in a scrapbook in the Brigden collection at the P.A.M. A few are undated, and a few of the magazines or journals cannot be clearly identified. The majority in the collection are from 1930-34. Unless otherwise noted, the following quotations are from either the Weekly News, or Manitoba Commonwealth.

perspective on socialism was clearly demonstrated.

In writing "Boys and Girls Corner," Brigden was continuing her years of involvement with young people that began when she was a Sunday school teacher. Her ideas in the column were simply illustrated, and while there was no specific mention of God, the religious analogies Brigden used to explain socialist principles plainly indicate her social gospel past. She explained how socialism rested on "the great principles of Love, Justice and Truth," and how these principles meant that all were to share in the wealth of the world. Brigden referred to the great "Spirit of love's" plan for the world, and reminded readers that "all the useful things of nature belong to all people because the Great intelligence made these things for all." She believed that resources such as coal, timber and fish were provided by nature: they were not "man-made" and therefore should be shared equally, that is, not owned by private corporations. Her Christian values led her to stress the moral aspects of socialism; the responsibility for one another, the sharing of resources to meet the needs of all. Those who deprived the workers of their 'fair share' or made profits out of human need and greed she portrayed as immoral. Her articles encouraged children's interest, awareness and responsibility in bringing about this new social order.

Brigden's feminism, as expressed most clearly through columns in the Manitoba Commonwealth, was based on her

belief that in all things - intellect, potential - women were the equal of men. To this she added the perspective of the maternal feminists. Then she turned her critical eye to socialism to demand that women's role and rights be recongnized.

The maternalist viewpoint was a valid one in light of her own experience. Books she had read and sold as a social service worker stressed the naturalness of marriage and children for women, quite contrary to Brigden's own choices in life. Most of the women she knew were wives and mothers who counted among their interests the health, education and general welfare of their children. So she appealed to them in this most common of roles to participate in politics for the sake of their children. Their motherhood made them the "first workers of the world" and made it impossible for them to stand aside in a world of unemployment (which Brigden called a waste of youth), exploitation and poverty. CCF women she especially identified as women whose maternal conscience was expanded by a larger social conscience concerned with the world outside their own, immediate family.

Women's concerns as political issues were new and challenging. For men and women alike, it was least threatening to hear them couched in familiar and reassuring terms, 'women as mothers,' who were continuing in their nurturing role. Like the feminists and suffragists before

her, Brigden rallied the women with common analogies of women as mothers of the world, and politics as social housekeeping. Economic discussions were illustrated with examples from local milk and egg production projects, and she informed her readers that "women have come to realize.. that politics and political platforms are really all about such common, everyday matters as food, clothing, shelter and how we get such things."

Women who worked at home she considered to make valuable contributions to the marriage partnership. Brigden's column gave the unemployment problem a new perspective when she repeated a farm woman's observation on the difference between housewives and unemployed men thus, "that the men had no jobs while the women worked without pay."

Brigden insisted that socialism's view of the new world include women's special concerns as well and asked "What will the economic change mean to women?...Most of the new leisure affected men." Brigden's column suggested the application of cooperative principles to establish communal laundries and kitchens, freeing women from their own particular (unpaid) drudgery.

Brigden believed that women's influence should extend beyond the private family role. To enable this to occur, she encouraged women to improve their understanding of social and economic conditions through self-education and

study groups. Properly prepared, women's participation would change both the focus and the character of the current political attitudes. At women's meetings, Brigden explained, socialism became a "warm, vital thing...(with) little theorizing (and) no quibbling...in short, the 'ism' dropped away and society as a human, living entity stepped forth."²⁹⁴

To her recognition of special interest groups such as immigrants and the working class, Brigden added women. Their shared experiences and interests united them, and Brigden urged women to work together for their common interest. She described the "mothermind...at work, on the age old task of making home, wherever and whatever it might be like, a better place for the family. We found ourselves saying **"Women of Canada, Unite!, You have nothing to lose but your chains!"**²⁹⁵

Brigden's woman centred work had two main benefits. It provided politically interested women with the emotional support and practical skills to participate more fully in the political process at all levels, from self-informed voter to political executive office holder to, on occasion, electoral candidate. Since the women's groups she was involved in were concerned with social reform, they made their impact felt on like-minded political parties,

²⁹⁴ From unidentified publication. Column title "Women and Politics," 27 July, 1930.

²⁹⁵ Emphasis in the original.

especially the CCF. The result was that through the influence of Brigden and women like her, the CCF came to consider seriously women's issues long before other political parties.²⁹⁶

The Labor Church was Brigden's transition stage to secular politics. It allowed her to keep her social gospel context and even the familiar context of church structure as she explored the option of political action. It was a direct link to more radical social gospel ministers as well as to the labour movement and was an important part of her political education. In turn, Brigden assumed a leadership role and her organizational and speaking talents helped the Brandon People's Church become one of the most enduring of the Labor churches. Within the church, Brigden turned her attention to groups most familiar to her and most traditionally associated with women's work - women and children. From the church, she moved into the political stream, as organizer, speaker and educator. She chose to work with women, to increase their social and political awareness and participation and raise their profile as a special interest group. As a member of the CCF, she was not so far from her roots as a rural Methodist. Her earliest interests, social justice, women's issues, and an independent career remained her motivating force in her relationship with the CCF and throughout her life. Her

²⁹⁶ Sangster, Dreams, p.319.

goals remained the same, but her understanding of them, and the means to affect them had changed.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the whole of Brigden's life. Suffice to say she remained a social activist until her death in 1977 at age eighty-nine. She had found her political niche with the CFF and continued to work with the party after it became the New Democratic Party. She joined the Quaker church, renewing her ties to her maternal past and continued to work for peace through women's groups. Her concern for immigrants and the working class was expressed through her involvement with the International Centre in Winnipeg, and the public speaking classes she taught at the Unemployment Youth Centre.

Even her later "diversions" into cultural events like the ballet, opera and art associations, can be traced to the environment in which she was raised; a house full of books and music. Furthermore, the influence of home and environment on the formation of one's character was part of the social reform discussion and Brigden held strong opinions on it. Her attitude was supported by Woodsworth's and Addams's approach to their own work. Woodsworth, through the Winnipeg People's Forums, tried to provide "wholesome entertainment and instruction...as a counterattraction to the cheap theatre, the dance hall and pool room, (with a religious atmosphere of) "good music,

beautiful pictures and conversation talks."²⁹⁶ Addams's account of Hull House further emphasized the important role played by the social clubs in offering a safe, entertaining and uplifting environment. Hull House had an Art Gallery on the premises, sponsored music concerts, and taught art and music.²⁹⁷

This exploration of Brigden's early life and experiences has tried to offer tentative explanations for the "end result" - Brigden as a single woman, a pacifist, socialist and feminist. It has identified patterns of intellectual and political development similar to some of her contemporaries. What is revealed by the details of Brigden's experience makes her historically important.

Personalities are by necessity a product of the times in which they live, but in Brigden's case, it is also important to acknowledge the role of her ambition, gender and marital status. There was no sudden awakening or dramatic transformation of Brigden's ideals, rather a slow, determined development of an ambitious woman who was determined to "do something" with her life in the face of recurrent obstacles and limitations imposed on her. Discouraged from a business education, she channelled her ambitions into a more acceptable church career, with the

²⁹⁶ James S. Woodsworth. My Neighbour. Introduction by Richard Allen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, reprinted edition, 1972, p.208.

²⁹⁷ Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, pp. 202, 214, 257-61.

addition of its moral considerations and challenges. Limited in her choice of education, she studied at Brandon University, a progressive coeducational institution whose professors offered her an early introduction to the social reform movement. She eventually earned a diploma from the Conservatory of Music in Toronto, a city where she became aware of poverty and exploited workers for the first time in her life. Hired by the Methodist Church by a supervisor who did not share her interest in Jane Addams's settlement work, Brigden adopted Addams as a personal role model. Brigden's stress on the value of women working together to develop their own potential was similarly unencouraged by the Church. Unable to join the ministry, she counted many friends within it, and was angry and upset when the Methodist Conferences criticized their viewpoints, which she often shared. She did not hesitate to express strong opinions or criticize church policy, especially to her employer, Moore. She was a member of the CCF by deliberate choice: it was a party that suited her values.

Her political views were tempered by the era in which she lived. She called herself a 'daughter of the common people' without possessing a working class background. Instead, she was guided by her own interpretation of the social service gospel message and influenced by her experience as a social service worker. She was a feminist who believed that women were equal to men and that they

possessed particularly feminine attributes. She commented on but did not challenge outright the CCF's neglect of feminist issues. By the standards of her time, to be ambitious, deliberately single, determinedly self-supporting and continuously outspoken was cause enough to be labelled as a radical.

Some of her most important contributions were made while working with other women. She addressed them as a church worker, led study groups at the People's Church, encouraged and facilitated political awareness and activism in the LWSEC. She encouraged them to look beyond the boundaries of their household lives, to create women's networks for support in the development of their own abilities. She found companionship and support among women and offered the same. Although she was single, she was able to sympathize with and understand the difficulties of combining a political life with family responsibilities.

Many women in reform took up reform work as a kind of second career after family responsibilities were lessened by their children's maturity, or else they supported their husbands' efforts in the field. Brigden, however, made social reform her first and only career. And she credited her freedom to pursue her career to remaining single. "I've been able to do things, take steps and speak out because there is no one dependent on me. That makes quite a difference in a fellow's courage...I wouldn't have had time

to keep house."²⁹⁸ Quite possibly, she could have married and had almost as active a life, but she had always perceived family life as a conflict with education and later, with a career, and she made her choices accordingly. As her parents grew older, her single status, temporarily, had the opposite effect on her freedom. As the unmarried daughter, she acquired responsibility for her parents after the other children married and moved away. It was also left to her to settle the estate and business affairs after her parents died.

Brigden's gender made a difference on how she experienced the social gospel and political reform movement. As a woman, she was expected to be supportive, polite, and "ladylike", qualities that were not particularly useful in the political arena. Furthermore, her outspoken opinion and confidence borne of years of public speaking were unlikely to endear her to all of her male colleagues. Politically, her female focus may have restricted her 'usefulness' to the party as women's issues did not generate universal concern within the CCF. At an early age, she crossed the line from public to private sphere, and as a single woman, she lacked the trappings of a husband and children, the context of a private life into which she could be safely placed.

Like so many of her contemporaries, she felt she had to prove her femininity in the face of her activism. A

²⁹⁸ Winnipeg Tribune, 17 Dec., 1954.

newspaper anecdote citing her reputation for fruit conserves and jelly making²⁹⁹ parallels the example of a 1945 biography of E. Cora Hind, which included details of graceful, genteel Christmas teas and numerous references to Hind's fashion sense, by way of assuring that the high-booted, masculinely dressed agricultural expert had lost none of her femininity in the pursuit of a career.³⁰⁰

Brigden's gender was also an advantage. It made her a curiosity at times, which occasionally increased her audience. It opened some doors for her. As a woman with the Methodist Church, she was able to meet with other women on a personal level, hear their stories and offer advice or commiseration. It gave her a context of other women with which to work, a safer, more secure testing ground for her ideas and a place to practice her skills and gain the self confidence to run for election. While she admired the work of men like Smith and Woodsworth, she also took women as role models and spoke of the importance of such. She did not defer to the men in the party and worked with them as equals, sometimes teaching them, for example, in her public

²⁹⁹ Winnipeg Tribune, 17 Dec., 1954.

³⁰⁰ Kenneth Haig, Brave Harvest. Toronto: Thomas and Allen, 1945. There are numerous other examples of women self-conscious about appearing to retain their femininity while engaged in a career. These include Charlotte Whitton, whose petite, feminine physical appearance and wardrobe were the subject of flattering commentary during her lifetime. Rooke and Schnell, No Bleeding Heart. Brigden herself reported on conference speakers with references to their age and appearance, e.g. "mother of four...fresh complexion and curling hair." Whether this was intended to challenge the perspective that held that activist, feminist women were 'failed' women, or to reassure others that they were still women in spite of their political involvement and high public profile is hard to know. This concern to show that 'notable women' "did not forfeit their femininity" was shared by numerous biographers at one time. Margaret Andrews, "Attitudes in Canadian Women's History 1945-75." Journal of Canadian Studies, xii, 4, 1977, p.69.

speaking classes sponsored by the CCF.

Brigden is an example of one of the many middle class reformers who deliberately chose to identify with the working class. She also fits Sangster's pattern of women who made their most important contributions working at the grassroots level. The value of the tasks performed by these grassroots workers in organizing and addressing meetings, fundraising and assisting in election campaigns has yet to be properly acknowledged. As Brigden's life demonstrates, the term 'grassroots' must not be interpreted to mean secondary in importance.

The role of women's religious organizations, church auxiliaries, missionary societies, also needs to be reassessed, both in terms of their contribution to the community and to the development of women's sense of independence and power. There are some similar patterns in women's early political and religious groups.

Speaking specifically of the CCF, although the comment applies to many other social and political organizations, Sophie Dixon observed that "the CCF had many mothers."³⁰¹ It is impossible to follow Brigden's life without becoming aware of many other 'mothers,' discussing, arguing, working with other women as well as with men to bring about social change. Through the example of one woman, we hear echoes of

³⁰¹ Sophie Dixon interview by Peter Gzowski, Morningside, CBC AM radio, 21 March 1988. Cassette recording of interview in possession of author.

many women.

Historians are rightfully cautioned against being "diverted by an articulate, interesting and well written diary...(representing) the world from...one person's perspective."³⁰² We need the 'skeletons' of statistical data and more generalized, generational biographies or surveys to understand and appreciate the context of an individual's life. As these are being provided by the recent works by Alison Prentice and Veronica Strong-Boag, to name a few, we can see that detailed, personal studies along the lines suggested by Susan Mann Trofimenkoff³⁰³ help understand the perceptions and motivations of women within these aggregate groups. Many aspects of Brigden's life story reinforce the patterns outlined in more general studies. More such biographies may prove that independent, politically active women are not to be seen as rare exceptions, but as part of women's true historical legacy.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Mary Kinnear in the introduction to First Days, Fighting Days, p. viii.

³⁰³ Trofimenkoff in the introduction to Neglected Majority, p.16 and "Feminist Biography," Atlantis, vol. 10. no. 2, spring 1985.

³⁰⁴ Historian Margaret Conrad explained her personal reaction to her own biographical research by paraphrasing the comments of Ann Douglas Feminizing American Culture, in her own article "Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada 1750-1950," in Neglected Majority. Conrad wrote, "we expected to find our foremothers; we ended up finding our sisters." p.60.

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REV. T. ALBERT MOORE D.D.
 GENERAL TREASURER:
 A. D. WATSON, M.D.
 LOCAL SECRETARIES:
 REV. J. M. HAZLEWOOD, D.D., TORONTO
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Social Service and Evangelism

of the Methodist Church

46 WESLEY BUILDINGS, TORONTO

TO BE THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES
 OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS TO THE ECON-
 OMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND MORAL RE-
 LATIONS OF LIFE, AND THE PROMOTION OF
 EVANGELISM THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH

Dear Brother:-

The General Conference has given to this Department authority to employ, under its auspices and direction, Moral Reform Evangelists, as Specialists in Social Reform work for such time and in such spheres or localities as it may deem expedient.

We have frequently heard and witnessed the admirable work among boys and young men of Mr. W. L. Clark, of Leamington, Ontario. While a most successful business man, he has achieved unparalleled success in winning the confidence of Boys and Young Men, and leading them to determine to live pure and chaste lives, as well as to practice total abstinence from intoxicants, and to renounce cigarettes and tobacco and to cease using profanity.

The accompanying circular will introduce Mr. Clark to you, as well as acquaint you with his plans, program and success. To secure his help will surely be a benefit to the Boys and Young Men of any community.

During the past year, he has held many meetings under our direction. In every place his work was a success. We are grateful that he has consented to continue with us for a few weeks.

AS TO FINANCES: This Special Work cannot be included in the regular contributions of any circuit to this Department. It should meet its own obligations. The cost to us of the services of Mr. Clark (remuneration and expenses) is above \$50.00 per week. He has been offered \$100.00 per week and expenses, to work in the United States, but prefers to work in Canada. Our hope is that each place visited by Mr. Clark will contribute an amount sufficient to meet all expenses. Each charge will receive credit for this Special Contribution. Of course we assume full financial responsibility, but have confidence that every place accepting Mr. Clark's services will do its utmost to raise as much as possible to be applied towards the cost to us.

We are now planning his itinerary for the coming months. Could you use him for a week in your congregation? We can place him with you for the week beginning Sunday, ~~and the week following~~. I trust you will be able to plan for his coming on these dates.

Believing that the work of Mr. Clark will be of great benefit to your community, and hoping to have your favorable reply by very first mail.

Yours faithfully,

General Secretary.

GENERAL SECRETARY
REV. T. ALFRED MOORE, D. D.

GENERAL TREASURER:
A. G. WATSON, M. D.

THE DEPARTMENT OF
Social Service and Evangelism
of The Methodist Church

FIELD SECRETARIES:
REV. J. M. HAZLEWOOD, D.D., TORONTO
REV. W. J. SMITH, B.A., MONTREAL
REV. HUGH DOBSON, B.A., B.D., REGINA

"The object of the Department shall be the application of the principles of the Gospel of Jesus to the Economic, Political, Social and Moral relations of life and the promotion of Evangelism throughout the Church."—Constitution of Department

518 WESLEY BUILDINGS,
299 QUEEN STREET WEST, TORONTO

Toronto,

1916.

Dear Brother:—

The work of Mr. W. L. Clark in dealing with the Life Problems of boys and young men has been so successful that our General Board decided to undertake a similar work for girls, young women and mothers. We have been very fortunate in securing for some months the services of Miss Beatrice Brigden, A.C.S.E., of Brandon, Manitoba.

The enclosed leaflet will inform you concerning her plans and work. She is not a novice in this difficult and delicate undertaking, and brings to her work a mind and heart well prepared for such important and valuable service. A week spent among the Girls and Women of any community will be of the highest value. Reports from places visited since her appointment confirm our opinion as to the success of her work.

We are now planning her itinerary in the Prairie Provinces. To secure the success desired it is necessary that she spend a week in each place. We could place her on your charge for the week beginning Sunday,
1916.

The Public Recital given on Monday evenings is well planned, most entertaining, and in harmony with the Programme of her week of work. This always attracts a good audience and greatly helps to increase the public interest. As she is an accomplished reader, this recital may be widely advertised with confidence that your people will not be disappointed.

AS TO FINANCES: This being Special Work, contributions for its support are not to be included in the regular contribution of the circuit to this Department. Our expectation is that each place visited by Miss Brigden will contribute at least \$25.00, the amount necessary to cover the expenses. Credit for this contribution will be given the circuit as a Special Contribution. While we assume the financial responsibility, we have confidence that each place will do its utmost to raise the amount sufficient to cover the cost of this special work.

It is our earnest hope that you can arrange for Miss Brigden to spend this week on your charge. We believe the mothers, young women, and girls will be greatly helped through her labors. Will you please send your reply to this letter by return mail, (stamped envelope enclosed) to her address.

Hoping for a prompt and favorable reply,

Yours faithfully,

Box 3
File 45

(selected letters)



Miss Beatrice Brigden, A.T.C.M.

Public Reader and Entertainer

Miss Brigden's interpretation showed a strong sense of humour and at all times the audience was entirely with her. *Toronto Mail and Empire.*

Miss Brigden was superb.—*Sunday World.*

Miss Brigden's interpretation stamps her with the mark of genius.—*Daily Ontario.*

An ambitious undertaking, but to credit of Miss Brigden, she caught and sustained motive with keen appreciation and clever work. — *The Globe.*

Enjoyed a rich treat Monday evening. Miss Beatrice Brigden, A.T.C.M., gave a splendid interpretation, a beautiful and pathetic rendering of these inspiring gems of literature.—
Port Arthur.

SEP 16 1925

Among those who give their whole time to the cause of labor, special mention should be made of Miss Beatrice Brigden, General Secretary of the Brandon Labor Forum, and Secretary of the Peoples' Forum Speakers Bureau. A graduate of Toronto Conservatory School of Expression and equipped with a college education, Miss Brigdens' talent and ability make her contribution to the labor movement of exceptional value. Her Readings and Recitals are selected from authors who have written about the common people, and no working man or woman should miss hearing her when ever there is an opportunity.

We commend her most heartily to workers of both farm and city. Do not miss her meetings and recitals, she has a message that is worth while. Any special courtesy and consideration shown Miss Brigden that will help her in carrying on her work will be greatly appreciated by us, her fellow workers of Brandon, her home city.

Signed:—

William Hill, Member of Division 818, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

H. S. Ostrander, Member of Division 605, Order of Railway Conductors

H. Spafford, Member Lodge 788, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers.

H. R. Davis, Chairman Manitoba Sub Legislative Board, Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, Lodge 855.

The "Recital on Social Themes" given by Miss Beatrice Brigden of Brandon, at the Central Branch of the Labor Church, was an impressive event.....The audience was large and applauded with vigor. Her renditions were far above the ordinary.....It was an evening that will long be remembered by those fortunate enough to be there.—North Star, Winnipeg.



The Peoples' Forum Speakers Bureau
ANNOUNCES

Miss Beatrice Brigden A.T.C.M.
PUBLIC READER and LECTURER

In a series of Recitals of the Literature of Social Protest.

A DEDICATION.

Not of the princes and prelates with periwigged charioteers
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years,
Rather the scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed in with the spears.
—John Masfield.

SEP 16 1925

SEP 10 1932

IN APPRECIATION.

"Graduate in Art and in Public Expression; trained teacher of subnormal children; secretary of the Brandon Labor Forum; organizer of a great Peoples' Forum circuit across Western Canada; active spirit in the Labor Women's Social and Economic Conference; this is the public record of Beatrice Brigden of Brandon, Manitoba. Sometimes the Forum Circuit of which she is secretary pays expenses. Sometimes it shows a deficit. Then she goes on the road herself and reads rebel poetry until she has met the bills.

"How did you ever get mixed up in a thing like this?" I asked.

She answers, quite simply: "I am a daughter of the pioneers. My people first settled in the woods of Ontario. Then they moved out in the prairies of Manitoba, miles beyond the end of the railroad. Those were my people. Their blood runs in my veins."

"But you," I insist.

"I am pioneering," she replies. "The real pioneering of today is to be done down the alleys and the streets, among those who are struggling for a new form of expression—for a new way of life. Why have I thrown in my lot with the Labor movement? It is the real pioneer movement of the age. It is in the blood. I must join the pioneers."

—Prof. Scott Nearing, in The Industrial Worker.

"The preparation and presentation of a program of selections illustrating the factors of and penetrating into the heart of the great social problem constitutes one of the most difficult tasks for the earnest Public Reader of today. This great thing Miss Beatrice Brigden has achieved. Her programmes of social readings, as rendered by herself will make a powerful impact upon the people, and will do great service in the promotion of conviction in the minds of the hearers. There need be no hesitation on the part of any group of workers in securing Miss Brigden for a recital."

—Rev. A. E. Smith.

SEP 10 1932

REPertoire.

- 1.—The Cattle Thief Pauline Johnson
- 2.—Ardelia Anon
- 3.—The Other Wise Man Henry Van Dyke
- 4.—Pa's Puzzles Anon
- 5.—Michael Robert Service
- 6.—The Victory Dance Alfred Noyes
- 7.—The Firebrand Thomas Ferguson
- 8.—Help Wanted Jack Lait
- 9.—Jesus of Nazareth Bruce Glasier
- 10.—Adventures in Brotherhood David Grayson
- 11.—The Workingman to the Capitalist Class Anon
- 12.—The Dying Boss Lincoln Steffens
- 13.—Scene from "The Octopus" Frank Norris
- 14.—The Mongrel Wilson MacDonald
- 15.—A Social Problem Ethel Whitehead
- 16.—Debs Has Visitors Charles Erskine Wood
- 17.—That's Different From the "Clarion."

PROGRAMS FOR JUVENILES

ARRANGED BY REQUEST.



EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President—Mrs. H. Perry

Vice-Presidents

Alberta—Mrs. D. Bell

Saskatchewan—Mrs. A. M. Eddy

Manitoba—Mrs. M. Aiken

Ontario—Mrs. Caucett

Finnish—Mrs. Geo. Hartwell

Secretary-Treasurer—Mrs. D. Hunt, Calgary

General Secretary—Miss Beatrice Brigden



THE SASKATOON STAR-PHOENIX LTD.

LABOR WOMEN'S
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
CONFERENCE

EIGHTH SESSION



MEETINGS OPEN TO PUBLIC

LABOR TEMPLE
SASKATOON, SASK., MAY 9, 10, 11
1931

Programme

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 1931

1.00 p.m.—Registration.

Opening—Mrs. H. Perry,
President.

Address of Welcome—Mrs.
A. M. Eddy, Saskatoon.

Reply—Mrs. M. Aiken, Win-
nipeg.

Minutes.

Appointment of Committees.
Resolutions.

6.00 p.m.—Supper.

7.30 p.m.—Roll Call.

Music—Mrs. Fothergill, Ed-
monton.

Address—"New Canadians
at Home in the Rural
Districts."—Mrs. Violet
McNaughton, Saskatoon.

Social Hour.

SUNDAY, MAY 10

10.00 a.m.—Roll Call.

Reports affiliated groups.

Reports National Officers.

12.00 a.m.—Lunch.

1.30 p.m.—"Joining Hands with the
Juniors."—Miss Beatrice
Brigden.

"The Five-Day Week."—
Mrs. Bussy, Regina.

Resolutions.

Drive about the City.

6.00 p.m.—Supper.

8.30 p.m.—"Personal Impressions of
Russia."—Mrs. Isabel
Ringwood, Edmonton.

In New Legion Hall.

MONDAY, MAY 11

10.00 a.m.—Roll Call.

Resolutions.

12.00 a.m.—Lunch.

1.30 p.m.—Election of Officers.

Round Table Discussion on
Peace.

Invitations for 1932.—Con-
ference closing.