

SEARCHING FOR EQUALITY: THE SOCIOLOGY OF JOHN PORTER

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John Porter's influence on Canadian sociology and on the social sciences in general was tremendous. His name, particularly in association with *The Vertical Mosaic (TVM)*, is one of the few in the social sciences known internationally. His death was a great loss, especially for those who knew him personally.

I have found writing this paper a difficult task in several ways. On the one hand I want to accurately portray the essential elements of his intellectual contribution, but his writings were many and do not readily lend themselves to condensation. On the other hand my intellectual (as opposed to personal) relationship with Porter was often one of contention. We frequently disagreed in our modes of analysis or interpretation. My problem will be to portray his positions on the topics he considered essential yet keep my editorializing to a minimum. I will not pretend to be detached from the subjects discussed here or even from my personal relationship to Porter but I will attempt to outline objectively his enormous contribution.

John Porter was born in Vancouver, British Columbia on the 12th of November 1921 and left Canada in 1937, remaining abroad for what he called "twelve formative years." As a teenager he worked at odd jobs and eventually as a reporter for the *Daily Sketch*, a Kemsley (now Thompson) Newspaper, in London. He joined the Canadian Army in 1941 as a private, rising by his release in 1946 to captain, having spent the war in the Canadian Intelligence Corps in Italy, North Africa, and North-West Europe. His class origins had prevented him from receiving much formal education; his father "did some clerical work but had no inclination to do anything very much," and John never graduated from high school. The war, however, gave him the chance to enter university through a veterans' program. He entered the London School of Economics and Political Science, graduating with a B.Sc. in 1949. Returning to Canada on a Department of Veterans Affairs trip, he stopped in Ottawa to look up an army friend. Paul Fox invited him to become a teacher of Political Science at Carleton, where he remained, aside from a brief sojourn at the University of Toronto in 1968-69, until his death on the 15th of June, 1979.

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Particularly during his later years, he again spent considerable time outside the country. He was a Canadian Fellow to the International Institute for Labour Studies in Geneva in 1966-67; he held the Canadian Chair at Harvard in 1974-75, and took his 1975-76 sabbatical in Paris. These periods abroad he found to be intellectually stimulating, giving him a distinct vantage point from which to view Canada and the opportunity to be exposed to outside influences. By this point he had achieved a large international reputation, having received the prestigious MacIver Award of the American Sociological Association in 1966 for *TVM*, the same year he finally received a D.Sc. from the London School of Economics (having submitted *TVM* as his thesis).

Many young social scholars must find it confusing that John Porter could have had such an overwhelming presence in Canadian scholarship. What was it that made *TVM* so prominent? My interpretation is that this work was a statement of the times. Not only was it enormous in its scope, rich in detail and suggestive in its analysis, it also encapsulated many of the important issues of the day. For the first time there existed a statement of where we were socially. It continues to be a baseline from which many contemporary researchers begin. Since *TVM*, of course, many other statements have appeared, but *TVM* was the opening volley.

Because he did so much in *TVM*, contemporary reviewers seem to want him to have done everything. They seem to forget the paucity of existing literature and data, particularly the fact that most of the material used was analysed for the first time. Since its publication, Canadian social science has blossomed, in no small measure due to *TVM*. Even ten years after its publication critical reviews were being written, often without sufficient regard to the historical conditions of its writing.¹ When first published in 1965, *TVM* was welcomed by the Canadian left (broadly defined) and during the student movement of the late sixties was often used as the basis for radical analysis. Into the 1970s, as a more theoretically sophisticated (but less activist) left developed and became reacquainted with Marxism, Porter was subject to much criticism. Much of this criticism he reacted to as mere "carping" rather than "constructive" empirical research designed to expose or eradicate inequalities in Canada.² Toward the end of his life Porter adopted some of the criticisms of his work but only after its shortcomings had been demonstrated empirically to his satisfaction. At that point he incorporated some of the insights of the left into his analysis.

Although *TVM* opens with the disclaimer that "no one volume can present a total picture of a modern society," it may safely be said that Porter did, to the extent possible, present a thorough overview of contemporary Canada. There are, of course, significant gaps — the study is weak historically; it does not adequately situate Canada internationally; the analysis of Quebec and other regions is limited; real (as opposed to statistical)

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classes are dismissed.* Its strengths, particularly for its time, compensate for these shortcomings. The analysis of power in its various expressions is likely the most comprehensive done anywhere; its treatment of education, ethnicity, migration and income and particularly the inequalities associated with them — were the *tour de force* of Canadian social science. Those engaged in empirical research tend to appreciate Porter's work more than those who work primarily at the theoretical level (or do little research at all). The methodological problems, sources of data, and access to information were all formidable barriers to solid research, to the application of theory. He marshalled amazing empirical detail and did so in a way informed by theory if not in a way that "tested" or "generated" theory. His work was drawn together thematically — the master theme being inequality. It is around this theme that I will address Porter's contribution.

II

What was the most consistent in Porter's work was his concern with issues of vital concern to the whole of Canadian society. Central was a focus on inequality and on the need for equality. Particularly during his later years he spent a great deal of time thinking about concepts like "justice" — what it meant, how it could be achieved, etc. These were his concerns, his value premises, which he never hesitated to put forward. Porter's philosophical roots were in the British social democratic tradition of Harold Laski, R.H. Tawney and T.H. Marshall but his values, as will be argued later, were often those flaunted as "American" ideals.

TVM was essentially an exercise in sophisticated description — and in prescription. Porter attempted to identify what is in order to evaluate what could be. Rather than develop a theory of class he chose to bring to light inequalities characteristic of the contemporary class structure. It was his judgement that the priority was empirical rather than theoretical. He envisioned himself as establishing a base from which he and others could work. It was never intended, as he never tired of reiterating, as "the last word" — although he was not too modest to claim it as "the first" comprehensive statement.

He outlined in some detail the intellectual forces integral to his early research in a "Research Biography." There he reflected on his consciously "eclectic" use of theory, an eclecticism which continued throughout his career.

*Porter often discussed reissuing *TVM* with a new introduction to deal with "recent" issues in Canadian society, including foreign investment, Quebecois nationalism, regionalism and the women's movement. These issues he regarded as the most significant ones to emerge since the drafting of *TVM* in 1963.

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The strongest and most concise statement of the value concerns and theoretical dilemmas informing his democratic socialism was articulated in "Power and Freedom." His final pronouncement on the values of social scientists appears in his Prologue to *The Measure of Canadian Society*, and in his previously unpublished paper on "Education, Equality, and the Just Society" in that collection. Together these papers consolidate the essential concerns of his work. As he said in his Introduction to the "Research Biography": "My research and social action interests since [TVM] was published have all been extensions of it, particularly those parts which are most relevant to social change in Canada as it is at present on the threshold of post-industrialism: the search for highly-qualified manpower, social mobility, educational opportunity, and the planning of post-secondary education."³ In his final collection of essays, it will be argued, he amended his position on post-industrialism and the centrality of educational reform.

The Preface to *TVM* clearly states Porter's value position regarding equality and specifies the type of equality he means. It is equality of opportunity — the removal of barriers which prevent the "most able" from attaining "top positions." This promotion of "meritocracy" is desirable, he argues, "on both ethical and practical grounds." He sees the "creative role of politics" as the means to achieve this goal and the educational system as the principal mechanism. At times he wandered into the territory of inequality of condition⁴ by identifying structural sources of inequality but basically opportunity was his focus, at least until his final years when he returned to the structural features of society.

Porter's is what may be referred to as a "meritocratic critique" of inequality in contrast to an "egalitarian critique."⁵ Never, however, does he shy away from the issue of values. In a little known piece called the "Limits of Sociology," written in 1973, he addressed some of these issues and it is worth reproducing his conclusion at length:

Important as measurement is to the clarification of ethical problems, measurement alone is not enough, for it leads to the free-floating findings which, lacking an anchor in a clear philosophical position, can be used to support contrary points of view. Perhaps that is a limitation of sociology, but in the search for equality it is difficult to avoid ethical considerations because equality is a moral problem. This difficulty is aggravated by the very legitimate need to measure, without which social sciences cannot make their contribution, but measurement reduces important ethical ideas to very mechanical procedures and limited scopes. It is all the more

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important, therefore, to capture findings within a clearly defined ethical framework; otherwise someone will come along and seize them for his own ideological purposes.⁶

The author of this statement is a man aware of “ideological warfare,” of the ethics and morality of research. It is also the statement of a humanitarian who sees the need to develop human qualities and develop a more equitable society.

The particular form of equality which Porter strove for was that often used to characterize “American” values in which the ideals of altruism and equality of opportunity dominate. Shortly after the publication of *TVM* he was quoted as saying, “In my optimistic moments . . . I think the best thing for Canada would be greater Americanization — the more American values we get the more we can become genuinely North American.”⁷ It may be argued that the egalitarianism produced by these values is *égalité de droit* (formal or legal equality) but not *égalité de fait* (practical or economic equality). Equality before the law and equality of opportunity, particularly through access to education and mobility through the occupational structure, were the forms of equality Porter sought throughout most of his career and thought were possible to achieve. Canadians, unlike “Americans,” he thought, were impeded to their development because they lacked values appropriate to advanced industrial societies. He opposed all “ascriptive” inequality — particularly ethnicity and intergenerational advantages transferred through education and occupational mobility.

Capitalism, as a way of organizing a society’s productive capacities, was viewed by Porter as a source of grave inequalities. He argued that “Individual property rights meant that those who owned the instruments of production controlled their use and access to them. In many respects the new urban proletariat of the industrial revolution was less free than the feudal serf who had at least some legally defined claims against his master.”⁸ At times he denounced capitalism and its “lack of conscience” which “can only be explained in terms of habituation to the capitalist ethos and the complex attitudes which legitimates predatory behaviour . . . The exploitive, predatory and restrictive character of capitalist institutions rests on a morality defined by those at the apex of our institutional hierarchies.”⁹ The irony of these statements is that he simultaneously called for Canadians to become more like the “Americans” who lived in the most advanced capitalist society of all! Thus capitalism is a progressive system, yet it severely limits human potential and its barriers must be transcended.

For Porter, socialism was not free from many of the problems plaguing capitalism. A common problem was that of bureaucracy:

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Bureaucracy provides socialist theory with a built-in contradiction. Socialism, which seeks to release men from productive drudgery, envisages larger productive units, more intricate co-ordination between these units, and more extensive planning of the total social effort, none of which can be achieved without a very great increase in administrative machinery.¹⁰

It is this problem which made elites so important to Porter's analysis. In his view there would always be elites of some kind. You cannot "do away with power." The point was one of "transforming it in some fashion to serve justice and equality."¹¹ The only way was to somehow inject more humanitarian values into those at the top. He concentrated on "opening up" or making accessible power positions within existing institutions. This problem became a preoccupation for the rest of his life.

From this stage in Porter's argument it is necessary to make a rather large leap. It is a leap from "industrial" to "post-industrial" societies. These changes were brought about by the new demands of science and technology which required freeing people from the bonds of an earlier stage of capitalism through a demand for talent. "Post-industrial" societies would require a new kind of labour force, new sets of values appropriate to the times, and would provide the productive capacity required to meet the society's material demands. The problem of power retreats into the background for Porter as the imperatives of science and technology take hold and re-shape the society. A new problematic emerges:

With the great expansion in the number of occupations as well as the emergence of new occupations that come with the post-industrial culture of science and technology, it is necessary for all societies at this stage of development to solve their recruiting problems.¹²

The first statement of this new problematic appeared in Porter's 1966 Maclver Award Lecture where he began to address the problem of the "recruitment of highly qualified professional workers" because of the new "culture based on science and technology." With this change there is "unfilled room at the top of our emerging occupational structures."¹³ This would be handled through greater social planning, particularly planning associated with the educational system where training would take place and new values instilled. Porter's contention was that industrial societies were moving in the direction of greater potential for the "good society" whereby greater parts of the society could share more equally in the benefits. His goal was to eradicate barriers — specifically mobility barriers — which prevented people from

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sharing in the newly created "good life" and which, for the society, wasted the talents of its people. The measurement of egalitarianism is not clear. The focus, however, is on barriers to individuals with particular ascriptive characteristics. While there is an analysis of inequality, there is not one of exploitation, of the structural relations between classes. There is a sense that we have to move by the imperatives of science and technology, which are creating new possibilities. The problem is one of *barriers* which simultaneously prevent people from equally sharing in the possibility of benefits and wastes the potential talents at the society's disposal. It is, in a word, the classic problem of "meritocracy," a word Porter chose to use.

III

For Porter the problem of barriers superseded the problem of power, although they were related to the extent that elites upheld self-serving values. Exclusion practices meant a waste of talent. If recruitment were widened society's institutions would become more innovative and hence more productive. This position was evident in *TVM* but became the dominant problematic of his later work. In *TVM*, as in his later work, Porter argued that industrialization was a means for overcoming some forms of inequality but at the same time the overcoming of these inequalities was necessary for the full benefits of industrialization to be realized:

The egalitarian ideology holds that individuals should be able to move through this hierarchy of skill classes according to their inclinations and abilities. Such an ideology reinforces the needs of an industrial economic system. A society with rigid class structure of occupational inheritance could not become heavily industrialized. On the other hand the industrial society which has the greatest flexibility is the one in which the egalitarian ideology has affected the educational system to the extent that education is available equally to all, and careers are truly open to the talented.

At some point in social development industrialization with its attendant egalitarian ideology comes into conflict with the structure of class.¹⁴

Thus Porter contended that "the correct values for the mobility needs of the industrialized society are those of achievement and universalism."¹⁵ Barriers to these values are offered by "subcultural values and norms — of class, ethnicity and religion" which are not "appropriate" for post-industrialism."¹⁶

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These barriers inhibit the development of society and are, at the same time, a major source of unjust inequality. If societies were to adopt a "universalism-achievement orientation" then their institutions would be more creative because talent would be more effectively used and the principles of meritocracy would be achieved. Thus the lack of "mobility values" creates "dysfunctions" for societal development. He argued, "If one were to locate within industrial social structures the areas where these dysfunctions can be best elucidated they would be class systems, particularly working-class culture, the family as a socializing agency, and education systems."¹⁷ This explains his concentrated research in the areas of intergenerational mobility, ethnicity, and education, each mediated by the family, in the years following *TVM*.

Porter's first major undertaking after *TVM* was on occupational prestige classifications, but it ran into serious technical problems.¹⁸ Eventually it led into an even larger scale national project on occupational mobility, entitled "Occupational and Educational Change in a Generation: Canada," involving five co-researchers. This remains unfinished, the final study having been written only in draft form before Porter's death.* It is not possible to evaluate the results of this unpublished work now, but it can be said of his earlier work on occupations that even though it provided a useful critique of census categories there is little of substantive value that resulted. It told little about Canada — its features and occupational anomalies — concentrating primarily on methodological problems. More, of course, can be expected from the unpublished study.

Education

Porter was opposed to any form of inequality which limited the development of a society's talent, whether it be class, gender or ethnicity. The core institution for overcoming inequality was the educational system. This required, in his view, changes in access to education and in the content of education itself. In his own case, only the Second World War provided the necessary conditions for access to a university education; likely the fact that his own formal educational career was in large part an historical accident was a factor in his deliberations.

The major area of public policy upon which Porter pronounced was education. He undertook a massive study of this subject and published, along

*Porter's two papers for this study were completed before his death. They include "Ethnic Origin and Occupational Attainment" (co-authored with Peter C. Pineo) and "Canada: The Societal Context of Occupational Allocation."

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with Marion Porter and Bernard Blishen, a policy report entitled *Does Money Matter? Prospects for Higher Education*, which contributed to the debate on educational reform. A longer, scholarly analysis of this data is entitled *Stations and Callings: Making It Through Ontario's Schools*. The major finding of this research was that "educational and occupational horizons of Ontario high school students are bounded by the class structure of the society in which they live; that, associated with that class structure, there is a wastage of bright young people from the educational process; and that girls, particularly lower class girls, see themselves destined for the labour force and excluded from the learning force."¹⁹ The report evaluates student assistance plans and the effects of family resources on students' educational prospects.

The study does not limit itself to the educational system *per se* but locates it within a broader social context. The authors say, "We are not so naive as to think . . . that educational reform alone is going to make for a society of equality."²⁰ This introduces the "what comes first" problem. Education is itself part of a larger structure of inequality but, in Porter's view, is the key institution for overcoming many inequalities. This was a problem of which he was acutely aware, arguing "equality in education cannot be truly achieved without moving toward a more equal society, and that could come about . . . through greatly reduced income differentials or a much more progressive tax system."²¹ As far as education itself was concerned, the major reforms recommended were the abolition of tuition fees and the provision of maintenance grants to students, but these would only be effective in the context of broader social reforms. This was a longstanding problem for Porter, as he wrote in 1961:

the fact remains that educational systems reflect the values of the dominant institutions within the society, and their influence in bringing about the desired psychological changes is thereby reduced. To achieve some measure of social change it may be necessary to find ways of changing the institutional structure before changing modes of thought.²²

Porter offered no simple solutions for what he regarded as a complex subject. More than most researchers he was acutely aware of the relationship between institutions and the way institutions such as education were biased by the interests of the powerful. He found it difficult, however, to abandon the possibility of educational reform because it was integral to his vision of positive social change. In his critical essay on "Education, Equality and the Just Society," written near the end of his life, he began to have serious reservations about the centrality of education to accomplishing these changes:

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The crucial point is that education has failed to equalize. Perhaps it was naive to think that it might have or that educational reform alone was sufficient to deal with the basic structure of inequality, which in its consequence is much more pervasive and deep rooted than we think.²³

Ethnicity

Paralleling the attention Porter devoted to education was his concern with ethnicity. As he made clear in *TVM*, ethnicity acted as a major barrier within Canada. Consistent with his general search for equality was his analysis of ethnicity. While he weighed the pros and cons of ethnic sub-cultures he concluded that they were serious impediments in Canada's development. His statements were strong, as the following indicates:

"What price culture?" As cultures converge through science and technology, cultural differentiation, in the sense in which we have usually meant it, will end. In fact, we may have reached the point where culture has become a myth, in the sense of a belief in a non-existent world which might become a reality. The more culture becomes a myth, the less can it become a working concept of social science In the contemporary society of change, culture can act as an impediment to social development, because it emphasizes yesterday's, rather than tomorrow's, ways of life.²⁴

Thus he argued that, "considering as alternatives the ethnic stratification that results from the reduction of ethnicity as a salient feature of modern society I have chosen an assimilationist position."²⁵ This was an unpopular position, given the revival of ethnicity being experienced in Canada from the late 1960s onwards and the official state policy of multiculturalism. Regardless of its controversial qualities, he clearly articulated the reasons for his position, noting that ethnicity "emphasizes descent group identification and endogamy . . . [thus] it runs the risk of believed-in biological differences becoming the basis of invidious judgements about groups of people Moreover, where ethnicity is salient there is often an association between ethnic differences and social class and inequality."²⁶ Not only does ethnicity interfere with the search for equality, Porter argued, "it has also served as a form of class control of the major power structures by charter ethnic groups who remain over-represented in the elite structures."²⁷

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Ethnicity, in the way Porter analysed it, was a barrier to the mobility of individuals within the class structure. The problem, as he argued, was that ethnicity was often an impediment to mobility because the values it promoted were contrary to those required for achievement within the dominant culture. Thus, if the salience of ethnic values were reduced and substituted with other values, there would be a freeing of the talent required by "post-industrial" societies. As it was, ethnicity was an instrument of social control by the powerful and a barrier to mobility.

Although Porter had less to say on the subject than others, he did not regard the Quebecois as he did "other ethnics." In 1961 he argued that the "French desire for cultural separation can be justified both psychologically and socially."²⁸ Later he argued that French culture could not withstand the onslaught of "modernization" but felt "there need not be a loss of language. If bilingualism can increase, and that requires a great effort on the part of the English, this distinctive dualism of Canada will remain."²⁹ His own actions were in this direction. At almost fifty years of age, Porter sought to improve his French and spent a great deal of time working at it. He valued the retention of the French language. He also recognized the two-nation reality of Canadian society. As he wrote me in 1976 concerning my study of class,

What are you going to do about French? It seems to me we have now reached the point in Canada where Fr and Eng Canada can be treated as two separate societies and one or the other left out. The Fr always leave the Eng out since they consider Quebec unto itself. Now they no longer mind if Quebec is left out of macroanalysis of "Canada" which they see almost as another country. That becomes increasingly the reality of course.³⁰

I certainly would have welcomed more of his views on Quebec in more developed form. I am not aware of any specific writings on the subject but expect it would have been addressed in his proposed macro-sociology of Canada (to be discussed later). His general position, however, was that Canada was entering a "post-industrial" stage of development where science and technology would dominate, leaving little room for particularistic cultures to survive; within this development he did not feel that there was room for bilingualism and for Quebec to have greater independence.

In advocating this position, however, Porter continued to support stronger central powers, if not vis-a-vis Quebec, then at least for the rest of Canada. He contended that "lessening of federal power particularly in a wide range of social policy can be seen as a loss of the ability to establish national goals."³¹ He wished to see, for example, a greater federal presence in the

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educational system as a means of standardizing and upgrading this institution.

He had little favour for regional analyses, contending that the differences within Canada were less geographically based than class based. He argued, "It is difficult to know how, other than in the statistical sense, provinces can be 'poor'. People are poor, and some of their poverty could be caused by protected privilege and regressive policies within provinces which in no way change through equalization transfers. To equalize provincial averages in some resource need not affect within-province distributions."³² He also maintained:

If one attempts to define communities by transaction flows, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are probably more closely linked and provide mutual identities than do these metropolises with their respective hinterlands. Hardrock and coal miners and pulp workers moving through Canada's single industry towns might have a regional identity which geographically spans the country.³³

I suspect that his opinion of regionalism was much like that of ethnicity. It spawned values inappropriate to the needs of "post-industrial" society by emphasizing particularistic rather than universalistic values, thus acting as possible barriers to mobility and, in this case, to national goals. Toward the end of his life he was prepared to re-evaluate his views on regionalism and toward this end was preparing to apply for a Killam Award to live in various regions of the country.

Class

In his analysis of class, Porter was more intent on demarcating ranks and strata than on analysing relationships between classes. Inequalities based on class are real in his studies but they are grouped or ordered by artificial lines drawn by application of various criteria, not by "legally recognized" relationships as was the case for estates or castes.³⁴ In Part I of *TVM* on "The Structure of Class," there is no class resistance or struggle, no agents of change in the working class since, he argued, we are now in a "post-Marxian industrial world." Porter contended that "in the nineteenth century it may have been the case that two groups classified by the criterion of owning or not owning property were sociological groups, but in the present day such classes are statistical categories and nothing more."³⁵ For him class is a ranking of occupations, income, and education; it is a "spectrum" of socio-economic

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status led by a wealthy and powerful elite. This conception of class was very much a product of the dominant social sciences in the 1960s.

The fundamental reason for the shift from conflicting to statistical classes, Porter contends, is the advance of industrialization. There has been a proliferation of occupations and a reduction in overt exploitation. "For the proletariat, the work world has not been one of increasing drudgery, nor one requiring an increasingly low level of skill, making workers a vast class of 'proles.' The skills that modern industry requires have become more and more varied and complex so that unskilled occupations have formed a much larger proportion."³⁶ Generally, throughout this work, he understates the amount of class conflict in society, arguing for example in 1965 that "the idea of the general strike has almost completely disappeared from union ideology."³⁷ He also had a low expectation at that time of unionization or resistance from "the white-collar group,"³⁸ expecting them to grow dramatically within the occupational structure but offering little possibility for unionization or resistance. His stress was on the weakness and fragmentation of labour and the relatively low and stagnating rates of unionization. There were some obvious truths to his observations but for the most part he underestimated the struggles that would emerge from the new middle class, particularly among state workers, for union recognition and wages. The upgrading of skills assumed with application of science and technology did not turn out to have the projected effects, as will be illustrated shortly.

Much of what Porter wrote in *TVM* can be read as informing analyses of class cleavages, but most is not analysed by him in this way. The chapter on "Class, Mobility and Migration," for example, can be read as the making of a working class through detachment from the land and particular immigration policies, but primarily it is an analysis of imported education and skills creating a "mobility trap" for native-born Canadians and an ethnically stratified society. Instead of class, Porter uses the concept of elite as a substitute saying, "What we have instead of a class of capitalists is a smaller and probably more cohesive group — an elite within the private sector of the economy."³⁹ This leaves an obvious analytical gap for all those outside the elite, particularly the working class and petit bourgeoisie but also smaller capitalists. The "class" quality of the elite does not, however, resolve the explanations of forces of change. This requires an analysis of class transformations. Porter did not ignore classes but he did deny them as real forces in contemporary society.

As has emerged as a consistent theme throughout his work, Porter's contention was that a fundamental change was taking place in industrial societies. The problems of capitalist societies would not hold in post-industrial ones:

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The radical-conservative polarity based on class may have been appropriate in the development of a modern industrial society. It led to welfare policies of redistribution and hence legitimated capitalist systems. It also led to policies to maintain levels of demand for the output of the economy. But high evaluation of working-class culture as something of benefit to be preserved becomes increasingly less appropriate to the society based on science and technology.⁴⁰

His analysis was based on a fundamental belief that progressive changes were taking place which would represent a movement beyond classes in the classical sense.

There is some evidence, however, that late in his life he began to re-evaluate some of the premises of this belief. It is worthwhile establishing some of these assumptions, as evident in *TVM*, and compare them with his more recent remarks. He argued that "It would be fairly safe to generalize that as industrialization proceeds the shape of the class structure changes from triangular to diamond or beehive . . . [using] the criterion of occupational skill."⁴¹ Further, he said, "it can reasonably be assumed that the increasing proportion of blue collar workers in manufacturing had higher levels of skills at the end of the sixty years [1901-1961] than at the beginning."⁴² Porter's analysis of post-industrialism places great stake in the decline of unskilled and the rise of semi-skilled and skilled workers. The "upgrading" of skills was accepted by Porter, as by most observers, as a matter of faith, concomitant with industrialization. They equated the decline of backbreaking labour with greater skill but failed to examine the content of the rising "semi-skilled" category and the changes among the "skilled."

In light of these assumptions, Porter's comments on Harry Braverman's influential *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, which makes the opposite points Porter had made earlier about class, are informative. Porter was particularly impressed by Braverman's critique of census and occupational classifications, saying "his analysis of the methodology of the prevailing official [classifications], more than any other part of the book calls into question the notion of an upgraded labour force. All of these things add up to a tremendously powerful critique of how we have looked at work."⁴³ Additional evidence of a change in Porter's position near the end of his life comes from his introductory commentary on his "Power and Freedom" article contained in his collection on *The Measure of Canadian Society*, where he remarks, "I would probably want also to modify my views about how the changing occupational structure which has come with industrialism really provides upward mobility."⁴⁴

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IV

John Porter's search for equality was a never-ending one. At the end of his life there was still a vibrance to his work, a feeling that he still had another great book in mind. He wrote in 1970, in the Introduction to his "Research Biography," that "Much more material is now available than formerly to undertake another macroanalysis of Canada in transition or to revisit the "mosaic." That would be an attractive possibility if time and energies allow."⁴⁵ In 1974 he wrote to me from Harvard that "course preparation I have found irksome and heavy, but I hope what I am doing will ultimately develop into a macrosociology — although the pay off is far ahead."⁴⁶ Again in 1976 he wrote, saying "When I can get out from under my present grant obligations I have every intention of doing another macro-book on Canada."⁴⁷ It is my impression that John was dissatisfied — or perhaps more accurately impatient — with his later studies of education and intergenerational mobility. They were massive research projects involving enormous grants and much complex collaboration. As I saw them, they were for John a means to an end, the necessary homework for a more important project, but they took much more time and energy than he had planned. They were only coming to a conclusion at the time of his death. There are, however, a few clues about what he intended to accomplish.

Porter's macrosociology after *TVM* contained a strong comparative focus,⁴⁸ arguing the desirability of understanding "types" of societies. Although he was hopeful about the promise of such studies he was aware of their pitfalls and critical of the rigor they had exhibited to date. One of the general concepts he continually returned to in later life was that of "citizenship rights":

What distinguishes a modern industrial society from earlier types is that, because of greater productive capacity, it can implement all the rights of citizenship according to the principles of justice . . . John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* which is perhaps the best contemporary attempt to develop a socialist ethic, suggests that, while liberty has primacy in modern industrial society, it could well not have it in an underdeveloped one where the development of economic resources must have primacy. Modern industrial societies, then, are a type with their own capacity to achieve social welfare, to implement citizenship and achieve equality and justice in the here and now.⁴⁹

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Porter was working with the concept of justice and how it could be translated not only into legal and political rights but social rights as well. Thus he considered the best way to develop a "socialist ethic" would be through the concrete application of specific enforceable rights available to each individual. These rights, which he felt advanced industrial societies capable of fulfilling, were for such things as a decent standard of living for all, equal access to education and equal access to all occupations. It is evident that the macrosociology he had in mind would not be a mere description. As he said, macrosociology

should be capable of both explanation *and* evaluation, that is we should be able, on the one hand to understand how a society in its totality works and how it got to be where it is, and on the other hand we should be able to judge whether or not it is moving in a desirable direction, that is in the direction of maximizing human welfare If we are not concerned with questions of value then sociology will return to that condition of aimless empiricism and labourious webs of theory spinning towards which recent criticism has been directed, or it will return to that condition where its hidden major premises are those of the *status quo*.⁵⁰

This will not be the final word on John Porter's work, nor should it be. We can expect the appearance of the major book reporting on his education study and a collection reporting on the massive mobility study in which he was engaged. We can also have a collection of his essays, *The Measure of Canadian Society*, which he worked on over the past few years and completed shortly before his death. Beyond these works there will be reinterpretations, elaborations and debates about his contribution. This is as it should be. As a great thinker he raised more questions, posed more problems and suggested more projects than could possibly be resolved in a lifetime. In the annals of Canadian sociology it will be recorded that John Porter was a great egalitarian, a committed scholar and a profound teacher for an entire discipline.

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Notes

- * I would like to thank Dennis Olsen and Marion Porter for detailed comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
1. See Edwin R. Black, "The Fractured Mosaic: John Porter Revisited," in *Canadian Public Administration* 17 (Winter), 1974; James Heap, *Everybody's Canada: The Vertical Mosaic Reviewed and Re-examined*, Toronto: Burns and MacEachern, 1974; Harvey Rich, "The Vertical Mosaic Revisited: Toward a Macrosociology of Canada," in *Journal of Canadian Studies* 11:1 (February) 1976.
 2. See John Porter, "Foreword" to *The Canadian Corporate Elite: An Analysis of Economic Power*, Wallace Clement, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975.
 3. John Porter, Introduction to "Research Biography of a Macrosociological Study: *The Vertical Mosaic*," in *Macrosociology: Research and Theory*, James Coleman, Amitai Etzioni and John Porter, Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc., 1970, p. 148.
 4. See Clement, *Canadian Corporate Elite*, pp. xxv, 1-8.
 5. See *ibid.*, p. 7.
 6. John Porter, "The Limits of Sociology," in *Contemporary Sociology* 2:5 (September) 1973, 467; also see Prologue to *The Measure of Canadian Society: Education, Equality and Opportunity*, Agincourt: Gage Publishing, 1979, pp 1-5.
 7. *Toronto Daily Star*, 31 December 1965.
 8. John Porter, "Power and Freedom in Canadian Democracy," in *Social Purpose for Canada*, M. Oliver, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961, p. 30.
 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
 11. John Porter, "Notes as Commentator" for "Macrosociological Issues in Canadian Sociology" session, Canadian Sociology and Anthropology meetings, Edmonton (May) 1975, p. 10.
 12. John Porter, "Evaluation and Status: Some Theoretical Perspectives," unpublished paper, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, Ottawa, n.d., p. 15.
 13. John Porter, "The Future of Upward Mobility," in *American Sociological Review* 33:1 (February) 1968, 5.
 14. John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965, pp. 166-167.
 15. John Porter, "Mobility, Stratification and Highly Qualified Manpower," Cornell Conference on Human Mobility, Cornell University (October) 1968, p. 12.
 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
 17. Porter, "Future of Upward Mobility," p. 11.
 18. See Peter C. Pineo and John Porter, "Occupational Prestige in Canada," in *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 4:1 (February) 1967, 24-28.
 19. Marion R. Porter, John Porter and Bernard R. Blishen, *Does Money Matter? Prospects for Higher Education*, Toronto: York Institute for Behavioural Research, 1973, p. x.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
 22. Porter, "Power and Freedom," p. 52.

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23. John Porter, "Education, Equality and the Just Society" in *Measure of Canadian Society*, p. 260.
24. John Porter, "Bilingualism and the Myths of Culture," in *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 6:2 (May) 1969, 118.
25. John Porter, "Canada: Dilemmas and Contradictions of a Multi-Ethnic Society," in *Sociology Canada: Readings*, C. Beattie and S. Crysdale, Toronto: Butterworths, 1974, p. 13.
26. John Porter, "Ethnic Pluralism in Canadian Perspective," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. N. Glazer and D.P. Molyneham, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 288.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
28. Porter, "Power and Freedom," p. 35.
29. Porter, "Ethnic Pluralism," p. 276.
30. John Porter, personal correspondence, 28 October 1976, Carleton University, Ottawa.
31. Porter, "Ethnic Pluralism," p. 272.
32. John Porter, Introduction to "Mr. Trudeau and Federalism," in *Measure of Canadian Society*, p. 164.
33. Porter, "Notes as Commentator," p. 6.
34. See Porter, *Vertical Mosaic*, pp. 7-8.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
38. See *ibid.*, pp. 309-310.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
40. Porter, "Future of Upward Mobility," p. 16.
41. Porter, *Vertical Mosaic*, p. 148.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
43. John Porter, "Comments by John Porter," Symposium on Braverman, *Alternate Routes: A Critical Review* 2 (1978), 25.
44. John Porter, Introduction to "Power and Freedom in Canadian Democracy," in *Measure of Canadian Society*, p. 209.
45. Porter, Introduction to "Research Biography," p. 148.
46. John Porter, personal correspondence, 22 March 1974, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
47. John Porter, personal correspondence, 14 July 1976, Lake Crostan, Ontario.
48. See John Porter, "Some Observations on Comparative Studies," *International Institute for Labour Studies: Bulletin* 3 (November) 1967, pp. 82-104.
49. Porter, "Notes as Commentator," pp. 3-4.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 2.