EXCHANGE/ECHANGE

THE "MYTH" OF THE RED TORY?

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I regret that I must deprive Rod Preece of the rare experience of exposing a real live "myth", but there is no major disagreement between us on the question of the character of British and Canadian Conservatism.[1] There is a semantic difference: Preece will use the terms "tory" and "corporate-organic-collectivist" only for "absolutist" or "romantic" philosophers like Filmer, Carlyle, George Grant, who are totally opposed or "essentially inimical" to "liberty,", individualism and capitalism, while I would use these terms to refer *also* to men like Burke, who combine an endorsement of the main achievements of the bourgeois revolution with continued adherence to many pre-liberal values and beliefs.

Preece himself points out that the Burkean Conservatism which superseded Filmerian Toryism "was a synthesis of waxing Whig and waning Tory doctrines", that Burke "provides . . . a healthy measure of conservative restraint on the Lockean Whig ideals of individual liberty." However, unlike those who "denounced a philosophy of individual rights and liberties, Burke only diminished them to make them more effectively realized;" for Preece, therefore, Burkean Conservatism is not *at all* tory or corporate-organic-collectivist. I apply these labels in a different manner: insofar as Burke used tory ideas for the purpose of "diminishing" the idea of individual rights, Burke was a tory. In the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* Burke elevates "prejudice", "prescription" and "duty" above reason and individual rights; utterly transforms the Lockean idea of contract into the idea of a "great primaeval contract of eternal society" which is not at all a matter of individual consent; passionately defends the "natural" hereditary aristocracy as the "soul" of the body politic; and justifies inequality of opportunity in these terms: "the awful author of our being is the author of our place in the order of existence." What are these ideas if not tory, corporate-organic-collectivist?

Of course Burkean Conservatism also contains liberal elements; I have never argued that liberalism is an "alien" aspect of British and Canadian Conservatism; on the contrary, I have emphasized that the "primary component of the ideology of business-oriented parties is liberalism." Preece himself quotes

1. Rod Preece, "The Myth of the Red Tory", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1977):3-28.

this caveat and proceeds to ignore it in his interpretation of my argument. I have never pretended that a thoroughly antiliberal red-toryism such as that of George Grant is *widespread* or *powerful* in the Conservative party. I have never denied that Meighen, Bennett, and Drew were business liberals. Preece can therefore quote their individualistic rhetoric from now until morning (as we say in Yiddish) without refuting my statement (which he also quotes) that "theirs is not the characteristically American conservatism which conserves *only* liberal values." The discussion of Robert Stanfield as a Burkean, with which Preece concludes his piece, is not a refutation but a confirmation of my argument.

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