



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES – MANITOBA

May 7, 2014

The nexus of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba: A Brief History

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To recognize the CCPA MB annual Supporter Drive, May 5th – 9th, we are publishing this fast facts on the history of the CCPA Manitoba.

In the mid-1990s a number of leaders in the progressive community recognized the need for a research institute in Manitoba to support alternative public policy that challenged the principles of privatization, shrinking welfare state and individualism espoused by right wing research institutes. This started as a conversation between Errol Black and Jim Silver in December 1995, who were very shortly afterwards joined by Wayne Antony. Throughout 1996 and early 1997 they worked together to develop a constitution and a local organization. At this time the organization was called “Manitoba Institute for Social and Economic Research” with the ironic acronym of “MISER.”

MISER approached the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives National office about

the possibility of becoming a part of the CCPA so that we could offer tax receipts for donations and memberships, thereby increasing our fundraising ability. Established in 1980, the National CCPA is one of Canada’s leading sources of progressive policy ideas. In early 1997 the CCPA expanded by opening an office in British Columbia, and by November of that same year successful negotiations with CCPA led to the establishment of a Manitoba office. We have an excellent relationship with the national office, who provide organizational support, and we operate autonomously governed by a local board.

From the beginning, we said that we wanted to be the kind of research institute that did not just publish things to be left to gather dust on a shelf. We wanted to be politically engaged; we wanted our research to make a difference. This meant doing high-quality research on matters of importance to Manitobans, and making an effort to distribute the results of our research as widely as possible.

Our first two publications set the tone. Evelyn Shapiro wrote a paper pointing out the perils of the privatization of home care, and Jim Silver wrote a paper exposing the nefarious activities of Olsten Corporation, the American

there is an alternative.

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company contracted to deliver private for-profit home-care services to 10 percent of the Winnipeg market.

We released those two papers at a noon news conference in December, 1997, and immediately after the news conference, walked the publications over to the provincial legislature where the House was in session. Two hours later Darren Praznick, the Conservative Minister of Health, announced the termination of the experiment in home-care privatization. We had used high-quality research to make a political impact on matters of importance to Manitobans. We made a very similar impact during the 1999 provincial election campaign, when John Loxley wrote a pair of popular papers criticizing the Conservative Government's economic promises.

We have fostered close ties with the labour movement. We involved the labour movement from the outset by keeping Rob Hilliard, then the President of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, fully informed of what we were doing. Labor has been very supportive of our effort and has seats on our Board, and we work cooperatively together, notably in the creation of the CCPA MB Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues in 2012.

CCPA MB is the administrative arm of the Manitoba Research Alliance, which has received three consecutive federal-government SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) grants on Community Economic Development (CED) with Aboriginal communities and in Inner City Winnipeg. These research grants have allowed us to increase our research output substantially. More importantly, the research added significantly to the value and importance that CED can play in the renewal and revitalization of neighborhoods and communities.

In 2003 we successfully won a contract with the Canadian Community Economic Development Network to house a regional coordinator. It is from this contract that the CCEDNET Manitoba office was born.

This in conjunction with the SSHRC Grant has made the Manitoba office a catalyst for CED work in the Province and has allowed us to play an important role in the promotion of the numerous and varied CED projects and organizations at work throughout the Province.

The CCPA MB membership is very important. All membership fees remain in Manitoba to support the work we do here. We have individual members as well as organizations and community partners. Recent changes at the Canadian Revenue Agency require us to now refer to our members as "supporters". Regardless of term, individuals, unions and organizations who donate to the CCPA are the backbone of our organization.

Our effectiveness at defining and pushing crucial issues was seen when we challenged the Province on its poverty-reduction plan and when our affordable housing timelines and targets were adopted by the current Provincial administration. We have become a productive and well-run research institute, contributing in important ways to maintaining and advancing the progressive elements of the political culture of the province.

Consider becoming a supporter today! If you are already a supporter, thank you, every contribution counts.

Wendy Land, Chair, CCPA MB Board

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