

 Simon Fraser University Special Collections
and Rare Books

Finding Aid - Robert Connell fonds (MsC 44)

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Rules for Archival Description

Simon Fraser University Special Collections and Rare Books

W.A.C. Bennett Library - Room 7100

Simon Fraser University

8888 University Drive

Burnaby

BC

Canada

V5A 1S6

Telephone: 778.782.8842

[Email: mhardbat@sfu.ca](mailto:mhardbat@sfu.ca)

<http://atom.archives.sfu.ca/index.php/robert-connell-fonds>

Robert Connell fonds

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Summary information

Repository:	Simon Fraser University Special Collections and Rare Books
Title:	Robert Connell fonds
ID:	MsC 44
Date:	1933-1937 (date of creation)
Physical description:	6.5 cm of textual records
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Robert Connell (1871-1957) was a clergyman and politician in British Columbia. He was the first leader of the provincial Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in (now the British Columbia New Democratic Party). Raised in Glasgow, Scotland, Connell came to Canada at the age of 17. He was ordained a Church of England priest in 1896 and moved to Victoria, B.C. in 1901. He served as a vicar in various parishes before retiring from the pulpit in 1923. In 1932, Connell joined the League for Social Reconstruction and also the B.C. Reconstructionist Party formed by some supporters of the LSR in British Columbia. The short-lived party quickly joined the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation after it was formed in August of the same year. Connell agreed to run for the provincial legislature as a CCF candidate in the 1933 provincial election. The new party won seven seats, including Connell's Victoria City riding. With the collapse of the governing Conservative Party and the election of the Liberals the CCF found itself as the official opposition in the British Columbia legislature. Leaderless, the party caucus met and agreed to appoint Connell as leader. Connell was a fervent believer of the social gospel movement, and a moderate compared to many more radical members of the party. Tensions between Connell and the party's left wing emerged publicly when he denounced in the legislature the radical language of fellow CCF MP Ernest Winch who had given a speech on the merits of communism. At the 1936 party convention, Connell survived a vote of non-confidence. His leadership again came under fire when he publicly opposed a resolution in favour of socializing banking and credit several weeks after it was approved. In July 1936, he issued a statement to the party executive and to the media revoking his support for the party platform approved by the convention three weeks earlier. The policy disagreement, which came to be known as the "Connell Affair" brought to a head a conflict in the party between moderates such as Connell and "revolutionary" Marxists. Connell was expelled from the party in August and he promptly formed a new political party, the "Social Constructives" with three fellow MLAs

from the CCF's 7 person caucus and was able to retain his position as Leader of the Official Opposition for the remainder of the life of the legislature. The "Social Constructives" stood 14 candidates (out of a possible 48) in the 1937 general election but failed to win any seats. The party received 8,086 votes to the CCF's 119,400. With the end of his political career, Connell returned to spiritual work becoming Archdeacon of Comox in 1940.

Scope and content

The fonds consists of correspondence, manuscripts, typescripts of radio addresses, etc.

Notes

Title notes

Finding aids

Printed inventory available.

Other notes

- Publication status: published
 - Level of detail: Full
 - Status description: Published
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Access points

- Connell, Robert (subject)
 - Textual record (documentary form)
 - Arts and culture (subject)
-

Series descriptions
