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IN HALIFAX HARBOR IN THE HISTORY
OF DISASTER RESEARCH: THE WORK OF
SAMUEL H. PRINCE*

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*Presented at a Conference on "The 1917 Explosion: Collision in Halifax Harbour and its Consequences," The Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Studies, St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, December 3-6, 1992.

**THE PLACE OF THE 1917 EXPLOSION IN HALIFAX HARBOR IN THE
HISTORY OF DISASTER RESEARCH: THE WORK OF SAMUEL H. PRINCE¹**

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Introduction

The 1917 explosion in Halifax Harbor was important for a number of reasons. The interest here is in the fact that this particular occasion became the focus of the first systematic social scientific study of disaster. In October 1920, Samuel H. Prince published Catastrophe and Social Change, Based on a Sociological Study of the Halifax Disaster. That work was part of his Ph.D. work and the chair of his dissertation committee at Columbia University was F. H. Giddings. Since Giddings was a significant figure in the developing field of sociology, Prince's study can be placed both within the context of sociological thought at the time as well as its place within the disaster research tradition which has evolved since his pioneering work.

The Study Itself

Prince's study covers a period of approximately two and a half years after the explosion and centers on the idea that, since catastrophe creates social disintegration, that, in turn, creates the conditions for social change. While this change cannot necessarily be considered "progress," knowledge derived from the scientific method can provide understanding which can turn such a tragedy into productive improvement. Prince's specific focus was on the social system which developed to distribute relief after impact but he provides much additional information about impact and response as well as some details of the changes which occurred during the period of the study.

The format of the dissertation is as follows: It is initiated by a discussion of catastrophe and social change and is followed by a chapter on the disintegration of the social order based on a brief description of the emergency period. The second chapter, "Catastrophe and Social Psychology" is, in certain ways, a diversion, summarizing existing knowledge about individual reactions to disaster. While it is perhaps the most dated of the discussion, Prince's previous training in Psychology (an M.A. at Toronto) and the fact that a member of his committee was a prominent psychologist perhaps explains its inclusion.

The core of the dissertation, in the next several chapters, centers on the organization of relief in the period after the explosion. He discusses this effort interspersed with a running critique of certain aspects of the process. He was pleased with the centralization of the process but less than impressed with the cooperation of several groups, such as the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Church, and several other private relief efforts which operated independently. He seemed particularly offended that some relief was given without proper investigation and that some groups used volunteers. These volunteers, in his view, could not be expected to "understand the nature of scientific relief service" (p. 84).

After this discussion, Prince moves on to consider the effects of the catastrophe on subsequent social legislation. While the time frame of the study was short, he noted that, in 1919, there was major legislation by Parliament concerning the control and shipment of explosives in Canadian harbors. Such examples he used

to support his view that catastrophe is closely associated with progress in social legislation. He also discusses the various factors which prompted outside assistance and even raise the possibility that such assistance might exceed the losses. He makes the suggestion that Federal disaster insurance might overcome "the irrationality of an inequitable level on the more sympathetic and the fluctuations of disproportionate relief" (p. 116).

In the concluding chapters, Prince returns to his theme of the relationship between catastrophe and change, suggesting that Halifax had been a conservative city intent of preserving the status quo, the explosion had prompted a number of significant changes which he documents with statistics on increases in building permits, bank clearings, postal and tramway revenues. He noted the increase in the population and the renewed interest in voting, city planning, public health, education and recreation. He does suggest that external factors were important especially the coming of the ocean terminals and the fact that the explosion occurred in wartime. The effect of these external factors was to replace the economic losses. Prince's final conclusion was optimistic. Reiterating that while catastrophe produces change and change is not necessarily progress, "the nature of social change in Halifax is one in the direction of progress we think to be based on reason and not alone on hope" (p. 146).

The way in which Prince structured his study had less to do with the impact of the explosion than with the nature of his graduate education at Columbia. In his preface, Prince indicates that the idea of the work was suggested to him while carrying out

a civic community study of the disaster under the direction of Professor F. H. Giddings of Columbia University. "The work...is the first attempt to present a purely scientific and sociological treatment of any great disaster" (p. 7). In addition to Giddings, Prince thanks Professor A. A. Tenney, a long-time colleague of Giddings, Professor R. E. Chaddock, a social economist, Professor S. M. Lindsey, an expert on social legislation and Professor R. S. Woodsworth of the Department of Psychology.

Of the committee, it was obvious that the primary intellectual guide was Giddings. In An Introduction to the History of Sociology (1948), Harry Elmer Barnes states that "Franklin Henry Giddings was probably the ablest sociologist that the United States ever produced, and among sociologists abroad, only Durkheim, Hobhouse and Max Weber would rank with him" (p. 763). Such adulation may not be misplaced. Along with Lester Ward, William Graham Sumner and Albion Small, Giddings (1855-1931) is rather universally considered a key figure in American sociology.

Giddings, introduced to the works of Spencer, Huxley and Darwin in high school, received an A. B. in Engineering at Union College and, for eight years, wrote for various Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics and for academic journals, such as the Political Science Quarterly. These articles led to his appointment in 1888 as Woodrow Wilson's professorial successor at Bryn Mawr College. In 1890, he began to conduct a graduate seminar on modern theories of sociology and, in 1894, he was asked to fill a special professorship in Sociology at Columbia "To develop the theoretical teaching of sociology proper and to direct the students in

practical sociological work" (Odum, pps. 60-61). Giddings became Carpentier Professor of Sociology and the History of Civilization in 1906. Under his leadership, Columbia became, at that time, one of the two dominant departments of sociology, the other being the University of Chicago. When Prince came to Columbia, Giddings was well established, both in terms of his writing and in terms of the accomplishments of his students who went on to have distinguished careers. During his tenure, some fifty Ph.D.'s were awarded. Six of Giddings' students later became Presidents of the American Sociological Society. Giddings served as President in 1910 and 1911.

Giddings' long career and extensive writing makes it difficult to easily summarize his sociological thought. Three themes of Giddings' work were particularly apparent in the way that the Prince dissertation was structured. These themes were: (1) social change is not necessarily progress, (2) progress can be achieved by the application of rational knowledge, and (3) rational knowledge is a product of the scientific method.

Giddings, like many scholars of this time, began as an evolutionist and used historical and comparative examples throughout his writings. His evolutionary thought, however, was not naively associated with the idea that the world was getting better and better, such as others, such as William Graham Sumner, seemed to imply. Prince added:

We cannot, however, remain long content with this suggestion as to the principle concerns--namely that progress is a natural and an assured result of change. The point is that catastrophe always means social change. There is not always progress. It is well to guard against confusion here. Change means any qualitative

variation, whereas progress means "Amelioration, perfectionment" (p. 21).

Prince echoed the hope that knowledge might lead to progress.

He said:

The principle thus appears to be that progress in catastrophe is a resultant of specific conditioning factors, some of which are subject to social control.

It is indeed this very thing which makes possible the hope of eventual social control over disaster stricken cities and the translation of seeming evil into tremendous good. And this is, in addition, to the many practical social lessons we already have been intelligent enough to preserve, such as those of better city planning and a more efficient charity organization (p. 22).

Within the history of sociology, Giddings represents an interesting transition during his career in that he moved from historical evolutionary thinking toward an emphasis on the scientific method. Prince also reflected the importance of the scientific method.

Thought becomes scientific only when its conclusions are checked up and underwritten by observation or experiment. Prior to such procedure, it still must remain opinion or belief...Knowledge must grow scientific only after the most faithful examination of many catastrophes. But it must be realized that the data of the greatest value is left of times unrecorded and fades rapidly from the social memory. Investigation is needed immediately after the event (p. 23).

Prince clearly saw his study as a pioneering one.

The whole subject, it must be repeated, a virgin field in sociology...It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that sociological studies of Chicago, Galveston, Baltimore, San Francisco and other disaster cities should be initiated at once (p. 23).

Prince is less clear as to a description of the methods he used in the dissertation. One can infer that he intended for the study to be dependent on observation which focused on an "objective" description of behavior which occurred during the

emergency period as well as a chronicling of events which took place subsequently. While there are some personal references, there was never any systematic attention given to other sources of information, except a list of acknowledgements in the preface. In other words, there was no clear indication that interviewing key people in particular organizations was done, nor was there extensive citation of unpublished data sources. Especially in the last chapter, there was an effort to obtain certain statistical indicators of change, such as changes in bank clearings and revenues. In general, Prince downplayed his personal involvement and experience to focus on a description of "what happened." He was insistent as to the necessity to replicate his findings in other disaster contexts. He does footnote his involvement in Halifax, and his earlier trip to the scene of the sinking of the Titanic and his more recent investigation of a Wall Street explosion, but these personal experiences are not presented as enhancing the current study. Instead, he considered his study as the first step to develop cumulative knowledge.

Of such a series--if the work can be done--this little volume on Halifax is offered as a beginning. It is hoped that the many inadequacies of treatment will receive the generous allowances permitted a pioneer (p. 24).

Why the Lack of Continuity From Prince's Pioneering Work?

In many ways, Prince's modest beginning was somewhat of an isolated event within the history of sociological thought. There are several reasons for the lack of attention. Giddings was moving toward the end of his career and his interest was moving increasingly in a behaviorist direction. More directly, the study

of social change was being transformed, primarily by the work of William Ogburn, another student of Giddings. Ogburn's book, Social Change (1922) moved the field toward a consideration of the discontinuities between material and nonmaterial elements of culture and, in particular, toward the idea that technology and invention was major movers for social change. That view, and particularly the concept of "culture lag," become a dominant view of the mechanisms behind social change. It is worth noting here that Ogburn was on the faculty at Columbia when Prince was completing his dissertation. Ogburn returned to Columbia in 1919 and stayed there until 1927 when he moved to Chicago where he spent the rest of his career. It is perplexing that Ogburn is neither acknowledged nor cited in Prince's dissertation nor is Prince cited later in Ogburn's book. Prince's contribution to social change theory is noted, however, in Pitirim Sorokin, Contemporary Sociological Theories (1933). It is possible that if Ogburn had been on Prince's committee during the initial stages of his distinguished career, Prince's work on change would have had greater visibility. Too, if Prince had been affiliated with a dominant graduate department in his subsequent career, his initial work would have made a larger impact on subsequent social change theory.

Prince's application of social science methods to disaster also lacked continuity. During the next thirty years, there was a singular lack of attention given to disaster within the social science community. It was only in the early 1950's when social scientists returned to the study of disaster. (For a background on

that period of research, see Quarantelli, 1987). While initiated by research in the United States, in the last 40 years, there has developed a considerable research tradition on disasters. That tradition now is increasingly multidisciplinary and international (see Drabek, 1984). When disasters became a focus for renewed interest, Prince was rediscovered and his work became a source of ideas and data. While Scanlon (1988) has examined his work more directly, he has been used by many others as a source of research leads, especially relating to the effects of disaster on change. Since Prince selected a very complex problem to begin with, our subsequent comments are not intended as a belated criticism but as a springboard to explore the complexities of the relationship between disaster and social change.

Placing Prince's Study in the Context of Contemporary Research

One way to evaluate the work of Prince is to attempt to untangle the continuing relevance of the issues he raised about Halifax. While he had a clear focus on one aspect of the disaster, he also provided considerable description of the event which was somewhat tangential to his focus. His writing style was considerably more flowery than one would expect in dissertations today. Too, certain descriptions would now be summarized into concepts which are common to the field. While he focused on a particular social system--that of the distribution of relief and rehabilitation, a number of other issues are still relevant.

1. His brief description about individual behavior in the post impact period is consistent with research in other disasters.

That is that their behavior was very adaptive to the set of problems which confronted the community. On the other hand, the explanations which he used, either in terms of instinctive or imitative behavior or in terms of Giddings' notions of "consciousness of kind or "pluralistic behavior" would no longer be used.

To a large extent, his description of individual actions and of the emergent organized response contradict his theoretical assumptions, introduced in the first chapter, which he describes as "social disintegration." While this metaphor continues to be used by the media in their coverage of disaster phenomena and perhaps Prince felt that he needed to posit "disintegration" as a precursor of change, his own description suggested the effectiveness of the community in responding quickly and in an organized fashion to the immense number of problems which the explosion produced. For example, Prince points out that within an hour after the explosion, telegraph service was re-established to the "outside" world. That within four hours, a train with many injured left for Truro. While many individuals were operating on their own to deal with the problems which confronted them immediately, (which would be described now as the mass assault phase) there were preliminary forms of coordination beginning to develop by noon. By late afternoon of the first day, tentative plans for dealing with the emergency were formulated at City Hall. Other indications of the rather rapid restoration of "normal" functioning would include that, on Friday, there was the re-establishment of the regular train to Montreal, as well as the first tram service and the first

newspaper. These are hardly clear indicators of "disintegration." Prince's description of the early emergency period is very consistent with subsequent studies which underscore the continuity of preimpact social structures and the adaptation of those structures to cope with problems emerging in the emergency period. Too, this adaptive response is not peculiar to Halifax but is much more universal. That universality has been revealed by research in a variety of communities. Such comparative research, as Prince anticipated, now allows us to generalize across events.

2. While Prince's description of the immediate emergency period was not extensive, he was especially interested in a specific area--that of relief and rehabilitation. He pointed out that the organization of relief had developed a structure which was innovative and based on "scientific" principles. First, there was the centralization of authority and administration into one official relief organization. There was coordination of relief in one central committee and funds from all sources went into the hands of one finance committee and all records were cleared through one registration committee and that there was a small managing committee to interpret policy set by an executive committee. In particular, Prince was concerned about wasting relief and about lack of coordination of relief. He underscored the desirability to move rather quickly away from "relief" toward a more rational (and bureaucratic) evaluation of the real needs of victims. He suggests that "public opinion" within the community had not given this approach much thought and that there was delay in planning, duplication in giving relief and giving without substantial

inquiry. He also suggested that when the Federal Relief Commission finally took charge on January 21st that, instead of assisting victims in rehabilitation, there was an attempt to make modified restitution. Prince was especially critical of the lump sum restoration. While quoting others, he said:

They assert that for many it proved simply a lesson in extravagance and did not safeguard the economic future of the recipients. Unused to carrying all their worldly goods in their vest pockets, these same pockets became empty again with uncommon rapidity. Victrolas, silk shirts, and furbelows multiplied. Merchants' trade grew brisk with "explosion" money. There seemed to be a temporary exchange of positions by the social classes (p. 96).

There are two related issues here. Prince used as his prime example of social change the attempt to introduce rational administrative methods into the distribution of relief. While he recognized that "unorganized" relief was necessary in the short run, he saw that organization as necessary to insure some notion of equity and justice. He did mention that in Halifax there was considerable criticism of the "cold professionalism" of the more rational methods but he tended to blame this conflict on the obtrusiveness of the symbols of bureaucracy--the forms, the typewriters, the file cabinets, etc. He suggested that "social workers of the future when thrown into a similar situation should curtain their machinery a little closer, at least until the community can realize the principles which organization can conserve" (p. 93).

Subsequent research suggests that such conflict is much more basic than Prince suggests and it is not likely to be solved by "pulling the curtains." While Prince mentions conflict at various

times, he treats it as somewhat "pathological" and having been created by the lack of acceptance of "scientific" principles. Some further understanding of this dimension is found in our examination of the consequences of the reconstruction process which followed the Alaskan earthquake. In observing the reconstruction of Anchorage after a 25 year period, we point out the importance of issues of equity and the tendency for the predisaster stratification system to effectively determine the long term consequences of such a process.

The reconstruction and recovery process is always characterized by heightened social conflict.

Social process after a disaster will direct the reconstruction along patterns already established prior to the disaster.

The reproduction of past patterns is most certain when high status groups are adversely affected.

This means that the reconstruction process benefits the most socially powerful at the expense of the less powerful. The end result is usually described as what is "good" for the community.

The distribution of any type of relief and assistance always raises issues of equity.

Reconstruction which requires the relocation of parts of the community raises issues of equity in a quite visible way.

Government policies reinforce the advantage of the most powerful in the reconstruction period. Since the more powerful are not unified, government policies are often inconsistent. (adapted from Dynes and Quarantelli, 1989)

While our conclusions are based on a 25 year time frame and are dependent on the "concrete" results of the rebuilding of Anchorage, it can be argued that the application of the "scientific principles" which Prince advocated would have resulted in reinforcing the "status quo" since the distribution of relief and

rehabilitation would avoid duplicative and unnecessary claims. While the introduction of the principles was used by Prince as an example of change, one could argue that their major function would be to minimize conflict over equity, and the principles adopted also insured the status quo.

Prince did not discuss the class composition of Halifax in any systematic way. That dimension of the community is critically important, not just as an issue of equity in the recovery period. Socio-economic status defines the social location of the damage as well as the nature of the problems to be faced in the emergency period. Hazardous locations are not randomly distributed within cities and hazardous sites in port cities tend to be located in less affluent areas, inhabited by residents of lower economic status who are less able to deal with, respond to and recover from disasters. These issues of equity are not solved by "pulling the curtains" on the bureaucracy but the nature of conflict and the ultimate solutions are rooted in the preexisting power relationships within the community.

Subsequent studies of the relationship between disaster and change have shown somewhat mixed results. Some of these studies have looked at longer time periods and some have focused on different kinds of social units. One of the closest parallel studies to Prince was William Anderson's (1970) study of changes in the public organizations which had become involved in the emergency after the Anchorage earthquake. In examining these organizations, a year after the quake Anderson identified a number of conditions which might maximize change. He suggested the following: (1) when

changes were already planned or in the process of being realized; (2) when new strains were generated or old ones were made more critical by the disaster; (3) when the organization experienced so great an alteration in its environment that new demands were made on it; (4) alternative organizational procedures were suggested by the disaster experience; and (5) increased external support was given to the organization following the disaster (Anderson, 1970). While several of the factors may have been operative in Halifax, perhaps one particular dimension needs to be noted here. It centers on the origins of the "scientific principals" which were used to guide the relief efforts. There is an interesting circularity in Prince's account. The primary source used by Prince in the criteria by which the relief should be judged was a book by J. Byron Deacon, Disaster and the American Red Cross in Disaster Relief (1918). That book centered on an evaluation of previous red Cross experience in administering disaster relief and was intended to produce guidelines for the future. In the introduction, written by the head of the Disaster Relief Services, American Red Cross, there is the following reference.

Just as the last pages of this little book were being corrected came the tragic news of the Halifax disaster, reinforcing Mr. Deacon's plea for the fullest possible means of preparedness for such possible calamities (Deacon, p. 5).

The point here is, that at the time of the explosion, elsewhere there had been a considerable thinking about the rationale and delivery of disaster relief. Some who had contributed data to the book and others who had read the proofs were members of a delegation from Boston who helped structure the relief effort in

Halifax. There had been a strong "professional" connection between Boston and Halifax established during the Titanic sinking. Prince may have been knowledgeable about the Deacon study but certainly, those who came from Boston were. While Prince described the initial relief effort, he comments:

But with the coming of the American Unit, the transfer of the work to a new headquarters upon their advice and the adoption of a complete plan of organization, the systematic relief work may be said to have in reality begun (p. 82).

The reference to the American Unit was a group from the Public Safety Committee of Massachusetts and from the Boston Chapter of the American Red Cross. Thus, it would seem that the document (Deacon) which set forth the scientific relief principles which were implemented in Halifax were also the same principles which Prince used as the basis for evaluating the system. The important point here is not the apparent circularity, but returning to the idea that change is likely to occur when changes are planned or in the process of being implemented at the time of disaster impact. The scientific principles existed, at least within the minds of the relief "professionals," prior to the explosion and Halifax provided the opportunity to implement them. In a more modern idiom, there was a small window of opportunity for change created but the direction of change was present prior to the disaster. This does not deny that change occurred but explains its origin and direction. This emphasizes the most consistent finding in subsequent research concerning disaster and change--disasters seldom create radical and dramatic change but the changes which do

occur are rooted in the predisaster intellectual and administrative climate.

An Evaluation of the Prince Study

We think that it is possible to argue that the Prince study was not about social change, at least in the substantive sense. His major focus was on an emergent system to distribute disaster relief to the "victims" of the explosion. That system emerged some sixty hours after the explosion subsequent to a discussion by locals coping with the immediate emergency problems and by those coming from Boston fresh with ideas, derived from the Deacon study, on how to "professionalize" relief. While there was considerable success in organizing that effort, Prince also described the resistance to that effort, which he attributed to a lack of understanding of the principles on which the system was based. The system operated only until January 20th when the Federal Relief Commission took over and changed (or violated) the principles which had been institutionalized before. So the change which Prince identified was implemented for less than two months. While Prince, in his later chapters, talks about changes within the community which were evident in 1919 and in the early 1920's, none of these relate to ways the emergent relief system became institutionalized within the community.

Part of the issue here is the question of what constitutes social change. With the benefit of conceptual hindsight, Prince would have been better advised to conceptualize his study in terms of a description of "emergent" organization, rather than as a

description of change. The emergent relief system which Prince described was a "temporary" solution to the rather immense problems which emerged in the immediate post impact period. For some 60 hours, various segments of the community worked simultaneously and rather independently especially on the "medical" needs. As those rather immediate problems were receding, the issue of the longer term issues of "rehabilitation" emerged and with the arrival of the "American Unit," this allowed the combination of the existing activity to be "reorganized" along the lines which Prince saw as following "scientific principles." In subsequent disaster research, there has been a long tradition of studying various types of "emergent" organizations, i.e., those that had not predisaster existence. (For a detailing of some of that research, see Drabek, 1986, 154 ff.) Rather than seeing the emergent social system as a legitimate object of inquiry, Prince was pleased with the directions of the change which occurred toward a more rationalized relief system. In his conclusions, he said:

If there is one thing more than another which we would emphasize in conclusion, it is this final principle. Progress is not necessarily a natural or assured result of change. It comes only as a result of effort that is wisely expended and sacrifice which is sacrifice in truth (p. 146).

Researchers today would, of course, still be interested in the efforts to implement policy in the emergency period. And the same conflict which existed in Halifax was recently enacted in Florida after Hurricane Andrew when FEMA was criticized for its imposition of bureaucratic rules amidst a sea of contributed goods. On the other hand, the indicators of post-impact social change which most researchers now would use would be some of the following:

1. alterations in the structure of social systems which would affect routine functioning in the post emergency period;
2. differences in the distribution of resources within the community,
3. differential growth patterns in various institutional sectors, and
4. the elaboration and increased complexity of behavior, in part created by changes in infrastructure.

In a recent summary of research stemming from the Prince hypothesis, Bates and Peacock (1987) have tried to specify the underlying social conditions which might be expected to produce change. Of course, most of those factors were relevant in Halifax.

1. Disasters place the structure of the social system under stress and test its capacity to perform vital functions. Certainly, the relief system was tested.

2. Disasters differentially affect socio-economic and ethnic groups and thus the stratification system may be affected. Prince expressed concern that certain people were getting more than their "share." In addition, he noted that "German residents of the city were immediately under arrest, when the disaster occurred, but all were later given their freedom" (p. 77).

3. Disasters bring new groups and organizations into being and provide the circumstances which foster new forms of behavior.

4. Disasters frequently destroy or severely damage outmoded infrastructure and force its replacement by more modern technology. Prince noted that during the reconstruction, some 20 miles of new

sidewalks were ordered (p. 123) which would have changed the interaction patterns among neighborhoods.

5. Disasters frequently result in the influx of large numbers of outsiders who supply additional labor and expertise as well as large amounts of outside physical and financial resources. Prince notes:

Glaziers, drivers, repair men and carpenters came by trainloads bringing their tools, their food and their wages with them. The city's population was increased by thirty five hundred workmen, twenty three hundred of whom were registered with the committee at one time (p. 115).

Too, Prince estimates that over 27 million dollars in external contributions came into the city.

6. Outsiders bring with them different forms of behavior which may be transferred to the local population. Of course, a major theme in Prince was the arrival of the group from Boston with their ideas on how to distribute relief.

7. Conflicts often emerge over the distribution of scarce resources and over the equity principle which should guide the recovery process. These have serious political implications and results in changes in the relationship between the government and other units in the system. Prince, of course, admitted that the system of relief became the object of controversy.

The merest touch of "cold professionalism" soon became fuel for the burning disapproval which spread through the city regarding the methods of relief. Letters to the press gave vent to the indignation of the sufferers. One of the judges of the Supreme Court was as outspoken as anyone. In criticizing the food distribution system, he wrote very plainly of the "overdoes of business efficiency and social service pedantry" (p. 92).

Prince also noted that such controversy emerged at public meetings in Wards Five and Six but noted that the "dissatisfied" did not organize a protest movement.

Prince also noted that the population of Halifax had increased from 50,000 at the time of the explosion to at least 65,000 or even to another estimate of 85,000 by 1920. He also suggested an increase in "civic interest" in voting although he does not indicate that subsequent election directly involved "disaster" issues. Certainly, there are conditions which would predict social change in Halifax were present, but because of the pressures of dissertation deadlines, Prince's choice to focus on a short period during the emergency period and ignore more long term and substantive changes which did occur in Halifax

Summary and a Final Comment

Samuel H. Prince's study of Halifax was structured less on his personal experience than on certain intellectual issues of the times. The study was grounded in the value of scientific method in developing knowledge to guide future disaster relief efforts in a more rational way. These directions reflected the theoretical orientation of his dissertation advisor at Columbia, F. H. Giddings. Prince's study had little effect on social change theory but many years later, when a disaster research tradition developed, his ideas were re-examined.

In retrospect, his analysis overestimated the "disintegrating" effects of disaster and underestimated the continuity of behavior from the predisaster community. The basis for the change, ideas

about the application of relief principles, existed prior to the disaster. Prince's advocacy of these "scientific" relief principles, in fact, reinforced the status quo rather than created substantive social change.

The complex relationship between disaster and social change remains a viable research issue. In addition, it is still an important issue for social policy. In the post World War II years, a major global policy thrust has concerned development. While a considerable effort in time and money has gone into development planning, relatively little has been accomplished. In recent years, in various national and international development agencies, there has been a resurgence of the ideas which Prince expressed that relief efforts should be more rationally handled. The persistence of development efforts being wiped out by disaster and the continual dependence of these countries on outside agencies for relief raises the question as to whether some of those relief funds should be allocated to strengthen disaster mitigation and preparedness. As Anderson (1991) has suggested, such efforts not only minimize damage but also provide a stable economic environment for investment and they provide a sense that people can control their own future. Such self confidence is necessary to sustain long-term development. So the hopes of a more rational distribution of relief, which was implemented and criticized in Halifax, still exists as a viable policy option around the world. Certainly, one can still echo Prince's notion that disaster creates social change but it takes considerable human effort to make that change progress.

FOOTNOTES

1. Samuel Henry Prince was curate at S. Paul's Church in Halifax at the time of the explosion. In May 1919, he began a Ph.D. in Sociology at Columbia and his dissertation was published in 1920. The preface was dated in October. Prince stayed in New York until 1924, lecturing at Columbia and assisting in the ministry at St. Stephen's Church. In 1924, Prince was invited to become a King's College Professor in the Department of Economics and Sociology at Dalhousie and he continued to lecture in that Department until 1924. Within the Department, in addition to Principles course, courses were given on the Community, Social Institutions, Social Legislation and Social Anthropology. In addition to his responsibilities in that Department, he was also a member of the faculty of Divinity at King's. His interest in Social Work was maintained by his service for 20 years as Chair of the Nova Scotia Diocesan Council for Social Service and his role in the establishment of the Maritime School of Social Work. While officially retired from Dalhousie in 1951, he continued to serve both Dalhousie and King's until 1955. Prince died October 19, 1960. (For a more detailed description of Prince's life, see Hatfield 1990 and for greater detail on Prince's study of Halifax, see Scanlon, 1988 and 1992.)

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