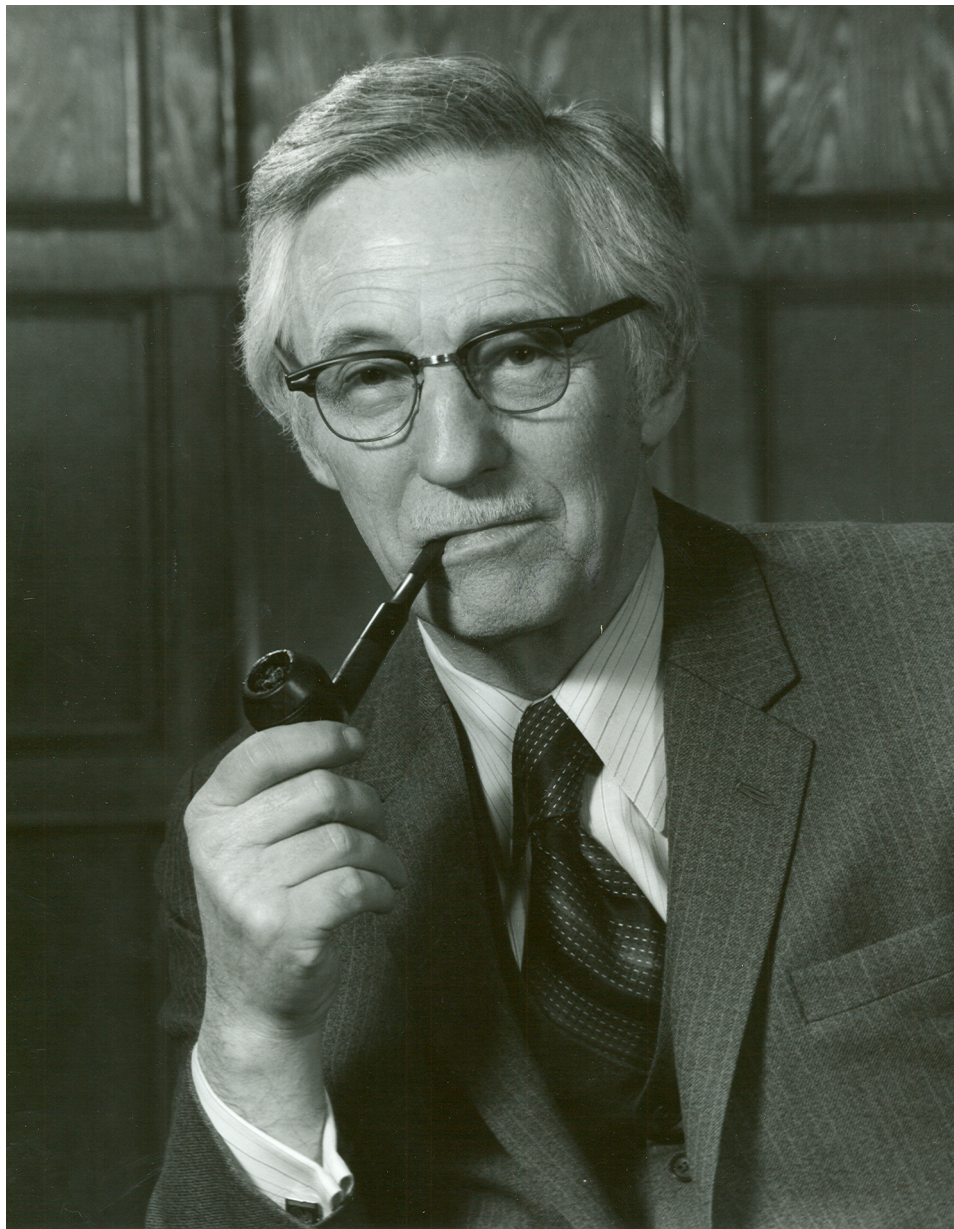


RICK HELMES-HAYES

Samuel Delbert Clark
1910-2003



Samuel Delbert (“Del”) Clark was a pioneer of English-language Canadian sociology who was a key builder of the discipline during a crucial period in its development, 1940-1970. Until the mid-1960s sociology was a small and marginalized presence in Canadian academia. Clark was in the front rank among the tiny cadre of scholars who in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s helped to establish the discipline as a legitimate scholarly enterprise so that when the university system expanded rapidly in the 1960s, sociology was able to take part and assume its proper place as a full partner in the Canadian social science community.

Del Clark was born in Lloydminster, Alberta on February 24, 1910 and died in Toronto at the age of 93 years on September 18, 2003. He attended the University of Saskatchewan, where he completed a BA in History and Political Science in 1930 and an MA in History in 1931. Following a year at the London School of Economics he returned to Canada where he completed an MA in Sociology at McGill University in 1935 and a PhD in Political Science at the University of Toronto in 1938.

Clark then joined the massive Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto. He was the department’s first permanent, full-time appointment in sociology. Aside from some temporary appointments at other universities, he spent his entire career at Toronto. He was promoted to full professor in 1953 and appointed the first Head of the Department of Sociology when it became independent of the Department of Political Economy in 1963. He served in that capacity until 1969 and retired in 1976 with the title Professor Emeritus. During his career, the department grew from one full-time appointment (1938) to nearly sixty (1975-6) and developed into arguably the top Department of Sociology in Canada. He played a major role - if not the major role - in these developments.

Clark’s best known research focussed on the dynamics of social change on Canada’s pioneer frontiers. In particular, during the early years of his career, he followed a path blazed by his mentor, economic historian Harold Innis, who had developed the famous “staples theory” of economic development. Clark extended Innis’ work in a sociological direction by analysing the social impact of rapid, staples-related economic development. He was especially interested in the dynamics of religious and political dissent in such societies and wrote two influential volumes – *Church and Sect in Canada* (1948) and *Movements of Political Protest in Canada, 1640-1840* (1959) – which are recognized classics in their respective fields. Other major historically oriented works include *The Canadian Manufacturers’ Association* (1939), *The Social Development of Canada* (1942) and two collections of essays: *The Developing Canadian Community* (1963, 1968) and *Canadian Society in Historical Perspective* (1976). Later in his career, he became interested in the phenomenon of urbanization. *Urbanism and the Changing Canadian Society* (1962), *The Suburban Society* (1966), and *The New Urban Poor* (1978) resulted from his research in the area.

Clark’s scholarship, important in its own right, is significant in the historical development of the discipline for another reason as well. From the beginning of his career until well into the 1960s Clark bravely and wisely defended a historical, interdisciplinary, “British” conception of sociology – he referred to it as “sociological history” - against a more scientific and ahistorical model of the discipline that was then dominant in American sociology and was becoming increasingly popular in Canada. Detailed assessments of his contributions to the discipline are available in two intellectual biographies – Deborah Harrison’s *The Limits of Liberalism: The Making of Canadian Sociology* (1981) and Harry Hiller’s *Society and Change: S. D. Clark and*

the Development of Canadian Sociology (1982). A set of critical essays may be found in Dennis Magill and William Michelson (eds.), *Images of Change* (1999).

During his long and distinguished career he made several other important contributions to the discipline and was awarded many significant honours in recognition of his efforts. In 1945, he was a Guggenheim Fellow at Columbia University and in 1953 was elected to the Royal Society of Canada. From 1945-53 he served as editor of the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* and in 1958 was chosen President of the Canadian Political Science Association. In 1960, he was awarded the Tyrell Medal of The Royal Society and in 1967 was elected Honorary President of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association. He served as President of the Humanities and Social Sciences Section of The Royal Society in 1970-71 and in 1975-76 served as President of The Royal Society. In 1976 he was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and, in 1978, became an Officer of the Order of Canada. As well, he received honorary degrees from seven Canadian universities. In 1999, the University of Toronto established the S. D. Clark Chair in Sociology to commemorate his many achievements and contributions to the development of a unique Canadian sociology.

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(Author's title given as of the time of writing)