

# Public Life and the Mennonite-Anabaptist Tradition

*Roger Epp*

This talk will explore the deep ambivalence or wariness about public life that is characteristic of the Mennonite-Anabaptist inheritance. While particular Mennonite communities in North America might be identified variously with peace-and-justice activism, quietism and conservative-evangelical politics, each of these tendencies borrows a great deal – not always well – from other formulations. Whatever value Mennonites have placed, say, on mutual aid and service to others, they may have little to contribute to the idea of public life. This talk will suggest, however, that a thoughtful ambivalence, informed by the rough historical experience of civic exclusion and official violence on this and on other continents, can serve a greater good in its own way. It ought to be attentive to the outsider; able to build (inclusive) institutions of a common life with or without state sponsorship; watchful for the militarization of the public realm; and willing to stand outside and against it when the time comes to do so.



**Roger Epp** is professor of political science at the University of Alberta, where he served from 2004 to 2011 as founding dean of the Augustana Campus in Camrose. His research interests include such diverse subjects as the rural west, settler-aboriginal relations, higher education, and, from a critical position, theory and ethics in international politics. His published work includes *We Are All Treaty People: Prairie Essays* (2008). He has been a visiting research professor at universities in the UK and the US.

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First Mennonite Church

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