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# **"A Feudal Chain of Vassalage": Limited Identities in the Prairie West, 1870-1896**

Theodore Binnema

**ABSTRACT:** Metropolitan approaches to Canadian history have often been understood as rejections of frontierism and as distinct from the idea of "limited identities." However, recognition of the importance of the hinterland and of "limited identities" is essential to the inclusive metropolitan approach endorsed by J.M.S. Careless. Such an inclusive metropolitan approach remains a useful tool for interpreting promotional literature produced on the Canadian Prairies in the early settlement era. This literature reveals that the prairie elite themselves perceived the West in terms of a hierarchy of metropolitan centres and hinterlands. This suggests that prairie regionalism may always have coexisted with local identities and grievances. While prairie regionalism has been a popular topic of scholarly discussion, the results of this study suggest that research into these local identities would improve our understanding of the western Canadian past.

**SOMMAIRE.** On a souvent perçu la thèse métropolitaine appliquée à l'histoire du Canada comme un rejet de la notion de «frontière» et comme un concept distinct de celui de «l'identité limitée». Pourtant, l'application générale de la thèse métropolitaine proposée par J.M.S. Careless dépend essentiellement de la compréhension de l'importance des notions d'hinterland et d'*d'identité limitée*. Cette approche demeure un outil utile dans l'interprétation des tracts publicitaires publiés dans les Prairies canadiennes au début de la colonisation. Leur analyse montre que l'élite elle-même s'était donné une image fondée sur une hiérarchie de centres métropolitains et d'hinterland, ce qui nous permet de penser que, dans les Prairies, le régionalisme pourrait avoir toujours cohabité avec l'identification à une localité et des griefs locaux. Le régionalisme dans les Prairies forme un sujet d'étude favori, mais le présent article conclut que l'étude des identités locales pourrait approfondir notre connaissance de l'histoire de l'Ouest canadien.

The University of Toronto historian J.M.S. Careless has long been associated with the metropolitan approach and the idea of "limited identities" in Canada. Careless has been almost alone, however, in consistently and explicitly linking these two ideas together.<sup>1</sup> In his 1954 article "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," Professor Careless first suggested that Canadian historians should give greater attention to the role of metropolitan centres in Canadian history.<sup>2</sup> While some have interpreted this article as Careless's obituary for frontierism, it is critical to understand that Careless was merely promoting the idea of metropolitanism as "the other side of the coin to frontier expansion."<sup>3</sup> Careless emphasized the influence of metropolitan centres on their hinterlands but he did not deny the two-way nature of the relationship. The Laurentian School, associated with historians such as D.G. Creighton and economist H.A. Innis, embodied an essentially metropolitan perspective that focussed on the impact of large national and international metropolitan centres on Canadian development. Careless endorsed a more subtle metropolitan idea. According to Careless, a metropolitan approach that recognizes "a chain, almost a feudal chain of vassalage, wherein one city may stand tributary to a bigger centre and yet be the metropolis of a sizable region of its own," and that acknowledges that metropolitan power has been more important in Canadian history than in United States history "may do more to explain the course of Canadian history than concepts of frontierism borrowed from the United States."<sup>4</sup>

In December 1967, as Canada's Centennial year drew to a close, Professor

Careless presented his well-known paper on limited identities in Canada, a response to the nation-building school of historical interpretation.<sup>5</sup> Careless argued that in seeking to trace the development of nationalism in Canada the nation-building approach “neglects and obscures even while it explains and illuminates.”<sup>6</sup> Historians, Careless suggested, ought to pay greater attention to the role played in the history of the Canadian community by the limited identities associated with region, ethnicity, and class. Tying the idea of limited identities to the metropolitan approach, Careless suggested that the rise of dominant metropolitan centres had served to reinforce regional identities in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Thus, according to Careless, the nation-building school was neglecting the importance of regional identities and the role of regional metropolitan centres in Canadian history.

Canadian historiography has undergone a dramatic transformation since 1967. If historians could be accused of overlooking the limited identities of region, class, ethnicity, and gender before 1967, the same could not be said of historians in subsequent years. Indeed, social historians have ensured that the term “limited identities” would find a prominent place in the Canadian historiographical lexicon. Strangely, however, although Canadian scholars have made use of metropolitan interpretations in regional studies, they have rarely acknowledged the complexity of the “feudal chain of vassalage” among Canadian metropolitan centres.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this helps explain why, only a decade after his “Limited Identities” article was published, Careless himself felt dismayed with the regional interpretations that had emerged in the intervening ten years. In 1980 he appeared to retreat from his argument in “Limited Identities” when he urged historians to balance their regional interpretations with a wider national perspective.<sup>9</sup>

By contrast, Careless has defended his metropolitan idea against all critics. The most persuasive critic of metropolitanism, Donald F. Davis, has suggested that metropolitan interpretations, like the frontier interpretations, had ceased to offer innovative insight into Canadian history.<sup>10</sup> Careless’s response to Davis is remarkable because, in arguing that both the frontier and metropolitan approaches “considered together, still have much to offer,” Careless alluded to his 1967 “Limited Identities” paper. Developing his assertion that the metropolitan approach assumed the existence of “almost a feudal chain of vassalage,” Careless wrote: “clearly, small local communities hold their own limited identities; to a large extent delimited and defined in spatial terms.”<sup>11</sup> Careless has not retreated from the “limited identities” idea because, for him, it was an adjunct to his metropolitan approach.

In the same way that the nation-building approaches had earlier obscured important regional aspects of the Canadian experience, many approaches to regional history have neglected important intraregional factors. For example, historians have emphasized the development of a prairie regional identity in the early settlement era but have given little attention to the even more limited local identities. Prairie promotional literature reveals that, between 1870 and 1896, the development of prairie regionalism was

accompanied, among the business elite in any case, by various “limited identities” that can be understood adequately only by employing a metropolitan approach.

Pamphlets promoting a particular city, district, or region as a field for immigration or investment have generally been treated dismissively by historians. Civic boosters may have played an important part in deciding the fortunes of some cities *vis-à-vis* their nearby rivals, but most historians agree that neither the promotional literature produced by the federal government nor by local boosters attracted many settlers to western Canada in general or to any particular city in the period from 1870 to 1896. Despite the efforts of the Canadian government and prairie boosters, immigrants trickled into the Canadian West only slowly. Similarly, promotional literature appears to have had little to do with the flood of immigrants after 1896.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, historians often remind us that the claims made in promotional literature often had much more to do with the overly optimistic views of boosters than with objective reality.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, this promotional literature merits careful consideration. The vast number of pamphlets published by the Canadian government, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the provinces and territories, and by municipalities, reveal the amount of intellectual energy spent on this endeavour.<sup>14</sup> More important, promotional literature offers considerable insight into how local elites perceived the West and the potential of particular places to achieve metropolitan dominance.<sup>15</sup>

The goal of promotional literature was simple: the attraction of immigrants and investment to a particular location. Boosters, however, viewed another location's gain as their loss. Naturally then, boosters promoted their city and its *perceived* hinterland by comparing their region with other regions that they *perceived* were in competition with their city. The implications of this fact deserve closer examination than they have received. Alan F. J. Artibise, the most prolific historian of prairie boosterism, has described the apparently unvarying metropolitan ambitions of prairie cities:

while all prairie boosters wanted the region to grow rapidly, they were especially concerned with the growth of their own communities. Despite the early prominence of Winnipeg, the boosters of the other four cities [Regina, Calgary, Saskatoon and Edmonton] optimistically envisioned their centre becoming the pre-eminent metropolis of the area. ... Each centre zealously competed with the others for economic advantage and prestige.<sup>16</sup>

A superficial examination of promotional literature would suggest that Artibise is correct. Boosters of each city or district would inevitably describe their soil, climate, resources, and community as the best in the entire Canadian North-West. A more careful examination of prairie promotional literature produced before 1896, however, reveals that the elite in most cities produced promotional literature that reflects a much more modest assessment of their cities' potential. Local boosters carefully identified the area with which they believed their own economic prospects were tied. They judged areas outside

this hinterland to be in direct competition for immigrants and investment. These areas were as prominent in promotional literature as the area being championed, for boosters were convinced that prospective immigrants and investors needed to be persuaded that their own area was equal, if not superior, to these other regions in its agricultural and economic potential. Thus, even if each city's boosters made bold claims that their city would eventually emerge as the preeminent western metropolis, they tailored their promotional literature to fit more moderate assessments of their city's prospects. The "sameness" of promotional literature is superficial: each city or district advertised that it enjoyed the greatest economic potential in the entire Canadian North-West. The critical differences in the promotional literature become evident when the researcher notes the extent of the area being promoted by the boosters of each city or region, and the *specific* areas with which that city or region is compared. In noting these aspects of the literature, the researcher can appreciate the very different metropolitan ambitions of the elites of various cities and regions.

Promotional literature produced by the federal government illustrates this salient point. The acquisition of the North-West was the result of an expansionist movement centred primarily in what is now Ontario. This expansionist movement was not propelled by popular sentiment in the North-West, although some Ontario residents may have believed that most of the inhabitants of the North-West sought annexation.<sup>17</sup> Neither was the expansionist movement driven primarily by a desire to extend the benefits of British civilization to the people of the territory. Put simply, the Ontario elite viewed annexation of the territory as essential to the survival of Canada in the face of potential confinement by an expanding United States.<sup>18</sup> Once Canada acquired the North-West, federal policy toward the territory reflected this belief.<sup>19</sup> Thus the federal government's promotional literature not only vigorously promoted the climate, soil, and organization of the Canadian Prairies, but also explicitly and favourably compared the Canadian Prairies to the northern Plains states.<sup>20</sup> With the northern Plains states consistently attracting far greater numbers of settlers (including settlers from Canada) than the Canadian Prairies, the Canadian government obviously aimed to convince prospective settlers of the superior economic potential of the Canadian Prairies. Even if many western settlers originated in Ontario, they were not considered lost to that province if they settled on the adjacent Prairies. These settlers could supply central Canada with important agricultural products while providing a market for central Canadian manufactured goods. Clearly, it was not by historical accident that the West became a hinterland of central Canada; it was intentionally developed as such.

The same metropolitan perspective can be applied within the prairie region. In the western "hinterland," the elite of every city estimated the position their city could attain in the hierarchy of prairie cities. In 1870 these assessments were made in the context of the conclusions provided by the expeditions of Captain John Palliser and Henry Youle Hind between 1857 and 1860. These expeditions replaced an earlier belief that the entire North-

West lacked agricultural potential with the view that certain regions of the northern Plains, running in a crescent from the Red River Valley northwest along the Saskatchewan River and then south along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, embodied a "fertile belt" on the northern rim of the "Great American Desert." In 1870 the nonindigenous population of the newly acquired territory was small, but by historical accident the bulk of this non-Native population was centred in small settlements within this "fertile belt."<sup>21</sup> These small communities including Winnipeg, Prince Albert, Battleford, and Edmonton, seemed destined to form the nucleus of future settlement. When the federal government promised to build a transcontinental railway, its projected route ran northwest from the Red River Valley to Edmonton and toward the Yellowhead Pass.<sup>22</sup>

If there was reason for optimism, nowhere was this more true than in Manitoba. The province, created in 1870, was the centre of the largest non-Native population on the Prairies. Manitoba boosters immediately assumed that the entire western region, as far west as the Rocky Mountains, would become their hinterland. The 1871 report of a Manitoba government committee on agriculture, immigration, and colonization, betrays this belief. The committee reported not only on the agricultural potential of Manitoba, but of the North-West Territories as well. Repeated references to "Manitoba and the North-West Territories" reveal no attempt to compare the advantages of any part of the Canadian Prairies with any other. Instead, the committee recommended that the government adopt the aim of "diminishing the current of emigration to the United States."<sup>23</sup> The committee recommended that to realize this goal "we must of necessity hold out to the emigrant advantages fully equal at least to those which he finds amongst our neighbors [sic] in Minnesota."<sup>24</sup> This is the strategy that the Manitoba government followed not only in the early years of settlement, but even after settlements in the North-West Territories had announced their own competing metropolitan ambitions.

An 1889 provincial government pamphlet provides an example of the nature of Manitoba advertising. While the pamphlet includes such general claims as "Manitoba is beyond all doubt the most attractive and important part of the Canadian North-West," it includes no disparaging remarks about any specific area on the Canadian Prairies.<sup>25</sup> In fact, it occasionally promotes the entire region. For example, after arguing that the American wheat fields were becoming exhausted, it asserts that "Informed Americans admit without hesitation that the supply of WHEAT MUST COME FROM NORTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY."<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the pamphlet makes repeated comparisons with specific western states and territories, and eastern Canadian provinces. For example, it claims that:

The almost universal verdict [of those who have lived in the country for several years] is that the CLIMATE OF MANITOBA IS MORE AGREEABLE THAN THAT OF ANY PART OF ONTARIO, QUEBEC OR THE EASTERN PROVINCES. .... It is decidedly preferable to Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, California or any other State in the Union.<sup>27</sup>

Other comparisons of Manitoba with Canada's eastern provinces and specific states appear in passages dealing with scenery, soils, laws and society, frequency of storms, and quality of pasture land.<sup>28</sup> Naturally, in each case, Manitoba appears equal or better than its competition. Conspicuously absent throughout this pamphlet are disparaging references to regions within Manitoba's hinterland. Lack of such references is general to Manitoba promotional literature produced in this era.<sup>29</sup>

Within the West, Winnipeg was ideally located to become the metropolis of the entire prairie region. Alan Artibise has argued that Winnipeg's emergence as the preeminent city of western Canada was brought about by its particularly dynamic business community and "was the result of neither geographical locational or initial advantage."<sup>30</sup> While Artibise has clearly shown that Winnipeg's specific physical site had important drawbacks, especially in comparison with the neighbouring town of Selkirk, geographer A.F. Burghardt has also proven that Winnipeg was ideally located to assume the role as the gateway city for the Canadian West.<sup>31</sup> Not only was Winnipeg in 1870 the largest settlement on the Prairies, but established as it was on the eastern edge of the Prairies, it enjoyed significant locational advantages over other centres. Winnipeg boosters may not have been alone in boasting that their city was destined to become the metropolitan centre of the Canadian North-West, but the promotional literature produced before 1896 indicates that only Winnipeg boosters viewed the entire Canadian prairie region as tributary to their city. Winnipeg was the only prairie city that consistently promoted the entire Canadian North-West between 1870 and 1896. While some have credited the Winnipeg elite with having the broadest western vision, Winnipeg's broad vision and other cities' "parochialism" may be more a reflection of the relative metropolitan potential of the various cities than of the attributes of city leaders.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike any other city, Winnipeg's economic, political, and social influence was intimately tied to the prospects of the entire West. Thus, when John Macoun announced in 1880 that the agricultural potential of lands outside the "fertile belt" identified by Palliser's expedition in 1860 had been greatly underestimated, Winnipeg residents, unlike the residents in other areas within the fertile belt, showed no disappointment. In fact, the Winnipeg elite, like the federal government, quickly abandoned earlier views and adopted Macoun's dogma. An 1886 Winnipeg pamphlet boasted that "What are known as the 'American desert' and as the 'bad lands' to the south disappear almost entirely when the Canadian border has been crossed."<sup>33</sup> Manitoba and Winnipeg boosters viewed the entire West as their hinterland just as central Canadian boosters did. Not surprisingly then, Manitoba and Winnipeg promotional literature bears much closer resemblance to the Canadian government literature than to the promotional literature produced elsewhere in the West.

In 1871 few westerners doubted that the preeminent city on the Canadian Prairies would emerge along the Red River Valley. Winnipeg's only real rivals for this position were its nearest neighbours. The most important

of these pretenders, Selkirk, was situated only twenty miles north of Winnipeg. In 1874 Winnipeggers learned that the federal government planned to build the main line of the transcontinental railway through Selkirk rather than Winnipeg.<sup>34</sup> Winnipeggers understood what the stakes were. They knew that one of these two cities, the one that would secure the main line of the transcontinental railway, would evolve into the metropolitan centre of the entire West; the other would never rise above the level of a local centre. Winnipeg's civic boosters understood that this rivalry could not be won with printer's ink, for Winnipeg's promotional literature of the time does not mention Selkirk.<sup>35</sup> The Winnipeg elite continued to promote the entire Canadian North-West as Winnipeg's hinterland. A pamphlet produced in 1874, when the route of the main line seemed destined to go to Selkirk, included a map of the Canadian North-West "Shewing [sic] the Convergence of the North Western System of Navigable Water Towards Fort Garry."<sup>36</sup> Five years later, before the issue of the transcontinental railway had been settled, two Winnipeg businessmen confidently asserted: "That Winnipeg is destined to be the great distributing and railway centre of the vast North-West is now no empty figure of speech."<sup>37</sup>

After the route of the CPR was confirmed in 1881, so was Winnipeg's position as dominant city. Although the city boasted a permanent population of only 9,000 in 1881, it laid claim to a hinterland that extended to the Rocky Mountains. Winnipeg boosters consistently advertised the entire prairie region. An 1882 Winnipeg pamphlet did not promote merely the Winnipeg environs but the entire area between Lake Superior and the Rocky Mountains. Its writers did not feel it irrelevant to predict that settlers would soon be taking up homes in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>38</sup> Even after the railway was completed and other prairie cities proclaimed their own metropolitan ambitions, frequently by denigrating Winnipeg, the Winnipeg elite continued to promote the entire Canadian West. A pamphlet issued by Winnipeg's Board of Trade in 1883 advertised the advantageous effects of the chinook winds on the climate of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and assured readers that the climate of the Canadian North-West was as favourable as that of Dakota and Minnesota.<sup>39</sup> An 1886 pamphlet printed by the Winnipge *Commercial* boldly predicted that "a few years hence will see the preponderance of population, production and political power west of Lake Superior" and that Winnipeg had been destined by geography and the "inevitable laws of supply and demand" to become the metropolis of the North-West:

Winnipeg becomes by its very position the natural middleman between the east and the west. Whatever, then, the immense region embraced in Manitoba, Assiniboia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Athabaska, may in the future, become, aggregating the greater part of the area of the Dominion, Winnipeg will be its chief mart and metropolis.<sup>40</sup>

In the ensuing years Winnipeg pamphlets continued to praise the agricultural potential of lands as far west as the Rocky Mountains, to refer to specific coal resources as far west as Lethbridge and Banff, and to extol the quality of grazing lands as far away as southern Alberta.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, promotional literature produced by Manitoba and Winnipeg boosters in the early years of settlement does not conform neatly to generalizations of prairie boosterism. Despite the competing metropolitan claims of other cities on the Prairies, Winnipeg promotional literature made no disparaging references to other prairie cities. Paul Rutherford's survey of the western press suggests that the Winnipeg press displayed a similar confidence. The Winnipeg press appears to have promoted the entire Canadian West, and did not instigate acrimonious exchanges with the press of other cities.<sup>42</sup> Winnipeg's boosters behaved this way because they understood that Winnipeg enjoyed the greatest metropolitan potential of any city in the West, not because of their unique vision. They knew that in casting aspersions on any area of the Canadian West, they would be calling into question the potential of their own hinterland.

If Winnipeg's rate of growth failed to meet expectations of optimistic boosters who compared it with Chicago, developments did seem continually to confirm its position as the dominant city of the West. In 1881 the future seemed only somewhat less promising for the isolated settlements of Battleford, Prince Albert, and Edmonton.<sup>43</sup> Steamers had begun plying the Saskatchewan River system in the 1870s. Construction of a telegraph line between Winnipeg and Edmonton along the route of the projected transcontinental railway began in 1875, and Battleford was chosen as the capital city of the North-West Territories in 1876. Most important, the proposed route of the transcontinental railway passed through these settlements. Prospects for the Saskatchewan River settlements changed radically, however, after 1880 when botanist John Macoun dismissed the earlier assessments that suggested that the "Great American Desert" extended into the southwestern Canadian Prairies.<sup>44</sup> The implications of Macoun's report were made tangible in 1882 when the CPR received the government's permission to build its main line through the heart of "Palliser's Triangle" rather than through the "fertile belt." Soon after this decision, the capital of the North-West Territories, and the headquarters of the North-West Mounted Police were moved from Battleford to Regina. Investment and settlement were also diverted from the Saskatchewan River settlements to the southern prairies.<sup>45</sup>

While Winnipeg boosters welcomed Macoun's announcement, those in the Saskatchewan River settlements were dismayed. The case of Charles Mair is instructive. As founding member of the nationalist organization, Canada First, and later as settler at Red River, Mair had vigorously promoted the North-West. Having relocated to Prince Albert in 1877, however, his vision had become somewhat more narrow by 1880. According to Doug Owram, Mair, resisting the notion that the entire Canadian North-West was a fertile belt, "retained the use of the term 'fertile belt' in its original and more restrictive sense."<sup>46</sup> The term "fertile belt" also survives in the title of an 1893 pamphlet promoting the Kinistino district near Prince Albert.<sup>47</sup> More pointedly, Battleford newspaper editor William Laurie complained that Battleford had lost its status as capital city because it had been the victim of "every variety of misrepresentation and falsification."<sup>48</sup> A similar hint of bitterness was expressed by Prince Albert promoter, Henry Thomas McPhillips, in 1888.

Perhaps because of the recent North-West Rebellion, McPhillips felt constrained to assure his readers that “we are Canadians, and hold national paramount to provincial interests”; otherwise, he continued, “we might not scruple to complain of its [the decision to build the railway through the southern prairies] having turned the tide of immigration away from us.”<sup>49</sup> Although residents along the North Saskatchewan River remained optimistic in the early 1880s, the mood gradually became gloomier as the economic depression of the mid-1880s delayed the construction of branch lines to the Saskatchewan River settlements.<sup>50</sup> Branch lines to the Prince Albert and Edmonton districts were not completed until 1890 and 1891 respectively. Even after they were built, the railways allowed the northern settlements to carve out only very modest prairie hinterlands. Growth of these centres remained very slow throughout the period before 1896.<sup>51</sup>

Without an east-west rail connection Edmonton could expect to dominate only a very small district to the south, east, or west. Early on, then, Edmonton boosters consoled themselves with an extensive northern hinterland. The improvement of a cart road from Edmonton to Athabasca Landing in the early 1880s, and the establishment of steamboat navigation on the Athabasca and Mackenzie Rivers between 1883 and 1887, made Edmonton the metropolitan centre of a vast albeit sparsely populated region of northern Canada.<sup>52</sup> In 1883 the *Edmonton Bulletin* produced a promotional pamphlet predicting that

[t]he timbered regions of the Athabasca, the farming lands of the Peace river, the gold bearing Liard, the fur country of the Mackenzie, the salt deposits of the Great Slave or lower Peace river, the petroleum beds of the lower Athabasca, the fisheries of the mighty lakes all will have to seek some point on the Saskatchewan as their outlet and market. To possess the trade of such a country, when developed, must build up a great city, and what place more likely to possess that trade than Edmonton?<sup>53</sup>

While the North is presented as Canada’s El Dorado, Edmontonians would have to wait several decades before they derived significant benefit from it. Meanwhile Edmonton needed to attract settlers. Edmonton’s boosters understood that if settlers were to be attracted to the Edmonton district, they would have to be convinced not only to bypass the northern states, but also Manitoba and southern prairie regions. Promotional material reflected this concern. An Edmonton pamphlet produced in 1892 argues that Edmonton farmers enjoyed higher prices for their wheat than Winnipeg farmers, greater proximity to markets, and less exposure to troublesome diseases. It also advised that Edmonton winters were warmer than Manitoba winters, while its climate was less windy and dry than that of southern Alberta.<sup>54</sup> For its main argument, however, this pamphlet alluded to the traditional belief that treeless lands were unsuitable for farming: “Forest growth tends to distribute the rainfall evenly, to equalize the temperature, reduce the force of the winds, and to prevent undue evaporation. In other words it prevents destructive rainstorms, and equally destructive summer drouths [sic] as well as summer frosts and cyclones and winter blizzards.”<sup>55</sup> Finally, the

pamphlet assured readers that gophers, troublesome pests throughout the prairies, were almost unknown in Edmonton.<sup>56</sup> Regarding the decision to build the CPR through the southern prairies, the pamphlet admits that this had instilled a belief that the “north country” was inferior to the southern prairies, but it asserts that construction of “[t]he Calgary and Edmonton Railway reversed this argument, and the inference was at once established that there must be something worth building for.”<sup>57</sup>

Superficially at least, boosters in the District of Saskatchewan continued to express confidence during the early 1880s. The *Prince Albert Times* of 15 November 1882, for example, predicted that Prince Albert would “ere long be one of the most important cities in the Dominion of Canada.”<sup>58</sup> Like Edmonton boosters, however, Prince Albert citizens faced the unenviable challenge of convincing settlers and investors that ideal conditions existed in an isolated location. In their efforts, Prince Albert promoters used similar arguments to those used by Edmontonians. Blizzards which affected the prairies, a Prince Albert pamphlet assured, “pass harmlessly over the wooded Saskatchewan country,” and the grasshoppers and gophers that were so destructive on the prairies were not a problem along the Saskatchewan.<sup>59</sup> In 1888 the *Prince Albert Times* undertook to promote the northern regions after damning the south with faint praise:

We have nothing to say in depreciation of the Canadian prairies. They are as rich as any in existence, and will in a few years be covered with prosperous communities. But the pioneer—especially the pioneer with limited means—finds near the rivers advantages he cannot find on the open prairies. On the latter he has no lumber for his house, no water till he digs a well; and frequently fuel is scarce. Along the rivers he finds good water in abundance, logs for the walls of his house, and so soon as a demand for sawn lumber is established there it is certain that sawmills will quickly spring up.<sup>60</sup>

Like Edmontonians, the residents of Prince Albert saw the north as their extensive hinterland: “Prince Albert will be to the Great Peace River Valley in process of settlement what Winnipeg was and still is to the Valley of the Saskatchewan, THE BASE OF SUPPLIES.”<sup>61</sup> Clearly, the promotional literature of the Saskatchewan River settlements reflects the very limited expectations of local residents. While its residents may have firmly believed in the superiority of their district, they readily recognized that the rerouting of the CPR had sealed their fate. The restraint and the occasional hints of bitterness evident among the elite of the Saskatchewan River settlements contrast sharply with Winnipeg’s ebullience.

While the northern prairie centres may have faced stagnation and frustration, new centres such as Brandon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat, and Calgary sprang up along the CPR between 1881 and 1883. Tiny by modern standards, these new towns quickly eclipsed older settlements along the North Saskatchewan River in both size and influence. The relocation of the capital of the North-West Territories from Battleford to Regina in 1883 reflected and reenforced this southward shift in influence.

Even northern economic development worked as much in favour of southern centres as the Saskatchewan River settlements. By 1883, even before railways had reached Edmonton and Prince Albert, the CPR had usurped steamboat transportation on the Saskatchewan River. Goods or people destined for or originating in Edmonton or Prince Albert were carried via cart roads to Calgary, Regina, or Qu'Appelle; businesses benefited from the increased trade.<sup>62</sup> Northern settlements remained entirely in the orbit of southern metropolitan centres.

Residents of these new southern cities quickly recognized their metropolitan potential and promoted the development of their hinterlands in comparison with competing cities. Perhaps all of these cities made grandiose claims as the future metropolis of the West, but their promotional strategies reflect modest expectations. Pamphlets produced in Brandon, for example, reveal that, despite its lofty claims, the Brandon elite understood that their city had only a limited metropolitan potential. While Winnipeg promotional literature never mentions Brandon either in a positive or negative light, Brandon's literature includes frequent negative remarks regarding Winnipeg. A pamphlet produced in 1882 takes aim at Winnipeg and its surroundings, dismissing the idea that the bulk of the best land in the North-West was in the Red River Valley. The same pamphlet extols the virtues of Brandon's surroundings, including Turtle Mountain, the Souris Valley, and the Qu'Appelle Valley.<sup>63</sup> Seven years later, little had changed. Again, a pamphlet written for the Brandon Board of Trade targeted Winnipeg: "While it is true that Winnipeg, by being the capital of the Province must always command a certain prestige, yet the locality and surroundings of Brandon are such that it must be the distributing centre for the entire business of the west." The pamphlet suggested that a day would come when Winnipeg and Brandon would be compared in the same way as one compares Fredericton and St. John's [sic], or Quebec City and Montreal.<sup>64</sup> Curiously, a map entitled "Brandon's Railway System" shows, not the entire West, but only branch lines in Brandon's environs. Similarly, the pamphlet promotes the agricultural potential of only a small region surrounding the city of Brandon. None of the expansiveness of Winnipeg literature appears in the Brandon literature. According to Paul Rutherford, Brandon newspapers also exhibited these limited ambitions.<sup>65</sup>

Regina's boosters behaved much like Brandon's. Promotional literature produced by the Regina Board of Trade in 1889 advises immigrants "don't be persuaded to get off the cars in Manitoba by Manitoba agents. Come right through to Regina."<sup>66</sup> The Regina Board of Trade promoted an area including the Qu'Appelle Valley and the Moose Jaw region. After explaining that the Qu'Appelle Valley was as good ranching country as Alberta, an 1891 pamphlet continues: "We mention this to show that the territories tributary to Regina both north and south, are as well suited to accommodate the prospective rancher as any other portion of these territories."<sup>67</sup> Thus, Regina promotional literature not only takes aim at Winnipeg and other centres to the east, but also disparages Alberta. This suggests that Regina boosters understood that no city between Vancouver and Winnipeg had

greater metropolitan potential than Calgary. Clearly the Regina boosters, like other cities' boosters, did not recklessly malign every other city in the West, but determined which areas to promote or degrade based on their place in the metropolitan hierarchy. For Regina before 1896, this meant promoting Moose Jaw, Battleford, and Prince Albert.

Calgary, like Winnipeg, was situated on the edge of the prairies. Once served by the railway, this village formerly supplied from distant Fort Benton, Montana, was suddenly poised to serve as an important gateway city. Nevertheless, Calgary boosters recognized the limits of their hinterland. Only twenty days after the first train arrived in Calgary, the inaugural edition of the *Calgary Herald* conceded Calgary's place in the prairie urban hierarchy by suggesting that Calgary, in becoming the supply centre for Edmonton, Peace River, Slave Lake, and Macleod was to "become the greatest distributing point west of Winnipeg."<sup>68</sup> The Calgary District Agricultural Society, like the *Herald*, was convinced that Calgary would dominate the provisional district of Alberta. Its promotional literature proclaimed Alberta as the banner district of the four provisional districts of the North-West Territories.<sup>69</sup> The same pamphlet ends by claiming that Calgary "is the embryo from which the future metropolis of the far Northwest is to develop into commercial greatness."<sup>70</sup> An 1884 pamphlet assures prospective settlers that "after being carried over that monotonously level stretch of prairie that extends from east of Winnipeg to the western boundary of Assiniboia, [the traveller] finds himself suddenly ushered into a district where the scenery is of remarkable beauty."<sup>71</sup> Referring to the agricultural potential of these lands, the *Herald* added that "On all sides of [Calgary] the soil is not only as rich as the soil in the Red River Valley, but produces grasses possessing nutriment for stock surpassing infinitely anything of the kind to the east of it. The land running away to the north and south is a belt of the most fertile character."<sup>72</sup> An 1885 pamphlet that advertises Calgary as the "Canadian Denver" also explicitly promotes the Macleod region as a rich grazing country blessed with particularly warm winters. Chinooks, the pamphlet cautions, are "not experienced except rarely in Saskatchewan, Central or eastern Assiniboia, and in Manitoba they are unknown."<sup>73</sup> Most interesting, the pamphlet not only promotes the Red Deer River region as a rich resource area, but even promotes Edmonton as "the centre of a rich farming district" surrounded by valuable forests.<sup>74</sup> In 1893 the *Herald* attempted to quell rumours that the Edmonton region had poor farming land. Citing a former farmer from Edmonton, the *Herald* declared "the high lands in the Edmonton District equal to any to be found anywhere for grain raising, any low lands there were being well adapted for grazing and much of them for farming also."<sup>75</sup>

Notwithstanding its overblown claims, and notwithstanding its doubtful efficacy, prairie promotional literature is a more useful historical source than has been assumed. Prairie promotional literature clearly reveals that the business elite of the Canadian Prairies quickly developed a shared mental image of the Canadian West. According to this image, Winnipeg would inevitably dominate the region between the Lakehead and the Rocky

Mountains. Once the CPR was built, other settlements along the railway seemed destined to possess considerable hinterlands within Winnipeg's expansive hinterland. Lower-order settlements would dominate small or sparsely settled regions. It could hardly be considered a startling revelation if this mental image conformed to actual patterns of economic dominance, but promotional literature clearly cannot prove that it did. Rather, what promotional literature reveals is the hitherto unacknowledged fact that many prairie residents, even in the formative early years of settlement, *perceived* the prairies in terms of a hierarchy of cities and hinterlands. Because boosters obviously planned their promotional campaigns in the context of thoughtful assessments of their city's locational and geographical advantages, the literature they produced reflects the changing historical circumstances. For example, booster literature reveals that promoters altered their strategies after the CPR was built through the southern prairies. One can predict, then, that promotional literature changed again when the Canadian Northern Railway was completed from Winnipeg to the Yellowhead Pass via the North Saskatchewan River settlements in 1905. The emergence of new centres of political power in 1905 would also have complicated the image.

Promotional literature also sheds light on an embryonic sense of regionalism on the Prairies. Since the late 1960s, the phenomenon of regionalism has spawned considerable scholarly discussion in Canada, not only among historians, but also among geographers, political scientists, and sociologists. While a sense of loyalty to a certain area is a defining characteristic of regionalism, this loyalty is often accompanied by a sense of alienation from outside centres of power and influence. Much of the literature on regionalism was produced during years of intense regional discontent.<sup>76</sup> Gerald Friesen has gone so far as to assert "Regionalism implies protest. It speaks of injustice, of neglect, perhaps even of one community's alleged superiority or power over another."<sup>77</sup> In this context, there has been discussion over whether regionalism is the inevitable product of the physical environment, the consequence of historical relationships between and among communities, or the result of a human response to an environment.<sup>78</sup> Evidence from prairie promotional literature supports the conclusion of Professor Careless (regarding Atlantic Canada) that "much of what is often called regionalism may be better expressed in terms of metropolitan relations and activities."<sup>79</sup> Regionalism on the Canadian Prairies is not merely the product of a distinct physical environment, but of human perceptions of that physical environment and of the resulting judgements of the proper place of a particular community within a broader community.

Prairie boosters, however, have left evidence, not primarily of a broad regional identity, but of more limited identities. They have left evidence of an almost feudal chain of local and regional loyalties and grievances. In order to shed light on contemporary circumstances many scholars have focussed their work on the development of prairie regionalism, but a contextualist approach, an approach that attempts to understand the past in the context of its own circumstances, would require that greater attention be paid to these

limited identities. Before 1896, the business elite (and perhaps many other residents) of each city clearly identified their interests with a particular settlement and its hinterland. Thus, the apparently broad vision of the Winnipeg elite and the more narrow vision of the elite of other cities can be readily understood. Furthermore, while an incipient western regionalism may have been forming during the early settlement era, many migrants to the prairie West also quickly identified with a particular part of the region. It would not be surprising if scholars should find other evidence of such identities. During the formative years many settlements remained small and isolated, with transportation and communication among them difficult. These circumstances would have tended to encourage localism.<sup>80</sup>

If regionalism implies protest, perhaps local identities were accompanied with local grievances. Dissatisfaction on the part of the "hinterlanders" with those in remote metropolitan centres who appear either to misunderstand or to exploit them, is perhaps the essence of "frontierism." A metropolitan approach which views hinterland protest as the other side of the coin of metropolitan dominance may clarify our understanding of local and regional grievances as much as it illuminates local and regional loyalties. Local grievances appear to have coexisted with regional grievances. For example, Paul Rutherford suggests that residents of small settlements such as Lethbridge and Macleod reserved some of their hostility for Calgarians.<sup>81</sup> Together with Calgarians and other westerners, however, they also chafed at the freight rate concessions and other privileges secured by Winnipeg merchants. Lethbridgians, Calgarians, and all other westerners, in turn, could join Winnipeggers in their opposition to the CPR, the Canadian government, and many other "eastern" institutions. Until further research is completed, it will be impossible to judge whether these intraregional grievances might have stifled regional unity in the early years of settlement. Promotional literature suggests that even the shared western grievances against the Canadian government and the CPR would have had local variants. Manitoba's loss of disputed territory to Ontario and the Canadian government's disallowance of railways and its inaction on improvements to the St. Andrews Rapids on the Red River annoyed Winnipeggers, but government policy toward big ranching companies was more important to Calgarians. Those in Battleford would have been particularly rankled by the routing of the CPR and the relocation of the capital of the North-West Territories.

Plainly, then, a subtle metropolitan approach as proposed by J.M.S. Careless remains useful, not only insofar as it helps understand economic, political, and cultural development and interaction, but also insofar as it allows historians to understand the minds of the historical actors. Such a contextual approach would help to recover the past in all its complexity. In the end, historians may be led to the conclusion that prairie regionalism and discontent are not primarily the product of a particularly visionary (or malignant) elite in Winnipeg, Ottawa, or Toronto, but primarily a result of that innate human tendency to assert, as circumstances allow, self-interest even at the expense of others.

## NOTES

This article is derived from a paper prepared for a graduate seminar at the University of Alberta. The author wishes to acknowledge the advice and encouragement of Professor David J. Hall, the instructor. As always, errors that may remain are the sole responsibility of the author.

1. The connection is implied in Paul Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), especially 5-6.
2. J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," reprinted in Carl Berger, ed., *Approaches to Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 63-83.
3. Donald F. Davis, "The 'Metropolitan Thesis' and the Writing of Canadian Urban History," *Urban History Review* 14 (1985): 95; Kenneth McNaught, "'Us Old-Type Relativist Historians': The Historical Scholarship of J.M.S. Careless," in David Keane and Colin Read, eds., *Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 38; Careless, "Frontierism," 80.
4. Careless, "Frontierism," 79, 82.
5. Careless presented his paper at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Toronto, December 1967. A later version was published as "'Limited Identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 50 (1969): 1-10. Careless derived the term "limited identities" from Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Centennial Celebrations," *International Journal* 22 (1967): 659-63.
6. Careless, "'Limited Identities,'" 2.
7. *Ibid.*, 6.
8. In this respect Paul Voisey's *Vulcan*, the case study of a small southern Alberta town, is a notable exception.
9. J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities — Ten Years Later," *Manitoba History* 1 (1980): 3-9.
10. Davis, "The 'Metropolitan Thesis,'" 113. L.D. McCann also attacked the metropolitan approach in "The Myth of the Metropolis," *Urban History Review* 9, no. 3 (February 1981): 52-58.
11. Careless, "Frontierism," 79; Careless, "The View From Ontario: Further Thoughts on Metropolitanism in Canada," in *Careless At Work: Selected Historical Studies* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 177. Careless has not developed this idea of the hierarchy among western cities beyond a rudimentary level: see Careless, *Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities Before 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 11, 86-87.
12. Kenneth H. Norrie has argued persuasively that exogenous factors determined the timing of prairie settlement. Neither promotional efforts, nor the national policy, he argued, had more than a minor impact: see "The National Policy and the Rate of Prairie Settlement: A Review," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, eds., *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), 246, 249-50.
13. For example, in 1886 Winnipeg boosters optimistically suggested that the port of Churchill, when reached by railway, would have a twelve-month shipping season: "The City of Winnipeg, The Capital of Manitoba and the Commercial, Railway and Financial Metropolis of the Northwest: Past and Present Development and Future Prospects" (Winnipeg, 1886), 72.
14. An essay contest advertised in the *Prince Albert Times* of 1 November 1882 suggests that all residents of the West were invited to participate in promotional efforts.
15. Thus, while metropolitanism is usually used to explain the dominant economic, political, and cultural position attained by certain centres, this study focusses on the *perceptions of* cities' elite regarding the *potential* of their cities to achieve economic dominance.

16. Alan F. J. Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871-1913," in Francis and Palmer, eds., *The Prairie West*, 411. Paul Rutherford makes a similar statement: see "The Western Press and Regionalism, 1870-96," *Canadian Historical Review* 52 (1971): 289.
17. Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 84.
18. *Ibid.*, 3, 38-78.
19. See Lewis H. Thomas, *The Struggle For Responsible Government in the North-West Territories* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 12-16.
20. A fine discussion of the federal government's promotional literature can be found in Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 105-18.
21. *Ibid.*, 59-78. The non-Native population of the region had concentrated in this region because of factors arising from the fur trade, long before these expeditions had released their findings.
22. *Ibid.*, 114.
23. *Report of the Joint Committee of Both Houses, on Agriculture, Immigration, and Colonization, During the First Session of the First Legislature of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1871), 3.
24. *Ibid.*, 18.
25. [Manitoba] Provincial Government, "Manitoba the Home for Agriculturalists, Stock Raisers, Dairymen, and all who Desire Comfort and Prosperity" (Brandon, 1889), 3.
26. *Ibid.*, 7, 9. Emphasis in the original text.
27. *Ibid.*, 6. Emphasis in the original text.
28. *Ibid.*, 4, 10, 12, 17.
29. See [Manitoba] Minister of Agriculture and Immigration (Thomas Greenway), "Fruitful Manitoba: Homes for Millions: The Best Wheat Land and the Richest Grazing Country Under the Sun" (Toronto: ca. 1891).
30. Alan F. J. Artibise, "Winnipeg, 1874-1914," *Urban History Review*, no. 1-75 (June 1975): 43. This same argument is expressed in *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975).
31. A.F. Burghardt, "A Hypothesis about Gateway Cities," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61 (1971): 269-85.
32. Artibise, *Winnipeg*, 13-15. Also see Rutherford, "Western Press," 288, 289.
33. See "The City of Winnipeg," 73; Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 162.
34. For an account of Winnipeg's rivalry with neighbouring cities, including a discussion of how Winnipeg civic leaders succeeded in wresting the CPR main line from nearby Selkirk see Artibise, *Winnipeg*, 64-73.
35. Winnipeg's battle was won largely after Winnipeg built a bridge over the Red River; see *ibid.*, 64-68.
36. George Babington Elliot, "Winnipeg As It Is in 1874, And As It Was in 1860" (Ottawa, 1875).
37. Alexander Begg and Walter R. Nursery, *Ten Years in Winnipeg: A Narrative of the Principal Events in the History of the City of Winnipeg From the Year A.D., 1870, To the Year A.D., 1879, Inclusive* (Winnipeg: Times Printing and Publishing House, 1879), 226.
38. "Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Her Industries" (Winnipeg: Steen and Boyce, 1882).
39. "Circular From the Board of Trade, Winnipeg" (Winnipeg, 1883), 2.

40. "The City of Winnipeg," 61, 62. The argument of this passage is similar to Burghardt's argument concerning Winnipeg's locational advantage.
41. See "Winnipeg, Manitoba and her Industries," 2; *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, "Winnipeg, Manitoba: The Prairie City, Its Wonderful History and Future Prospects: A General Historical, Statistical and Descriptive Review of the Railroad Centre of the Northwest" (Winnipeg, 1891); "The City of Winnipeg..." 73, 81, 83-85. Indeed, Winnipeg businessmen played a part in the development of western coal fields, Ruben Bellan, *Winnipeg First Century: An Economic History* (Winnipeg: Queenston House, 1978), 11.
42. See Rutherford, "Western Press," 289, 291.
43. See *ibid.*, 291.
44. Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 149-67.
45. See Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North: 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 28-29.
46. Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 163.
47. "Facts About Grain Growing, Stock Raising and Dairying in the Midst of the Great Fertile Belt: the District of Kinistino, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories of Canada" (Winnipeg, 1893).
48. As quoted in Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 163.
49. Henry Thomas McPhillips, "McPhillips' Alphabetical and Business Directory of the District of Saskatchewan, N.W.T. Together With Brief Historical Sketches of Prince Albert, Battleford and Other Settlements in the District" (Qu'Appelle, 1888), 16.
50. Gary William David Abrams, "A History of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan to 1914" (M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Saskatchewan, 1965), 69-76.
51. Thomas, *Struggle for Responsible Government*, 104.
52. Zaslow, *Opening of the Canadian North*, 56
53. *Edmonton Bulletin*, 10 March 1883 as quoted in Zaslow, 89. The full-page promotion was printed in the *Bulletin* as well as separately for more general distribution.
54. Edmonton Town Council, "A Few Plain Facts About the Edmonton District of Northern Alberta, North-West Territories of Canada as a Field for Settlement" (Winnipeg: Acton Burrows, 1892), 2, 4, 5-6.
55. *Ibid.*, 2.
56. *Ibid.*, 3.
57. *Ibid.*, 5.
58. Also see Abrams, "History of Prince Albert," 74.
59. McPhillips, "McPhillips' Alphabetical and Business Directory," 19.
60. *Prince Albert Times*, 13 January 1888.
61. *Ibid.*, 30 May 1883.
62. Zaslow, *Opening of the Canadian North*, 56.
63. Brandon, *Manitoba and Her Industries* (Winnipeg: Steen and Boyce, 1882).
64. Brandon Board of Trade, "A Handbook of the County of Brandon the Garden of the Province and the City of Brandon the Metropolis of the West" (Brandon, 1889).
65. Rutherford, "Western Press," 290.
66. Regina Board of Trade, "A Few Facts Respecting the Regina District in the Great Grain Growing and Stock Raising Province of Assiniboia, North-West Territories, Canada" (Regina, 1889), 4.

67. Ibid., 11-12. See also, Regina Board of Trade, "An Unvarnished Tale of Regina and its Agricultural and Ranching District, in the Great Province of Assiniboia, N.W.T., Canada" (Regina, 1891).
68. *Calgary Herald*, 31 August 1883.
69. "Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Her Industries and Resources" (compiled by Burns and Elliot, Calgary, 1885).
70. Ibid., 15.
71. Calgary District Agricultural Society, "Dominion of Canada: District of Alberta, NWT," 1884.
72. *Calgary Herald*, 2 January 1884.
73. "Calgary, Alberta, Canada," 6.
74. Ibid., 11.
75. *Calgary Herald*, 17 May 1893.
76. Scholarly expressions of regional discontent reached their high water mark in David Jay Bercuson, ed., *Canada and the Burden of Unity* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), but remain fully in evidence in George Melnyk, ed., *Riel to Reform: A History of Protest in Western Canada* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1992).
77. Gerald Friesen, "The Prairies as Region: The Contemporary Meaning of an Old Idea," in James N. McCrorie and Martha L. MacDonald, eds., *The Constitutional Future of the Prairie and Atlantic Regions of Canada* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1992), 6.
78. See *ibid.*, 2-5 for a discussion of the formal, relational, and imagined approaches to regionalism. Janine Brodie, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), includes a fine discussion of various approaches and an excellent interdisciplinary bibliography of regionalism.
79. J.M.S. Careless, "Aspects of Metropolitanism in Atlantic Canada," in Mason Wade, ed., *Regionalism in the Canadian Community 1867-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 117.
80. The literature on localism in the prairie West is small, but Lewis H. Thomas has suggested that local issues often overshadowed national or regional issues in the minds of westerners. For example, he argued that "restrictions on municipal and school district organization caused, perhaps, more discontent in the Territories than the lack of popular representation in the Council": Thomas, *Struggle for Responsible Government*, 89. Abrams's history of Prince Albert includes discussions of local, regional, and national issues in Prince Albert. The existence of local identities, of course, did not inevitably undermine a regional identity any more than a regional identity inevitably threatened loyalty to the country. Thus Paul Rutherford may have overstated his case when he argued that "metropolitan rivalries throughout the prairies naturally undermined regional unity": Rutherford, "Western Press," 290. Rutherford himself asserted that regional identities are not necessarily anti-Canadian, see *ibid.*, 292.
81. The Lethbridge and Macleod press appear to have targeted Calgary; see Rutherford, "Western Press," 290. This raises the obvious question of how many links existed in this chain. Jean Burnet's sociological study of the Hanna district suggests that the town of Hanna (2,000 people in 1951) was "regarded by the rural communities around as a distinct, and at times hostile social entity," see *Next Year Country: A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 75. She found no such town-country hostility in the case of Oyen (population 400 in 1951). Using Burnet's findings and his own research on Vulcan (a town of 800 in 1831), Paul Voisey has argued that smaller towns such as Oyen and Vulcan maintained such close ties with their rural communities that town-country harmony was encouraged, see Voisey, *Vulcan*, 234-35.

# Farming Technology and Crop Area on Early Prairie Farms

Tony Ward

**ABSTRACT.** Between 1880 and the start of the wheat boom in 1900 there was a significant amount of innovation in prairie agricultural equipment and techniques. This article documents those changes and derives their implications for farm sizes and costs. The development of new labour-augmenting machines enabled labour-scarce farmers to cultivate a larger area of crops at lower costs, and substantially enhanced the attractiveness of prairie farmland.

**SOMMAIRE.** L'équipement et les techniques agricoles connurent des innovations notables entre 1880 et le début de la «ruée vers le blé» en 1900 dans les Prairies. Le présent article explicite ces innovations et calcule leur effet sur la superficie des fermes et les coûts de production. La mise au point de machines décuplant la force humaine permit aux agriculteurs, perpétuellement à court de main d'œuvre, de cultiver de plus vastes superficies à moindre coût et, par conséquent, augmenta de façon substantielle l'attrait économique des terres agricoles des Prairies.

## Introduction

Early farms on the Canadian Prairies were small, with an average cropped area in 1880 for Manitoba of just twenty-five acres. Between then and the start of the wheat boom in 1900, the typical farm in the Brandon area grew to 143 cropped acres.<sup>1</sup> This article documents improvements in farming equipment, techniques and crop strains that led to much of this expansion.<sup>2</sup> The productivity of farm labour is estimated, and the implications of that increased productivity for farm size and costs are calculated, to show the significance of technological change in agricultural equipment.

The study begins with 1880, by which time Winnipeg was connected to the United States by rail, and construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway was imminent. It extends through to the height of the wheat boom in 1910, when settlement had transformed the Prairies.

## Literature

There is an extensive literature on the topic of Canadian prairie settlement which identifies many factors that contributed to the slow progress of agriculture before 1900. Norrie (1975) analyzed the critical problem of inadequate rainfall, and identified the need for the development of dry farming techniques. Lewis (1981) examined the issue of the inadequate network of railway branch lines. Railway freight rates were initially very high, as Green (1986) showed, but by 1900 had fallen due to technological change in the railway sector (Green, 1994). Borins (1982) showed that the length of the frost-free period and the amount of summer rainfall were important determinants of the rate and pattern of settlement.

There has been no detailed analysis of technological change in agriculture. Dick (1980) looked at the productivity of non-land inputs to agriculture, and found a rapid increase in the early twentieth century. McInnis found rapid growth in value added per worker around the turn of the century, suggesting:

Further investigation of the substance of Canadian agricultural development will probably reinforce the plausibility of this pattern as the waning years of the

century are shown to be a period of decided agricultural improvement. ... the overall rise in agricultural output per worker was more rapid in the late nineteenth than in the early twentieth century (McInnis, 1986: 757-58).

Ankli (1974) and Dick (1981) analyzed the initial cost of establishing a grain farm. In this article the only costs examined are those of the equipment and draft animals, to show how productivity increases reduced the labour and machine components of farming costs.

Not all writers have felt that the growth in farm size can be attributed to technical change. Kislev and Peterson (1982) analyzed the increase in the average size of American farms between 1930 and 1970, and determined that it could be explained entirely by changes in factor prices. They suggest (p. 575) that "we explain virtually all of the growth in the machine-labor ratio and in farm size over the 1930-70 period by changes in relative factor prices without reference to 'technological change' or 'economies of scale'." That approach, however, ignores the reasons for the relative price changes. As Table 6 of this article shows, the reduction in machinery costs is attributable to the development of improved implements that could cover greater areas of land for what was frequently the same capital cost.

Kislev and Peterson also see the reduction in labour cost per acre as due to factor price changes. Real farm wages rose over the period they examined. The fall in per acre labour costs must therefore have been due to an increase in the output per unit of labour, which can be attributed primarily to the rise in productivity resulting from improved machinery. Factor prices are important, but they are a *reflection* of factor scarcity and productivity, rather than its *cause*.

### The Early Prairie Farm

A typical homesteader arriving on the Prairies took up at least 160 acres of land, frequently more. Farm income, however, was determined not by the total area of land, but by the area of crops grown, which depended on the amount and the productivity of labour. There was little hired labour available, so the work was done primarily by the farm family.<sup>3</sup> Between the start of spring and the first frost in fall, there was only a short period for the farmer to sow, ripen and harvest his grain. The early prairie farm then can be characterized by scarce labour and surplus land. Given these limitations, and the agricultural technology available, farmers could grow only a small area of crops.<sup>4</sup> The following sections analyze some of the ways in which the constraints on farm size and revenues relaxed between 1880 and 1910.

### The Changing Technology of Grain Farming

This section analyzes the equipment used at the two critical times of the grain farmer's year: spring and fall. The productivities of the items discussed are used later in this article to estimate potential crop areas. Activities carried out during the less critical periods of the year are considered briefly in the next section, followed by a study of changes to crop strains after that.

### Spring Activities

#### Ploughing<sup>5</sup>

In 1880 the most effective plough was the chilled-steel plough, first developed about a decade earlier. This was heavy, with a high draft, and needed a team of two oxen or three horses (McKinley, 1980: 9) to cover about 2.1 acres in a day's work. (This corresponds to a labour requirement of  $1/2.1 = 0.476$  days per acre of grain.) A big advance in ploughing technology in the 1890s was the development of the sulky gang plough. Early sulky ploughs consisted of a single ploughshare mounted on a pair of large wheels with a seat for the driver. This reduced fatigue and increased the number of hours the driver could work, thus increasing output by about 5 percent. Broehl (1984: 201) noted that the first Gilpin sulky appeared in 1875, but a letter in the *Farmers' Advocate* (December 1882: 32) commented that no manufacturers were yet ready to sell such ploughs in Canada. Early sulkies with two side wheels were unstable since they could rock backward and forward about the axle, and therefore were not popular.

The idea of the gang plough was to attach two or more ploughshares to a single frame, thereby enabling one man to plough more land at each pass. Early implements of this type had a very high draft — twice that of a single share plough, so they needed four to six oxen or six to eight horses to pull them. Few farmers had that many draft animals, and managing such a large team was difficult, particularly on the turns at the end of each furrow, so the gang plough never became popular. The concept of the sulky gang plough was obvious — mounting two or more ploughshares on a wheeled frame. An early example is shown in the *Farmers' Advocate* (March 1878: 72), with three small shares on a three-wheel tricycle-type frame, though without a seat for the driver. It was difficult to set the shares to the right depth, or to release a share if it caught on a rock or root. A ploughshare also generates a sideways thrust as it pushes the earth over, so wheeled ploughs tended to drift sideways. The early sulky gang ploughs were therefore ineffective and unpopular.

Efficient mechanisms for setting the depth of each share accurately and for allowing any one ploughshare to move up independently if it hit an obstruction were also developed in the late 1880s. With the evolution of angled wheels to counteract the sideways thrust, it became possible to remove the long "landside" of the walking plough, which had contributed so much to the draft. Since the shares were on a stable frame, they could be tilted slightly "nose down." Only the front edge then touched the bottom of the furrow, further reducing the draft and making it feasible for four horses to pull two fourteen-inch bottoms at about 2 mph.

Disc ploughs began to appear after the turn of the century. With any fixed mouldboard plough, the main draft was created by the friction of the soil against the ploughshare and the landside. A circular saucer-shaped share, free to rotate, reduced this friction considerably. Lateral thrust was resisted by facing the multiple discs of the plough in opposing directions.

However the disc plough was at first heavy to use, difficult in wet ground, and unable to turn a sufficiently wide furrow to be efficient. Advertisements for these ploughs did not appear until after 1900, although journals were discussing the implements in the late 1890s.<sup>6</sup>

### Seeding

Before the late nineteenth century seed was always "broadcast" by hand or with a rotary broadcast seeder (Rogin, 1931: 206). While the seed was dispersed rapidly, coverage was extremely uneven and much of the seed did not get covered with earth and therefore did not germinate. During the 1870s the endgate seeder — a broadcast seeder fixed to the back of a wagon — was developed, which could cover about twenty to thirty acres per day (Hurt, 1979: 28; Rogin, 1931: 211). The work went quickly, but coverage was very uneven and much seed was wasted.

An important improvement in seeding technology was the development of the seed drill, which pushed the seeds into the ground to an accurate depth and at even spacing. This improved both coverage and the proportion of the seed germinating. The first drills appeared in the United States in the late 1840s, but Rogin (1931: 207) noted that drilling did not supersede broadcast seeding until about 1885. Early drills were heavy and prone to jamming, but by the mid-1880s became more popular. The *Nor-West Farmer* (April 1886: 441) noted: "Seed drills ... now ... supplanting the broadcast seeder. It is expected the change will result in a marked advance in the early maturity of grain."

In the late 1880s a free-running wheel was added behind each shoe to press the soil back over the small furrows, and during the 1890s there were several further improvements. The Experimental Farm for Manitoba tried out these press drills from 1890 onwards, and found that use of a drill reduced growing time by four days (over the broadcast seeder) and increased yield by 7 percent.<sup>7</sup> Press drills that used wheels to push the soil down were heavy and cumbersome and therefore slow to catch on. An alternate developed later in the 1890s was to attach a short length of chain behind each shoe. This was almost as effective, and was far lighter to pull. Pulling an early ten-foot drill typically required two horses, which could cover about fifteen acres a day. By 1910 most seed drills used discs to open the furrows, which reduced the draft, enabling the size of the drill to be increased to between twelve and fourteen feet, covering about eighteen acres a day (Davidson and Chase, 1920: 119; Gehrs, 1919: 85; Kranich, 1923: 90).

### Harrowing and Cultivating

After the ground had been ploughed, the clods of earth had to be broken up to make seeding easier, to destroy weeds, warm the soil and enhance water retention. For ground that had been ploughed in fall, harrowing was the only operation required before seeding. Before the advent of the seed drill, it was necessary also to harrow after broadcasting the seed, to cover it over. In 1880 most harrows were of the simple "peg tooth" type.<sup>8</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s two new types of harrow became popular. The spring tooth

Table 1 Spring Labour Requirement and Costs of Ploughs, Harrows and Seeders				
Productivity*	1880	1890	1900	1910
Plough (days/acre)	0.476	0.476	0.208	0.208
Harrow (days/acre)	0.083	0.083	0.063	0.063
Seeder (days/acre)	0.111	0.111	0.100	0.056
<b>Costs</b>				
Stubble Plough	\$25 <sup>a</sup>	\$22 <sup>b</sup>	\$18 <sup>c</sup>	\$13 <sup>d**</sup>
Sulky Gang Plough	—	—	\$95 <sup>e</sup>	\$95
Peg Tooth Harrow	\$24 <sup>f</sup>	\$24	—	—
Spring Tooth Harrow <sup>g</sup>	—	—	\$25 <sup>h</sup>	—
Disc Harrow	—	—	—	\$40 <sup>i</sup>
Seedbox Seeder and Cultivator <sup>j</sup>	\$75 <sup>k</sup>	—	—	—
Shoe drill (8 ft.) <sup>l</sup>	—	\$65 <sup>m</sup>	—	—
Press shoe drill (12 ft.)	—	—	\$90 <sup>n</sup>	—
Disc drill (12 ft.)	—	—	—	\$110 <sup>o</sup>
Total cost per farm	\$124	\$111	\$228	\$258

\*These figures are the inverse of the daily outputs listed in the body of the text.

\*\*A stubble plough is included after 1900 since one would still have been required for some types of work. For the first years of operation a breaking plough would also have been required.

a) Barneby (1884); "Writing Home," *Winnipeg Daily Times*, 27 June 1879.

b) *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 22 November 1888.

c) Lyle Dick (1981: 193).

d) *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, 5 July 1905: 992.

e) Parson (1981: 152).

f) *Manitoba Free Press*, 23 November 1878; "Writing Home," *Winnipeg Daily Times*, 27 June 1887; advertisement of W.H. Disbrowe, *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 23 November 1878.

g) *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, September 1891: 351.

h) *Edmonton Journal*, 10 May 1897.

i) *Nor-West Farmer*, 5 January 1909: 38.

j) Rogin (1931: 209).

k) *Manitoba Free Press*, 9 February 1877 (advertisement); Lyle Dick (1981: 193).

l) Rogin (1931: 208).

m) *Manitoba Free Press*, 22 November 1888: 7; *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 22 November 1888: 7; Lyle Dick (1981: 193).

n) *Edmonton Journal*, 10 May 1897; Lyle Dick (1981: 193).

o) *Nor-West Farmer*, 5 January 1909: 38 (prize); Lyle Dick (1981: 193).

harrow, such as that shown in the *Farmers' Advocate* (20 December 1901: 819), was particularly efficient at pulling up weeds, and coped well with any obstructions in the soil. For 1900 and 1910 the productivity of harrowing increased to about twenty acres per day, and a second harrowing operation after spring ploughing was no longer needed because of the greater efficiency of the new implements. The disc harrow first appeared in the late 1870s, but was not at first practicable.<sup>9</sup> By the early 1890s, though, both the disc harrow and the duck-foot cultivator became popular.<sup>10</sup> These were more efficient rather than faster, and were particularly effective for root crops that needed more cultivation. Table 1 summarizes labour requirement per acre and the cost of implements. Over time less labour was needed, but the cost of implements increased substantially.

**Table 2**  
**Harvest Labour Requirement and Costs of Reaping and Binding Equipment**

Productivity	1880	1890	1900	1910
Reap (man days/acre)	0.500	0.100 <sup>a</sup>	0.067	0.057 <sup>b</sup>
Stook (man days/acre)	0.100	0.100	0.067	0.067
Transport (man days/acre)	0.486	0.486	0.353	0.353
<b>Costs</b>				
Self Rake Reaper (6 ft.)	\$200 <sup>c</sup>	—	—	—
Twine Binder	—	\$260 <sup>d</sup>	\$155 <sup>e</sup>	\$155
Wagon	\$85 <sup>f</sup>	\$85	\$80 <sup>g</sup>	\$60 <sup>h</sup>
Total	\$285	\$345	\$235	\$215

a) Zintheo (1917), 214.  
b) Gray (1967: 177).  
c) Hutchinson (1935: 475).  
d) Ibid., 704.  
e) *Edmonton Journal*, 10 May 1897.  
f) *Manitoba Free Press*, 10 March 1877.  
g) *Edmonton Journal*, 10 May 1897.  
h) *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, 5 July 1905: 992.

### *Fall Activities*

#### Reaping and Binding Grain

Machines for cutting and collecting grain were first developed in the 1830s, and by the late 1870s the best technology available was the self-raking reaper (David, 1966). Drawn by two horses and operated by one man, this type of machine could cut a six-foot swath through the grain. It could cut about ten acres per day, but left the loose stalks on the ground to be tied in bundles later.<sup>11</sup> In 1880 it took a team of five men to cut and bind ten acres of grain in a day.

The first wire binders, which automatically tied the cut stalks into bundles, were sold in the United States in 1873 (Rogin, 1931: 110); a few were sold in Canada before 1880. These made subsequent handling of the grain stalks easier and reduced damage to the grain due to rain or frost. Wire binders however had a variety of problems, and by the early 1880s were superseded by twine binders. A typical 1880s twine binder cost about \$290 (Hutchinson, 1935: 704), needed three or four horses and one driver, and cut and bound about thirteen acres per day.

Early binders were heavy, cumbersome machines. Denison (1948: 85) notes that the binder "didn't immediately replace all other kinds of harvest machinery, since it was costly and complicated, and farmers were unsure of its strength, reliability and durability." During the 1880s and 1890s improvements to metallurgy and machining reduced the draft, which made it possible for the width of cut to be increased. By 1910 a new binder pulled by four horses could cut an eight-foot swath.

The rapid adoption of the twine binder resulted in shortages of twine and high prices. Twine cost about 18¢ per lb. in the early 1880s, but the price fell by 1910 to 7¢.<sup>12</sup> Before 1900, sacks for the grain had also to be bought, costing about 3¢ per 100 lbs. of grain, or about 30¢ per acre of wheat. By 1910, most of the grain was handled in bulk, eliminating the need for sacks.

## Collecting and Transporting the Grain

After the bundles were dropped, they were collected in groups of eight to ten and stood on end for about ten to fifteen days for the grain to dry. When first cut, the heads of grain had a very high water content, which made the grain very susceptible to frost damage. Reaping therefore had to be finished ten to fifteen days before the expected date of the first frost. After drying, the grain was either threshed immediately, if the travelling threshing outfit arrived in time, or was collected from the fields to a central stack for threshing later.<sup>13</sup> Fall ploughing could not begin until the fields were clear of the sheaves. The technology for this part of the work did not change between 1880 and 1910, although a greater output was achievable after 1890 when the binders were fitted with bundle carriers, which held up to six sheaves. Releasing the sheaves in one pile greatly reduced the work of collection.

## Changes to Other Aspects of Farming Technology

### *Breaking*

Every homesteader faced the heavy task of breaking and backsetting the hard sod before starting any cropping. This occupied a large part of each summer during the first few years on a new homestead, and resulted in smaller crops until the farmer had prepared as much land as he could subsequently crop each year. The only important technical change to this operation was the availability after the 1890s of large steam traction engines. These could pull up to eighteen ploughshares on a frame, breaking up to twenty acres per day. This meant that a farm could produce a full set of crops very quickly, but the high cost of contract breaking meant that few could afford it.<sup>14</sup>

### *Maintenance of the Summerfallow*

With the development of dry-farming techniques in the late 1880s and 1890s, other implements became necessary, mainly to control the density of the topsoil. During the 1890s the most common implement for this was the land roller, such as that advertised in the *Farmers' Advocate (Western)* (July 1891: 270). By 1900 this had been developed into the subsurface packer, a typical example of which was advertised by the Brandon Machine Works in the *Farmers' Advocate (Western)* (5 July 1900: 359). Use of a roller reduced the blowing of topsoil, induced more effective capillary action in the soil, and made reaping and ploughing easier due to the more evenly compacted soil. The pulverizer and compressor performed a similar function to the roller and subsurface packer.<sup>15</sup>

### *Haying*

Every farmer spent a week or two in summer preparing a stock of hay for winter feed. Larger mowers,<sup>16</sup> the side delivery rake<sup>17</sup> and the hay tedder<sup>18</sup> increased productivity in cutting and turning the hay. From about 1900, hay loaders greatly reduced the work of pitching the hay into wagons,<sup>19</sup> and the work of building a stack was also decreased by the development of the overhead horsefork and slings.<sup>20</sup>

### Dairy and Beef Cattle

Many farmers kept cows, since these generated food or income throughout the year, and the labour requirement was spread more evenly than that for grain farming. More scientific feeding enabled farmers to increase the lactation period (Spector 1977: 37). The butterfat tester, available by the late 1880s, enabled farmers to select more productive cows, obtaining more milk for the feed used (Schlebecker, 1975: 184). Improvements in the rearing of beef cattle increased the profitability of that activity, though there is little evidence in census data of an increase in dairy and beef farming in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

### Threshing

All grain had to be reaped and dried before it was damaged by the first frost, but once it had been stacked, threshing could be carried out later in the year. Threshing productivity was therefore not a determinant of farm size, although most settlers had to "meet their notes" on the equipment they had purchased, and threshed their grain as early as possible.

Mechanical separators had existed since the 1850s, but there were several important laboursaving devices added to this equipment that greatly reduced the labour requirement. Bigger, more reliable steam engines drove larger separators, and better bearings meant that the cylinder could turn faster. Metal teeth reduced breakages and improved separation.<sup>21</sup> The volume of straw produced by a large separator was a substantial problem, and in the 1880s a team of about six men was needed to avoid overwhelming the thresher. First a belt elevator and later the "wind stacker"—a large fan blowing the straw through a long tube—were added, reducing the labour required to one man by 1900.<sup>22</sup>

Early separators frequently clogged, as the sheaves were thrown in unevenly. The self feeder and band cutter developed in the late 1880s reduced this problem, saving the work of one or two men, and enabling a larger cylinder to be used.<sup>23</sup> Automatic grain baggers eliminated the work of another man, and between 1900 and 1910 usage of these devices became almost universal. Kranich (1923: 221) suggested that by 1920 over 95 percent of threshers were equipped with all three. By 1910 most of the grain was handled in bulk, which eliminated the work of bagging and the subsequent multiple handling of the grain as it was moved to market.

### Power: Oxen, Horses and Steam

Farm implements had to be pulled back and forth across the fields over large distances. For example, in 1890, ploughing the typical Brandon field crop acreage of fifty-two acres with a fourteen-inch ploughshare involved walking a distance of almost 370 miles. Many of the early implements were heavy and imposed a considerable draft on the motive power used to pull them.

From the earliest days of the Red River Settlement the primary source of

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Average Number of Horses	1.63	2.74	4.05	4.81
Cost	\$350 <sup>b</sup>	\$400 <sup>c</sup>	\$275 <sup>d</sup>	\$525 <sup>e</sup>

a) Manitoba data only are used because in other areas horse ranching distorts the number of draft animals. Canada, *Census of Canada*, 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910.

b) *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 10 March 1877 (report of minister of Agriculture and Immigration 1876) \$300/span; and 9 June 1877: native horses \$ 60 to \$100, imported \$10 to \$200; Hamilton (1875), 254-55: \$300 to \$ 400/span ; Ankli and Litt (1978: 51): (\$66, \$175); Tyman (1972: 44) for 1880: pair of horses \$200 to \$500, harness \$12 to \$60.

c) *Farmers' Advocate*, January 1883: 5: horses \$450 to \$600/pair; *Nor-West Farmer*, January 1886: 353: horses \$25 to \$190; 28 April 1887: horses \$150 to \$400/team; 16 July 1887, good average working team \$400.

d) *Nor-West Farmer*, 6 February 1899: 102, 20 October 1899: horses \$65 to \$175, good pairs \$200 to \$265, old drivers \$40; 20 October 1899: fully broken horses \$125 to \$175; *Edmonton Journal*, 10 May 1897: team of horses \$125, harness \$32.

e) The price of a horse appears to have increased substantially during the first decade of the twentieth century, probably due to the increased demand derived from the large number of new farms. See "The Horse Market," *Nor-West Farmer*, 5 July 1906: 579: "Not in the memory of many living has there been such a universal scarcity of horses in proportion to the demand as exists at present." See also *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 15 May 1907: teams 3,000 lb. to 3,600 lb. weight — \$550 to \$800, 2,400 lb. to 2,800 lb. — \$450 to \$500; de Gelder (1973: 72) — 4 horses \$1000; Shepherd (1965: 49) — \$200; Canada, *Census of Canada*, 1910, average for horses over three years old for Saskatchewan \$180, Manitoba \$187, Alberta \$150.

power had been oxen. These huge beasts could pull great loads, although only at a slow speed — about 1.5 miles per hour. Oxen were well suited to pulling a plough or a wagon, but for more complicated equipment such as seeders or binders were less appropriate. If a horse felt that an obstruction was stopping the equipment, it stopped pulling, whereas an ox would lean its weight into the harness. This was useful for pulling a plough through roots, but could result in damage to a binder or mower caught on a rock. Oxen were therefore almost indispensable during the initial period of breaking in a new prairie farm, but were less useful after that. An ox could pull as much as a horse, but at two-thirds the speed, therefore generating only two-thirds the horsepower (Davidson and Chase, 1920: 287.) On the very bad roads of the early prairie days an ox-drawn wagon could cover only about twelve miles per day (Careless, 1973: 88; de Gelder, 1973).

Typical farm horses weighed 1,000 to 1,600 lbs. with the average increasing over the period from about 1,100 lbs. in 1880 to 1,400 lbs. by 1910. They could pull about one-tenth to one-seventh of their own body weight continuously, and up to half their weight for very short periods. Horses could work a ten-hour day, similar to oxen, and could keep up a steady speed of about 2.5 mph, compared with about 1.5 mph for oxen, but their feed and care were more involved and expensive. The typical pattern of ownership was for a new settler to buy a yoke of oxen when he arrived and to keep them for three to five years (Morton, 1938: 164; Neatby, 1979: 24). Another pair of oxen was sometimes added, but four oxen were difficult to harness and handle for field operations, since they are not prepared to back up.

Towards the end of the first four or five years a pair of horses was usually bought, and after the 1890s a second pair was added when the oxen were sold. (See Table 3.)

The power of the horse was generally taken through a harness to pull a moving load directly behind the animal. Some farm implements, though, were stationary, requiring rotary power. For these, the tread and the sweep were developed. The tread was like a short escalator, with one or two horses walking uphill pushing the treads down. A one-horse tread was an efficient means of capturing the power of a horse, since it used the horse's weight rather than its pull, to turn the wheel. An 1,100 lb. horse in a tread could generate almost 1.5 hp, compared with about .75 hp pulling an item of equipment (Davidson and Chase, 1920: 293, 296.) It was not feasible, however, to make a tread for more than three horses. Treads were therefore suitable only for small threshing machines.

A sweep consisted of from four to twelve long arms projecting from a central capstan, to each of which was attached a horse that walked around in circles. Power was taken off by a rotating shaft running along the ground. More horses could be harnessed to a sweep but it wasted much of their energy due to the incorrect line of draft (Davidson and Chase, 1920: 296). Sweeps were not used as frequently as treads, since there were never enough spare horses. Table 3 shows the average number of horses on Manitoba farms over the period and the cost of a pair of horses with harness.

Steam engines became important, initially for driving stationary equipment such as threshing machines. Though too cumbersome to replace the horse in most field operations, the enormous power of the steam traction engine ensured its dominance for a few applications. The *Manitoba Free Press Weekly* for 17 July 1880 noted that up to 1879 only 252 engines had been built by one of the largest Canadian manufacturers, the Waterous Steam Engine Works Co. of Brantford, Ontario. None of these were traction engines and few would have found their way to the Prairies. Early steam engines needed a team of horses to move them from place to place, since they were "portable" rather than "locomotive."<sup>24</sup>

By 1890 there had been significant progress. Barger and Landsberg (1942: 199) suggest that by then the use of steam engines for threshing was standard in the United States. An advertisement in the *Farmers' Advocate* (June 1886: 189) by the Waterous Steam Engine Works Co., shows that some engines were self-propelled by that date. McKinley (1980) estimates that by 1890 there was a total of 3,000 steam tractors throughout the United States, producing 8-12 hp each.

Steam engines developed very rapidly during the 1890s, and by 1900 large, reliable traction engines of up to 110 hp were available. However, they never became agile enough to carry out all field operations. The major technological improvements to the steam engine had been made by 1900, after which improvements consisted primarily of refinements that made the engines more efficient and reliable.

## New Strains of Crops

Before 1870 several varieties of wheat were grown, mostly brought up from the United States, and not necessarily well suited to prairie conditions. From 1870 to 1907 the most important variety was Red Fife, which matured relatively quickly, and was suited to the soil and weather conditions on the Prairies. Both individual farmers and the experimental farms put a great deal of effort into the search for a better strain.

The development of new strains of wheat became important after 1900. Several varieties of imported seeds and of crossbred types were tried. None was really successful until 1908, when Marquis wheat, first tried experimentally in about 1897, was made available on a commercial scale.<sup>25</sup> The reports of the experimental farms show that Marquis ripened six to eight days earlier than Red Fife. This shorter growing period, combined with higher yields, resulted in its rapid adoption. Marquis wheat came too late to be a cause of the wheat boom, but it increased profitability once it was available.

## Implications

### *Farm Size*

In this section the labour productivities derived in the earlier sections are used to estimate the effect of technological change on farm size between 1880 and 1910, using Brandon and Indian Head as examples. Spring typically began at both places on 6 April (Hurd and Grindley, 1931: 14, fig. 12), and field work could start on about 15 April. The first killing frost of fall came on 17 September in Brandon and at Indian Head on 12 September (Hurd and Grindley, 1931: 13, fig. 10). Red Fife wheat took 122 days to mature at Brandon and 129 at Indian Head. By 1900 the use of seed drills accelerated germination of the seed, reducing the growing time to 119 days at Brandon and 127 at Indian Head.<sup>26</sup> Once it was available, Marquis took 109 days at Brandon and 122 at Indian Head.<sup>27</sup>

The annual schedules for the two farms for the four dates examined are prepared on the basis of maximizing the area of wheat grown. The shorter ripening period for oats meant that it was sometimes possible to seed some after the wheat was all in, and reap it before the wheat was ripe. Any land used for oats had of course to be ploughed and harrowed also. The area of oats may in practice have been greater than is modelled here, but that would have been at the expense of wheat acreage, and would therefore have had a minimal effect on total farm area.

For each model the area of spring ploughing has been adjusted so as to result in all the available time being used up, with the areas of ploughing, harrowing, seeding and reaping being equal. As the area of spring ploughing increased, seeding was delayed, thereby delaying the start of harvest and reducing the area of land that could be reaped. Since all grain had to be reaped at least ten days before the first frost in fall, the period from when the grain was ripe to the first frost was normally fully occupied with harvesting. However, in the early days, fall ploughing was critical, so it was essential to

**Table 4**  
**Labour Availability**

Location	Farmers	Farmers' Sons	Labourers	Spring Total	Excess Farmers	Harvest Excursion	Harvest Total
Brandon							
1880	1.00	0.29	0.19	1.48	0.20	0	1.68
1890	1.00	0.38	0.22	1.60	0.29	0	1.89
1900	0.96	0.26	0.23	1.45	0	0.22	1.67
1910	1.00	0.14	0.24	1.38	0	0.12	1.50
Indian Head							
1880	0.82	0.18	0.21	1.21	0	0	1.50
1890	1.00	0.36	0.15	1.51	0.25	0	1.76
1900	0.98	0.24	0.18	1.40	0	0.27	1.67
1910	1.00	0.11	0.34	1.45	0.04	0.12	1.61

Notes: Figures derived from Canada, *Census of Canada*, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910, and Haythorne (1933). Census data do not contain sufficient information to determine how many labourers worked on farms as opposed to, for example, railway construction, so these proportions had to be estimated. For details see Ward (1990). The 1900 census contains very little information on labour which, other than the harvest excursionists, has therefore been interpolated between the 1890 and 1910 figures. In 1890 the number of farmers was greater than the number of farms. The excess farmers are assumed to have been looking for land, and to have worked as harvest help.

seed the wheat as early as possible in spring, so harvesting could be completed earlier. In order to start the fall ploughing the fields had to be clear, so the sheaves had to be collected and either stacked or threshed.<sup>28</sup>

When first cut, the grain had a high water content, and had to be dried before it could be handled further. This was achieved by standing the bound sheaves on end in groups (stooks) in the field to dry for ten to fifteen days. After that they could be either collected and threshed immediately, or collected and stacked to await threshing later in the year. The timing of threshing was not technically critical, but since the grain could not be sold until it had been threshed, and most farmers had mortgages and implement payments to make, and store credit to be paid off, there was significant financial pressure to thresh early. Since that took labour away from other critical operations in the fall, the estimates here ignore threshing before the onset of winter, which will result in slight overestimates of the areas of crops.

Farmers lost time to inclement weather, so in spring a deduction of 31 percent is made for that and for Sundays, when many farmers did not work, even at harvest time.<sup>29</sup> At harvest time 27 percent is deducted for inclement weather, and during the fall ploughing period 35 percent. The amount of labour available can be estimated from census data, and is listed in Table 4. Table 5 summarizes the estimates made.

The estimates depict the potential size of a fully developed farm that used the latest equipment, and represent what settlers might have realistically expected of a new homestead. It is not meant to imply that every farmer would have updated all his equipment every time something new was developed.

**Table 5**  
**Estimates of Farm Sizes**

Activity	1880	1890	1900	1910
<b>Brandon</b>				
Spring plough	None	15-23 April 8.3 days, 19 ac	5-22 April 7.25 days, 35 ac	15-26 April 11.3 days, 52 ac
Harrow	15-18 April 3.8 days, 47 ac	23-29 April 5.2 days, 69 ac	22-29 April 6.75 days, 107 ac	26 April-4 May 8 days, 121 ac
Seed and harrow wheat	19-26 April 7.5 days, 39 ac	29 April-22 May 12.2 days, 69 ac	29 April-10 May 11 days, 107 ac	4-11 May 7.1 days, 121 ac
Seed and harrow oats	26-27 April 1.5 days, 8 ac	None	None	None
Reap and stalk oats	15-18 August 4 days, 7 ac	None	None	None
Reap and stalk wheat	19 Aug.-7 Sept. 18.7 days, 40 ac	29 Aug.-7 Sept. 9 days, 69 ac	27 Aug.-6 Sept. 11.2 days, 107 ac	25 Aug.-7 Sept. 13 days, 121 ac
Collect and stack grain, fall plough	8 Sept.-27 Oct. 51 days, 46 ac	7 Sept.-28 Oct. 51 days, 50 ac	7 Sept.-28 Oct. 51 days, 73 ac	8 Sept.-28 Oct. 51 days, 69 ac
Total cropped area	46 acres	69 acres	107 acres	121 acres
Census average size	31 acres	69 acres	143 acres	207 acres
<b>Indian Head</b>				
Spring plough	None	15-18 April 3 days, 6.6 ac	15 April 0.5 days, 2.5 ac	15-18 April 2.9 days, 14 ac
Harrow	15-17 April 2.8 days, 28 ac	18-23 April 4.6 days, 58 ac	15-21 April 5.1 days, 78 ac	18-24 April 5.8 days, 92 ac
Seed and harrow wheat	18-20 April 2.5 days, 11 ac	23-27 April 4.5 days, 24 ac	21 April-4 May 13.4 days, 78 ac	24 April-5 May 11 days, 92 ac
Seed and harrow oats	20-23 April 4 days, 17 ac	27 April-4 May 7 days, 38 ac	None	None
Reap and stalk oats	13-24 August 12 days, 17 ac	20-25 August 5 days, 34 ac	None	None
Reap and stalk wheat	25 Aug.-2 Sept. 8.2 days, 12 ac	30 Aug.-2 Sept. 3.6 days, 24 ac	25 Aug.-2 Sept. 8 days, 77 ac	24 Aug.-2 Sept. 9.25 days, 92 ac
Collect and stack grain, fall plough	2 Sept.-27 Oct. 55 days, 41 ac	3 Sept.-27 Oct. 54 days, 51 ac	2 Sept.-27 Oct. 55 days, 75 ac	2 Sept.-27 Oct. 55 days, 78 ac
Total cropped area	39 acres	58 acres	77 acres	121 acres
Census average size	16 acres	30 acres	53 acres	158 acres

Note: Total cropped area is the minimum of the areas covered by ploughing, harrowing, seeding and reaping. After 1900, the use of seed drills obviated the need to harrow immediately after seeding.

**Table 6**  
**Labour and Equipment Costs Per Acre**

	1880	1890	1900	1910
P/t harvest work (days)	0	0	10	8
Harvest Wages/day (incl. board)	1.50	2.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.60 <sup>b</sup>	2.35
Total p/t harvest wages	0.00	0.00	16.00	18.80
Annual farmers' wages <sup>c</sup>	260.00	235.00	225.00	250.00
Annual cost sons and f/t labour	54.60	178.60	132.75	95.00
Total wage cost	314.60	413.60	373.75	363.00
Total equipment cost <sup>d</sup>	409.00	456.00	463.00	473.00
Cost of horses <sup>e</sup>	350.00	400.00	550.00	1,050.00
Annual allowance <sup>f</sup>	91.08	102.72	121.56	182.76
Labour cost per acre	6.84	5.99	3.49	3.00
Equipment cost/acre	1.98	1.49	1.14	1.51

Note: These figures are calculated for the estimated acreages at Brandon, and not intended to be comprehensive. The equipment cost includes capital only, not maintenance or operating.

a) *Farmers' Advocate (Eastern)*, January 1885: 12; May 1885: 13; *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 2 October 1890; *Brandon Weekly Mail*, 15 July 1885.

b) *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, January 1892: 5, 5 October 1900: 543; *Manitoba Free Press Weekly*, 15 September 1898; *Edmonton Journal*, 27 September 1897.

c) Based on a farm labourer's wage in Ontario, as a realistic opportunity cost. For more details see Ward (1990: 180-82).

d) Includes all items listed in Tables 1 and 2 for spring and fall equipment for grain farming.

e) For 1880 and 1890 two horses are included, and for 1900 and 1910 four are included.

f) Amortized at 8 percent over ten years.

Both estimated farm sizes and census averages grew substantially over the period. The estimated potential sizes are initially higher, suggesting that in 1880 and 1890, most farms were not fully developed. For Brandon in 1900, and for both places in 1910, the census average area is greater than the estimates, which may indicate that the increases in labour productivity have been estimated too conservatively, or that other factors were involved. For 1910 the estimated potential size for Indian Head is little greater than that for 1900, because the introduction of Marquis wheat was offset by a fall in the quantity of labour.<sup>30</sup>

### *The Costs of Operating a Farm*

In this section labour and machine costs per acre on a fully developed farm are calculated, to show the effects of the technical changes that had occurred. The only additional data added at this point are farm wages. Table 6 uses the data derived in the earlier sections of the paper to generate these per acre costs. Both labour and equipment costs per acre fall, except that the equipment cost per acre rises in 1910 due to the increased price of horses.

### **Conclusions**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a significant amount of technical change in almost all aspects of field cropping technology. It would appear likely that this was induced by the agricultural potential of the large areas of land that comprised the next stage of expansion on the North American continent. As the new equipment was brought

to the Prairies and adapted to local conditions, productivity increased. Given the short seasons and scarcity of labour on the Prairies, these improvements resulted in increases in the area of crops that the typical farm could grow. The major improvements in the 1880s and 1890s increased farm size and output by 250 percent without commensurate increases in costs, greatly increasing the attractiveness of prairie farming, and contributing to the start of the wheat boom.

#### NOTES

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1. Canada, *Census of Canada*, 1880, 1900.
2. Other causes include the time it took to break in a new farm and the problem of land speculation in the early 1880s.
3. See census data in Table 4.
4. For an interesting analysis of changing farm size see Ray D. Bollman and Philip Ehrensaft, "Changing Farm Size Distribution on the Prairies Over the Past One Hundred Years," *Prairie Forum* 13, no. 1 (1988): 43-66.
5. Ploughing was in fact carried out in both spring and fall, but the technology was the same.
6. *Farmers' Advocate*, 21 August 1907: 1300; *Farmer's Advocate (Western)*, 5 July 1907: 490; 3 May 1905: 659; 22 November 1905: 1695; *Nor-West Farmer*, July 1898: 305; 20 August 1901: 531; 5 September 1906: 809, 812; 20 September 1901, "Farm Implements." See also J.B. Davidson and L.W. Chase, *Farm Machinery and Farm Motors* (New York: Orange Judd, 1920), 67 and W.G. Broehl, *John Deere's Company* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 208.
7. *Report of the Experimental Farm for Manitoba*, for example, 1890: 249; 1892: 196; 1893: 236.
8. For example, see the illustration in the *Farmers' Advocate (Eastern)*, May 1881: 126.
9. See, for example, the *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, 20 February 1899: 103.
10. See, for example, the Cockshutt diamond point cultivator in the *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, February 1890: 268 and April 1891.
11. Another machine, the McCormick harvester, carried three men, one driving and two tying the grain into bundles before it was dropped. G. Quick and W. Buchele, *The Grain Harvesters* (St. Joseph, MI: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1978), 74, suggest that two men on the machine could do the work of four or five men following behind on foot, who would have to first walk around collecting the stalks together before they could bind them into bundles.
12. About six pounds of twine were needed to bind an acre of grain. For details see Ward, "Extensive Development of the Canadian Prairies" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1990), 106.
13. For example, the *Farmers' Advocate*, 3 January 1906: 57 notes in an item on "Stook versus Stack Threshing": "threshing from the stack was cheaper, but the risk of crop losses meant that it was better to stack." J. Bracken, *Crop Production in Western Canada* (Winnipeg: Grain Growers Guide, 1920), 121, recommended that farmers stook then stack after ten days.
14. The *Edmonton Journal*, 10 May 1897 quoted a cost of \$5.25 per acre for breaking and backsetting.

15. Such as that advertised by the Watson Manufacturing Co. in the *Farmer's Advocate*, 7 September 1904: 1316.
16. *Manitoba Free Press*, 22 November 1887; *Farmer's Advocate (Western)*, 5 September 1893; Marvin McKinley, *Wheels of Farm Progress* (St. Joseph, MI: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1980), 19.
17. *Farmers' Advocate (Western)*, 5 July 1905: 992.
18. Ibid., March 1891: 116; 5 July 1905: 992.
19. See, for example, *ibid.*, 5 July 1905: 992.
20. Ibid., March 1891: 108; 20 June 1899: 339.
21. *Farmers' Advocate (Eastern)*, July 1885: 205.
22. In the *Nor-West Farmer* for April 1898 the J.I. Case Co. listed the wind stacker among other recent improvements.
23. A good cutaway view of this attachment is given in the *Farmers' Advocate* for 1 July 1904: 787.
24. The Rumely portable steam threshing engine needed eight horses to move it. See McKinley, *Wheels of Farm Progress*, 27.
25. Many other varieties were also tried, but they tended to suffer from plant diseases such as smut and rust. Marquis was even less susceptible to these problems than Red Fife.
26. These durations are derived from the annual reports of the experimental farms, 1890 to 1914.
27. Reports of the experimental farms, Brandon and Indian Head, 1887 to 1914.
28. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for help in clarifying the logical sequence in which these constraints worked.
29. Little work was done on Sundays. For example, George Shepherd, *West of Yesterday* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 62, notes being "shut down by a Mountie" for threshing on a Sunday. See also *NorWest Farmer*, January 1904: 29, and W.P. Rutter, *Wheat Growing in Canada, the United States and Argentina* (London: A. and C. Black, 1911), 117.
30. Census areas for 1890 and 1900 were inconsistent and information is available only at a very high level of aggregation. For 1900 the entire Territories were divided into only four districts. Census averages cover extremely large areas in which many farms were far below their potential size, having been newly established.

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# **"An Imperfect Architecture of Power": Class and Local Government in Saskatchewan, 1908-1936**

Rod Bantjes

**ABSTRACT.** Rural local government in Saskatchewan (the "rural municipality") failed to perform its legitimization function during a period of intense agrarian political agitation at the beginning of this century. The failure was an unintended consequence of design choices made to adapt institutions of representative local government to unique spatial conditions of a prairie wheat economy. The rural municipality so designed became part of the spatial/institutional context which influenced agrarian class formation. The first part of this article documents the overlooked importance of rural municipalities and their provincial association (the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) as resources in the making of a radical agrarian class identity in the period from 1908 to 1922. The second part documents how institutional constraints increasingly co-opted farmer councillors but at the same time undermined their effectiveness as local guarantors of the legitimacy of the capitalist state.

**SOMMAIRE.** En Saskatchewan, le modèle de gouvernement local appelé «municipalité rurale» a failli à sa fonction de légitimation durant une période d'intense agitation politique agraire au début du siècle. Ce fut une conséquence imprévue de choix effectués dans le but d'adapter des institutions représentatives locales venues d'ailleurs à de nouvelles conditions géographiques, particulières à une économie fondée sur la culture intensive du blé. Les municipalités rurales s'intégreront dans un contexte spatio-institutionnel qui influença la formation d'une classe agraire. Dans la première partie de l'article, l'auteur explicite l'importance souvent méconnue des municipalités rurales et de la *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities* à titre d'agents actifs dans la formation d'une identité radicale agraire entre 1908 et 1922. Dans la seconde partie, il expose comment des contraintes institutionnelles servirent à coopter les conseillers municipaux, mais en même temps à saper leur rôle de garants locaux de la légitimité de l'état capitaliste.

Bruce Curtis, in a recent journal article, identifies the changing spatial logic of class relations within capitalism as the appropriate context for understanding the origins of the local state in Canada. He writes:

"Free labour" could no longer be governed through direct supervision and personal contact between rulers and ruled. New relations of production created a new physical and political distance between classes.<sup>1</sup>

As Anthony Giddens would phrase it, relations of class domination became increasingly "dis-embedded" from former spatial matrices and reconstituted through impersonal and "distanciated" relations.<sup>2</sup> These new relations were organized increasingly through the market and the state. As Curtis shows, the *local* state in particular, developed in response to these changes as an agent in the reproduction of class relations. Despite the clearly spatial character of his problematic and his references to Michel Foucault's architectural metaphor of the panopticon, Curtis underplays the role of space in his analysis. The writers who have analyzed state domination in spatial terms have focussed almost exclusively on urban spaces and looked at institutional architecture — Foucault's prisons, asylums and schools<sup>3</sup> — or the densely clustered neighbourhoods and public spaces of cities.<sup>4</sup> The relevant spaces to consider in the Canadas of the 1840s (Curtis's area of interest) and in western Canada in the early 1900s (which I discuss in this article) were predominantly *rural*. The institutional architecture of rural, and in particular of prairie space, is no less real and no less constructed, but much more difficult to perceive than that of cities.<sup>5</sup> Prairie space, and hence rural class relations, posed unique problems for capitalist states and demanded, more than in any other context, innovations in distanciated relations of domination.

This article looks at the way in which the domination of this rural territory was accomplished by those acting in the name of the state.<sup>6</sup> Prairie space encompasses the physical disposition of wheat fields, farmsteads, community halls, school districts, electoral polls, shipping points and the like. These are institutional artifacts which, for actors, take on ineluctable physical forms.<sup>7</sup> The work of Harold Innis is particularly helpful in explaining both the ground rules of this spatial setting as well as its extraordinary dynamism. While beyond the scope of this article, such an explanation would begin by considering the physical attributes of wheat as a crop and as a cargo, the changing technologies for cultivating and transporting it and its commodity value as defined by international capitalist markets.<sup>8</sup> The later work of Innis is also suggestive of approaches to understanding the ways in which the state's territorial domination is conditioned by an interplay between physical terrain and means of transport and communication.<sup>9</sup> Following Innis, snow and mud might be characterized as salient media of communication within the territorial jurisdiction of the province of Saskatchewan between 1908 and 1936.

Innis, Foucault and Giddens,<sup>10</sup> all recognize that state power is dependent upon the physical collection and dissemination of "knowledge." There are (changing) physical limitations on the extent of territory that can be known in sufficient detail and within which state policy can be effectively administered and legitimated. Local government was a response to spatial limitations on communication within local regions and between these regions and central administrations. The idea is illustrated in the debates over how best to guarantee central administrative control within the Canadian colonies after the Rebellions of 1837-38. Without local representation, argued Poulett Thomson<sup>11</sup> the provincial government

has neither any officer in its own confidence in the different parts of these extended provinces from whom it can seek information, nor is there any recognized body enjoying the public confidence with whom it can communicate, either to determine what are the real wants and wishes of the locality, or through whom it may afford explanations.<sup>12</sup>

Two questions were important in the design of the boundaries of local jurisdictions within a province. The first concerned their size. This was a question contingent, in part, upon communicative distances. The second concerned the populations captured within these boundaries and whether they included persons fit for the role of governing. This question was contingent upon the local geography of class. British local government was historically predicated upon the presence of an aristocratic class whose territorial claim predated the modern state. Conservatives were convinced that good government at the local level was the expression of the "natural" authority of this elite class and were worried by its absence in the colonies. Liberal reformers, in the Enlightenment tradition, saw local government institutions as "educative." The delegation of powers of the state to local institutions was to *create* local political elites. However, even for liberals, the predisposition for ruling was still conditioned, not by heredity, but by economic class position. They assumed that in most municipalities, a

property-owning class imbued with an entrepreneurial spirit would supply the material for the indigenous political elite. Women and wage earners were clearly excluded, and the potential of *petit-bourgeois* farmers was equivocal and depended on their commitment to an ethic of accumulation rather than pastoral traditionalism.

Despite the recognition that state offices imposed constraints upon officeholders<sup>13</sup> there was still a concern that the powers of the local state could be placed in the wrong hands. The question at issue is at the core of modern debates about the state in a capitalist society — who does (or can) rule through the apparatus of the state? Contemporary debates define three broad structural possibilities.<sup>14</sup> The first is that classes, as social formations, rule. Those who either influence or enact state policy do so on the basis of their perceived class interests. Consistent with this position is the idea that the hegemonic rule of capital is limited in circumstances where opposing class forces are particularly well organized. Neo-Marxist analyses of city politics pointed to the possibility that the geographic organization of classes could favour the "capture" of the *local* state.<sup>15</sup> The second structural possibility is that no one rules. Those who act on behalf of the state are constrained by an inescapable "logic of the situation" in capitalist societies. The bureaucratic machine that they tend cannot be used to challenge the market and its logic of accumulation; it must nurture investor confidence in government bond issues and in the likelihood of economic growth within its jurisdictional boundaries. The third possibility is based on the Weberian notion that the state often responds to an institutional logic of "organizational maintenance" which is not reducible to "capital logic."<sup>16</sup>

Debates over which structural logic prevails divert attention from the fact that neither states nor classes are *things* which come with ready-made powers. They are rather sets of practices which concrete actors struggle to make effective or to subvert.<sup>17</sup> The extraordinary feature of rural municipal government in the Prairies was that local units were designed in such a way that they included only one class (the agrarian *petite bourgeoisie*), precisely the class that they were intended to control. This was a tactical error on the part of legislators. And it placed farmers in a structurally contradictory position. It took them many years to learn how to "do" responsible government. The logic of their positions as local representatives of the state was not immediately evident to them. They sought collectively, and in rather creative ways, to evade and redefine that logic; because, simultaneously they were involved in a process of "doing class" in the populist fashion exemplified by the Grain Growers Association and United Farmers. They were successful in these efforts to some degree. For this reason there is justification for seeing the rural municipalities, as Seymour Lipset does,<sup>18</sup> as class institutions.

But farmers did learn eventually to be responsible local administrators. And through their financial and legal experience in running what was essentially a public corporation they learned how to be farmers of a different sort. Rural municipal councillors formed part of the economic elite of farmers who, in practice at least, were the first to contradict the radical

populist tenet that farming need not be a capitalist enterprise based on accumulation and the competitive acquisition of land. Their experience of governing helped to define for them their class interests. In a fundamental sense class itself was a process conditioned by the action of the state.<sup>19</sup>

If the design of rural municipalities was flawed, the mistake was at least understandable. Rural municipal units appropriate to conditions in the Prairies were established through crude trial and error with few exact precedents to follow. Counties, modelled on those of eastern Canada, were organized briefly in Manitoba. The experiment was abandoned in 1886 because the area was found to be too large to administer, given the slender tax base which the dispersed prairie population could provide. It was also difficult to get a quorum at meetings since councillors did not have the means to travel great distances.<sup>20</sup> Manitoba reduced the size to an eighteen-mile square,<sup>21</sup> roughly one-third the size of a typical county, and called the new unit a "rural municipality" (RM). Legislators were unprepared for the dynamism which was to characterize social geography on the Prairies. Had they tried their experiment again in twenty years on a population boosted by immigration, it surely would have been successful. Counties worked in the United States superimposed on a similar survey system and under similar agricultural conditions. As it was, in 1907, soon after the province of Saskatchewan was formed, members of the provincial Municipal Commission recommended that Saskatchewan adopt the model which had been proven in Manitoba. The recommendation was passed into law in 1909 in the Rural Municipalities Act. A complete grid of squares was immediately drawn up, although the people who fell within each of them had to petition, then vote to become incorporated as an RM.<sup>22</sup> The map showed a daunting number of potential RMs, close to 400, many of them hundreds of miles from the provincial capital. In order to guarantee some centralized control, particularly over the borrowing powers of these local bodies, Saskatchewan created the country's first Department of Municipal Affairs in 1908.<sup>23</sup>

In the same year, urban municipalities formed an association to represent their interests to the legislature. Representatives of rural "Local Improvement Districts" participated in the association until 1908 when they established a separate organization to represent rural interests in the deliberations surrounding the proposed Rural Municipalities Act.<sup>24</sup> The Saskatchewan Local Improvement Districts Association, later the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), was to have more influence as a pressure group than its urban parent.<sup>25</sup>

The power of SARM was based, in part, on the accident of geography which led to so many tiny RMs being formed. As a consequence, it was able to draw a respectable number of elected representatives of the farm constituency to its annual conventions: between 600 and 1,000 once the bulk of RMs had been formed.<sup>26</sup> Commenting on its growth in 1917, the *Western Municipal News* declared that "The decisions arrived at by so considerable and representative a body of men are naturally momentous."<sup>27</sup>

These decisions were heard by the representatives of the various government departments who were in regular attendance.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the SARM

executive met with government representatives before each session of the legislature to discuss intended action on the various resolutions.<sup>29</sup> They generally met with sympathetic and regretful inaction. Sometimes the delegates were admonished for poorly thought through or naive resolutions.<sup>30</sup> But with encouraging regularity, resolutions were also adopted and put into law. Whatever the actual power of SARM, the appearance of influence was carefully cultivated. Claims such as the following were commonly made in ministers' and deputy ministers' addresses: "I think these conventions sometimes have more authority over the legislature than we members who sit there."<sup>31</sup>

The hopes of young farmers entering municipal politics in the first two decades of this century were raised by a general optimism about the possibilities of broadening "the stream of freedom."<sup>32</sup> In Saskatchewan a consensus was emerging around the need for women's suffrage, and provincial reforms enabling the referendum and recall.<sup>33</sup> The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association (SGGA) had set a precedent in the unusual influence that its annual convention, the self-styled "Farmers' Parliament," exerted in decisions of the Saskatchewan Legislature.<sup>34</sup> SARM sought to emulate this status. As the Association's vice-president predicted in 1910:

It only needs steady and cheerful support and [the Association] will take its place side by side with the Grain Growers Association in becoming a power for the popular good that cannot be ignored.<sup>35</sup>

But while SARM reports acknowledged the SGGA as their model, the farm radicals of the SGGA made no mention of SARM in their accounts.<sup>36</sup> They had fixed their attention on the great struggles of "economic populism" for access to rural credit, and control of the marketing and transport systems for agricultural products. They sought influence over the provincial legislature and ultimately, state ownership at the federal and provincial levels, as the best means of attaining their ends. However, the government was playing an effective cat-and-mouse game with the SGGA, deflecting pressures for nationalization and encouraging the use of cooperative associations instead. There were in fact genuine constitutional and logistical problems with state ownership. Hail insurance was an instance of the latter. Since the turn of the century, farm organizations, including SARM and the SGGA, had been agitating for some provincewide, compulsory system of insurance. Not all regions in Saskatchewan were threatened by hail damage to the same degree and farmers themselves could not agree over the issue of universal coverage. But optional systems offered by private firms or cooperatives<sup>37</sup> could not distribute the risks among enough subscribers or achieve economies of scale in administration, therefore premiums had to be excessively high. The idea of a municipal system was proposed and worked out by members of the SGGA; it provided a balance between optional and universal coverage. Subscription was compulsory within the municipality, and risks were shared widely among participating RMs.<sup>38</sup> Ratepayers in each RM voted on whether or not to participate. RMs were quick to adopt the scheme; nearly half passed the necessary bylaw in 1912, the first year of operation.<sup>39</sup>

Municipal hail insurance enhanced the prestige of the municipality as a place where useful work could actually be done; but exactly what sort of work was best suited to it was still somewhat unclear. Interpretations were offered from various quarters. The president of SARM in 1910 had argued that there should be a division of labour in reform work between SARM and the SGGA:

The Grain Growers' Association, dealing with all questions pertaining to the marketing, storage, and transportation of our products, has undoubtedly accomplished much and established for itself a good reputation. We have a wide and useful field of labour.<sup>40</sup>

The field open to SARM was supposed to be defined by the Rural Municipalities Act. But SARM could press for changes in this and related legislation to enable progressive municipal programs under the RM's general mandate to deal with issues of social welfare, public health, and local organizational and economic development.

The delegates were often tempted to use this means to join the SGGA in taking up the popular issues of agrarian economics. Unsuccessful efforts were made to enable RMs to own and operate grain elevators and mills,<sup>41</sup> and to act as rural banks.<sup>42</sup> While it could hardly advocate municipal ownership, SARM supported the nationalization of railways.<sup>43</sup> The association was more prolific with resolutions to regulate the activities of railways and local grain dealers and speculators, many of which fell within their mandate.<sup>44</sup> Other of their resolutions in this vein were wholly outside their jurisdiction,<sup>45</sup> but delegates felt compelled nonetheless "to show the Powers how thought was lying along certain lines."<sup>46</sup> Delegates also voiced their support for other farm organizations which did address these issues.<sup>47</sup>

The deputy minister of Municipal Affairs, John Bayne, promoted an apolitical vision of the Association's role. In a 1919 address to the national Commission of Conservation on the theme of the RMs' contribution to the planned development of the province's rural resources, he noted three constructive programs: road building, seed grain assistance and a surtax on uncultivated land.<sup>48</sup> The surtax was a response to repeated demands by SARM for a tax on land speculators and represented to them a small populist victory over the CPR and eastern financiers.<sup>49</sup> This was a scheme which, like municipal hail insurance, was admired and emulated elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> Bayne insisted on seeing it as an economic stimulus to encourage owners to put land into production. SARM delegates preferred a more socially progressive interpretation both of the meaning of the tax and its appropriate uses, suggesting a subsidy to maternity aid and to rural telephones.<sup>51</sup>

SARM's most successful reform role was in the end thrust upon it. It became a crucial ally in efforts of organized farm women and public health professionals to bring "medical attention to outlying areas." The source of inspiration for this effort was the urban reform movement, whose role has generally been overlooked since the movement tends to be seen as an expression of the interests of the urban bourgeoisie. In Canada the movement found official recognition in the Commission of Conservation headed

by the influential British town planner Thomas Adams.<sup>52</sup> Adams took a special interest in issues of rural planning. He hoped to counter in the West what he saw as the injurious effects of land speculation and to address the neglected "social side" of settlement.<sup>53</sup> Rural women responded to the Commission of Conservation's support for "improving family life in the country."<sup>54</sup> The broader "hook" of this issue was the idea that if women could not be persuaded to stay "down on the farm," nor could the more ambitious men, and farms would consequently be left idle or poorly managed. Women organized through the SGGA and Homemakers Clubs and lobbied the RMs. As Violet McNaughton argued in the pages of the *Western Municipal News*, in 1916:

I think it is conceded that most of our future reforms must be brought about through the Municipality. This means that greater responsibility will rest on the municipal officers and greater intelligence and interest will need to be shown by the tax payers as a whole.

...I look to the time when tax payers will ask for a library tax, for the establishment of a recreational centre, and for such other reforms as will make country people forget that they contemplated ever "leaving the land!" The West is God's Own Land and it is through Municipal Administration it can be kept so.<sup>55</sup>

Women leaders decided to focus their energies and "go after" health care.<sup>56</sup> The infant mortality rate was reportedly high and infectious diseases common. Rural women assumed a large proportion of the work of caring for the sick, which, even by the standards of the day, physicians should have been performing. Rural areas everywhere had trouble supporting the services of physicians. But the difficulty was greater in wheat-growing regions where the extreme dispersal of population resulted in too few paying patients within the travelling range of a rural doctor.

The women's organizations were joined in their concern by a number of physicians employed in the area of public health by urban municipalities and by the province. Public health work attracted humanitarian individuals who saw themselves as contributing to a broader movement of social betterment. They were naturally interested in expanding their role for both altruistic and professional reasons. Even before McNaughton's public appeals, physicians had argued for greater state involvement in public health work.<sup>57</sup> Regina's medical health officer made the case in characteristic terms to the Union of Saskatchewan Municipalities convention in 1912:

We hear a great deal today of the Conservation movement. ... Can there be any greater National Resource demanding Conservation than the Health of the people, and has any other feature of our national health been more neglected? When a case of hog cholera is reported to the Federal Department of Agriculture, an expert is sent out and the farmer has the benefit of the most expert advice for the conservation of his hogs. If a country physician has the temerity to report a case of tuberculosis he is told to look after it himself. ... A National Health Service would conserve in the highest interests of every citizen, the interests of life itself.<sup>58</sup>

Normally this sort of idealism would be kept in check by finance-conscious bureaucrats, but in Saskatchewan, it received the strong support "of the awakened interests of the public at large."<sup>59</sup> SARM's role in this was crucial.

Through a series of resolutions at annual conventions, SARM added the "voice of the people" to the moral suasion of the Women's Grain Growers' Association and the approval of sympathetic health professionals. In response, the province agreed to make changes to the Municipalities Act enabling four main health care programs: municipally financed rural hospitals (1916); salaried municipal doctors (1919);<sup>60</sup> a municipal commitment to fund the province's tuberculosis (TB) sanatorium (1920); and, in 1929, a program of free treatment for all TB patients funded in part by the rural municipalities.

Individual RMs, the "grass roots" of municipal politics, played a role in developing the municipal doctor scheme.<sup>61</sup> While the decision to hire a doctor was ultimately up to the ratepayers, councillors were responsible for administering the programs and would have had to have been at least sympathetic. The schemes proved to be enduring and relatively popular, with 173 in operation by 1950.<sup>62</sup> Hospitals were a larger and more permanent commitment, requiring the cooperation of more than one municipality. To insure continuity they were administered by special boards. The provincial Bureau of Public Health joined with the Women's Grain Growers' Association in mobilizing local support for these institutions.<sup>63</sup> By 1954 over half of the settled portion of the province was included within municipal hospital districts.<sup>64</sup>

SARM's initial motion to support the TB sanatorium in 1920 implicitly placed a condition of involvement by urban municipalities.<sup>65</sup> There was a certain amount of resentment about the fact that the actual legislation had the "rurals" contributing alone. The secretary of SARM suggested that the RMs' contribution could at least be dedicated to defraying costs already incurred by RMs for "indigent" patients.<sup>66</sup> Following this suggestion, a "sanatorium pool" was established in 1924 which transformed the RMs' contribution from an outright gift into a scheme for distributing the RMs' existing financial responsibility for TB patients.<sup>67</sup> RMs already paid for over 90 percent of the TB cases for their districts.<sup>68</sup> Most patients were unable to pay the high cost of a long sanatorium stay and therefore could be classified as "indigent." The sanatorium pool distributed the risks of high expenditures for these patients faced by RMs and made expenditures more predictable. It also increased the number of people able to receive care, since individual councils had less of an interest in disallowing claims for aid.

In 1929 SARM proposed to extend free treatment to urban TB patients as well, based on what they considered to be an equitable distribution of costs between the rural and urban municipalities, with a large share being given to the province.<sup>69</sup> The *Western Municipal News* described this as the "most advanced step yet taken."<sup>70</sup> It simplified and more equitably distributed coverage, but likely reduced the overall costs to RMs. Later, in 1936, SARM appeared ready to go even further, resolving in favour of "state medicine," covering all medical costs. But the meaning of this support is equivocal.<sup>71</sup> On the one hand it was an effort to divest the RMs of responsibility for health care which they found insupportable during the Depression. On the other,

it was an indicator of the tolerance which had developed for the principle of public involvement in this area, a tolerance which SARM helped to create, and which enabled the province to emerge in the 1960s as the first in North America to offer universal health care insurance.

Despite the elements of self-interest in the behaviour of SARM, there had been among delegates before 1920 a readiness to go "over the top for reform."<sup>72</sup> The results were that by 1929 rural people were better protected against hail and illness than they would have been without its efforts. Through creative use of legislation, SARM delegates were able to solve problems which were not as well addressed elsewhere. They were also able to fix in legislation general reform principles, and in that way to preserve them after the Commission of Conservation and inspired individuals had retired from the scene and had elsewhere been forgotten. In this sense Lipset was right that they made a valuable contribution to the "political culture," which in Saskatchewan prepared the way for the success of the CCF.

The other side of the question, the role of RM structure in co-opting farmer leaders, can be best understood in light of the purposes of municipal government as conceived by contemporary legislators, and the mechanisms by which these ends were to be effected. Conventional wisdom held that the stability and conservatism of British rural local government was guaranteed by the presence of a rural gentry. But in Canada, Durham had noted, there was "no class resembling English 'country gentlemen,'" nor did "the doctors, notaries and lawyers who overabound in the colony, form an efficient substitute for such a class." The chief virtue of the requisite class was a certain noblesse oblige, a willingness "to labour for the advancement of their uninstructed neighbours."<sup>73</sup> Local government in the British colonies would often have to be entrusted to the "hardy farmers and humble mechanics" who predominated and who conducted "a very independent, not very manageable, and, sometimes a rather turbulent, democracy."<sup>74</sup>

In western Canada it proved difficult to guarantee the restraining influence either of the small urban elites of "doctors, notaries and lawyers" or of any recognizable form of "community."<sup>75</sup> When the county system of Ontario was rejected in Manitoba in 1886, with it went the principle of including urban municipalities under county jurisdiction. Under the RM system, incorporated urban places were entirely separate jurisdictions from the RMs that surrounded them. RMs were consequently "perforated" squares, laid out independently of, and indifferent to, patterns of urban settlement. Conservatives in the West feared that the lines of the grid severed bodies of local government from community and the restraining influences of the "better class of people" to be found in small commercial centres, and exposed rural municipalities to a dangerous individualism.<sup>76</sup> The editor of the conservative *Daily Standard* saw portents of anarchy in the first assembly of RM representatives in 1908. Under the heading "Scenes of Bedlam" he described a meeting out of control for an hour as an unfortunate speaker was "howled down" for no intelligible reason.<sup>77</sup>

The liberal editor of the *Western Municipal News* saw an entirely different meeting in which unity had begun to emerge from difference:

Listening, we heard the burr of the Scot, the brogue of the Celt, the soft "whatever" of the Welshman, the drawl of the United States Westerner, the broad vowels of the Englishman, the quaint phrasings and accents of Russians, Swiss, French, Swedes, and Galicians, all cutting across and mingling with the unmistakable Canadian tongue. And over and over again we marvelled at the clear grasp so many of these newer citizens had of Canadian laws, of the workings of municipal systems, of the needs of their districts. ... There was a sort of God-bless-you-you're-one-of-us feeling that sent a glow over the whole convention.<sup>78</sup>

Like Durham, the *Western Municipal News* had confidence in the educative role of the formal process; the discipline of rules of order, the practical experience with argument and debate. This faith is reflected in the annual "progress reports" on SARM conventions issued by the journal's editor:

[1910] It was a busy, cheery Convention, with less of the Obstructionist element present, less of a lack of point and concentration, more real work, more logical discussion than ever before.<sup>79</sup>

[1913] The growth of the Association in poise and thoughtfulness was shown in that no hasty action was taken in the matter of the books and no resolution passed even by the committee appointed, but time asked for to go carefully into the points of the paper and this with the Department responsible for the system.<sup>80</sup>

From a pragmatic point of view, SARM must have been seen as a more biddable "voice of the people" than the SGGA, already noted in 1909 as a forum for "decidedly Socialistic and Radical opinions,"<sup>81</sup> or the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section (UFC), founded in 1926 by SGGA radicals who favoured the confrontational style of the trade union movement. The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities provided a captive assembly which could be relied upon for more temperate, responsible views.<sup>82</sup>

Various efforts were made by Saskatchewan authorities to ensure the responsible exercise of RM powers. The Department of Municipal Affairs was formed in 1908 in anticipation of the organization of RMs the following year. Its main function was to oversee fiscal matters. The deputy minister and his two inspectors<sup>83</sup> tried to insure competency and uniform procedures in the "bookkeeping, recording, accounting and auditing" of local councils.<sup>84</sup> All debentures<sup>85</sup> and sinking funds had to be put to a vote of the ratepayers and approved by the minister.<sup>86</sup> The minister's responsibility in this regard was transferred to a "Local Government Board" in 1914 to lessen any suspicion of partisan interference.<sup>87</sup> The Union of Saskatchewan Municipalities (urban), had asked for some "expert" control over municipal borrowing since they recognized that this would increase the confidence of financial markets (mostly in eastern Canada) in western securities. They were willing to give up a degree of local autonomy in the hope of cheaper borrowing rates.<sup>88</sup>

The departments of Municipal Affairs, Agriculture, Highways, and when formed, the Department of Health were all concerned with encouraging

professionalism in RM administration. Paid officials were few, despite efforts to persuade RMs to hire additional staff.<sup>99</sup> Each RM was required to engage the services of a secretary-treasurer, who was usually, but not always full-time, and an auditor.<sup>100</sup> The auditor was brought in to look at the books once every three months. Few RMs could afford the services of a genuine chartered accountant.<sup>101</sup> Weed inspectors were frequently hired,<sup>102</sup> also on a short term, and in some instances on a fleeting basis, as one Paul Trout attested in 1916:

Having been appointed weed inspector for Division No. 2, I beg to submit a report of my work.

You gave me only three days. I saw at first how hopeless it was to try and cover all the seventy odd square miles of land comprising this Division in the three days given me. I decided that the best way to use the time would be to travel around as fast as possible and merely make notes of weedy fields, so I spent very little time in talking to farmers but put in nearly the whole three days in travelling by bicycle and gathering the facts presented below.<sup>103</sup>

RM councillors themselves typically served as road engineers and foremen.

The Department of Agriculture tried in 1915 to persuade RMs to hire agricultural experts.<sup>104</sup> RMs were already responsible for supporting agricultural societies promoted by the Department. But these proved to be a perennial disappointment, squandering their grants on annual fairs, and lying dormant the rest of the year when they were supposed to be doing educational work.<sup>105</sup> "Agricultural secretaries," modelled after American county agents, were to organize and direct the local activities of farmers towards more informed and efficient agricultural practices. But RMs were smaller than most counties and could not easily support a full-time expert.<sup>106</sup> The few that were hired proved "unpopular,"<sup>107</sup> and did not last.<sup>108</sup> Many farmers saw educational programs as a red herring when the real problems of agricultural production were structural in origin.<sup>109</sup> Within their mandate to "aid agricultural societies and boards of trade,"<sup>110</sup> RMs were just as happy to support more political campaigns for agricultural improvement led by the Wheat Pool or the UFC.<sup>101</sup>

Until special provisions were made for the hiring of municipal doctors it was also impossible for RMs to carry out their public health mandate with professional staff.<sup>102</sup> Responsibility remained with the provincial Bureau of Health.<sup>103</sup> It was also difficult for provincial staff to have much of an influence in the countryside without local cooperation. The Bureau of Health was one of the few bureaucracies which was successful in mobilizing local, volunteer support for its programs, largely because of the support of women's organizations.<sup>104</sup>

Professional administration at the local level proved too costly. The alternative of centralized supervision was problematic if it involved travel. The approval of debentures and sinking funds could presumably be done by mail. Municipal inspectors, agricultural representatives, the provincial sanitary inspector, all had to face snow, mud and dust to visit hundreds of tiny far-flung destinations. The territory was vast. One of the four agricultural representatives in 1915 was responsible for an area of 8,000 square

miles.<sup>105</sup> In 1910 the two municipal inspectors divided the entire province between them. The roads which traversed this territory were crude at the best of times, impassable in spring and nonexistent in winter.<sup>106</sup> The chief municipal inspector argued that it was "impracticable for the inspectors to start out on the road before the beginning of March at the earliest."<sup>107</sup> The chief provincial sanitary inspector illustrates one of the reasons why:

Last December in connection with a proposal to establish a union hospital in a certain district it was my duty to travel to four different schools for the purpose of explaining the scheme. With great difficulty I was driven to each place on time, when the temperature ranged from thirty to thirtysix below zero. At only one place did a meeting materialize, and only one lady of those most intimately concerned, was able to be present. In such weather, common to the season of year, it is almost a physical impossibility to travel.<sup>108</sup>

For the annual convention of SARM, hundreds of municipal officers starting from all corners of the map drove by wagon or sleigh to the nearest rail line, then boarded the train to converge on one of the province's two major cities, Regina or Saskatoon. The eagerness of provincial officials to attend was understandable. The annual convention provided an opportunity to conduct a sort of "short course" for farmers in local administration. Delegates sat through interminable technical papers on road engineering, uniform accounting, and the control of "noxious weeds." They were often eager for information as is illustrated by the popularity of Bayne, the deputy minister of Municipal Affairs, at the meeting in 1912:

Questions buzzed around his ears as usual. He enjoys the swarming interrogation points which he so successfully hives. His enjoyment is so evident it is sometimes amusing to watch the efforts of the officers to shoo away the swarm.<sup>109</sup>

Delegates liked to see SARM as a forum where the voice of the people could be heard by government. But it also worked the other way. And when the government did listen it was under no obligation to pay any heed. In questions of policy formation the dialogue was unbalanced. Government representatives learned how popular thought "was lying along certain lines," without always disclosing their own policy intentions or consulting before decisions were made.<sup>110</sup>

In the end it was not the provincial inspectors, nor the annual pep talks of ministers and deputy ministers of provincial departments which made responsible administrators of RM councillors; rather, it was the "actual, practical, day to day work of administration" their positions defined for them.<sup>111</sup> For if they were to do it well and keep themselves out of financial difficulties, they found the position came with a built-in set of priorities, and complemented only certain sorts of skills and ways of viewing the world.

First, capable councillors became adept within the legal matrix which delimited all of their actions. They learned the rules; and through the annual meetings acquired a jurist's appreciation of the niceties of accommodating the law to the complexities of actual practice. The resolutions to establish the basic reforms allowing hail insurance, municipal hospitals, the surtax and so on were followed in later years by innumerable amendments as the

delegates of SARM sought to fine-tune these laws to fit circumstances met within the daily practice of administration.

Secondly, their responsibility for public finances bound them into the cash nexus more surely even than the running of their own farms. In the 1920s, farm households were run to a considerable extent on a noncash basis, and record keeping was rudimentary. Farmers rarely had the resources or the inclination to view their operation in profit-loss terms. The RM functioned essentially as a public corporation. This "great business institution"<sup>112</sup> was designed to operate on a purely commodified basis with all of its economic transactions recorded and its books balanced. Councillors learned that uniform accounting, bookkeeping and careful auditing was a basic step in marshalling all of the stray dollars and cents otherwise prone to wander off like unfenced cattle. The provincial auditor did not have to impose a discipline upon councillors; they learned to impose it upon themselves and attended to his annual lectures to find out how.

The more a councillor identified with the institution the more he sought its best interests in the increase of its revenues and the reduction of expenditures. On the side of increasing revenues, SARM minutes give testimony to a very strong impulse to simply improve the machinery for extracting taxes and disciplining defaulters. More creatively, councillors could, and did, expend collective resources in the interests of increasing the available revenue or the value of taxable land within RM boundaries. The first task in this direction was the control of natural threats to agricultural production: fire, wolves, gophers, and "noxious weeds." As usual, SARM acted as a forum for refining the legal instruments for this work. The *Western Municipal News* has left us the unforgettable image of gophers and wolves being pursued by "threatening Resolutions" at the 1915 meeting. The sober reality for councillors, of course, was that "pests" and weeds reduced the yield per acre by the sorts of small amounts which, compounded, represented huge sums of lost revenue. Any activity which increased the productivity of the land raised its taxable value and improved the likelihood that its owner would be able to pay. In 1922, capital investment in land or "improvements," also became subject to assessment.<sup>113</sup> There was no need for an agricultural expert to explain to local farm leaders the importance of viewing the farm as a business and investing for growth.

Roads emerged as the RM's primary investment. Road building and maintenance directly increased the value of adjacent land. This principle of assessment was informed by an elaborate "doctrine of good roads" which linked improved communications with efficiency, increased trade and even social and hygienic benefits.<sup>114</sup> While health care might, as Dr. Bow and Violet McNaughton argued, increase the value of the country's greatest natural resource, such improvements did not translate as tangibly into tax revenue as healthy roads. Road work made a huge claim on RM resources in Saskatchewan for the added reason that the grid survey and the dispersal of population multiplied the miles of road per person and per taxable unit of land. Permanent roads could not be built and the makeshift earth roads

required constant rebuilding.<sup>115</sup> Road work also made the rural council a bastion of male prerogative,<sup>116</sup> to the detriment of the issues of "homes and community life"<sup>117</sup> which activist women of the period specialized in. Not only did councillors have to tolerate endless technical discussions of culverts and wrapping, road-dragging machinery, and techniques surveying gradients, but usually they were expected to take part in the actual road work as well.

Their position gave councillors a direct stake in extending a regime of control upon the rural environment in the interest of capital accumulation and required the mental habit of measuring land and human activity in precise monetary quantities. Councillors' skills were honed by their role in land assessment<sup>118</sup> and encouraged by the efforts of provincial authorities interested in greater universality and accuracy in assessment practice.<sup>119</sup>

All of these mundane details of RM administration are important in order to understand how it prepared farmers for political leadership. The day-to-day work of the RM taught farmer leaders "truths" that the "establishment" had always known. The ground rules of a capitalist society were defined in terms of money and law. "Value" could be reduced to commodity value. One had to accept not only that political decisions were constrained by local finances, but that radical policies at the local level could offend investors in distant markets, depress bond ratings and limit borrowing powers. Such considerations warrant a rethinking of the meaning of the statistics on farmer representatives in the Saskatchewan legislature. They dominated the legislature by 1921 (see Table 1).<sup>120</sup> But their numbers cannot be simply interpreted as an index of class influence.<sup>121</sup> Farmers' main avenue of entry into provincial politics was through experience in local government.<sup>122</sup> As colonial policy makers had intended,<sup>123</sup> the years spent in local administration insured that farmers internalized the same "legal/financial ethic" which informed the politics of the lawyers and businessmen in the legislature that they joined and gradually replaced.

The practice of RM councillors came increasingly to reflect this ethic. And it did so in a way that was immediately visible to the "rank-and-file" farmer. To the extent to which councils represented "constituted authority," they did so on the "front line." A key idea in the devolution of powers to local bodies has been to insure a personal touch in the exercise of control. Units of local government were supposed to correspond with some set of personally manageable face-to-face networks: a "local area in which each inhabitant knows a large number of the others and is conscious of a considerable community of interest."<sup>124</sup> They were to place firsthand knowledge of local persons and conditions in the service of the state. Durham's first concern was for the efficient distribution of public money. Local councils could identify local needs invisible to a central authority, and were naturally more interested in promoting local development.<sup>125</sup> They could also do so more cheaply since they knew the availability and costs of local resources, and could more easily monitor the efficiency of the work done.

Scores of SARM resolutions show delegates to have been energetic in

**Table 1**  
**Occupations of Saskatchewan MLAs, 1912-1944**

	1912		1921		1934		1944	
	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.
Proprietary/managerial	12	6.6	7.5	2.3	5	2.2	1.5	.6
Professional	13	10.8	7	3.0	11	4.5	11	4.3
Clerical	0	—	2	.9	0	—	0	—
Commercial/financial	3.5	2.3	3	1.3	2.5	1.2	1	.6
Manufacturing/mechanical	1	.6	0	—	0	—	2.5	1.2
Construction	0	—	0	—	0	—	.5	.6
Labourers	0	—	0	—	0	—	0	—
Agricultural	16.5	.5	33.5	.9	23.5	.8	22.5	.7
Transportation/ communication	0	—	1	.5	1	.5	5	2.2
Service	0	—	0	—	0	—	1	.1
Unknown	7	—	6	—	12	—	10	—
Total	53		60		55		55	

Notes: "No." = number of MLAs. This figure includes fractions because when an individual is listed with two occupations each is counted as one-half. Census occupational categories are used. "Prop." = the factor by which the occupation is over (or under) represented in the legislature relative to its representation in the Saskatchewan work force. If the figure is less than 1 the occupation is underrepresented.

Sources: Pierre G. Normandin, *The Canadian Parliamentary Guide* (Ottawa: Syndicat D'Oeuvres Sociales Ltd., 1923); *Census of Canada*, 1951.

their pursuit of fiscal restraint. There is a populist flavour to their efforts to reduce the take of various experts and "middlemen" whose services the RM required: surveyors, equipment dealers or undertakers.<sup>126</sup> But despite the tremendous support for programs of rural health care, there is a strong undercurrent of resolutions resistant to carrying out social welfare functions: the "higher duty of the Municipality, the taking care of the poor, and needy and the sick."<sup>127</sup> RMs had their first real test as social welfare institutions in a brief period of drought and poor wheat prices immediately after World War I. From this period on the minutes show the delegates of SARM increasingly eager to rid themselves of responsibility for expenditures on various categories of individuals and programs.<sup>128</sup> The changing spirit was marked first by the *Western Municipal News* in 1922: "One does not like to hear of retrograde movements to disestablish an attitude of mind it has taken years to induce, as for instance, hot lunches in schools."<sup>129</sup>

In 1926 the premier complained to the executive of SARM that

your convention is very prolific with recommendations as to how the Government can undertake heavy expenditures on behalf of the rural municipalities, and at the same time requests that certain revenues now payable to the Government should be diverted wholly or partially to the municipalities.<sup>130</sup>

The government persistently refused to assume responsibility for the social welfare functions of the RMs.

Under strain, councils simply shifted the burden "downwards" onto individuals and their families. As a western observer complained in 1930:

the tendency of municipal councils is to respond to appeals as grudgingly as possible in the hope that applicants for relief may be compelled to utilize their own abilities to a greater extent, or, still better, remove to some other community.<sup>131</sup>

The original idea of putting "poor relief" in the hands of local councils was precisely that they would behave in this manner.<sup>132</sup> The English model was based on the assumption that individuals, not economic systems or regions, become subject to destitution. Consequently, the proportion of indigents should not be greater in any jurisdiction unless the poor were insufficiently disciplined and motivated to fend for themselves. This assumption was hopelessly out of tune with the realities of the drought and depression of the 1930s. The contradictions that it imposed upon councils were to decisively compromise their ability to play a progressive role in Saskatchewan politics.

Destitute farmers complained bitterly that councils were "hard boiled"<sup>133</sup> or presided over by "little Hitlers."<sup>134</sup> Many migrated to the cities, where relief schedules were more generous, and they could entertain a faint hope of finding work. They reported conditions on relief in the RMs to be "absolutely deplorable" and refused to return until "something was done."<sup>135</sup> The Saskatchewan Union of Unemployed, and the United Farmers, representing the interests of these migrants, petitioned the government to institute a universal standard of relief, but the government defended the principle of local discretion, arguing that local councils could best take into account variations in the cost of living. For instance, farmers in the north had plentiful supplies of wood for fuel, while those on the treeless plains had to buy coal; others had a few animals or a garden or could sell cream.<sup>136</sup> Councillors were expected to be personally acquainted with each case and to apply a kind of discretionary means test. They were also expected to make judgements of character and worthiness, as the premier illustrated in discounting a case of distress presented to him by the Union of Unemployed:

Premier: A fine example that is! He has three big boys all able to go out and work and he refuses to let them.

Mr. Hayes: He does not refuse.

Premier: When they want to go to work, he works on them and tells them not to go.<sup>137</sup>

But neither the low wheat prices nor the drought could be attributed to character. The idea of municipal councillors disciplining "the poor," their neighbours and fellow farmers, under these conditions is rather perverse. But the sad fact was that they were often left with no choice.<sup>138</sup> The problem was compounded by the fact that the effects of the drought were distributed regionally. In some RMs the majority of farmers were forced onto relief because of crop failure. These, of course, had the least revenue to pay for relief. Resentment was fuelled by the fact that farmers on relief were

Table 2 Involvement of Saskatchewan Farmer MLAs in Selected Organizations, 1912-1944								
	1912		1921		1934		1944	
	%	(no.)	%	(no.)	%	(no.)	%	(no.)
RM	14	(2)	33	(11)	41	(9)	14	(3)
Co-op	8	(1)	27	(9)	23	(5)	29	(6)
Farm Union	0	(0)	0	(0)	9	(2)	10	(2)

Note: These figures include only elected positions in each type of organization.  
Source: Pierre G. Normandin, *The Canadian Parliamentary Guide* (Ottawa: Syndicat D'Oeuvres Sociales Ltd.).

disqualified for office when they were unable to pay their taxes. As a UFC representative complained in 1936

we cannot get the people sympathetic to distress nominated, because they are not eligible. The attitude of the present council is "the more relief the more taxes I have to pay" — it is close to 4 mills on the dollar for assessment on relief.<sup>139</sup>

The strains of a failing capitalist economy were being shifted "downwards," such that the main sufferers were being disciplined by their peers. The role scripted for RM councillors in this crisis was that of Thomas Malthus, and many of them, seeing no option, played their part faithfully.<sup>140</sup> The damage which this did to the credibility of the RM as a vehicle for agrarian reform is evident in the striking shift in the backgrounds of farmers in the first CCF government of 1944. Only 10 percent of farmers had come from the ranks of local politicians, in contrast to 40 percent in 1936. CCF farmers were far more likely to have been involved with cooperative associations than local government (see Table 2).

In addition, the RM gradually lost many of its functions to the province, since standards for professional service increased, and the RM, on essentially a fixed income provided by land taxes, could not satisfy them. The last great exercise of the power of RMs was in resisting efforts during the 1950s to consolidate them into larger units which would have increased their resources and allowed them to take advantage of economies of scale. In doing so they insured their future irrelevance.

The dreary discipline of local administration contributed to the making of a class of farm leaders "fit for representative government" within the narrow constraints of a capitalist state. It is tempting to see this as a structural inevitability. However, what enlivens this particular history is all of the evidence to the contrary, showing that state-making was a human and fallible endeavour. To begin with, the RM was an example of bad design in the architecture of domination. The exclusion of small urban settlements meant that government could not use the talents of people within the business and professional classes who had already internalized the ethic that legislators saw as essential to the "responsible" exercise of state power. The failure to make use of these "local overseers" was hardly compensated for by efforts at indirect control through inspectorates. Professional inspectors, the mobile

links between the centre and its dispersed territories, were rendered ineffective by snow, mud and the general recalcitrance of the intended recipients of official "messages." A detailed history has yet to be written of the innovative and largely unrewarding efforts of government departments and agricultural extension services in the prairie west to improve channels of communication through road building, and the early promotion of electronic and visual media (telephones, radio, slide presentations and films).

The boundaries of the RM were also too small. This resulted, in part, from the failure of legislators to understand the dynamism of prairie space. As Lipset recognized, the fine jurisdictional grid demanded that an unusually large proportion of the agrarian population act as local leaders (and this proportion increased as farms expanded). The most significant consequence of numerous small units, unanticipated by legislators and unappreciated even by Lipset, was that they enabled SARM to claim legitimacy and influence on the basis of its broad representation. SARM delegates developed the legal expertise that enabled them to recognize the limits of RM powers and to hope that they might reform and expand them. Also unanticipated were the irrational restrictions which small jurisdictions placed on the distribution of economic assistance required by the crop failures of the 1930s. These exacerbated contradictions that RM councillors already found themselves in and led ultimately to their political marginalization. The RMs lost their hold on "the public confidence" and were not able to effectively "afford explanations" on behalf of the provincial state. They failed to perform the legitimization function which Poulett Thomson and other architects of the local state had intended for such bodies. This failure is surely one of the conditions that paved the way for the success of the CCF in 1944.

#### NOTES

1. B. Curtis, "Representation and State Formation in the Canadas, 1790-1850," *Studies in Political Economy* 28 (1989): 62.
2. A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 21.
3. For the explicit connection between state power and local "panoptisms," see M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 72; Hayden deserves mention here for her work on what Foucault would term the "tactics of the habitat": D. Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).
4. I am referring here to the Marxist geographers of the 1970s, in particular those in the tradition of Castells for whom the role of the state is crucial, see E. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 94-102, for a brief discussion of the literature. For the Canadian context see H. Chorney, "Amnesia, Integration and Repression: The Roots of Canadian Urban Political Culture," in M. Dear and A. Scott, eds., *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society* (London: Methuen, 1981). Boyer provides a more Foucaultian look at the role of the state: M. Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).
5. The debates of the 1970s have demolished the ontological status of "urban" and "rural" as meaningful explanatory referents. The explanatory value of (social) "space" has been repeatedly spared this fate; see R. Harris, "The Spatial Approach to the Urban Question:

- A Comment," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2 (1984); Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*; and J. Urry, "Capitalist Restructuring, Recomposition and the Regions," in Tony Bradley and Philip Lowe, eds., *Locality and Rurality* (Norwich: Geo Books, 1984).
6. More specifically, I am concerned with local *government* while Curtis, for example, is interested in the local *state* in the broader sense which includes educational institutions; see W. Magnusson, "Urban Politics and the Local State," *Studies in Political Economy* 16 (1985): 123.
  7. Non-geographers appear to have difficulty with this dialectic between physical instantiation (materiality) and process in social geography. Social geographers are mistakenly accused of "fetishizing space." Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* provides the most theoretically sophisticated account of this dialectic. The most commonsensical account is Langdon Winner's classic article, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* 109, no. 1 (1980): 121-36.
  8. There are a number of layers in the structuring of prairie space in the early 1900s. The influence of the state is evident in a number of them, notably through the Dominion Survey. See R. Bantjes, "Improved Earth: Land Settlement, Community and Class in Rural North America, 1900 to 1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1991).
  9. H. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950); H. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).
  10. See A. Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 157; A. Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 169-77.
  11. Thomson (Baron Sydenham after 1840) was governor of Lower and Upper Canada between 1839 and 1841 during which time he acted on many of the reforms of local government recommended by Lord Durham in his report: see C.P. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912).
  12. Cited in Curtis, "Representation and State Formation," 72.
  13. See for example, Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report*, 82.
  14. I am referring here primarily to the Marxist tradition. For a discussion see B. Jessop, *The Capitalist State* (Oxford: M. Robertson, 1982).
  15. The "socialist" Greater London Council provided a model for many of the New Left; see P. Dunleavy, *Urban Political Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1980). For a discussion of the literature on the general question of the relationship between urban geography and class formation see R. Harris, "Residential Segregation and Class Formation in the Capitalist City: A Review and Directions for Research," *Progress in Human Geography* 8 (1984) and J. Urry, "Localities, Regions and Social Class," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 5 (1981). Much of this literature is concerned with how the state has acted to inhibit class formation within the city.
  16. Skocpol has been the most vocal proponent of reconsidering the independent causal role of purely organizational processes. See T. Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back in Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
  17. The way in which I balance agency and structure might be defended by reference to Giddens, but in fact it owes more to Max Weber and Dorothy Smith. See D. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987).
  18. S. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism* (1950; Berkeley, CA: Paperback Edition, 1971), 245.
  19. While a distinction must be made between economic "class position" and the "social formation" of classes, I do not take an essentialist stance on the former. Both are subject, to differing degrees, to process. For a similar position, see Urry, "Localities, Regions and Social Class."

20. K. Crawford, *Canadian Municipal Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), 42.
21. The RMs usually consisted of nine “townships,” each six miles square. In western Canada, townships were simply units of survey, not to be confused with American townships which were often administrative units as well.
22. See *Canadian Annual Review*(CAR) (1909): 524.
23. For a more complete account of the functions of the department and the minister attached to it, see below.
24. For a description of the extent and limited functions of Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) see Crawford, *Canadian Municipal Government*, 44. At the LID Association meeting in 1908, “In a general way the Report and conclusions of the Municipal Commission were endorsed,” CAR (1908): 485.
25. The name changed in 1911, however, I have used “SARM” throughout to avoid confusion. All conventions (of both the urban and rural associations) are numbered from the first convention of the Saskatchewan Union of Urban Municipalities in 1906.
26. The reports of numbers rarely distinguish elected councillors and reeves from visitors. When they do, the number of visitors is as high as 200. After 1914 the total number reported never dropped below 600.
27. *Western Municipal News* (WMN) 12, no. 4 (1917): 100.
28. The departments of Municipal Affairs and of Highways, the Bureau of Public Health (later the Department of Public Health).
29. These meetings had been taking place since the first Saskatchewan LID Association convention in which RMs were represented, in 1908. They were held before the opening of the legislature from 1913 onwards, WMN 8, no. 1 (1913): 5. While SARM conventions typically took place in Regina during the legislative session, the influence of its resolutions was not dependent on the timing and place of the annual meeting.
30. Saskatchewan Archives Board-Saskatoon (SAB-S) (micro), address of George Langley, minister of Municipal Affairs, SARM, Sixteenth Annual Convention, 1921, report, “I was present when they [the executive] waited on the government. They read out the resolution [no. 1] and I called attention to it. I said: ‘That is rather an extraordinary resolution. Did the convention thoroughly discuss it?’ And Mr. Hingley who was spokesman said: ‘Well, no, they did not. As a matter of fact it was brought before the convention close to the end of the session and no one felt inclined to discuss it and so it was put to the meeting and carried.’ Then I put the question: ‘What do you think of it?’ And one of the other men, not the secretary, I will not mention his name, said: ‘Well, we do not think much of it either.’ ... I thought you should know the facts because it will give you an idea of why all your resolutions are not passed into law.”
31. Ibid. For other examples of the genre, see: Saskatchewan LID Association, Fifth Annual Convention, March 1910, Saskatoon, reported in WMN 5, no. 4 (1910): 72; SARM, Sixth Annual Convention, 15-16 March 1911, Moose Jaw, reported in WMN 6, no. 4 (1911): 122.
32. The words are George Langley’s (minister of Municipal Affairs) quoted in CAR (1913): 612; for prewar optimism generally, see “The Saskatchewan Convention,” WMN 19, no. 4 (1913): 923.
33. CAR (1913): 609, 612.
34. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism*, 259; CAR (1912): 552-53; for the farmers’ own assessment, see “The Saskatchewan Convention,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, 28 January 1914, p. 6.
35. “The Vice President Speaks,” address to the Saskatchewan LID Association, Fifth Annual Convention, 16-17 March 1910, Saskatoon, reported in WMN 5, no. 4 (1910): 72.
36. There were no references to its annual conventions in the *Grain Growers’ Guide* through

- the important years of 1913-16 when health care was being discussed and Violet McNaughton was appealing to the farm movement to work through the municipality.
37. At least two mutual insurance companies operated in the prairie region before 1911: the Provincial Mutual Hail Insurance Company (formed 1891) and the Farmers' Mutual Hail Insurance Company (1899). Both were still in existence in 1905 (SAB-S, Department of Agriculture, hail insurance files, unidentified Manitoba newspaper).
  38. In 1912 certain lands could be withdrawn at the request of individual owners. After 1916 the scheme was overhauled making individual option one of the new features, see G.E. Hingley, "Municipal Hail Insurance System Outlined," *Public Service Monthly* (May 1925): 150.
  39. A.F. Mantle, deputy minister of Agriculture, proceedings of SARM, Eighth Annual Convention, Prince Albert, 1913, reported in WMN 8, no. 4 (1913): 159-60.
  40. President's address to the Saskatchewan LID Association Fourth Annual Convention, March 1909, Regina, reported in WMN 4, no. 5 (1909): 11-36.
  41. Saskatchewan LID Association, Second Annual Convention, 7-8 April 1908, Regina, reported in WMN 3, no. 5 (1908): 745, resolution 11. This proposal was defeated.
  42. Proceedings of SARM, Ninth Annual Convention, 3 March 1914, Regina, reported in CAR (1914): 641: "(5) That rural municipalities should be given authority to finance the farmers from one marketing season to another by the issue of Provincial currency or negotiable scrip on the security of grain in store"; Henry Soresen (Alberta Reeve), "Rural Municipal Banks," WMN 10, no. 6 (1915): 171, proposal made at the "Convention of the Rural Municipalities in Calgary."
  43. Saskatchewan LID Association, Second Annual Convention, 7-8 April 1908, Regina (government ownership of all railways); proceedings of SARM, Sixth Annual Convention, March 1911, Moose Jaw, reported in WMN 6, no. 5 (1911): 157 (government ownership of the proposed Hudson's Bay railway, whose construction was repeatedly demanded by SARM).
  44. For example, SARM annual conventions: 1912 (taxing of CPR land grants not under cultivation); 1913 (railway liability for killed animals); 1914 (independently operated, Dominion financed weigh scales; control of implement salesmen); 1915 (regulating mill owners); 1924 (grading and inspecting wheat).
  45. For example SARM annual conventions: 1917 (demand for independent weigh scales); 1919 (in favour of fixing the price of wheat); 1921 (continuation of government seed grain purchasing); 1922 (against excessive bank charges); 1922 (for the continuance of the National Grain Board); 1924 (criticism of grading and inspecting of wheat at the Winnipeg Grain Exchange); 1925 (favouring branch line construction in unserviced areas).
  46. Proceedings of SARM, Eighth Annual Convention, Prince Albert, March 1913, reported in WMN 8, no. 4 (1913): 123.
  47. SAB-S (micro), SARM, Nineteenth Annual Convention, March 1924, Regina, resolution 37a: "We hereby endorse the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and urge that every member present help put the Wheat Pool over"; resolution 106: in favour of turning over \$50,000 left over from the Wheat Board to the Wheat Pool organizing committee (Board of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Ltd.).
  48. J. Bayne, "Municipal Responsibility in Regard to Economic Development of the Land," Appendix 9, in *Report of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Commission of Conservation* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1919), 118.
  49. Report of secretary-treasurer to SARM, WMN 8, no. 5 (1913): 161.
  50. "Adoption of Canadian Tax System Urged," *Bismarck Weekly Tribune*, 18 January 1917, p. 3; Bayne, "Municipal Responsibility," 118.
  51. SAB-S (micro), SARM, Seventh Annual Convention, 1912, resolution 24. The province

- instead diverted all proceeds to its own general coffers in 1917, Bayne, "Municipal Responsibility," 118.
52. The Commission, headed by Clifford Sifton, was "an autonomous federal-provincial body" whose function was to study and make recommendations on the efficient use of Canadian natural resources, "including human life." It operated from 1909 to January of 1921. See M. Simpson, "Thomas Adams in Canada, 1914-1930," *Urban History Review* 11, no. 2 (1982): 3, 9.
  53. See T. Adams, *Rural Planning and Development* (Ottawa: Commission of Conservation of Canada, 1917). In an address given to the Conference on Urban and Rural Development, Winnipeg, May 1917, Adams argued for instance that "We need: ... To provide facilities for cooperation, rural credit, education and social intercourse." See also T. Adams, "Planning and Development of Land," WMN 12, no. 9 (1917): 27-57. Adams was heir to the conservative tradition of Robert Owen, a kind of "utopian Conservative."
  54. Adams, *Rural Planning*, 20.
  55. V. McNaughton, "The Municipal Unit," WMN 11, no. 7 (1916): 199.
  56. S. Steer, "The Beliefs of Violet McNaughton: Adult Educator 1909-1929" (M.A. thesis, Department of Continuing Education, University of Saskatchewan, 1979), 91.
  57. On the support of the Saskatchewan Medical Association for municipal hospitals see H.G. Nyblett, "Municipal Hospitals," WMN 3, no. 1 (1908): 635; for a later example see "Commissioner Yorath Urges Free Hospital Treatment to Poor," WMN 17, no. 3 (1922): 85.
  58. M. Bow, "Public Health," WMN 7, no. 8 (1912): 249. Violet McNaughton used similar terms, drawn from the same reform discourse, five years later in her address to the 1917 SARM convention.
  59. J.M. Uhrich, "Public Health Movement is Reviewed by Minister," *Public Service Monthly* (December 1923): 8.
  60. Similar provision to hire a municipal nurse was enacted in 1917, see Steer, "Beliefs of Violet McNaughton," 91.
  61. One RM had a scheme of free coverage operating in 1916 ("Our Welfare Page," *The Saturday Press and Prairie Farm*, 6 May 1916, p. 5). SARM had earlier, in 1914, proposed a land grant as a means of recompense to doctors, see J. Feather, and V. Matthews, "Early Medical Care in Saskatchewan," *Saskatchewan History* 37, no. 2 (1984): 51.
  62. Feather and Matthews, "Early Medical Care," 52.
  63. Ibid., 47; see also the work of the Chief Provincial Sanitary Inspector, T. Watson, "Rural Sanitation," WMN 14, no. 2 (1919): 39-41; and "Medical Aid" in the 1917 minutes of the SGGA on the problems of organizing.
  64. Saskatchewan, Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, *Rural Roads and Local Government*, Report no. 4, (Regina: Queen's Printer, 1955), 152.
  65. SAB-S (micro), SARM, Fifteenth Annual Convention, 1920, resolution 16.
  66. SAB-S (micro), SARM, Sixteenth Annual Convention, 1921.
  67. SAB-S (micro), SARM convention minutes, 1925, "Report of the 'Trustees of the Pool'."
  68. Saskatchewan Archives Board-Regina (SAB-R), minutes of conference between SARM executive and the government, 13 June 1928, 2.
  69. "New Sanatoria Act," WMN 24, no. 4 (1929): 96.
  70. Ibid., 3.
  71. SAB-S, conference between the executive of SARM and the government, 22 October 1936, 18.
  72. WMN 15, no. 4 (1920): 102-3.

73. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report*, 143.
74. *Ibid.*, 26.
75. "Open-country" communities did crystallize connecting dispersed farmsteads. As these rarely had any geographic focus other than an isolated rural school house, urban commentators had difficulty recognizing their existence. See Bantjes, "Improved Earth."
76. For reasons for Conservative opposition to RM see *CAR* (1908), 496; for arguments for the reestablishment of counties, see T. Patrick, "The County System for Saskatchewan, An Urgently Needed Reform," *WMN* 16, no. 3 (1921): 183; "Should We Have Counties?" *WMN* 17, no. 6 (1922): 171.
77. "Scenes of Bedlam," *Regina Daily Standard*, 7 April 1908, 1.
78. "Citizens in the Making," *WMN* 3, no. 5 (1908): 745.
79. *WMN* 5, no. 4 (1910): 99.
80. "Finer than Ever," *WMN* 8, no. 4 (1913): 121.
81. *CAR* (1909): 535.
82. For examples of this expectation see: "Address of Hon. Mr. McConnell [minister of Municipal Affairs]," *WMN* 26, no. 5 (1931): 159; "Story of the Grain Growers' Struggle for Government Ownership and Operation of Elevators at Country Points," *Grain Growers' Guide* (June 1908), p. 6: "The government declined to act on the request of the Grain Growers alone, but agreed to call a Conference of Reeves and others for June 5th and 6th, and declared themselves prepared to carry out the findings of that Conference."
83. The full staff of the Department in 1910 consisted of "One chief clerk, one accountant, two inspectors, one cashier, four assistant cashiers, eleven clerks, seven stenographers." Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report, 1909-10* (Regina: Government Printer, 1910), 11.
84. J. Bayne, "Saskatchewan's Centralized Supervision of Municipalities Gives Satisfaction," *National Municipal Review* 15, no. 12 (1926): 689-93.
85. A debenture is a loan for the purchase of some municipal asset whose benefits are expected to accrue over the long term. Short-term borrowing did not require approval.
86. For a detailed list of the possible spending mistakes of municipalities, see: "Local Government Board," *Public Service Monthly* 4 (1915): 112-14.
87. Bayne, "Saskatchewan's Centralized Supervision of Municipalities," 692.
88. Union of Saskatchewan Municipalities, Seventh Annual Convention, 26-28 June 1912, Prince Albert, reported in *WMN* 7, no. 8 (1912): 237. See resolutions 5 and 8, and the discussion of the latter.
89. See for example, "The Wants of Rural Municipalities," address of J.N. Bayne to the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, Saskatoon, 15-17 July 1913 reported in *WMN* 8, no. 9 (1913): 281.
90. "Rural Municipal Bill for Saskatchewan," *WMN* 3, no. 6 (1908): 791, an assessor was also required but this office could be, and usually was, performed by the secretary-treasurer.
91. Just over half of RM used CAs as auditors, see *WMN* 16, no. 3 (1921): 69.
92. In 1913, forty-two RM had hired full or part-time weed inspectors, "Agricultural Secretaries in Rural Areas," *Public Service Monthly* 2 (1913): 14.
93. "A Weed Inspector's Report," *WMN* 11, no. 9 (1916): 262.
94. "Municipalities as Related to Agriculture," address by A.F. Mantle, deputy minister of Agriculture, SARM, Tenth Annual Convention, 1915, reported in *WMN* 10, no. 4 (1915): 96.

95. See SAB-R, circulars to agricultural societies from the Department of Agriculture, 1898-1939.
96. The deputy minister of Agriculture lamented this fact in a letter to C.F. Bailey, assistant deputy minister of Agriculture for Ontario, 15 April 1915, (SAB-S).
97. SAB-S (micro), "President's Address," SARM, Eleventh Annual Convention, 1916. The program was popular with Boards of Trade since it proposed an individualistic solution to farmers' economic troubles. See for example the Weyburn Board of Trade (SAB-R, letter from the superintendent of the Credit Department of the Weyburn Security Bank to Auld, deputy minister of Agriculture, 17 August 1928).
98. W. Baker, "The Historical Development of Extension in Saskatchewan," unpublished manuscript, University of Saskatchewan Archives, 1949, p. 10.
99. See "Increased Production and Greater Efficiency in Farming," (SAB-S, SGGA Convention proceedings, 1915, 2). The editor of the *Grain Growers' Guide* was apparently at odds with SGGA delegates on this issue, (cf. SAB-S, letter, 21 December 1914, deputy minister of Agriculture to G.F. Chipman, editor and manager of the *Grain Growers' Guide*; and "Making a Business of Farming," *Grain Growers' Guide*, 6 February 1915, p. 12).
100. Municipal Commission, *Report* (Regina: n.p., 1907), 20.
101. D. Willmott, "The Formal Organizations of Saskatchewan Farmers," in A.W. Rasporich, ed., *Western Canada: Past and Present* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 29; The RM office could provide resources such as a typewriter, and could take responsibility for the collection of dues and administration of funds. In many instances they were willing to bend the rules; for instance, to contribute money for a speaker in the Wheat Pool drive (SAB-S, Wheat Pool Organization, 1923).
102. E.M. Wood (secretary-treasurer, Board of Health, Manitoba): "Practical suggestions for raising the standard of municipal health officers," WMN 7, no. 1 (1912): 3a, mentions "totally inadequate salaries" and "ridiculously low fees." The "first rural full-time medical health officer in Saskatchewan" was appointed in 1945, see WMN 41, no. 4 (1946): 107.
103. The Public Health Act of 1909 established every municipal board as a unit of the Provincial Bureau of Health; see M. Seymour, "Public Health Work in Saskatchewan," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 15 (1925): 271-78. An unusual degree of authority was conferred upon the Bureau's commissioner (Seymour) who had the power to review all local health legislation, see "Health Legislation," WMN 5, no. 5 (1910): 132-33.
104. See also M. Seymour, "The Seymour Plan," *Canadian Public Health Journal* 17 (1926): 593-96, for an example of the deputy minister of Health's approach to mobilizing support for his vaccination scheme.
105. Baker, "Historical Development of Extension," p. 10. District representatives were financed and directed by the province. The four in 1915 were subsidized by a federal grant, (SAB-S, letter, 28 April 1926, deputy minister of Agriculture to John M. Trueman, acting director, agricultural agents, Agricultural College, Truro, NS). By 1938 the number had been increased to fourteen, (SAB-S, circular letter from Auld to agricultural representatives, 10 August, 1938).
106. R. Bantjes, "Improved Earth: Travel on the Canadian Prairies, 1920-1950," *Journal of Transport History* 13, no. 2 (1993): 115-40.
107. "Address of John Anderson, chief municipal inspector," WMN 15, no. 5 (1920): 147.
108. T. Watson, "Rural Sanitation," WMN 14, no. 2 (1919): 39-41.
109. WMN 7, no. 4 (1912): 101.
110. The minister of Education made the government's position very clear to the executive of the School Trustees Association, another provincial association claiming representative status: "These conventions ... can give suggestions all they like but they are not going to

- be consulted before things are done. There is a properly elected legislative body." (SAB-R, Official Report of Conference Between Representatives of the School Trustees Association and the Government of Saskatchewan, 28 September 1927.)
111. C.A. Dunning, provincial treasurer, used the expression in his argument that this mundane discipline tempers radical impulses, see SAB-S (micro), SARM, Seventeenth Annual Convention, 1922.
112. The words are those of J.J. Smith, deputy minister of Municipal Affairs, see SAB-S (micro), SARM, Eighteenth Annual Convention, 1923.
113. Inclusion of improvements reflected the "actual value of the land," see Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, "The Rural Municipality Act," in *Annual Report*, 1921-22 (Regina: King's Printer, 1922), 7.
114. There are scores of papers and addresses in the WMN on this topic: see for example, J. Ollier, "Good Roads Movement is an Important Progressive Agency in National Life," WMN 17, no. 6 (1922): 169.
115. Bantjes, "Improved Earth: Travel."
116. Women were eligible to vote and hold municipal office in 1916, see WMN 11, no. 11 (1916): 332. The property qualification appears to have been removed for "farmers' wives" in 1917, see WMN 12, no. 5 (1917): 157.
117. WMN 10, no. 4 (1915): 94.
118. Councillors' local knowledge was an important ingredient in the prevailing "rule of thumb" approach to land assessment: "it is hard to substitute anything for the good judgement of a competent assessor and a wise council board" (WMN 8, no. 10 (1913): 331).
119. Taxation rates began to be reviewed and readjusted in 1922, see Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, "The Saskatchewan Assessment Commission," *Annual Report*, 1921-22 (Regina: King's Printer, 1922). In 1937 efforts were intensified to make assessment more "scientific," and in 1945 the function was finally transferred to the province (Saskatchewan, Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, *Rural Roads and Local Government*).
120. It should however be noted that they were always underrepresented relative to their proportion of the work force.
121. See, for example, Robert J. Brym, "Regional Social Structure and Agrarian Radicalism in Canada," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 15 (1978): 346.
122. This fact was frequently commented upon. See for example, "Municipal Men at the Helm," WMN 16, no. 9 (1921): 237; SAB-S (micro), address of C.M. Hamilton, minister of Agriculture, to SARM Sixteenth Annual Convention, 1921. I have calculated that in 1923 RM councillors were roughly ten times more likely than other farmers to become MLAs. I calculate the likely percentage of farmers in the general population with RM experience at 3 percent, assuming that there were 2,107 positions to fill, and that between 1908 (when RMs were formed) and 1923, each position was occupied an average of seven years (based on tenures in RM offices of men listed in Pierre G. Normandin, *The Canadian Parliamentary Guide* (Ottawa: Syndicat D'Oeuvres Sociales Ltd., 1923)).
123. Curtis, "Representation and State Formation," 71.
124. 1940 Sirois Commission on Dominion Provincial Relations, quoted in F. Pohlman, "Functions of Rural Municipal Government," WMN 41, no. 4 (1946): 101.
125. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report*, 184-85.
126. SAB-S (micro), SARM convention minutes, 1924, 1925.
127. See for example, SARM convention minutes: 1920, (Resolution 11, attempt to be divested of responsibility for aged and "incurables"); 1921, (Resolution 71, Province rather than RMs should contribute to foster homes under the Child Protection Act). Minutes of the

- conference between the government and the executive of SARM, 22 June 1926, p. 29, (shifting responsibility for delinquent children; cheaper accommodation for neglected children); similar conference, 19 October 1927, p. 19, (poll tax for indigent fund); p. 20 (shifting responsibility for transient farm labourers); p. 37 (shifting responsibility for indigent patients).
128. Indicative of this theme is the protracted struggle over the definition of "indigent." RMs were responsible for a wide range of expenses for residents deemed indigent, and sought to restrict the definition. See WMN 19, no. 4 (1924): 923; 25, no. 9 (1930): 265; SARM 26th convention, Prince Albert, 4-6 March 1931, reported in WMN 26, no. 3 (1931): 81-82.
129. WMN 17, no. 4 (1922): 101.
130. SAB-S (micro), SARM, Twenty-first Annual Convention, 1926.
131. R. Fagan, "Problems of Relief in Rural Municipalities," WMN 25, no. 11 (1930): 349-50, paper presented to the Social Welfare Conference, Winnipeg, 7-9 October 1930.
132. In Saskatchewan, relief of the indigent was not in fact a legal but a "moral" responsibility. Medical treatment for the indigent sick was a legal responsibility, WMN 25, no. 6 (1930): 171, address of J.J. Smith.
133. SAB-R, "Conference between the Government of Saskatchewan and Delegation representing Sask. Union of Unemployed," 16 June 1936, p. 10.
134. SAB-S, letter, John Crowley to Hon. J.G. Taggart, minister of Agriculture, 6 July 1933.
135. SAB-R, conference between the government and the Saskatchewan Union of Unemployed, 16 June 1936, p. 3.
136. Ibid., minutes of the "Conference between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Executive of the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section," 28 July 1936, pp. 8-12.
137. SAB-R, conference, Saskatchewan Union of Unemployed, 1936, p. 14.
138. A punitive attitude is evident in a number of SARM resolutions during the 1930s; for example: SAB-R, minutes of conference between the government and the executive of SARM, 22 October 1936: asking for the power to evict squatters, p. 16; to prevent unlawful cohabitation (and the potential RM responsibility for illegitimate children), p. 17.
139. SAB-R, minutes of a "Conference between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Executive of the United Farmers of Canada Saskatchewan Section," 28 July 1936, p. 7.
140. There is also evidence of political favouritism in the distribution of relief; abuses of Liberal councils are most often cited, probably because there were more of them, see J. Pitsula, "The CCF Government in Saskatchewan and Social Aid, 1944-64," in J. William Brennan, ed., *Building the Co-operative Commonwealth: Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985). Conservative councils were also culpable (letter from Thomas Orr, agricultural representative, to Auld, 13 April 1935).

# A Populist in Municipal Politics:

## Cornelius Rink, 1909-1914

J. William Brennan

**ABSTRACT.** In the golden age of western boosterism before World War I a variety of "populist" and labour politicians emerged to challenge the business elite's hegemony in local government. A few won seats on city councils, including recently arrived immigrant and small businessman Cornelius Rink in Regina. This article demonstrates that Rink's political success lay in his ability to forge a broad electoral coalition with a vaguely populist appeal that transcended ethnic and class divisions. He won election to city council three times, but a bid for the mayoralty failed in 1914 when his foreign birth counted heavily against him.

Cornelius Rink was thus something of a transitional figure in local politics, for after 1914 the strongest challenge to the business elite would come from a succession of labour aldermen elected with the votes of immigrant and working-class Reginans.

**SOMMAIRE.** Avant la Grande Guerre, à l'âge d'or du «boostérisme» dans l'Ouest canadien, plusieurs hommes politiques «populistes» et d'obédience syndicaliste s'opposèrent à l'hégémonie des hommes d'affaires dans l'administration municipale. Quelques-uns accédèrent à l'échevinage, dont un petit entrepreneur réginois et immigrant de fraîche date, Cornelius Rink. Ses succès politiques se fondaient sur sa capacité de réunir une large coalition d'électeurs grâce à des accents vaguement populistes qui transcendaient les barrières ethniques et de classe. Trois fois élu échevin, il fut pourtant défait dans la course à la mairie en 1914, alors que son origine étrangère le desservit puissamment.

Le personnage de Cornelius Rink marque donc une transition en politique municipale puisqu'après 1914, ce furent des échevins syndicalistes, élus grâce aux votes des immigrants et de la classe ouvrière, qui s'élèverent contre l'élite des gens d'affaires de Regina.

The two decades prior to World War I were the golden age of "boosterism" in western Canada. Boosterism, Alan Artibise has emphasized, was something more than mindless rhetoric and something less than a precise ideology. At its core was a belief in the desirability of rapid and sustained economic growth at the expense of virtually all other considerations.<sup>1</sup> Business elites and local governments worked hand in hand to attract people, lure railways and bonus industries, confident that a larger city would be a greater city. In anticipation of future growth, and to accommodate local real estate interests, prairie cities brought vast tracts of vacant or nearly vacant property within their boundaries. Booster-dominated city councils then proceeded to provide these suburban areas with sidewalks, sewer and water lines and often even streetcar service. Far less attention was paid to the needs of those neighbourhoods which were predominantly working-class or which were populated largely by recently arrived European immigrants. In 1914 many still lacked even the most rudimentary amenities.

In their pursuit of growth and metropolitan stature, boosters fostered the myth of a shared sense of community. In their view, all residents of the city were committed to its growth and shared a common belief in its destiny. That the myth did not accord with reality became increasingly apparent after the turn of the century. As prairie cities grew larger, and their populations became more diverse, a variety of "populist" and "labour" (moderate socialist) politicians emerged to challenge the business elite's hegemony in local government and local politics. Although a restrictive franchise posed a considerable obstacle, a few managed to gain seats on city councils.

We still know relatively little about these men.<sup>2</sup> What was their background? What was the basis of their critique of the local business elite's ideology and priorities? What differentiated populist and socialist politicians at the level of municipal politics? Where did their electoral support come from? Did they draw their support from the same voters? The answers to these questions might be found by examining the political careers of some of these individuals in greater detail.

In Regina it was not organized labour, or socialist politicians claiming to speak for labour, who were the first to criticize the local business elite and their "booster" policies. It was populist, Cornelius Rink. He managed to forge a broad electoral coalition with a vaguely populist appeal that transcended the city's ethnic and class divisions. With such an appeal Rink was able to win election to city council three times, but a bid for the mayoralty in 1914 fell short. The 1914 municipal election proved to be a watershed for Cornelius Rink; it effectively marked the end of the first phase of a somewhat erratic political career that would resume only in the mid-1920s. It was also a turning point in local politics, for after 1914 the strongest challenge to the business elite's hegemony in Regina would come from a succession of socialist parties.

Many of the details of Cornelius Rink's early life remain unclear. He was born in Hedel, Holland on 16 September 1871, but left as a young man to seek his fortune in South Africa. A newspaper obituary gives the date of his leaving as 1891, a family history 1895. Rink found employment with the Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij (NZASM), a Dutch-German consortium which had been given a monopoly for the construction of railway lines in the Transvaal. The most important of these, linking the gold fields at Johannesburg with the capital, Pretoria, and Lourenço Marques, a port on the Indian Ocean in Portuguese East Africa, was completed in 1894. Rink eventually rose to the position of chief clerk in the NZASM.

Rink's life took another turn in 1899, when tensions over the Transvaal's treatment of Uitlanders (the foreigners, largely British, who had flocked to the colony with the discovery of gold in 1886) precipitated a war with Great Britain. All able-bodied men in the Transvaal were obliged to become proficient in the use of a Mauser rifle, but the details of Rink's service in the Boer army are sketchy. It is said that he served as a sharpshooter under General Louis Botha, and took part in the siege of Ladysmith in the early months of the war. Later Rink was captured at Zuurfontein and taken to Johannesburg, which was securely under British control. He remained a prisoner for only a short time. A British doctor who had also worked for the NZASM intervened on Rink's behalf and he was released on parole.

At war's end North America beckoned. Rink arrived in New York in 1902, and apparently found work there in the insurance business. His stay in New York must have been short, for he does not appear in the city's business directories. Other equally brief stops followed in Chicago and possibly Cleveland before Rink headed north to Winnipeg in 1906. The

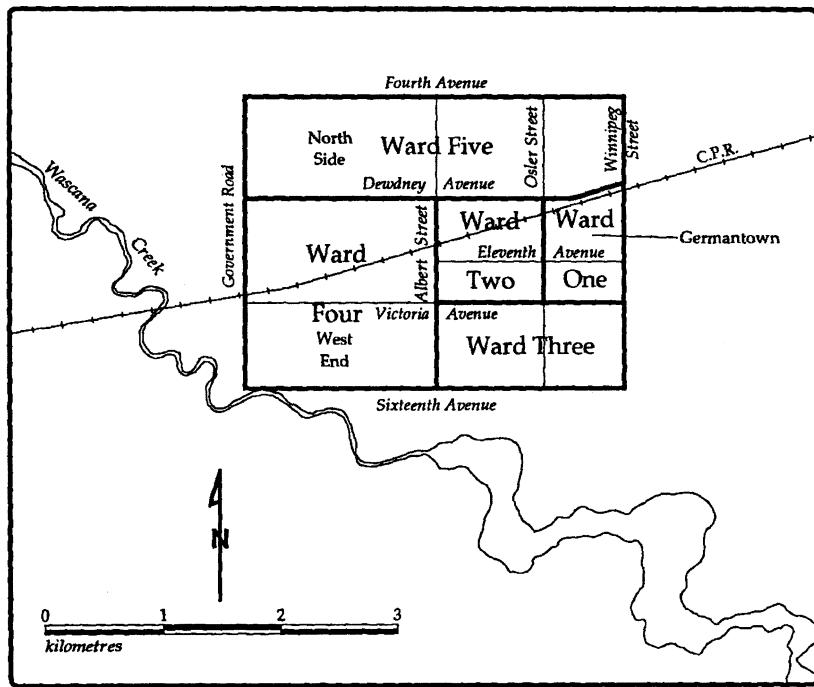


Figure 1. Regina's Wards, 1909-1910.

following year he was on the move again, to Regina. When he first arrived, Rink boarded with a German carpenter, Jakob Zerr, who lived in the city's increasingly cosmopolitan "East End," or "Germantown" as it was popularly known (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

Why Regina? It was small, compared even to Winnipeg at the time, let alone Chicago or New York. But the prospects were encouraging for a newcomer of modest means, as Rink must have been. Regina had been founded in 1882. It had grown slowly at first, but its fortunes were on the rise by the time Cornelius Rink arrived. A flurry of railway building was opening previously remote areas of Saskatchewan to settlement, and creating wider markets for those in Regina who engaged in retail and wholesale trade. Newcomers were arriving in the province by the tens of thousands (31,409 in 1907 alone), most to take up land, and wheat acreage and wheat production were beginning to soar. By 1913 a total of twelve railway lines would radiate from the city, bringing some 250 towns and villages across southern Saskatchewan within Regina's trading area. Regina also became a major shipping and distribution point, particularly for farm implements. By 1913 it was estimated that nearly 1,000 Reginans worked in the city's agricultural implement warehouses. Thirty of the sixty-seven wholesale firms in the province were located in Regina, and in 1913 they handled more than half of Saskatchewan's general wholesale business.

A considerable building boom was also underway in this growing city (Regina's population rose from 6,169 in 1906 to 30,213 in 1911). It proved

particularly beneficial to real estate firms, contractors, lumber and other building supply companies, and businesses which provided financial services. In 1908 (the first year for which statistics are available) there were seventeen building contractors in Regina and thirty-seven real estate firms. At the height of the prewar boom, in 1912, the respective totals were 74 and 157.<sup>4</sup>

Rink himself was attracted to real estate and insurance. His firm, the Rink Land Company, first appeared in the 1908 city directory with an office on Tenth Avenue in Germantown. To assist in the work Rink hired Toma McRadu. Rumanian by birth, Toma Radu (McRadu would come later) had come to the North-West Territories in 1903. He had settled near Southey, north of Regina, and like Rink subsequently moved to the provincial capital in 1907. By 1912 they were partners in the Rink-Toma Land Company, with offices in the New Engel Block on Eleventh Avenue opposite the city market. Advertising in German and Rumanian as well as English, the Rink-Toma Land Company dealt in farmland and city lots; sold fire, life and hail insurance; and had money to loan. In 1913 Rink also began to build houses.<sup>5</sup> He put down other roots in the city. In 1909 he married Frances Zerr, whom he had first met while boarding with her parents. Their first child, a son, was born in 1912; a daughter followed in 1913.<sup>6</sup>

When Cornelius Rink arrived in Regina, municipal politics and government were still the near-exclusive preserve of businessmen. As in other prairie cities, there was a property qualification for voting and for those who sought civic office.<sup>7</sup> The mayor was elected at large, the aldermen from individual wards first created in 1906. There were five wards, with two aldermen elected in each for a two-year term. The terms were staggered so that half of city council was obliged to seek reelection each year. The ward system was falling into disrepute among municipal reformers in Canada and the United States by this time, but in Regina there was considerable support for it, particularly in the working-class neighbourhoods that were beginning to appear north of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) main line and of course in Germantown. The adoption of the ward system certainly contributed to a broadening of council membership. In 1906 L.L. Kramer, a German (and a school principal), became the first of his nationality to gain a seat on city council. He was joined by another German, F.X. Kusch, in 1907. Kramer built up a strong following, and carried the ward again in 1908. The interests of the "North Side" were also more effectively represented. Prior to the division of the city into wards, no one residing north of the CPR tracks had ever sat on city council; between 1906 and 1914, when the wards were abolished, all of the aldermen but one elected in Ward Five lived there.<sup>8</sup>

Individual aldermen wielded considerable influence on city council and on its standing committees. (The most important committees were those which dealt with finance, public works and Regina's municipally owned electric power plant.) With the increasing complexity of municipal government and administration Regina followed the lead of other prairie cities, notably Edmonton, and in 1910 superimposed a board of commissioners on

top of the existing council and its standing committees. There were initially two city commissioners, one of whom was the mayor. Together they exercised broad administrative powers at City Hall.<sup>9</sup>

The priorities of prewar city councils in Regina were essentially the priorities of the business community. One group of businessmen were particularly well represented around the council table: those who had a direct interest in Regina's real estate and construction boom. Of the seventy men who held the offices of mayor and alderman between 1904 and 1913, slightly more than half earned their livelihood principally from real estate (10), finance (17) or construction (10).<sup>10</sup> Real estate dealers and others who had an interest in suburban property were among the strongest proponents of the expansion of Regina's boundaries, for example. And when city council increased Regina's area from three to nearly thirteen square miles in 1911, they were the principal beneficiaries. Once brought within the city limits, their subdivisions were more likely to obtain sewer and water service, sidewalks and even streetcar lines, for by 1911 Regina also boasted a street railway. Municipally owned, it was the first in the province and the object of considerable civic pride.

From the outset real estate firms took a keen interest in this new municipal enterprise. The initial routes of the Regina Municipal Railway (RMR) were largely designed to serve the built-up areas of the city. The main east-west line ran along Eleventh Avenue from Winnipeg Street through Germantown and the downtown area to Albert Street. The completion of the Albert Street subway in 1911 provided access to the warehouses and residential neighbourhoods north of the CPR tracks. As a consequence, Albert Street became the main north-south link in the system, with the RMR cars running west along Thirteenth Avenue into the "West End" and east and west along Dewdney Avenue. Only one of the initial streetcar lines extended beyond the pre-1911 city limits, south on Albert Street across Wascana Creek to the Legislative Building. Coincidentally or not, it also provided a streetcar service to Lakeview, which partners E.A. and E.D. McCallum and W.H.A. Hill were promoting as Regina's most exclusive residential area.<sup>11</sup> It was not long before rival real estate firms began to clamour for the extension of streetcar lines to their subdivisions too, as will be seen.

It was in 1909 that Cornelius Rink first ventured into municipal politics. He must have become a naturalized British subject by this time, since this was another of the requirements which prospective aldermanic candidates were obliged to meet. He sought election in Ward One, which embraced Germantown (see Figure 1). Why was Cornelius Rink, only recently arrived in Regina, drawn to local politics? He may have been motivated by economic self-interest (a charge Rink would subsequently make often enough against other realtors). Or he may have been appalled that Germantown lacked most basic amenities, including running water and indoor toilets. Rink did promise if elected to make certain that Ward One received its share of civic improvements, but so did each of his rivals, Daniel Ehmann and Alfred I. Shaw. There was no incumbent in the race, Alderman F.X. Kusch having decided not to run again, but this proved of no advantage to Rink

**Table 1**  
**Election Results in Ward One, 1909-1913**

Year	Candidates	Candidate's Total Vote	Total Vote Polled	Candidate's % of Total Vote Polled	Number of Names on Voters' List
1909			216		n/a
	A.I. Shaw	77		35.6	
	D. Ehmann	74		34.3	
	C. Rink	65		30.1	
1911*			221		325
	C. Rink	117		53.0	
	J. McCarthy	104		47.0	
1911**			778		1,083
	C. Rink	255		32.8	
	T. Schmitz	241		31.0	
	R.G. Waddell	169		21.7	
	A.I. Shaw	113		14.5	
1913			927		2,289
	C. Rink	662		71.4	
	J.W. Ehmann	265		28.6	

\* By-election, 20 June 1911

\*\* Two aldermen elected

Sources: *Daily Province*, *Daily Standard*, *Morning Leader*, 1909-1913.

either. Shaw, the "English" candidate, won a narrow victory. Rink finished third (see Table 1).

It was rumoured in 1910 that Rink would make another run for a council seat. He did not; in fact, no one was prepared to challenge L.L. Kramer and he was elected by acclamation. But Kramer did not serve out his term, resigning in May 1911 to take a position with the provincial government. Rink did contest the by-election to fill the vacancy. This time he faced only one opponent, John McCarthy. Each angled for the decisive German vote. In an age when the municipal franchise was still based largely on the ownership of property, the number of qualified voters was small. There were only 325 names on the voters' list for this by-election in Ward One, and this would have included Reginans who lived in other wards but owned sufficient property in Germantown to qualify for a ballot there too. It was estimated that approximately 150 of these voters were of German origin and 100 English, with the remainder belonging to other nationalities.<sup>12</sup> At the packed meetings he addressed Rink could, and did, switch easily from German to English and back again. This, and the fact that there was no German candidate to split the vote as there had been in 1909, were probably the decisive factors in Rink's narrow victory over McCarthy (see Table 1).

It is not clear whether the new alderman had much to say at the first city council meetings he attended. Rink did cause something of a stir when he challenged the assessment in Ward One, claiming that it was too high in comparison with other and wealthier wards. However his colleagues refused

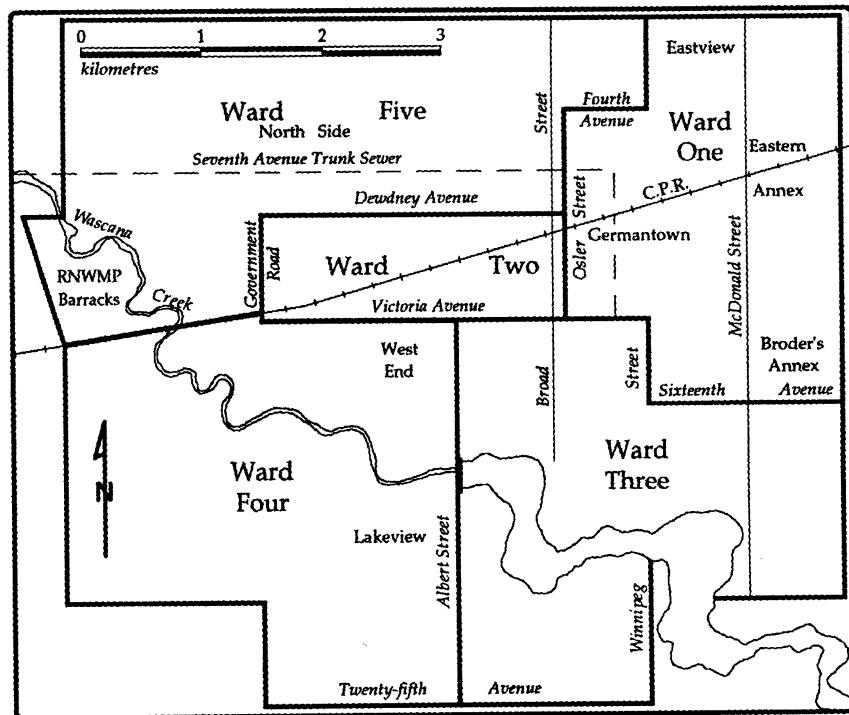


Figure 2. Regina's Wards, 1911-1914.

to change it.<sup>13</sup> If he spoke at length on other subjects, none of the city's three daily newspapers took notice.

The entire city council was obliged to seek reelection at the end of 1911, since the wards had been expanded to reflect Regina's new boundaries. Ward One now embraced not just Germantown but Broder's Annex, Eastview and other outlying subdivisions. Rink's election platform reflected this new reality. "As I am a property owner in every part of your Ward, including every Annex," he boasted, "you may rest assured that your interests are my interests and that I will do my utmost to advance them." He would press for the construction of water and sewer lines and for other local improvements, including "the extension of the Street Car system to the various Annexes."<sup>14</sup>

Rewarded with another two-year term by virtue of polling the largest vote in his ward (see Table 1), Rink was as good as his word. He continued to rail against the inequitable assessment in Ward One, though without much effect it would appear.<sup>15</sup> From his seat on the Works Committee and on city council Rink also pressed for more sidewalks and street lights and sewer and water connections. Improving sanitary conditions in Germantown, the oldest part of his ward, became his highest priority, but success did not come quickly or easily. The outdoor "privy" could not be eliminated until sewer lines were

extended into the ward. This in turn was dependent upon the construction of the main trunk sewer, which was being built from west to east across the city. The Seventh Avenue trunk sewer was completed as far east as Toronto Street by 1912. From there it turned south, reaching Victoria Avenue a year later (see Figure 2). Thus it was 1913 before the work of laying sewer (and water) lines in Germantown could finally begin.<sup>16</sup>

Cornelius Rink also took a keen interest in the extension of streetcar lines. So did his fellow aldermen. In 1912, and more particularly in 1913, they greatly expanded the RMR to keep pace with the city's burgeoning population and to generate more tax revenue in newly annexed areas. The terms of the 1911 annexation had stipulated that taxes would increase in new subdivisions on an escalating scale over ten years, but property within three blocks of a streetcar line would immediately be taxed at the same rate as built-up areas of the city. Thus, in 1912, the streetcar tracks were extended west along Dewdney Avenue nearly to the Royal North-West Mounted Police barracks and east from Eleventh Avenue along Winnipeg Street and Victoria Avenue to within several blocks of Regina's eastern limits. Two additional lines built the following year ran even farther east. One provided streetcar service to the southern fringe of Broder's Annex along Sixteenth Avenue, the other to Eastview via Dewdney Avenue, Winnipeg Street and Fourth Avenue.<sup>17</sup>

In outlying areas the street railway was often little more than a tool of land speculators, who in some cases offered to construct a line at their own expense and turn it over to the city to operate once completed. City council received a number of such proposals in 1912 and 1913, accepting some and rejecting others. Cornelius Rink's response to these various schemes reveals a curious ambivalence.

In 1912 a group of real estate firms with property south of Wascana Creek, and indeed south of the city limits in some cases, offered to build a two-mile extension of the existing Albert Street line to Twenty-fifth Avenue and beyond. The Street Railway Committee (on which Rink also sat in 1912 and 1913) was initially receptive to the proposition. Indeed Rink himself moved the resolution recommending to city council that it be accepted.<sup>18</sup> Not so the *Regina Daily Standard*, whose owner and editor, J. K. McInnis, also had a keen interest in real estate. (He was the developer of Eastview subdivision.) To McInnis there was "no pressing need to push the street railway system two miles farther into the country in any direction." It would be far better to serve the existing areas of the city first rather than "some rural subdivisions of rankly 'wildcat' character."<sup>19</sup>

Hard on the heels of this proposal came another, even more ambitious, for the private construction of a "belt line" encircling Regina on the southeast. More than half the line (4 of its projected 6.5 miles) would be located outside the city limits.<sup>20</sup> This was too much for some of the aldermen, including Rink. Subdivisions were being extended too far out into the country, he now declared:

If this petition is granted, these gentlemen will build fine houses out in the country and will come to the council and ask for sewer, water and paving. The council will say that they must have what they want and still the east end will have to go without. ... The city should first provide for the people who live in the old city limits and then the annexes close in.<sup>21</sup>

In the end council decided to defer a decision on both proposals until it determined what the RMR's own construction program for 1913 would be. That decision came in September 1912, and included an extension of the Albert Street line, but only south to the city limits.<sup>22</sup>

Nothing more was heard of the "belt line" scheme in its original form. But in November 1912 the Wascana Country Club, founded by some of Regina's wealthiest businessmen, offered to extend the Albert Street line to the club house and other facilities which it was erecting southeast of Regina. The city would operate the new line on a seasonal basis, and the Club was prepared to cover any operating losses for two years. To the alderman from Ward One it was the proposed "belt line" in another guise. (Indeed some of the Club's executive members were the same real estate men who had been behind the earlier scheme.) The Wascana Country Club's offer was therefore no less objectionable. Rink was one of three aldermen to argue that it should be put to a vote of the ratepayers, but they found themselves in the minority and city council accepted the proposal.<sup>23</sup>

Construction of the "Country Club line," as it became popularly known, began in May 1913. By August the work was completed, at a cost of \$60,951, but the Club was in arrears and Rink was furious. It was "one of the biggest pieces of graft ever engineered on God's green earth," and he favoured taking legal action against the Club to recover the \$37,880 still owing.<sup>24</sup>

The *Daily Standard* also weighed in. J.K. McInnis praised Rink as "the doughty champion of the rights of the common people" and declared:

there is no reason why the Country Club people should be allowed to use the city's money without interest. They have their toy railway and they should be made to pay for it.<sup>25</sup>

For its part the Club complained that the construction costs were inflated, and demanded that its auditors be allowed to examine the books. They were, and on reconsideration the city did reduce the cost slightly (to \$60,192). This was agreeable to the Club, but at year's end it was still in arrears and the question of the operation of the line remained unresolved.<sup>26</sup>

Rink looked much more favourably on another proposal for a car line extension which was made to the city in 1913. In this case a real estate firm offered to pay half the cost of extending the Sixteenth Avenue line east from McDonald Street to the city limits. When the superintendent of the RMR and the city commissioners recommended against accepting it on the grounds of low traffic potential, Rink disagreed:

While it was true that it might not pay the city to operate the cars the first year ... the property would soon be settled upon after the line was constructed ... perhaps the city could afford to lose something on the operation for one year, as the following year all the property served by the car line would come under taxation.

No other alderman shared Rink's confidence, and the offer was not taken up.<sup>27</sup> The wisdom of that decision soon became apparent. There was so little traffic even on the portion of the Sixteenth Avenue extension which the RMR did build in 1913 (from Broad Street to McDonald Street) that it abandoned service over nearly half of it within three weeks.<sup>28</sup>

Cornelius Rink was no less outspoken on other civic issues, particularly the attraction of industry and the practice of bonusing. In this era of prairie boosterism the Board of Trade and successive city councils worked closely together; indeed, as will be seen, there was a considerable degree of overlap in the membership of the two bodies. The city provided most of the money for the Board's promotional efforts, \$7,500 in 1911 for example. In 1912 city council was prepared to increase the grant to \$12,000, but the Board of Trade requested an additional \$25,000 to be used exclusively for promotional purposes.<sup>29</sup> Rink was quick to object to this additional grant:

It is a move to benefit a few at the expense of the many ... if these real estate men want to boom property let them pay for it out of their own pockets instead of continually coming to the city for it.

One of his North Side colleagues was of the same view, but they found themselves in the minority. City council decided to grant the Board an additional \$13,000 on condition that it raise a similar amount in private donations.<sup>30</sup> This offer the Board promptly rejected, asking instead that council provide the \$13,000 without conditions. It eventually agreed to do so, but not before Rink demanded (without success) that the four Board of Trade members present recognize their conflict of interest and refrain from voting.<sup>31</sup>

Critical though he was of the Board of Trade on this occasion, Rink was in sympathy with its efforts to attract industry. It envisaged the city's industrial destiny in terms of the success of midwestern American cities that had become major meat-packing or flour-milling centres. Believing that Regina shared certain attributes with these cities, notably a central location in the wheat belt and good rail connections, the Board actively sought out such industries and the city offered them a variety of inducements.

To assist the Board of Trade in courting the Ogilvie Milling Company, city council was prepared early in 1912 to give a free site, a fixed assessment on the property for taxation purposes and the lowest water rate. Before that firm had had a chance to respond (it is not clear if it ever did), the city reached an agreement with the Ontario and Manitoba Flour Mills Limited. In return for a free site, exemption from all municipal taxation for twenty years, electric power at cost and a city guarantee of \$500,000 worth of company bonds, it undertook to build a flour mill with a capacity of 2,000 barrels per day and a 200,000-bushel storage elevator.<sup>32</sup>

Rink sided with the majority in supporting these concessions, but two aldermen objected so strongly to the proposed bond guarantee that they voted against it. Once the agreement with the Ontario and Manitoba Flour Mills became public there was more opposition. The *Daily Standard* was critical of the guarantee of company bonds, the *Morning Leader* of the tax

exemption. Only the *Daily Province* was favourable, but its endorsement of the concessions offered was far from enthusiastic. When the city referred the agreement to the ratepayers for their approval, as it was obliged to do, they decisively rejected it by a margin of 383 to 217. Ward One, where the mill and elevator would have been located, was the only ward to support the concessions.<sup>33</sup>

Rink remained convinced that Regina must attract industries. In 1913 he supported a \$25,000 grant to the Board of Trade for publicity purposes, and apparently even joined the organization himself. What the Ward One alderman was not prepared to support were "schemes put forward to sell subdivisions."<sup>34</sup> This was the basis of his opposition to another mill proposal from a group of local businessmen, E. A. McCallum among them. Their Regina Storage and Drying Elevator Company appeared before city council in March 1913 requesting a grant of two city blocks, which they proposed to sell to raise capital. The mill was to have the same capacity as the one the ratepayers had refused to bonus in 1912. Rink initially supported the scheme on the condition that the mill be "erected within the City Limits or within a radius of two and one half miles of City Hall."<sup>35</sup> The promoters' reluctance to make a firm commitment as to the mill's location soon aroused his suspicion. Rink declared at a public meeting in mid-March that he

did not think they were so much concerned about the mill as about placing another subdivision on the market. ... the promoters wanted to buy a half-section or a section of land, ask the city for sewer and water and then subdivide it into lots.

They would buy farm land at \$600 or \$700 an acre ... and the next morning in the newspapers we should see big advertisements covering the whole of the page offering lots at \$300 and \$400 a-piece with sewer and water.

Rink now wanted the agreement put to a vote of the ratepayers.<sup>36</sup>

Rink's stand was endorsed by the *Daily Standard*, and by the Ward Five Ratepayers' Association, only recently established. Even the Regina Trades and Labour Council (RTLC), hitherto silent on the issue of bonusing, expressed its misgivings about the scheme.<sup>37</sup> The provisional directors of the Regina Storage and Drying Elevator Company were themselves divided on the issue of referring the agreement to the ratepayers, but in the end it did not matter for the company withdrew its proposal.<sup>38</sup>

Bonusing in fact proved to be self-destructive. Regina's rivals, notably Moose Jaw and Saskatoon, had similar ambitions and were also prepared to offer generous concessions. The result was that they competed with and outbid each other in the race for metropolitan stature. Since the cities were incapable of policing themselves, they had asked the provincial government as early as 1908 to ban bonusing altogether. The province had taken no action then, but subsequently had a change of heart. In 1913 it limited the concessions a city could offer to free sites and a ten-year tax exemption. Later that same year it prohibited the use of even these inducements, "to remove all temptation to municipal folly" as the minister of Municipal Affairs candidly put it.<sup>39</sup>

Cornelius Rink also displayed a certain ambivalence toward the administrative reforms which the city had adopted in 1910. "I don't object to the system of having Commissioners," he declared in 1911 after gaining a seat on city council, "but I don't think the Commissioners should run the city."<sup>40</sup> Rink shared the view of many businessmen of his day that this innovation would make municipal government more efficient. Indeed he was one of the first aldermen to press for the addition of a second appointed commissioner who would be responsible for financial matters, a step which council finally took in 1912.<sup>41</sup> But he also often objected that the city commissioners overrode and ignored aldermen like himself who were the elected representatives of the people of Regina.

Rink's aggressive championing of the interests of Ward One gave him a higher profile than any of his predecessors had enjoyed. As his popularity grew, the ward and its grievances began to garner more attention and sympathy in the wider community. In 1912, with Rink threatening to take the city to court for neglecting to collect refuse in Germantown, Regina's newspapers drew attention for the first time to the "shocking condition of affairs" there.<sup>42</sup> The district received more detailed scrutiny the following year. However in this case it was not Rink but the "social gospel" which prompted the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches to commission J.S. Woodsworth to undertake a social survey of Regina. Woodsworth, who was director of All Peoples' Mission in Winnipeg at the time, spent four months in the Saskatchewan capital. He found that although water and sewer lines had been extended as far east as Winnipeg Street, 60 percent of the homes in Germantown were so poorly constructed as to make the necessary connections impossible. His *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Regina*, released in the fall of 1913, described in graphic detail how poor ventilation, overcrowding, outdoor toilets and the absence of any regular system of garbage removal gave Germantown a proportionately higher number of cases of infectious diseases than other areas of Regina.<sup>43</sup>

There were some in Ward One who blamed this state of affairs on Rink himself. Dissatisfaction with his record was said to be behind efforts to establish a ratepayers' association in the ward in time to put up a candidate against him in the 1913 municipal election. At the inaugural meeting of the new organization Rink found himself under attack and denied any opportunity to reply.

Rink and his supporters were evidently better prepared by the time of the next meeting. It elected an executive and that executive unanimously endorsed him as the official candidate of the Ward One Ratepayers' Association. When first confronted about his aldermanic record Rink had been defensive, but when the Ratepayers' Association met on 14 November to ratify the decision of its executive he was in fighting form. To the charge that he had done nothing for the ward, Rink claimed that prior to his election in 1911 the city had not spent more than \$50,000 on improvements there. Since then he had been instrumental in securing an expenditure of \$600,000 on improvements in Germantown alone. In addition "a large sum" had been

spent in the construction of sewer and water lines, sidewalks and streetcar lines in Broder's Annex, Eastern Annex and Eastview. Rink also boasted that he had saved the city hundreds of thousands of dollars by foiling the schemes of promoters such as E.A. McCallum's Regina Storage and Drying Elevator Company. With but two dissenting votes the Ward One Ratepayers' Association confirmed Rink as its candidate.<sup>44</sup>

He initially faced two opponents. J.B. McLeod appealed for support on the grounds that "the ward could not afford to keep a critic in the council ... solely to prevent grafting." But he eventually withdrew from the contest and threw his support behind Rink's other opponent, John W. Ehmann.<sup>45</sup> Ehmann was a more imposing foe. He was a successful businessman, part owner of a hotel in Germantown, and was said to have the support of other businessmen in the ward. He was also German and gained the endorsement of the city's German newspaper, the *Saskatchewan Courier*. It took considerable pains to contrast Ehmann's "close connections with all Germans in the city, especially those of Ward 1" with Rink's alleged neglect of the interests of that ethnic group.<sup>46</sup>

It is well known that Ward One, and more particularly, Germantown, was the most cosmopolitan part of Regina. J.S. Woodsworth undertook an informal census as part of his social survey in 1913, and it is worth examining. Not surprisingly, he found Germans to be the largest single group in the East End, comprising slightly more than half the population (1,699 out of 3,223). There were also sizeable numbers of Rumanians (352), "Servians" (259), Ruthenians (253), Poles (121), Russians (112), Hungarians (105) and Jews (102). Those of British origin numbered only 126. Of course Woodsworth did not survey the entire ward, and his statistics offer no help in determining who was eligible to cast a ballot. Only the voters' lists would provide that information, and none appears to have survived. We have only Rink's subsequent claim that "two-thirds of the voters in the east end are English-speaking people," which, in the absence of the 1913 voters' list, cannot be confirmed.<sup>47</sup> Who lived in the annexes, and who could vote there, cannot be determined either.

Elections in Ward One had acquired the reputation of being lively affairs, with plenty of free beer and other less subtle methods employed to influence the outcome. In 1913, Rink claimed that a group of prominent Regina businessmen were attempting to "pad" the voters' list to ensure his defeat. He managed to have twenty-one names struck from the list,<sup>48</sup> and repeatedly insisted during the campaign that a "Tammany gang" was out to get him. In the final days there were also a series of personal attacks. Rink dismissed his opponent as the owner of "a dinky whiskey shop" whose campaign was being financed by the liquor interests. And for the first time (but not the last) Rink's opponents attempted to discredit him by pointing out that he had fought in the South African War on the Boer side.<sup>49</sup>

Rink left nothing to chance. He made a special appeal to German voters, emphasizing that Ward One would be more likely to obtain additional improvements with an experienced alderman representing it. Meanwhile,

his business partner, Toma McRadu, went after the Rumanian vote.<sup>50</sup> The combination of Rink's popular appeal and an effective organization produced a resounding victory. Cornelius Rink polled the largest vote and recorded the greatest margin of victory of any of the successful aldermanic candidates in 1913.

It is impossible to determine precisely where Rink's support came from, since there was only one polling place in the ward. He must have been able to counter the influence of the *Saskatchewan Courier*, for he outpolled Ehmann by a margin of nearly three to one (see Table 1). It would be tempting to conclude that Toma McRadu delivered the Rumanian vote, or that the ratepayers in the annexes, grateful for Rink's efforts to extend streetcar lines, rewarded him with their votes, but this cannot be confirmed. What is clear, however, is that Rink enjoyed broad support across the ward.

He was now one of the senior members of city council, with another two-year term ahead of him. Only Mayor Robert Martin, who was reelected by acclamation in 1913, and Alderman R.M. Halleran had held office longer than Rink. When the new council convened for the first time and his peers balloted for committee chairmanships, they chose Rink to head the Works Committee (regarded as the second most prestigious committee, after Finance). But almost at once Rink's star began to fall. Controversy dogged the combative alderman throughout the early months of 1914. First he found himself in a bitter feud with the Board of Trade. Then his efforts to convince the Works Committee and city council to lay sewer and water mains by day labour as a way of assisting the unemployed provoked an uproar. In the end Rink won a partial victory, but it proved to be short-lived; the war halted the city's entire 1914 construction program. The war also raised doubts about his loyalty to his adopted homeland, and when Cornelius Rink sought the mayoralty at year's end the prize eluded his grasp.

The feud with the Board of Trade appears to have arisen out of the 1913 election contest in Ward One. It had been a dirty fight, and Rink was still smarting when the Board appeared before city council to request a grant of \$20,000 for publicity work for 1914. Claiming that the Board was in fact run by a "little clique" which had quietly campaigned against him in the recent election, Rink was in no mood to be generous. "I might as well contribute money to have myself hung as to agree to make this grant," he told his fellow aldermen. He then proceeded to criticize some members of the Board of Trade, insinuating that they were motivated by self-interest. Eventually a majority (including Rink) agreed to provide the sum requested, but only if the ratepayers gave their approval.<sup>51</sup>

This infuriated the Board of Trade. It promptly withdrew its request, but not before lashing out at Rink. One Board member, A.T. Hunter, dismissed the Ward One alderman as "an unsophisticated foreigner, who does not understand Canadian ways." Another based his criticism not on Rink's nationality but his occupation. Himself a prominent wholesaler, H.G. Smith disparaged real estate men like Rink:

He is only holding property in Regina that he expects to make a profit from. ... Has he a pay roll? Has he financial interests or a business of any kind? Yet this is the kind of man the board of trade is obliged to be insulted by.

Rink shot back:

I can at least say that any real estate I hold or any other property that I hold I have had to pay for, and have not had it given to me as the gentleman who made the statement ... had his valuable property given to him or his company by a generous mayor and his colleagues.

Smith was as quick to deny Rink's charge.<sup>52</sup>

When the tumult finally died down, city council (but not Rink) agreed to give the Board a small grant. Council also decided by a unanimous vote that the city itself would in future undertake the work of bringing industries to Regina, and appointed an industrial commissioner for the purpose.<sup>53</sup>

The prospects were bleak, however, for the investment boom which had helped to fuel Regina's growth was beginning to falter. The impact was felt first in building construction: the value of building permits issued in 1913 (\$4,018,350) was only half that of the previous year. It was widely believed that the best remedy for this "money stringency" would be a bumper crop. The 1913 harvest was the largest in the province's history, but the tightness of the money market and higher interest rates drove prices and farm incomes down. Even in prosperous times the number of jobless men in Regina increased once the harvest was completed and cold weather brought construction activity to a halt. Hard times made the situation worse during the winter of 1913-14, and the coming of spring brought no noticeable thinning of the ranks of the unemployed.<sup>54</sup>

For a decade city councils had been preoccupied with the promotion of economic development and the provision of additional municipal services to a rapidly growing population. For the 1914 council, the priorities would be different. It was obliged, first of all, to begin to come to grips with the consequences of the expansive policies of its predecessors. Of greatest concern in the early months of 1914 was the plight of the RMR. It was the pride of the city, a symbol of Regina's coming of age, but it was also overbuilt and losing money. Ten miles of track in 1911 had become twenty-eight with the completion of the line to the Wascana Country Club (which the city began to operate in 1914). But revenues failed to cover operating expenses let alone meet the fixed charges on the system. By 1913 the street railway accounted for nearly 20 percent of the city's total debenture debt of \$7,553,607, more indeed than the waterworks and electric light plant combined. The street railway had recorded a loss (including fixed charges) of \$7,655 in 1911, \$21,287 in 1912 and \$60,118 in 1913, but the projected deficit for 1914 promised to be far greater. In May 1914 the city commissioners predicted that it would reach \$100,000 and council, now thoroughly alarmed, reacted by cutting service on all routes effective 1 June 1914. It also laid off eighteen motormen and sixteen conductors.<sup>55</sup>

Worsening economic conditions also compelled city council to turn its attention to the plight of the unemployed. It was Rink who first took up

their cause. In February 1914 he inquired whether the city could provide some work hauling gravel from Boggy Creek (nine miles north of Regina) for the benefit of unemployed teamsters. It took the city commissioners nearly two months to report that the cost would be prohibitive.<sup>56</sup>

Undeterred, Rink then proposed that the city lay water mains by day labour, rather than give the work to large contractors (and their trenching machines) as it had in the past. Not all members of the Works Committee were as confident as the chairman that the work could be done more cheaply, but the Committee did agree to recommend that water mains be laid in this fashion for a distance of three blocks as an experiment. The city's daily newspapers looked favourably upon the scheme. Even the *Morning Leader*, which in 1914 scarcely ever had a kind word to say about Cornelius Rink, admitted that it would certainly be "better to pay out the money in wages now rather than in charity next winter."<sup>57</sup>

If city council needed any evidence of how desperate the unemployed were becoming, a mass demonstration at City Hall on 1 June provided it. The crowd was estimated to number 500. They demanded work, but Mayor Martin had to admit that there was little the city could do. Unable to dispose of its debentures in an unreceptive market, Regina was not yet in a position to begin any extensive program of civic improvements. Another crowd of unemployed, this time numbering 200-300, showed up when council met next day to consider the recommendation from the Works Committee. The vote in favour of trying Rink's scheme as an experiment was unanimous. Married men and *bona fide* residents of the city would be given the first opportunity to undertake the work.<sup>58</sup>

Rink took a keen interest in the progress of the experiment, and so apparently did some of the private contractors who had previously laid water mains for the city. The weather was good (hence the trenching work proceeded without interruption) but the result, so far as city officials were concerned, was not. The superintendent of waterworks estimated that the cost of laying water mains by day labour had amounted to 35¢ per lineal foot in wages and 44¢ when insurance and other overhead expenses were added. Since this was more than the lowest tenders received from private contractors with trenching machines, the city commissioners recommended that the work be given to them.

Rink judged the estimate too high, and when the matter was discussed in the Works Committee he managed to wring an admission from the city commissioners that this was so. They reduced the cost to 40¢. This was only half a cent higher than the lowest tender received for laying water mains on the north side of the city, and 2¢ cheaper than the lowest bid for south side work. At Rink's urging the Committee eventually decided to call for new tenders for the city's 1914 program of water main construction by either machine or day labour, and for the laying of sewer lines by day labour as well. In the meantime the city would continue to lay water mains by day labour as long as its supply of pipe held out in order to provide some employment. There was another lengthy debate in the full council, but the

result was the same. Rink's "pet scheme," as the *Morning Leader* ungraciously called it, carried the day.<sup>59</sup>

Nearly three weeks passed before the new tenders were received, reviewed by the city commissioners and a report presented to the Works Committee and then to the entire council. The commissioners recommended that the sewer work be given to two machine contractors and that the laying of the water mains be awarded to another firm, Flick and Nismer, employing day labour. The Flick and Nismer tender was not the lowest (that of John Brodt, a machine contractor, was significantly lower), but the commissioners urged its acceptance on the grounds that "considerably more men will be required as laborers to prosecute the work by hand labor methods than by machine methods."<sup>60</sup> There was little opposition to the commissioners' first recommendation, but Rink's suspicions were aroused by the fact that the Flick and Nismer bid was so much higher than that of the machine contractor. "The only way to give the day labor scheme a fair chance," he told the Works Committee on 24 July, "was for the city to do the work itself." A majority of the Committee agreed, rejecting the commissioners' second recommendation (by a single vote) and proposing instead that the water mains be laid by day labour under the supervision of the superintendent of waterworks.<sup>61</sup> When the full council met that same evening, Rink was forced to give ground. Council finally decided, after a protracted debate, to divide the water main construction work. It gave half to John Brodt and the balance to the city using day labour.<sup>62</sup>

For Rink even this partial victory was to prove a hollow one. The city did make a start on the water main work on 28 July, and this provided employment for some fifty men. Another 150 men (and seventy-five teams of horses) began excavating the site for a new water reservoir which city council had also decided should be built by day labour.<sup>63</sup> But within a week Canada was at war.

Its debentures still unsold, Regina had resorted to short-term treasury bills to finance as much of its 1914 construction program as was underway. With the outbreak of the war even this source of funds seemed likely to disappear. Retrenchment now became the watchword at City Hall. In short order the city decided not to proceed with the construction of a new police station for which debentures had been approved, and to complete only the most essential public works projects. In the private sector there was an equally sharp decline in construction activity. The value of building permits in 1914 turned out to be less than half (\$1,765,875) of what it had been in 1913. Some escaped the ranks of the unemployed by enlisting, but by the end of the year it was estimated that at least 1,400 Reginans were out of work.<sup>64</sup>

The war and the worsening economic situation had an immediate impact upon municipal politics, and particularly Reginans' attitude toward the ward system. Its future had first been cast in doubt the year before, when the province had given Saskatchewan cities the option of prohibiting ratepayers from voting in more than one ward. Reginans had endorsed the "one man one vote" principle by a margin of 1,355 to 930 at the time of the

1913 municipal election,<sup>65</sup> and in the process took the first step toward diminishing the voting power of those with large property holdings. It also raised the spectre of sectionalism reigning supreme on city council at a time when Regina's economic and fiscal problems seemed to require that the "best people" be placed at the helm. Such arguments convinced a majority in Wards Two, Three and Four, the city's more affluent wards, to opt for the at-large system of election. Voters in the more disadvantaged wards not surprisingly preferred to retain the ward system. The turnout on 10 August 1914 was not large: 302 votes were cast against the ward system and only 239 in its favour.<sup>66</sup>

These same factors doomed Cornelius Rink's bid for the mayoralty in December 1914. What prompted him to run is not entirely clear. Rink had been touted as a possible mayoralty candidate in 1912 and he was again in 1914. In 1914 the field would be wide open, Robert Martin having decided not to seek reelection. The closest Rink came to an explanation was in an open letter to voters late in the campaign: believing that the "ordinary business principle of promotion" should apply in municipal politics, he had decided to seek the city's highest office.<sup>67</sup>

Rink's only opponent was James Balfour. Save for the fact that each had served as an alderman for three years (Balfour between 1904 and 1906), they had nothing in common. Balfour was a prominent and well-connected lawyer who had resided in Regina since 1883. His uncle, Robert Martin, was about to give up the mayor's chair; a cousin, and one of the partners in his law firm, W.M. Martin, was the city's member in the House of Commons. Balfour was a pillar of the Presbyterian Church, sat on the boards of the city's high school and YMCA, and belonged to the right clubs.<sup>68</sup> Rink, by contrast, was a relative newcomer to the city and very much an outsider.

In most respects Rink's campaign rhetoric differed little from that of the previous year when he had carried his ward with such a resounding majority. He was the people's champion whereas his opponent, Rink insinuated, had been put up by a "small, influential, but notorious clique." He told Reginans to

vote for Rink if they wanted a mayor who knew the city's business and was prepared to carry out their wishes, and if they did not want a representative whose main qualifications were his ability to play golf and attend social functions.<sup>69</sup>

Rink also claimed to be "a true friend of the labor men," and sought the support of those at least who possessed the franchise. It was not unreasonable for this self-made businessman to make such an appeal: he had pushed the city to use day labour in laying sewer and water mains and thus had provided jobs for men who would otherwise not have had work. Rink promised to undertake all construction work by day labour if he was elected mayor. His opponent did so as well, near the end of the campaign.<sup>70</sup>

Balfour offered little else in the way of a platform, other than to promise "sane and careful administration of civic affairs."<sup>71</sup> He did not deal in personalities and neither, surprisingly, did his principal newspaper supporter, the

**Table 2**  
**1914 Mayoralty Election Result by "Ward"**

	<b>One</b>	<b>Two</b>	<b>Three</b>	<b>Four</b>	<b>Five</b>	<b>Total</b>
J. Balfour	216	368	550	561	460	2,155
C. Rink	524	119	112	101	166	1,022

Sources: *Daily Province*, *Morning Leader*, 1914.

*Morning Leader*, which earlier in the year had criticized Rink at every turn. Others were not so circumspect. Rink had to contend with a whispering campaign questioning his loyalty to Great Britain in light of the fact that he had once fought against the British. Rink met the accusation head on by comparing his own situation with that of the man under whom he had served, Louis Botha (who by this time was prime minister of South Africa):

It is quite true that I fought in the Boer war and so did General Botha and he is a bigger man than I am. How could any man have expected me to fight against my own countrymen when I was in the Transvaal? General Botha is a loyal British subject and is now fighting the Empire's battle as you all know. I am a loyal British subject. Even suppose I did not feel inclined to be a British subject, I have to be, for everything I possess is on British soil. All that I own, with the exception of a little property in Winnipeg, is in Saskatchewan. I have my home here. My family is here and for their sake and the sake of my little children, there is nothing else for me but to be loyal.<sup>72</sup>

It was uncharacteristic of Rink to speak publicly about business, family or personal affairs. If by such candour he hoped to put the issue to rest, he was mistaken. His South African war service dogged him for the remainder of the campaign. So did allegations that he was a German. This too he denied, but his continued use of that language in campaign meetings lent a measure of credibility to the accusation.

Never before in the city's history had a mayoralty contest provided voters with as clear a choice as in 1914. James Balfour won handily, carrying every poll in the city but one (see Table 2). While the ward system no longer existed, the city used the same polling places and the newspapers reported the results on a ward-by-ward basis. To a considerable extent, the city divided along ethnic and class lines. Balfour's greatest strength lay in the affluent and predominantly "British" neighbourhoods south of the downtown core, Rink's in the immigrant and working-class districts to the east and north.

Cornelius Rink's foreign birth certainly counted against him in a year in which patriotic fervour, and a suspicion of those who were not "British," had become so strong. James Balfour laboured under no such handicap. It was also to Balfour's advantage that he was not an incumbent and that his opponent was. In this respect it was Balfour who was the outsider and Rink who was identified with what appears to have been an unpopular city council. Hard times had put the voters in an angry mood: of the eight aldermen who stood for reelection (including Rink), only two were successful.

Cornelius Rink's first foray into municipal politics, 1909-14, defies easy categorization. To dismiss him as a parochial ward politician, as his opponents sometimes did, is too simplistic. He did fight hard to expand and

improve municipal services in Ward One, but Rink also had a larger vision of the city. Neither was he an implacable foe of Regina's business elite and their "booster" policies. A small businessman himself, Rink shared their commitment to the promotion of economic growth. He was prepared to offer inducements to attract industry and he favoured the extension of streetcar lines into outlying areas of the city. But he drew the line at supporting industrial propositions or street railway extensions which, in his opinion, were little more than schemes to "boom" outside property, particularly subdivisions outside the city's boundaries.

To label Rink a "populist" is also fraught with difficulties. Some scholars have used the terms "populist" and "populism" loosely, almost casually, and those who have sought to apply the terms more rigorously have devised a variety of definitions. Cornelius Rink's political ideology does not fit neatly into any of the four categories of populism which David Laycock has identified in his recent and comprehensive survey of this political phenomenon in western Canada.<sup>73</sup> (But then Laycock did not examine municipal politicians or municipal politics in his work.) Margaret Canovan's somewhat older book, *Populism*, which attempted a much wider canvass of populist movements in Europe, the Americas and Africa, identified no less than seven variants, including what she termed "politicians' populism." This she defined as "broad, nonideological coalition-building that draws on the unificatory appeal of 'the people'."<sup>74</sup> In this sense Cornelius Rink was a populist. He was the first municipal politician in Regina to forge a broad electoral coalition that crossed ethnic and ward boundaries. His populist rhetoric did not win him the mayor's chair in 1914, but it did have considerable appeal in the immigrant and working-class neighbourhoods that had hitherto comprised Wards One and Five.

The 1914 election proved to be a watershed in the history of Regina municipal politics. To this point it had been a populist who had mounted the most sustained critique of the business elite and their "booster" policies. The city's trade unions had, for the most part, been quiescent. But in 1914 this began to change. Rink was not the only candidate appealing for the votes of the "labour men"; for the first time the RTLC fielded three aldermanic candidates. A fourth ran as an independent labour candidate. None were elected. (The most successful of the four, one of the official labour nominees, polled 701 votes and finished twentieth in a field of twenty-eight). Their greatest electoral strength, like that of the populist Rink, lay in what had once been Wards One and Five.<sup>75</sup> The following year Harry Perry (the vice-president of the RTLC) carried the East End and the North Side to become Regina's first labour representative on city council. Through the war years and the 1920s the strongest challenge to the business elite's hegemony in local politics would come from a succession of labour aldermen elected with the votes of immigrant and working-class Reginans.

As for Cornelius Rink, he left the city and the province after World War I to live briefly in New Westminster.<sup>76</sup> He subsequently returned to Regina and won a seat on city council in 1924, but served only one term. He then

disappeared from the political stage a second time. Not until the 1930s would Rink's populist appeal finally carry him into City Hall as Regina's first non-British mayor.

#### NOTES

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1. A.F.J. Artibise, "In Pursuit of Growth: Municipal Boosterism and Urban Development in the Canadian Prairie West, 1871-1913," in G.A. Stelter and A.F.J. Artibise, eds., *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 116-47. Artibise's analysis derives in great measure from his own work on Winnipeg, particularly his *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975) and *Winnipeg: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977). Other works which examine the ideology of boosterism and the role of business elites in promoting economic growth in prairie cities include M. Foran, *Calgary: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1978), D. Kerr and S. Hanson, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982) and J.W. Brennan, *Regina: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989).
2. The emergence of populist and socialist politicians in western Canadian cities prior to World War I has begun to attract some scholarly attention. See, for example, J.R. Day, "Edmonton Civic Politics, 1891-1914," *Urban History Review* no. 3-77 (February 1978): 42-68; G. Hengen, "A Case Study in Urban Reform: Regina Before the First World War," *Saskatchewan History* 61, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 19-34; A.R. McCormack, "Radical Politics in Winnipeg: 1899-1915," Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, *Papers*, Series 3, no. 29 (1972-73), 81-97; G. Makahonuk, "Class Conflict in a Prairie City: The Saskatoon Working-Class Response to Prairie Capitalism, 1906-19," *Labour/Le Travail* 19 (Spring 1987): 89-124. There are as yet no individual political biographies, however.
3. *Henderson's City of Regina Directory* for 1908 (hereafter *Henderson's Directory*); *Leader-Post*, 13 September 1949; Rink family history, provided by Jack C. Rink (son)—interview with Jack C. Rink, 21 October 1992. Cornelius Rink's employment with the NZASM cannot be confirmed from either J. van der Poel, *Railway and Customs Policies in South Africa, 1885-1910* (London: Longman, Green and Company, 1933) or P.J. van Winter, *Onder Krugers Hollanders: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: J.H. De Bussy, 1937-38), the most detailed works on that railway. The same is true of the details of his short-lived military career.
4. Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1907 (Regina: Government Printer, 1908), 128; *Henderson's Directory*, 1908, 1912; *Morning Leader*, 8 May 1913.
5. *Henderson's Directory*, 1908-1913; City of Regina Archives (CORA), City Clerk's Office Records (hereafter Clerk's Records), Collection COR-5, file 1639, Rink-Toma Land Company to City of Regina, 5 March 1912; *Daily Standard*, 6 September 1912, 6 December 1913; *Leader-Post*, 17 April 1954.
6. *Leader-Post*, 29 June 1944; interview with Jack C. Rink, 21 July 1993.
7. The City Act stipulated that men, unmarried women and widows who had been "assessed upon the last revised assessment roll for \$200 or upwards" or who paid a \$5.00 householder's tax and were at least twenty-one years of age were eligible to vote in municipal elections (Saskatchewan, *Statutes*, 8 Edw. VII, c. 16, s. 86, 87, 312). A candidate for alderman or mayor had to be "the owner of a freehold estate of the value of \$500 over and above all incumbrances [sic] rated in his own name on the last revised assessment roll of the city" (*ibid.*, s. 17).

8. *Morning Leader*, 11 December 1906, 10 December 1907, 15 December 1908, 8 October 1913.
9. CORA, Regina City Council, Bylaw no. 544, 6 June 1910.
10. D.S. Richan, "Boosterism and Urban Rivalry in Regina and Moose Jaw, 1902-1913" (M.A. thesis, University of Regina, 1981), 38.
11. On the interrelationship between "boosterism," the expansion of Regina's boundaries in 1911 and the construction of a street railway in the Saskatchewan capital that same year see Brennan, *Regina*, 73-79, 89-91; Richan, "Boosterism and Urban Rivalry," 92-128.
12. *Daily Province*, 16 May, 20 June 1911.
13. *Daily Standard*, 25 July, 15 August 1911.
14. *Morning Leader*, 7 December 1911.
15. *Daily Standard*, 17 July, 6 August 1912, 4 July 1913.
16. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 1868(c), city commissioners' report to the electors of Regina, 25 November 1912; file 2117, city commissioners' report to the electors of Regina, 21 November 1913.
17. J.L. Moser, "The Impact of City Council's Decisions Between 1903 and 1930 on the Morphological Development of Regina" (M.A. thesis, University of Regina, 1978), 36-44; C.K. Hatcher, *Saskatchewan's Pioneer Streetcars: The Story of the Regina Municipal Railway* (Montreal: Railfare Enterprises, 1971), 11-22.
18. *Daily Province*, 6 June 1912; CORA, Street Railway Committee, Minute Book, 6 June 1912; Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 1877, Street Railway Committee to city council, 17 June 1912.
19. *Daily Standard*, 14 June 1912.
20. CORA, Street Railway Committee, Minute Book, 20 June 1912; *Daily Province*, 21 June 1912.
21. *Daily Province*, 26 June 1912.
22. CORA, Regina City Council (Committee of the Whole), Minute Book, 25 June 1912; *Morning Leader*, 25 September 1912.
23. CORA, Street Railway Committee, Minute Book, 4 November 1912; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 4 November 1912, 29 November 1912; *Daily Standard*, 5 November, 30 November 1912.
24. CORA, Street Railway Committee, Minute Book, 12 September 1913; *Daily Province*, 13 September 1913; *Daily Standard*, 13 September 1913.
25. *Daily Standard*, 27 September 1913.
26. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2035, Wascana Country Club to city council, 16 September 1913; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 16 September, 24 November 1913.
27. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2117, city commissioners to Street Railway Committee, 14 March 1913; Street Railway Committee, Minute Book, 14 March 1913; *Daily Province*, 15 March 1913.
28. Hatcher, *Saskatchewan's Pioneer Streetcars*, 20.
29. *Daily Province*, 24 February 1912; CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 16 April 1912.
30. CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 29 April 1912; *Daily Standard*, 30 April 1912.
31. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 1661, Board of Trade to A.W. Pool, 4 May 1912; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 5 June 1912; *Morning Leader*, 6 June 1912. There were

- apparently only four members of the 1912 city council who were not also members of the Board of Trade (*Morning Leader*, 21 May 1912).
32. CORA, Regina City Council (Committee of the Whole), Minute Book, 27 January, 23 March, 6 April 1912; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 22 April 1912.
  33. *Daily Province*, 23 April 1912; *Morning Leader*, 18 May 1912. The City Act stipulated that before a city could bonus “whether by ... way of the payment of a lump sum or periodical payments or otherwise exempting from taxation beyond the current year, subscribing for stock in or guaranteeing the payment of debentures issued by any person, syndicate or corporation” it first had to secure the approval of the ratepayers. A two-thirds majority was required (Saskatchewan, *Statutes*, 8 Edw. VII, c. 16, s. 185).
  34. *Morning Leader*, 21 February 1913; CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 3 March 1913.
  35. CORA, Regina City Council (Committee of the Whole), Minute Book, 5 March 1913.
  36. *Daily Province*, 14 March 1913.
  37. *Daily Standard*, 15 March 1913; CORA, Clerk’s Records, Collection COR-5, file 1961, Regina Trades and Labor Council to the mayor, 16 March 1913; file 1962, Ward Five Ratepayers’ Association to city council, 17 March 1913.
  38. CORA, Clerk’s Records, Collection COR-5, file 1915(c), E.A. McCallum to city council, 17 March 1913; *Daily Standard*, 18 March 1913.
  39. Saskatchewan Archives Board, J.A. Calder Papers, Union of Saskatchewan Municipalities to Calder, 10 November 1908, pp. 7197-98; *Morning Leader*, 15 November 1913; Saskatchewan, *Statutes*, 3 Geo. V, c. 27, s. 15; 4 Geo. V, c. 42, s. 11.
  40. *Morning Leader*, 7 December 1911.
  41. *Daily Province*, 17 October 1911, 6 February 1912; CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 19 February 1912. For a fuller treatment of western cities’ enthusiasm for boards of commissioners and other innovations see J.D. Anderson, “The Municipal Government Reform Movement in Western Canada, 1880-1920,” in A.F.J. Artibise and G.A. Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), 73-111.
  42. *Daily Province*, 27 July 1912; *Morning Leader*, 30-31 July 1912.
  43. J.S. Woodsworth, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Regina* (1913), 36-37.
  44. *Daily Province*, 25 October, 13, 15 November 1913; *Morning Leader*, 15 November 1913.
  45. *Daily Province*, 29 November 1913; *Morning Leader*, 4 December 1913.
  46. *Saskatchewan Courier*, 3 Dezember 1913.
  47. Woodsworth, *Report*, 39; *Daily Province*, 25 March 1914.
  48. CORA, Regina City Council (Court of Revision), Minute Book, 12 November 1913; *Daily Province*, 13 November 1913.
  49. *Morning Leader*, 6 December 1913; *Evening Province and Standard*, 8 December 1913.
  50. *Saskatchewan Courier*, 3 Dezember 1913; *Daily Province*, 3 December 1913; *Morning Leader*, 5 December 1913.
  51. CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 12 March 1914; *Daily Province*, 13 March 1914, *Morning Leader*, 13 March 1914.
  52. CORA, Clerk’s Records, Collection COR-5, file 2128, Board of Trade to city council, 17 March 1914; *Daily Province*, 17-18 March 1914; *Morning Leader*, 18 March 1914.
  53. CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 17, 27 March 1914; *Daily Province*, 28 March 1914.
  54. *Morning Leader*, 21 July 1913; Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report, 1913* (Regina: Government Printer, 1914), 95-99. The actual number of unemployed in Regina during the winter of 1913-14 cannot be determined precisely, since no statistics were kept. The monthly local correspondent’s reports in Canada, Department of Labour, *The Labour Gazette*, vol. 14

- (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1915) give the clearest impression of employment prospects (or the lack of them) in Regina at this time.
55. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2314, city commissioners to Utilities Committee, 12 May 1914; Utilities Committee, Minute Book, 12 May 1914; Hatcher, *Saskatchewan's Pioneer Streetcars*, 27; R.M. Haig, *The Exemption of Improvements From Taxation in Canada and the United States* (New York: M.B. Brown, 1915), 41.
  56. *Morning Leader*, 7 February 1914; *Daily Province*, 2 April 1914.
  57. *Daily Province*, 30 May 1914; *Morning Leader*, 2 June 1914; CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2303, Works Committee to city council, 2 June 1914.
  58. *Evening Province and Standard*, 1, 3 June 1914.
  59. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2314, Superintendent of Waterworks to city commissioners, 18 June 1914; city commissioners to Works Committee, 3 July 1914; file 2303, Works Committee to city council, 7 July 1914; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 7 July 1914; *Daily Province*, 4 July 1914; *Morning Leader*, 4 July 1914.
  60. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2304, city commissioners to city council, 23 July 1914.
  61. *Morning Leader*, 24 July 1914; CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2303, Works Committee to city council, 24 July 1914.
  62. CORA, Regina City Council, Minute Book, 24 July 1914; *Daily Province*, 25 July 1914.
  63. CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2303, Works Committee to city council, 15 July 1914; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 15 July 1914; *Evening Province and Standard*, 21, 28 July 1914.
  64. *Morning Leader*, 4 August 1914; CORA, Clerk's Records, Collection COR-5, file 2304, city commissioners to city council, 6 August 1914; Regina City Council, Minute Book, 18 August 1914; Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1914 (Regina: Government Printer, 1915), 175-76.
  65. Saskatchewan, *Statutes*, 3 Geo V, c. 27, s. 6; *Morning Leader*, 9 December 1913.
  66. *Morning Leader*, 9 July 1914, 10-11 August 1914.
  67. *Daily Province*, 12 December 1914.
  68. N.F. Black, *History of Saskatchewan and the North-West Territories* (Regina: Saskatchewan Historical Company, 1913), vol. 1: 321-22.
  69. *Evening Province and Standard*, 12 December 1914; *Morning Leader*, 8 December 1914.
  70. *Morning Leader*, 9 December 1914; *Daily Province*, 12 December 1914.
  71. *Evening Province and Standard*, 12 December 1914.
  72. *Daily Province*, 27 November 1914.
  73. D. Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910 to 1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
  74. M. Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 13.
  75. *Evening Province and Standard*, 15 December 1914.
  76. Interview with Jack C. Rink, 21 October 1992.

# Prelude to Medicare: Institutional Change and Continuity in Saskatchewan, 1944-1962

Aleck Ostry

**ABSTRACT.** This article examines health reform in Saskatchewan in the era 1944 to 1962, focussing in particular on the unintended consequences of the introduction of publicly funded hospital insurance in 1947. Ironically, this flagship of "socialist" health reform strengthened Saskatchewan's doctors financially and in terms of increased autonomy and empowered the profession in its fight with the CCF in such a way that the scope and impact of the government's final victory with the "doctors' strike" in 1962 was limited. The plan operated to strengthen "fee-for-service" medicine directly by upgrading and expanding Saskatchewan's hospital facilities, especially in urban centres, and indirectly by making physician-run health insurance plans more attractive and marketable, thus unintentionally encouraging the profession's resistance to further health reform.

**SOMMAIRE.** Le régime public d'assurance-hospitalisation établi en 1947 eut des effets inattendus sur les réformes dans le domaine de la santé en Saskatchewan entre 1944 et 1962. Cette vitrine de la réforme «socialiste» servit à consolider la position financière et l'autonomie des médecins, qui en tirèrent profit durant leur dispute avec les cécéfistes, limitant en dernière analyse l'ampleur et la portée de la victoire finale du gouvernement au terme de la grève des médecins en 1962. Ce régime servit à renforcer le modèle «honoraires à l'acte» de façon directe en multipliant et modernisant les équipements hospitaliers, en particulier dans les centres urbains, et de façon indirecte en rendant les régimes d'assurance-santé offerts par les médecins plus attrayants et commercialisables, encourageant involontairement la résistance des médecins à l'introduction de réformes plus avancées.

## Introduction

Until recently, historical discussion of post-World War II health-care reform in Saskatchewan has been dominated by the dramatic clash between the provincial government and the medical profession which climaxed in the 1962 doctors' strike. Because of its high drama and importance in Canadian history, earlier investigations of health reform in Saskatchewan focussed on this conflict, overshadowing some of the less spectacular aspects of reform in the province. In particular, publicly funded hospital insurance, which operated for a period of approximately fifteen years prior to the introduction of Medicare, has remained underinvestigated, especially in terms of its impact on the health reform process.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past several years, fixation with the doctor's strike has faded and researchers have begun to explore other aspects of health reform in this era. For example, Harley Dickinson has clearly shown the links between Saskatchewan traditions of agrarian populism and farmer militancy and support for public health insurance.<sup>2</sup> His paper locates this support in the activism of local and provincial farmer organizations and in the needs of local (mainly rural) municipalities. While Dickinson's paper focusses on the "roots" of public health insurance, Duane Mombourquette has pointed out and elaborated on the major role played by one of the key CCF institutions formed in the immediate postwar period: the Health Services Planning Commission (HSPC). Mombourquette points out that the HSPC moved quickly and radically so that, by 1947, many of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation's (CCF) major health reforms had been legislated and set in motion.<sup>3</sup> As well, Joan Feather has deftly traced and explained the history of the rise and fall of the Swift Current health insurance "model."<sup>4</sup> While

these are valuable recent contributions to the subject of health reform in the province, they do not directly grapple with the impact of publicly funded hospital insurance on the reform process. The purpose of this article is to fill this gap.

Why is this important? Because public hospital insurance was the major health reform initiated in the early years of the CCF government and because it was practically the only reform in the period which was not opposed by organized medicine. According to Seymour Lipset, "the medical profession had no serious objection to the establishment of free hospitalization in the province in 1947, for this measure satisfied popular desire for increased state provision of medical care, but did not affect the position of the physicians."<sup>5</sup> Does this mean that the operation of a system of publicly funded hospital insurance for fifteen years prior to the introduction of Medicare was merely a benign reform from the point of view of the profession, or did this reform bolster the power and authority of the profession in ways which acted to slow the move for health reform?

After all, one of the interesting features of the era 1944 to 1962 is the "about face" in physician attitudes towards provision of insurance for medical services. During the Depression and World War II, doctors in the province were mostly in favour of such insurance. However, between war's end and 1962, except for a minority of public health physicians who tended to be active CCF supporters, most of the medical profession became passionately opposed to government moves into "public" insurance for doctors' services.

Of course, the same thing happened in many other Canadian provinces in the postwar era. However, in Saskatchewan the situation was unique because public hospital insurance and construction grants were introduced earlier compared to the other provinces. Thus, when the CCF girded its loins for battle with the doctors in 1962, it fought a profession that had ironically been bolstered both in terms of "real" income and in terms of more professional autonomy by the increased resources which the "socialist" CCF directed into the health-care system.

As is generally well known, Saskatchewan Premier T.C. Douglas intended to introduce plans to insure medical and hospital services simultaneously following the CCF's election victory in 1944. When federal resolve on health insurance waned after the war, however, the province felt unable to "go it alone" with both projects and decided to establish hospital insurance first to be followed, when finances improved, by an insurance plan for doctors' services (Medicare). The Saskatchewan Hospital Insurance Plan (SHIP), established in 1947, was universally accessible and funded mainly from provincial tax revenue. This scheme, in conjunction with provincial grants for upgrading old hospitals and building new ones, introduced by the CCF a few years earlier, laid the institutional foundation upon which the later edifice of doctors' insurance was erected and within which the conflict between doctors and government fermented and finally erupted in 1962.<sup>6</sup> The postwar injection of provincial funds for hospital construction, health services research, and hospital insurance profoundly altered the institutional character of

Saskatchewan's health-care sector, changed medical practice, altered the balance of power between the state and the medical profession, and contrary to general belief, slowed the pace of health reform.

The purpose of this article is to explore the effects of hospital insurance on health reform in the period between World War II and the doctors' strike. The unprecedented injection of capital into the hospital system after 1947 was directly beneficial to doctors because the type, amount and range of services which they could now provide were greatly enhanced. Public hospital insurance enhanced physicians' ability to practice medicine and helped strengthen their professional autonomy which served to stiffen their resistance to public insurance for doctors' services and other reforms of the health-care system.

The extent to which the medical profession in Saskatchewan directly benefited from this injection of public funds is very clear. According to Jack Granatstein, "Saskatchewan physicians' net earnings in 1958 were on average about \$12,000, a very substantial income in the 1950s, and the highest earnings in the nation for doctors."<sup>7</sup> Certainly, this increase in physicians' income in the 1950s cannot be explained by population growth, as the number of people in the province effectively remained static between 1941 and 1956.<sup>8</sup>

Because the ability of doctors to generate income tends to be enhanced by the existence of good hospitals and well-trained auxiliary health personnel, any government moves to increase the size and quality of this infrastructure benefits the profession by increasing the range, type and quality of services they are able to offer. In the immediate postwar period in Saskatchewan, the injection of public funds into the health care system was unprecedented. According to Mombourquette, "health care expenditures rose from \$1,852,079 (six percent of the provincial budget) in 1943-1944 to \$10,246,194 (twenty percent) in 1947-1948."<sup>9</sup> While these figures reflect general health expenditures, the funds directed particularly towards expansion of the hospital sector were also significant. Again, according to Mombourquette, "in March 1945 the government set up a system of grants for hospital construction, subject to the approval of the HSPC. These grants resulted in considerable hospital construction. Between 16 March 1945 and 1 March 1949 the government had approved \$653,713.86 in grants and \$173,500.00 in loans, and the number of union hospitals grew from twenty-six in 1944 to seventy-eight in 1948."<sup>10</sup>

From 1944 to 1962, Ann Crichton argues that physician resistance to encroachment on their professional autonomy crystallized around opposition to "salaries as against fee-for-service payments and opposition to regionalization."<sup>11</sup> During that period, Saskatchewan physicians were completely successful in opposing both, and according to David Naylor the doctors' success in keeping the fee-for-service method of payment alive set the standard for Medicare payment systems for the whole country.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the battle for professional autonomy in Saskatchewan had major ramifications for the rest of the country.

Of course, the strengthened position of Saskatchewan doctors was intimately linked to the expansion of private health insurance plans which grew almost exponentially throughout the 1950s, mainly in urban regions of the province. These plans, usually controlled by physicians, were, as Howard Shillington suggests, aggressively promoted by the profession in a conscious attempt to carve out a secure foothold in the "market" for health insurance.<sup>13</sup> The promotion of these plans in Saskatchewan was particularly aggressive as the medical profession felt squeezed by government plans to divide the province into health regions and then introduce public health insurance into them on a piecemeal basis. From the doctor's point of view, any success by the government in expanding its public health insurance system would have thwarted the ability of physician-run private insurance companies to grow. Thus, the struggle for health insurance "market share" is a useful way to frame the see-saw battle between profession and government in 1950s Saskatchewan.<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, the scales in this battle for "turf" in the health insurance market were tipped towards the profession by the early introduction of publicly funded hospital insurance. Better hospitals and hospital technology, due to the infusion of public funds via SHIP, enhanced the ability of doctors to practice medicine, while the increased prestige of "technological" medicine aided their ability to market private plans for services and slow the move towards publicly funded doctors' insurance.

While the central questions to be addressed by this article have been outlined, what is the most useful way they can be contextualized? The topic is focussed on health institutions during a unique period of experimentation by the first social democratic government in North America, and after major federal government moves to establish the postwar Canadian "welfare" state. This occurred in a province with a unique set of prewar health-care institutions and an attendant set of relationships between doctors, health-care institutions, and governments. Also, the 1950s was a time of transformation in Saskatchewan as the province began the profound shift from a mainly rural to an urban society and, around 1956, reversed a long-term population decline, partly attributable to the provincial government's social and economic *dirigisme*.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, the prewar and wartime health institutional setting in Saskatchewan is described in order to better understand postwar reforms and perhaps why they occurred in this province rather than in another part of Canada. Also, postwar federal and provincial manoeuvering is key to any understanding of health reform in Saskatchewan because the CCF was constrained from moving forward on health reform at its planned pace because of federal/provincial constitutional disputes which loomed very large indeed at the end of the war. In the next section, medical institutions in prewar Saskatchewan are described in order to understand the situation faced by the CCF on coming to power in 1944 and to be able to chart the changes to this institutional environment which were wrought by public hospital insurance.

## Medical Institutions in Pre-CCF Saskatchewan

Between the end of WWII and the doctors' strike of 1962, a major demographic shift occurred in Saskatchewan. In 1946, 25 percent of the population lived in cities. However, by 1956, 37 percent of the population were in urban areas and on the eve of the doctors' strike this had increased to 45 percent.<sup>17</sup> As we shall see, because most of the "cooperative" elements (upon which the CCF hoped to base their health reforms) in the Saskatchewan health-care system were rooted in rural areas, the population movements of the 1950s operated to attenuate them and make the CCF's job more difficult than expected.

The medical institutions that evolved in Saskatchewan rural districts in the first half of the twentieth century were different from those which developed in the cities. The differences were so profound that the CCF, in 1944, inherited two medical traditions — one rural and the other urban. Large areas of rural Saskatchewan had evolved into *de facto* enclaves of "socialized" medicine run by rural municipalities and regional districts. Often these administrative units raised and collected taxes locally, built and managed their own hospitals, and hired, supervised and paid the local doctor. However, in the cities, fee-for-service medicine was the rule and, until the development of private health insurance plans in the late 1930s, most city patients paid the doctor and the hospitals directly for services.

On coming to power, the CCF strategy was to build on rural cooperative institutions by extending financial support to rural areas already "socialized," creating such institutions in rural areas which were without these, and by moving to a system of cooperative medicine in the cities largely by promoting community-based health clinics. Thus, the institutional framework the CCF inherited in rural Saskatchewan was a key building block in the party's health-reform platform.

Another element in the evolution of health reform was, of course, the attitude of Saskatchewan's doctors, particularly towards the cooperative elements of the system in rural regions. The Depression hit Saskatchewan doctors very hard, forcing about 20 percent of them from the province.<sup>17</sup> Those who remained faced financial hardships that helped create a positive feeling for state intervention in medicine. This sentiment increased through the Depression as Saskatchewan doctors relied heavily on provincial government supplements to rural municipalities to ensure a steady income. It is not surprising that under these dreadful conditions the Saskatchewan Medical Association, in 1933, endorsed a publicly funded health insurance plan.<sup>18</sup>

The rural tradition of community medicine in the 1920s and 1930s also produced hospital administrators, nurses and other medical auxiliaries (as well as civic-minded citizen-participants on various hospital and regional health boards) who became skilled in managing, operating and staffing hospitals within a local or regional government-run system. While urban elites in many regions of Canada traditionally organized voluntary hospitals and sat on their boards, rural municipalities in Saskatchewan typically

assumed an analogous role. In 1916, the provincial legislature enabled municipalities to band together to form Union Hospital Districts (UHD) in order to expand the tax base for the construction and operation of rural hospitals. By 1920 there were ten of these in the province and by 1944 there were twenty-three.<sup>19</sup>

The legislature gave the UHDs authority to tax local property owners to finance the construction and operation of hospitals. Until 1934, property owners were the tax base. However, in 1934 the Rural Municipality Act was amended to empower rural municipalities to assess nonproperty owners a flat hospital tax. Through the Municipal Medical and Hospital Services Act of 1939, municipalities raised taxes from both property and individuals.<sup>20</sup> Thus, by the end of World War II, many rural municipalities had developed fairly sophisticated local infrastructures and expertise for the purpose of tax collection and the management and operation of hospitals.

Residents of rural Saskatchewan also developed a cooperative solution to pay doctors. This became known as the municipal doctor system (MDS). The first MDS was established in 1914 when the municipality of Sarnia, which was about to lose its physician, offered him a \$1,500 annual salary to stay. Sarnia offered the contract without provincial legislative approval. In 1916, in response to an obvious need, the legislature gave municipal councils authority to levy a tax to pay for doctor services and by 1931, fifty-two municipalities had contracts for service with physicians.<sup>21</sup> Thus, by the 1940s, local government in many rural regions of the province had made hospital care and doctors' services available at relatively low cost to most residents within their jurisdiction.

The Union Hospital Districts and Municipal Doctor Systems were a feature of rural Saskatchewan. They provided basic hospital and medical services within a region and were universal so that everyone, including the most disenfranchised and poor members of the community, was covered. In the cities, which were less impoverished than the rural areas, private medical plans were introduced in the late 1930s. These plans, endorsed by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), were voluntary, had a limited range of benefits, and operated with numerous exclusions and caveats. In Saskatchewan, the development of these plans heralded the entry of the medical profession into, at first, the urban insurance market.

The beginnings of the private plans were slow at first. In 1939, two plans, the Regina Mutual Medical Health Benefit Association and Medical Services Incorporated (MSI) were organized. Two years later the Saskatoon Mutual Medical and Hospital Benefit Association was organized. By 1945, about 50,000 people were covered by MSI and Group Medical Services (GMS).<sup>22</sup> These two companies were organized and controlled by the medical profession and by the mid-1940s they dominated the small but expanding private market for health insurance in the cities.

Thus, when the CCF came to power in 1944 a new player was emerging in the health insurance field in Saskatchewan's cities. Physician-run insurance

companies were offering a service in the cities that was provided in most rural areas by local government. The new urban health insurance market expanded rapidly following the war, strengthening the hand of "private" medicine and increasing the bifurcation between urban and rural medicine in the province. Paradoxically, at a time when the CCF wanted to build on the medical traditions of rural areas, "city medicine" was rapidly gaining the upper hand. CCF planners were aware of the dangerous irony posed by this situation and, at least initially, moved rapidly to establish a uniform system of provincewide state medicine.

In 1944 the CCF took power expecting to obtain federal cash to establish a system of insured medical and hospital care simultaneously and within a few years. However this did not happen (for reasons explained in the next section); instead, the CCF was only able to institute a system of hospital insurance. Hospital insurance came into the province and operated without a system of state-insured doctors' services at a time in the province's history when economic, demographic and institutional power began to shift from rural areas to the cities. The operation of a system of hospital insurance on its own and the establishment of hospital construction grants resulted in an infusion of capital into the hospital infrastructure that was particularly beneficial to the hospitals in the cities. Increasingly, as road networks were improved, city hospitals with their superior technologies were seen as centres in which rural patients could be serviced with more ease. The demographic shift and the provision of hospital insurance increased the resources of urban hospitals, the catchment area for patients, and therefore the size of the urban medical market. All of these factors tended to strengthen fee-for-service medicine and private health insurance plans.

Before going into detail on this subject, we must first review the federal and provincial manoeuvrings on health insurance during and immediately after the war, because these are key to understanding the way health reform unfolded in Saskatchewan after the war.

### The Federal/Provincial Picture

During the war, the federal government (with the support of the CMA) endorsed public health insurance as part of a general package of social legislation proposed for the immediate postwar era. By 1945, the federal government drafted a model bill for hospital insurance legislation for each of the provinces. Thus, in 1945, the commitment of the federal government and the organized medical profession to insuring hospital and medical services was strong.

This commitment had also been building at the local level since the early 1930s. Support for health insurance had surfaced earlier in British Columbia and Saskatchewan under Liberal provincial governments. In the 1930s the British Columbia Liberal government passed a health insurance bill but withdrew it after sustained objection and public campaigning by the province's medical profession.<sup>23</sup> While the British Columbia legislation failed,

other medical associations and provincial governments looked with increasing favour on health insurance as the Depression deepened.

In the 1944 Saskatchewan election health insurance was an uncontroversial issue championed by both the CCF and the Liberals. As Saskatchewan historian John Archer explains: "the debate ... was not state medicine or private medicine, but rather what kind of state medicine was to be brought about. The physicians favoured health insurance and private practice, with bills being rendered to the state rather than to patients. The Liberals generally supported this concept. The CCF proposed that the government move gradually towards a completely socialized system of health services."<sup>24</sup>

While the goal of health insurance may have been a "motherhood" issue in wartime Saskatchewan, its attainment was complicated by much larger problems of postwar constitutional jurisdiction between provincial governments and the Dominion. Briefly summarized, the so-called "have" provinces (that is those provinces with a more viable personal and corporate tax base) fought to regain tax fields they had temporarily given to the federal government during the war, while the "have-not" provinces (like Saskatchewan) were happy for the Dominion to retain jurisdiction over income and corporate tax in return for federal grants. Thus, the social legislation proposed by the federal government with its attendant "grants-in-aid" was a powerful incentive for "have-not" provincial support in the federal government's drive to entrench its tax base and strengthen central government.<sup>25</sup>

At a 1945 federal/provincial conference, the federal government attempted to persuade the provinces to accept matching grants to develop health care services in the provinces and, in return, to leave personal and corporate income tax fields under exclusive federal control. According to Alvin Finkel, this agreement was never reached because, at the end of the war, "King also came to view the proposals for social insurance schemes as too extravagant and did not wish to impose the taxes necessary to implement them. Provincial demands for changes served him well, however, and became the public justification for withdrawing the Green Book package and proceeding with a more conservative agenda for managing the post-war economy."<sup>26</sup> Federal funding was postponed until 1948 when a less ambitious series of matching health grants was established to enable provinces to build hospitals and train medical staff. These grants gave the provinces fifty-cent dollars in order to expand the personnel and capital component of their health-care infrastructure.<sup>27</sup>

Although the CCF in Saskatchewan was politically committed to a complete system of health insurance, the collapse of federal initiatives in the immediate postwar period forced the abandonment of plans to finance Medicare and focus instead on a system of hospital insurance. For a decade the CCF ran its hospital insurance program with no hope of federal aid. When in 1957 the federal government finally passed national hospital insurance legislation, money was finally available which freed enough provincial revenue to enable the Douglas government to consider legislation to bring in

Medicare.<sup>28</sup> The ability of the CCF to introduce both medical and hospital insurance was severely compromised following the 1945 failure at provincial and federal cooperation. As we shall see in the next section, this failure widened the window of opportunity for Saskatchewan doctors, improving their strategic position in relation to the CCF government.

## Health Care Reform In Saskatchewan After World War II

### *Early CCF Reforms*

Immediately on taking office in 1944 the CCF established the Health Services Planning Commission (HSPC) with the task of introducing state-funded hospital insurance. This was an amazingly complex task because the civil service was hostile to CCF ideology and because no one had ever attempted to introduce public health insurance on this scale in North America. To get around these problems, Douglas brought in outside experts both sympathetic to democratic socialism and skilled enough to run the HSPC.

Within two years the HSPC had surveyed all of the province's hospitals, devised an insurance scheme. It set up the infrastructure to collect hospital taxes (using the municipal tax-gathering system already in place over most rural regions in the province), to sign up beneficiaries and to pay the hospitals. The province also set up a system of capital grants (four years in advance of the 1948 federal grants) to encourage the building and upgrading of hospitals. At the same time, the CCF established, for administrative purposes, fourteen health regions in Saskatchewan. In 1947, in Health Region number 1, located in and around Swift Current (representing about 5 percent of the province's population), the government started North America's first comprehensive health insurance scheme funded by a combination of a local health tax and provincial sales tax.<sup>29</sup>

After the election, the CCF also encouraged the expansion of the MDSs and the UHDs using health grants to encourage training of personnel and upgrading of equipment. In the five years between 1944 and 1949, fifty-five additional UHDs were established so that, by 1949, there were a total of seventy-eight covering one-third of the province and providing about 40 percent of Saskatchewan's hospital beds. Similarly, by 1948, 107 municipalities, fifty-nine villages and fourteen towns had contracts with a total of 180 doctors.<sup>30</sup>

The expansion of Union Hospital Districts, the establishment of health regions, and the successful start of the "Swift Current" scheme were indications that the government wanted to move quickly in spite of the federal government's fading resolve on state medicine. Rural Saskatchewan experienced an injection of expertise and capital as the government aggressively built on and expanded the cooperative health infrastructure and traditions already in place.

Of course the major provincewide reform initiated by the CCF during this time was the establishment of SHIP in 1947. It is very important to note that

although the establishment of the HSPC, the setting up of the Swift Current demonstration project, the creation of health regions, and the expansion of UHDs and MDSs generated opposition among Saskatchewan's doctors, SHIP was greeted with relative silence by a profession which recognized this portion of the CCF's reform would operate in its best interests.

### *Resistance to the Early Reforms*

Resistance to reform proceeded down several parallel tracks. One of these was the avoidance of situations where doctors were salaried by governments or agencies of government. As long as Saskatchewan was depressed and doctors were poor, direct salary arrangements with the municipality were an economically viable option for rural practitioners. However, with the fading of the Depression, doctors began to pressure councils for payment on a fee-for-service rather than a salary basis. Thus, under the Liberal administration of 1941, provincial legislation was amended to allow payment of doctors within the MDS on a fee-for-service as well as a salary basis.<sup>31</sup>

This move away from direct salary arrangements with municipalities even penetrated the government's pilot project in Swift Current. By 1949, the approximately forty doctors in the Swift Current health region had negotiated a fee-for-service payment scheme with the regional health board. However, the board kept the doctors' fees at 75 percent of the recommended fee schedule set by the Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons, with a global cap on expenditures that effectively controlled the rate of increase in Swift Current doctors' income. The profession in the rest of the province witnessed this income squeeze with alarm and increasingly agitated against the spread of the Swift Current model to other rural health regions.<sup>32</sup>

The growth of private insurance plans was another track down which resistance to reform grew, particularly in the cities. This resistance grew as the plans expanded rapidly in the first half of the 1950s, slowing somewhat towards the end of the decade. However, the annual rate of membership in these plans averaged 20 percent per year in the decade.<sup>33</sup> (See Table 1.)

By the early 1950s, urban physicians increasingly viewed expansion of either the Swift Current model or the MDS as a threat because, in a political sense, their success encouraged the government along the road to state medicine, and also because this expansion represented a loss of market share for the private plans. Both the political and market threats were intertwined and formed the basis for the medical profession's increasingly strident opposition to "state medicine."

The key to understanding physician promotion of their private plans does not just lie in the economic advantage that accrued to physician-owners and operators of the plans. Another reason was the increased autonomy that the plans provided. The managers of the plans (usually physicians) set the schedule of fees and offered consumers a range of plan options. That is, the

Table 1 Growth in Membership for MSI and GMS Voluntary Insurance Plans from 1951 to 1960				
Year	MSI	GMS	Total	%Annual Growth
1951	48352	17186	65538	
1952	74382	22281	96663	48
1953	92530	25157	117687	22
1954	107874	30906	138780	18
1955	122191	37070	159270	15
1956	150649	45000	195649	23
1957	175000	61730	236730	21
1958	192351	62822	255173	8
1959	211514	68201	279715	10
1960	214002	74816	288818	3

Source: Saskatchewan, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health* (1952-61).

private plans offered doctors an ability to negotiate the price of their services with themselves. This was very different from a situation where doctors were salaried by government agencies. With the latter arrangement, physicians became civil servants with less economic clout and a greater opportunity for government to interfere directly in the practice of medicine.

Although the growth of private plans occurred mainly in the cities they made some inroads in rural areas as the insurance companies made a deliberate attempt to slow both the spread of the municipal doctor system and the Swift Current scheme. They were quite successful in rural areas because, by 1955, the private plans had negotiated contracts with sixty out of approximately 180 rural municipalities, towns and villages.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the early expansion in UHDs and MDSs following the CCF ascension to power began to slow and reverse itself after 1948. (See Figure 1.)

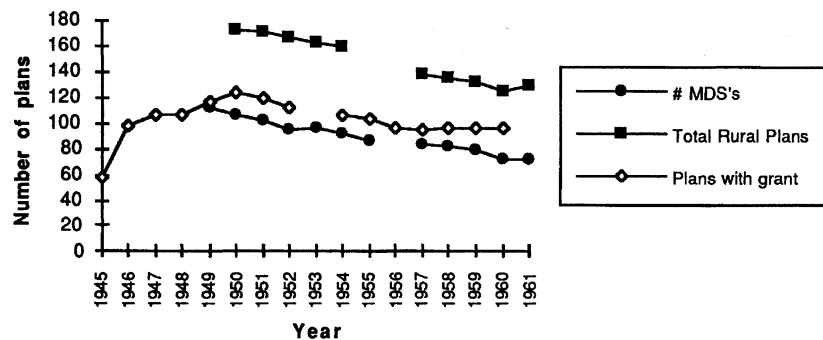


Figure 1. Change in the number of rural/municipal doctor plans between 1945 and 1961.  
Source: Saskatchewan, *Medical Care Insurance Commission Annual Reports* (1962-1967).

The government was very aware of the threat and potential headache posed by the spread of physician-controlled private health insurance plans in rural regions and viewed their expansion with alarm as it feared they would cream off the paying section of the market, leaving the state to pick up the tab for the destitute and the working poor. Also, if the middle class patients were captured by these plans, the government would run into electoral resistance in its attempts to tax this class to pay for medical insurance for everyone in the province. This concern is apparent in the annual report of Saskatchewan Public Health for 1956 which states:

There is virtually no governmental supervision over the benefits, coverage, or costs of the voluntary medical care plans. Theoretically, municipalities require approval by the Minister of Public Health before entering into agreements for provision of medical care to local residents. In practice, however, such agreements are undertaken between municipal councils and the voluntary plans without ministerial approval. This presents a problem which remains to be solved. The real difficulty is that the voluntary plans leave unprotected some 25 percent of persons in the municipality and their costs are very much higher than those plans providing prepaid medical care under official auspices.<sup>35</sup>

Some rural municipalities abandoned their MDS in favour of these private plans, partly because "of the improvement of highways throughout the province and the corresponding desire of the people for the services of specialists who are located in the larger cities."<sup>36</sup> Clearly such improvements had increased the expectations of rural residents and created a more "market" oriented system. The private plans gave the municipality a way of meeting these higher expectations as they could buy a range of specialist services not available under the less flexible MDS. Of course, because the plans usually had exclusions and conditions, a municipality purchasing such a plan usually reduced the scope of coverage in the community.

In an attempt to slow the spread of private plans in rural Saskatchewan the government tried to interest rural councils and health regions in their Swift Current model. A relevant passage in the Saskatchewan Public Health report of 1956 is worth quoting at some length:

Because of the success of the regional medical care plan in the Swift Current area, several other health regions expressed interest during the year in launching new regional medical care plans. This reached the point of proposals in the Regina Rural Health Region and the Assiniboia Health Region, contemplating the establishment of prepaid plans covering the whole population of these regions. At the request of the regional boards, statistical data were compiled for calculation of the benefits and costs of medical care plans, fashioned after the Swift Current experience but modified to suit the wishes of the regional representatives. After favourable action by the regional boards, the regional health councils of both of these regions met in the summer of 1955 and voted overwhelmingly to favour such plans, but to submit the question to public referenda. During the late summer and fall months serious difficulties developed on the international wheat market and farmers became acutely short of cash. Meanwhile, the organized medical profession expressed considerable opposition to these regional proposals, favouring instead enrollment of the people into voluntary plans.<sup>37</sup>

The government was stopped head on in its efforts to expand the Swift Current model to other regions. Meanwhile, it made half-hearted efforts to

stop municipalities from opting out of the MDS by refusing to give a municipality its health grant (used to pay for its doctor) if council contracted with a private plan. Because the health grants were small, many rural councils ignored the government and went ahead without their approval to negotiate with the private plans. By 1955 the MDS system was in decline, the Swift Current demonstration project was contained, and the private plans were expanding rapidly. The momentum for change appeared to have shifted away from the government. As the next section of the article argues, this was in large part due to SHIP's success, which helped to shift the balance of power away from the state.

### **Direct Impact of the Saskatchewan Hospital Insurance Plan on the Reform Process**

Hospital insurance was a boon for the hospitals. According to the 1952 Saskatchewan Public Health report, SHIP payments represented 86 percent of the income for Saskatchewan hospitals in the years 1950 and 1951. The remaining 14 percent of revenue would have come from private insurance plans and direct payments for noninsured services from patients.<sup>38</sup> Hospital insurance gave hospitals a reliable source of income that encouraged expansion and added stability to the system.

This expansion was explosive. Between 1947 and 1951, the average annual growth rate in hospital beds per 1,000 population in Saskatchewan was 6.71, compared to the national average of 1.57.<sup>39</sup> For the same time period, the average annual growth rate in the number of hospitals in Saskatchewan was 13.32, compared to a national average of 4.56.<sup>40</sup> These figures indicate that the basic infrastructure of the hospital system (buildings and beds) expanded, respectively, at rates that were triple and quadruple the national rates for this time period. This trend continued as the bed supply in Saskatchewan outstripped that in most other regions of Canada throughout the 1950s.

While the infrastructure expanded rapidly in this period, the question remains whether or not patients used this expanded physical plant at the same or at greater rates. If we look at discharges from Saskatchewan hospitals, the trend was of increasing hospital utilization relative to other provinces. The annual average growth rate in the number of discharged patients between 1947 and 1951 was 7.15 in Saskatchewan and 3.01 in the rest of Canada.<sup>41</sup>

These numbers illustrate that, relative to other parts of Canada, the hospital infrastructure and the rate at which it was utilized expanded dramatically following the introduction of SHIP and that these high utilization rates continued throughout the 1950s. This means that doctors were admitting patients into the province's hospitals in numbers and at rates far greater than pre-SHIP averages and much higher than national averages. This injection of public funds enhanced the doctors' ability to deliver services and the potential for increasing the range and price of their services as well as the attractiveness of their private health insurance plans. It is no

**Table 2**  
**Per-Capita Costs (in \$) for SHIP and Percentage Annual Increase in Costs (1947-55)**

Year	Cost per Capita	% Increase in Cost
1947	9.68	
1948	11.85	22.4
1949	13.98	18
1950	15.97	14
1951	17.97	12.5
1952	19.18	6.7
1953	20.44	6.6
1954	21.90	7.1
1955	24.00	9.5

Source: Saskatchewan, *Public Health Annual Reports* (1947-56).

wonder, as Granatstein has pointed out, that by 1958 Saskatchewan doctors were the best paid in the country.<sup>42</sup>

Also, from 1947 through 1951, hospitals were paid by SHIP using a system that gave institutions with the best facilities more money and linked this to the number of patient days in the hospital. The per-capita cost of SHIP from 1947 to 1951 approximately doubled and although the rate of cost increase slowed after 1951, by 1955 costs were about triple those for 1947. (See Table 2.) Thus, for the first four years of SHIP, the payment system encouraged hospital administrators and physicians to fill hospitals to capacity. Of course, this dramatic increase in utilization may have been in part patient-driven because people who, prior to SHIP, could not afford hospital treatment had this financial barrier removed after 1947. Although utilization rates levelled off after 1951, Saskatchewan residents had become, by the mid-1950s, the most hospitalized in Canada.<sup>43</sup>

While this discussion shows that SHIP operated in the best economic interests of the profession, what proof have we that physicians really benefited in a direct way? Clearly, by the mid-1950s, Saskatchewan doctors had access to good hospital facilities and relatively high incomes. With these conditions, it is no surprise that there was a substantial migration of doctors into the province. Although the population of Saskatchewan increased by

**Table 3**  
**Number of Registered Physicians in Saskatchewan by Year (1949-55)**

Year	Number of Physicians	Year	Number of Physicians
1949	614	1956	835
1950	633	1957	864
1951	662	1958	886
1952	713	1959	925
1953	750	1960	895
1954	776	1961	900
1955	811	1962	881

Source: Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons, *Brief to the Saskatchewan Government's Advisory Planning Committee on Medical Care* (1962), 76.

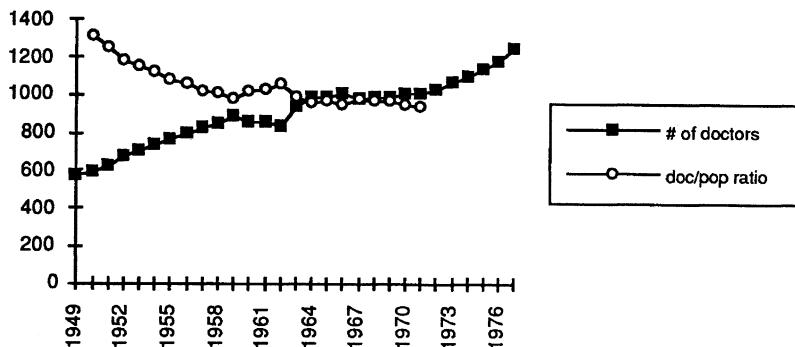


Figure 2. Number of registered physicians and their ratio to the total population of Saskatchewan (1949-77).  
Source: Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons, *Brief to the Saskatchewan Government's Advisory Planning Committee on Medical Care* (1962), 76.

only 11 percent between 1949 and the eve of the doctors' strike in 1962, the number of doctors practicing in the province increased by 43 percent, from 614 to 881. (See Table 3 and Figure 2.)

Figure 2 shows a dramatic and steady increase in physician supply in the province in the decade following the introduction of SHIP, indicating that the medical profession, at least prior to 1959, was attracted to the province by health reforms (specifically SHIP) initiated by the Douglas government in the late 1940s. Fixation on the doctors' strike obscures the reality that Saskatchewan, throughout the 1950s, was a very good place to practice medicine. While it is true that in 1958 growth in physician supply flattens, likely because of the profession's fear of impending government introduction of Medicare, this should not obscure the fact that the profession did well under SHIP.

### Conclusion

The combination of cooperative culture and populism that manifested itself in the CCF's political lock on provincial electoral success for nearly twenty years was undoubtedly the bedrock upon which successful health-care reform was pioneered in Saskatchewan between 1944 and 1962. However, this experiment nearly foundered as the CCF battled an increasingly militant and united professional organization. Foot dragging by the federal government ensured that Tommy Douglas and the CCF fought a series of tough and lonely battles on health reform. The process of incremental introduction of reforms in Saskatchewan allowed the medical profession to gain enough strength to force the CCF to back away from its 1944 plan to salary doctors. As David Naylor demonstrates, the profession's victory in Saskatchewan ensured the fee-for-service principle survived to become the cornerstone of the payment system under nationwide Medicare after its introduction in 1968.<sup>44</sup>

The capitalization and expansion of the hospital infrastructure in terms of plant and personnel were unparalleled in any other province between 1944 and 1962 as both hospital construction grants and SHIP funnelled public money into the hospital system. In 1947 the number of rated beds per 1,000 people in the province was 5.1. This figure peaked at 6.7 in 1951, an increase of 31 percent. The availability of beds shot up in this five-year period and the intensity with which patients who were in these beds were serviced also increased dramatically from 1,678 to 2,209 days of patient care per 1,000 beneficiaries, also an increase of 31 percent. The number of practicing doctors in the province increased from 614 to 750 (22 percent) during the same time period.<sup>45</sup> It was only in 1958 that the rate of growth in physician supply began to level off at just under 900 doctors as they began to believe the CCF would do away with their private plans and place them on salary.

The profession prospered, as the government expanded urban medical facilities (in particular a medical school was built in 1953 and a large University Hospital in 1956). As the private plans grew, the medical insurance industry and the medical profession were opposed mainly by the political commitment of the CCF and the public. However, according to Ann Crichton, by the mid-1950s, "the government was becoming less skilled in managing health policy moves, Health Ministers changed, bureaucrats came and went. Meanwhile the Saskatchewan Medical Association was gearing up for battle."<sup>46</sup>

The CCF compromise with the doctors in 1962 was one that was ultimately acceptable to the profession across the nation. Again, while not wishing to detract from the CCF victory in 1962, the battles over health reform in the era between the Second World War and the doctors' strike were a partial defeat for the CCF. For example, although the CCF moved quickly on hospital insurance they did not aggressively expand the scope of existing municipal doctor plans. In fact, the CCF cut several programs while at the same time refusing to cooperate with the doctors' desire to establish their plans in rural communities. The government seemingly was unable to commit all its efforts to supporting and expanding UHDs and MDSs and yet, at the same time, half-heartedly moved to stop the profession expanding its own insurance companies.

As Mombourquette has pointed out, most of the radical health reforms were undertaken by Dr. Henry Sigerist and Drs. Mindel and Cecil Sheps in the early days of the HSPC.<sup>47</sup> However, by the early 1950s, the tactics on the part of CCF health planners had become ambivalent, leading finally to the defeat of the CCF's regionalization policy in 1955. According to Feather, in terms of the defeat of regionalism, "the critical turning point centred on events in 1955."<sup>48</sup>

Clearly physicians benefited directly from SHIP in terms of income, infrastructural improvements, and increased ability to provide services to patients; these factors drew doctors back to Saskatchewan and fed the growth in private insurance plans. The key victory of the medical profession in 1955

over the government's insurance regionalization plans was made possible through the growth of the private medical plans. By 1955, "this growth had an extraordinary impact on the leaders of the organized profession as they saw a real possibility rather than, as in 1951, simply a vague hope that their plans offered a politically and economically viable alternative to government action."<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the "success of the profession-sponsored plans which embodied or institutionalized the profession's policies had the effect of exacerbating the strains in profession-government relationships."<sup>50</sup>

As Shillington points out, a key factor in the movement towards a "medical model" in health planning was successful provision of an alternative to the state funding of medical care in the form of the private health insurance plans.<sup>51</sup> Expansion of the government's alternative Swift Current model was stopped in 1955. This victory and the emergence of an increasingly confident medical profession emboldened by the successful expansion of its private plans ensured a permanent move away from the "socialist" planning model of the immediate postwar years.

It is no wonder that SHIP was not opposed by the medical profession. As early as 1949, just two years after the introduction of SHIP, Malcolm Taylor pointed out that, "from the point of view of the doctors, the advantages (of SHIP) have been equally great. They have been able to order their patients into hospital without reckoning the effect of the cost on the patient's financial status. The fact that patients are not faced with major hospital bills has left them with more resources with which to pay doctors' bills earlier and more completely."<sup>52</sup>

One can only wonder what Canadian Medicare might look like today if the CCF in Saskatchewan had been able to oppose the growth of private health insurance plans more vigorously, and had it known of the impact of the Saskatchewan Hospital Insurance Plan. Perhaps, rather than implementing the Liberal party's 1944 health reform package, the CCF might have achieved its own 1944 health reform agenda.

#### NOTES

The author wishes to thank Dr. Tina Loo, Dr. Allen Seager, and Dr. Jack Little from the Department of History, Simon Fraser University, for their support and advice in framing this article.

1. The two major historical works which deal with health reform in the province after the war are constructed around an explanation of the doctors' strike. These two works are: R. F. Badgley and S. Wolfe, *Doctors' Strike: Medical Care and Conflict in Saskatchewan* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), and E.A. Tollefson, *Bitter Medicine: The Saskatchewan Medicare Feud* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1963).
2. Harley Dickinson, "The Struggle for State Health Insurance: Reconsidering the Role of Saskatchewan Farmers," *Studies in Political Economy* 41 (Summer 1993): 133-56.
3. Duane Mombourquette, "An Inalienable Right: The CCF and Rapid Health Care Reform, 1944-1948," *Saskatchewan History* 43, no. 3 (1991): 101-16.
4. Joan Feather, "Impact of the Swift Current Health Region: Experiment or Model?" *Prairie Forum* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 225-48; Feather, "From Concept to Reality: Formation of the Swift Current Health Region," *Prairie Forum* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 59-80.

5. Seymour M. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan, A Study in Political Economy* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), 246.
6. Gordon Hatcher, *Universal Free Health-Care in Canada, 1947-77* (Washington: National Institute of Health, 1981), 77. In discussing hospital construction grants and grants for health research in Saskatchewan, Hatcher says that "the research and some of the training grant programs were indirect subsidies of medical education and residency programs. As such, they accelerated the trend to specialization and the concentration of specialists in cities and suburban areas."
7. Jack Granatstein, *Canada 1957-1967: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 171.
8. In 1941 the population of Saskatchewan was 896,000, shrinking to 880,700 by 1956. *Canada Yearbook* (Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology, 1992), 82.
9. Mombourquette, "An Inalienable Right," 112.
10. *Ibid.*, 106.
11. Ann Crichton, "Evolution of Health Services in Canada," 135. Unpublished book manuscript cited with permission of the author.
12. David Naylor, *Private Practice, Public Payment: Canadian Medicine and the Politics of Health Insurance (1911-1966)* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 171.
13. Howard Shillington, *The Road to Medicare in Canada* (Toronto: Del Graphics Publishing Department, 1972), 26.
14. See Elliott Freidson, *Professional Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) and Robert Evans, *Strained Mercy: The Economics of Canadian Health Care* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1984).
15. John Archer, *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), 297. Between 1941 and 1961, the total number of farms in Saskatchewan declined by 25 percent while the average size of farms increased by 61 percent. By 1956 the population of Saskatchewan began to grow for the first time since the 1930s.
16. *Ibid.*, 358.
17. In 1920 the ratio of doctors to the general population was 1:1,445 but by the end of the Depression in 1941 the ratio had increased to 1:1,700. Badgley and Wolfe, *Doctors' Strike*, 31.
18. *Ibid.*, 12.
19. Malcolm Taylor, "The Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan: A Study in Compulsory Health Insurance" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1949), 83.
20. Malcolm Taylor, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy*, 2nd ed. (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 72.
21. Taylor, "Saskatchewan Plan," 84.
22. Badgley and Wolfe, *Doctors' Strike*, 24.
23. The strong support by medical associations and provincial governments for some form of public health insurance particularly during the Depression is discussed in: Margaret Andrews, "The Course of Medical Opinion on State Health Insurance in British Columbia, 1919-1939," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 14 (1983): 129-41 and Shillington, *The Road to Medicare*.
24. Archer, *Saskatchewan: A History*, 259.
25. Taylor, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy*. This work is "the classic" in the field and describes in detail the fiscal manoeuvrings between provinces and the Dominion in relation to public health insurance in the 1940s.
26. Alvin Finkel, "Paradise Postponed: A Re-examination of the Green Book Proposals of 1945," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (1993): 122.

27. Taylor, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy*, 163.
28. Granatstein, *Years of Uncertainty*, 172.
29. William Lougheed, *Underwriting Canadian Health: An Economic View of Welfare Programs* (Toronto: MacKinnon and Atkins Ltd., 1957), 82.
30. Tollefson, *Bitter Medicine*, 41.
31. Taylor, "Saskatchewan Plan," 87. The Municipal Medical and Hospital Services Act was passed in 1939. In 1941, a minor amendment to this act allowed for physicians within the MDSs to be paid on a fee-for-service basis.
32. Saskatchewan, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health* (1956), 93.
33. Ibid., 98.
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39. Morris Barer and Robert Evans, "Health Costs and Expenditures," in Robert Evans and Greg Stoddart, eds., *Medicare at Maturity: Achievements, Lessons and Challenges* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1986), 103.
40. Ibid., 101-2.
41. Ibid., 111.
42. Granatstein, *Years of Uncertainty*.
43. Crichton, "Evolution of Health Services," 307.
44. Naylor, *Public Payment, Private Practice*.
45. Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons, *Brief to the Saskatchewan Government's Advisory Planning Committee on Medical Care* (1962), 72.
46. Crichton, "Evolution of Health Services," 301.
47. Mombourquette, "An Inalienable Right."
48. Feather, "Impact of the Swift Current Health Region," 226.
49. Taylor, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy*, 258.
50. Ibid., 262.
51. Shillington, *The Road to Medicare*, 181.
52. Taylor, "Saskatchewan Plan," 358.

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# Is Soil Erosion a Problem on the Canadian Prairies?

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**ABSTRACT.** The prairies of western Canada were settled for their capacity to produce wheat for world markets. Any threat to that potential continues to be treated seriously; one threat has received much attention during the past decade. Widely expressed concern has arisen that the grain industry of the Canadian Prairies is no longer sustainable, largely due to soil erosion and consequent deterioration of the land base. Estimates of the annual loss in farm income from erosion vary, but most indicate that erosion is very costly. This article reviews evidence on soil erosion in the Canadian Prairies, arguing that the costs of erosion to farmers in the region are probably negligible. Similarly, off-site costs are likely small, although the evidence here is less conclusive. Finally, some government programs have led to greater soil erosion, and future public policy needs to recognize that soil erosion can be an on-farm or off-farm issue.

**SOMMAIRE.** C'est leur capacité de production du blé destiné au marché mondial qui impulsa la colonisation des prairies de l'Ouest canadien et toute menace à cette capacité continue d'être prise au sérieux. Bon nombre de voix inquiètes ont affirmées, durant la dernière décennie, que la culture des graminées n'est plus viable, à cause de l'érosion des sols et de la réduction des superficies arables. Les pertes de revenu agricole annuel font l'objet d'estimations variables mais généralement très élevées. Le présent article examine les chiffres touchant l'érosion des sols pour proposer que le coût est probablement négligeable pour les agriculteurs des Prairies. Le coût de l'érosion hors des fermes est lui aussi probablement minime, quoique les chiffres soient moins concluants. Plusieurs programmes gouvernementaux se sont soldés par une augmentation de l'érosion et les politiques devront dorénavant refléter le fait que l'érosion des sols peut être à la source de problèmes sur les fermes mais aussi en d'autres lieux.

The economic basis for settlement of the Canadian Prairies was its agricultural potential — a view that the region could produce vast quantities of grain for the export market. That potential was realized early in the history of the Prairies, with grain production and exports still continuing to be important to the region. More than 95 percent of Canada's wheat and canola are grown in the region, as well as 90 percent of its barley; most Canadian exports of these grains originate in the region. As well, the Prairies are home to almost two-thirds of the Canadian cattle population, and about one-third of the hogs that are produced. The dominant role of grain production, exports and feeding has affected public attitudes toward agriculture. Beginning even before the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) was established in the 1930s, threats or perceived threats to the prairie region's ability to produce large amounts of low-cost grain have been reasons for public intervention.

One new concern about the future of grain production on the Prairies has been expressed in the term *sustainable agriculture* (Brundtland 1987; Agriculture Canada 1990; Science Council of Canada 1992). It relates to the belief that the productivity of the land is threatened, primarily as a result of wind and water erosion and increasing salinization. In this article, we focus on the former, because productivity of the land base is believed to be threatened by reduced yields caused by erosion. A typical solution is public intervention to change use of the land, to encourage farmers to alter farm practices, or both.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this article is to argue that the on-farm costs of soil erosion are not as large as suggested in the popular press (for example, Fairbairn 1984). Indeed, government intervention on those grounds may

provide incentives that cause farmers to erode their soils at a faster rate than in the absence of such intervention. Further, we argue that current government programs that provide income support are not leading to sustainable agriculture on the Prairies. Finally, government intervention can only be justified because of its high off-farm costs. In that case, public intervention will take a different form from that which has been suggested.

## Background

Some erosion characterizes nearly all soil, even when there is considerable plant cover. Soils erode but they also regenerate from rock and mineral sources, and receive deposits from wind and water erosion at other locations. It is the balance between erosion losses and soil formation or accretion that is critical. For different soil types, slopes, climate and so on, the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has determined the maximum tolerable rates of soil loss that will permit a continuing high level of crop productivity; these equal the rate of natural regeneration and are known as *T-values*. According to USDA studies, soil loss tolerances range from one to eleven tonnes per hectare (0.5–5 tons per acre) per year, depending upon the thickness of the topsoil and the existence of a favourable and sufficient rooting depth. For most deep soils, regeneration occurs at the rate of five tons per acre or one-thirtieth of an inch (11 tonnes/ha or 0.85 mm) per year. Soils that are shallow to bedrock or groundwater, or that have some other obstruction to the rooting zone, may exhibit lower levels of soil loss, as low as 1 ton/ac (0.006 inches) or 2.25 tonnes/ha (0.17 mm) per year.<sup>2</sup> Soils covered with natural vegetation lose less than 0.01 mm of topsoil per year in the Prairies (Weisensel 1988), and may do so elsewhere as well.<sup>3</sup> Converting grasslands to row crops increases erosion by as much as 300 times, while tillage summerfallow increases erosion by an additional factor of five to six over row crops. Exceeding the tolerable soil loss rate or *T-value* threatens the productivity and fertility of the soil, in some cases jeopardizing its ability to support vegetative cover. While American lands have been classified according to *T-values*, this has not been the case in Canada.

Criteria for deciding soil loss tolerances are constantly being debated and reevaluated. For example, while cultivation increases the rate of erosion, it is now recognized that it also tends to boost the rate of soil formation. The latter effect appears to be due to greater percolation of water and improved aeration of the upper soil horizons:

In uncultivated land, the natural weathering process can take some 300 years to produce 2.5 centimeters of ... topsoil. ... Under cultivation, the process of soil formation can be much quicker. In some places, just three decades can build up 2.5 centimeters of topsoil, about 380 tonnes of topsoil per hectare. Some soils, however, gain at lesser rates, as low as 2.2 tonnes per hectare. In tonnages, the figures for the higher rate are impressive — more than 12 tonnes of topsoil being added each year to each hectare (Fairbairn 1984: 16).

The higher figure of twelve tonnes/ha (or nearly 5.5 tons/ac) per year suggests that soil can be replaced at rates about equal to the higher end of

acceptable T-value levels for soil loss. However, there is a view that T-values have been too closely tied to the presumed rate of formation of the upper (A) soil horizon, not on additional soil formation at rooting depth, a slower process.<sup>4</sup> T-values based on soil formation in the lower layers would, therefore, be smaller than those based on the A horizon; thus, estimates of tolerable soil loss would have to be adjusted downward and, from an economic point of view, achieving given soil conservation targets would accordingly be more expensive. Some effort has been made to separate the determination of T-values from the setting of soil conservation objectives. For example, T-values might be determined solely by the rate of formation of soil (perhaps based on the formation of a favourable rooting zone), while conservation objectives would reflect a range of other concerns, which might be ethical, economic or social concerns (Crosson and Stout 1983: 4, 79-82).

In any event, conservationists argue that, even if areawide erosion rates are below the "tolerable" annual soil loss (however defined), there is still an urgent need for more and better soil conservation because: 1) annual erosion losses are much higher in subregions than they are likely to be across the entire region; 2) soil erosion may significantly increase the variability of production even though average productivity is not greatly affected; and 3) erosion is cumulative and sometimes irreversible. This view holds that soil erosion is a serious concern even if it does not impinge on overall levels of agricultural output.

### The Public Interest in Soil Conservation

It is likely that the growing public interest in soil conservation is due to the widely held view that soil erosion is costly to farmers, and is becoming more so. This view is characteristic of many estimates of the costs of erosion, but is particularly shown by the largest and probably the best publicized estimates of the on-farm costs of erosion, those by the Senate of Canada (1984) and Rennie (1989). The highest of these suggests that farmers' annual incomes on the Prairies are as much as \$1 billion less than they would be if erosion had not occurred.

Widespread interest in the issue does not necessarily imply that this is a concern for public policy, however. Public intervention in support of soil conservation is sensible in only two situations. The first occurs if society prefers more conservation than is prudent for the farmer. This could happen if society values more highly the future importance of low-cost food than do farmers. If society has a lower rate of time preference than do farmers, it might prefer using more (or more costly) soil-conserving practices than those which make economic sense to the farmer. The second way for farmer and society interests to differ can occur if the costs of erosion are off-site, meaning that the costs are largely or completely borne by someone other than the farmer or landowner.

The concern about insufficient use of soil-conserving practices comes from a limited number of soil degradation studies, but these have tended to be influential. One is the World Commission on Environment and Development

(Brundtland 1987: 125, 130-34), which argues that the existence of high on-farm costs and major social and economic consequences is due to soil erosion in Canada. Brundtland accepts the view that typical farm practices "mine" the soil, with consequences that include loss of soil, higher costs of production, and, eventually, major costs to society through higher food costs, a smaller and less competitive crops sector, or both. The solution to the problem, so identified, is to provide encouragement (probably financial) to farmers to ensure use of conserving, *but not cost-efficient*, technologies in order to maintain the productivity of the soil.

Canadian literature to date emphasizes the on-site cost of soil erosion. In addition to Rennie (1989), the Senate of Canada (1984) and Brundtland (1987), estimates have been made by Anderson and Knapik (1984), Desjardins et al. (1986), and Dumanski et al. (1986). Evidence from the United States, particularly from the geographically similar northern Great Plains, tends to suggest very low on-site costs of erosion.<sup>5</sup> Colaccio et al. (1989) simulate long-term yields using 1982 rates of erosion, and estimate 100-year yield reductions in the northern American Great Plains of 1.1 percent for wheat and 0.2 percent for legume hay. Alt and Putman (1987) also estimate yield declines from erosion in the United States to be low, with the northern Great Plains representing among the lowest rates of yield loss in that country (about 1 percent over 100 years).

There is some evidence concerning off-site costs of erosion, however. Ribaudo (1986) estimates that off-site costs in the United States are about twice as large as on-site costs. In New Mexico, Huszar and Piper (1986) estimate the costs of wind erosion to be about \$US 1 per person per day.<sup>6</sup> These costs are the erosion-induced costs that occur away from the erosion source. They include costs due to silted waterways, damage to fisheries, added water treatment costs, wind-borne soil in businesses or homes, and saline seeps. The emerging view seems to be that soil erosion research or amelioration should emphasize off-site costs, which are increasingly believed to represent the major component of erosion costs (Crosson 1986; Fox and Dickson 1988: 23; Veeman et al. 1989: 3).

### Is Soil Erosion a Problem?

Soil erosion is a problem, but it is primarily a management problem on individual farm units. Research cited by Dumanski et al. (1986: 207) suggests that the annual on-farm costs of soil erosion on the Canadian Prairies are approximately \$468 million. A study cited by Rennie (1989: 9) indicates that the costs to farmers of soil degradation in Saskatchewan alone are even higher, about \$1 billion per year. The latter figure is an incredible 30 percent of average total cash receipts from crop production in the province for the five-year period 1982-86, and exceeds average net farm income for that period by 17 percent. While the figure cited by Rennie is too large to be believable, the other estimates are also excessively large. The reason is that the economics of soil degradation has largely been overlooked.

In the September 1989 issue of *Scientific American*, Crosson and Rosenberg (1989: 129) wrote:

The U.S. is the only country in the world that has *reasonably* accurate and comprehensive estimates of soil erosion and its effect on productivity. Those estimates suggest that if current rates of cropland erosion prevail for 100 years, crop yields will be from 3 to 10 percent lower than they would be otherwise. Yield increases (resulting from technology) that are modest by historical standards would much more than compensate for such a loss. ... Estimates of erosion have been made for other parts of the world ... [but] these evaluations have little scientific merit. ... [A]pocalyptic scenarios ought to be evaluated skeptically.

This condemnation of soil degradation research in "other parts of the world" applies also to Canada. Using the results reported by Crosson and Rosenberg, the annual on-farm cost of soil erosion in western Canada will be between \$100 and \$350 million, and only after 100 years of erosion have taken place.<sup>7</sup> This result is supported by recent research indicating that the true annual on-farm costs of soil erosion in Saskatchewan are very small (see Furtan 1990: 188; van Kooten et al. 1989a, 1989b).

In order to calculate the on-farm costs of soil erosion, it is necessary to determine the opportunity cost (best alternative use) of the current agro-nomic practices, which are blamed for current high rates of soil erosion. The alternatives are either to allow the land to revert back to grassland (and reduce erosion by several hundredfold) or to employ conservation practices such as chemical summerfallow, continuous cropping or fewer tillage operations. In dryland cropping regions where soil moisture is the greatest impediment to crop production, each of the latter typically results in lower net returns (both now and over an infinite time horizon) than current practices.<sup>8</sup> In that case, the opportunity cost or true on-farm cost of soil erosion is zero. The economics of having the land revert back to grassland, and used to produce wildlife for hunting or other recreation or for livestock grazing, have not been adequately investigated, although biological scientists use it as the benchmark for making comparisons about rates of soil loss.

Erosion and other forms of land degradation are a problem mainly on marginal lands.<sup>9</sup> Canada's record concerning marginal land has not been good. Between 1975 and 1985, cropland area in western Canada increased by about 8 percent as farmers brought more marginal land into production. These marginal lands tend to be localized, both by region and by specific areas on individual farmer's fields. Typically, these are the soils with the lowest yields and net returns. Degradation would be reduced by removing these lands from the cropland base. This might be done by public policies that encourage farmers to convert marginal lands into domestic pasture, native forages and related uses, or nonagricultural use. It would be aided by reducing transfers of land to cropping from less intensive uses such as forestry or grazing (van Kooten 1993). Thus, the worst problems of soil degradation can be rectified without drastic policy changes to either land use or farm practices.

Numerous public policies influence land use. Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) quota allocations are tied to the amount of improved land, thereby

encouraging farmers to cultivate marginal land. Crop insurance is based on average regional yields, encouraging farmers to produce on lands whose maximum output does not exceed the insured proportion of the average yield. Programs such as the Western Grain Stabilization Act, the Special Canadian Grains Program and drought assistance have encouraged producers to get out of livestock, reducing the need for maintaining pastures and wetlands.<sup>10</sup> The transportation subsidy in the Western Grain Transportation Act (WGTA) discourages livestock enterprises in the prairie provinces by raising feed prices in the region; this is re-enforced by the Feed Freight Assistance Program that is targeted at livestock producers outside the prairie region. Finally, greater use of agrochemicals (potential pollution of ground and surface water) and tillage (causing erosion) can be attributed to government subsidies on fertilizer and fuel. Leroohl et al. (1990) concluded that these programs vary widely in their influence on soil erosion. Examples of the most erosion-sensitive programs turned out to be WGTA rail rates, rebates on farm fuel, and programs designed to open land to cultivation in fringe areas. Others have attributed many environmental problems in agriculture directly to government policies (Buttel and Gertler 1982).

It is not clear, however, that levels of erosion associated with typical agronomic practices lead to lower yields. Applying a long-term yield simulation to prairie farm practices suggests that normal rates of erosion would not likely reduce yields, even if those rates of erosion are sustained over periods of as long as fifty or 100 years. Leroohl (1991) reported no evidence of yield reductions even when farmers employ erosion-susceptible practices (for example, summerfallow in areas such as southern Alberta, which is sensitive to wind erosion, or in northwestern Alberta, which is sensitive to water erosion). These studies do not, however, report off-site effects, nor have there been studies that examine the cumulative effect of numerous programs on farmer decisions and, hence, soil erosion.

### Economic Prescriptions for Soil Conservation: Opposing Views

In much of the Canadian Great Plains, precipitation averages 300 to 450 mm per year, and the region experiences an annual soil moisture deficit of 100 to 300 mm. This constraint led many farmers to adopt a rotation that includes summerfallow (SF) every two to three years, depending upon the region and its expected moisture deficit. SF increases available nitrogen for next year's crop, helps to control weeds, and is used to store water in the soil by not growing a crop for one season; in essence, two years of precipitation are used to grow one crop (usually wheat) — this accounts for the traditional two-year, wheat-fallow (W-F) rotation in the driest cropping areas. To control weeds during the SF year either mechanical operations (tillage) or chemicals can be used. Chemical SF is normally expensive and therefore tillage SF is preferred, but it results in greater soil erosion. The ratio of (primarily tillage) SF to total cultivated acreage is as high as 0.45 in parts of Saskatchewan and averages more than 0.30 in some years, although it is lower in the other prairie provinces. In Alberta and Manitoba, efforts to reduce the SF ratio have met with some success, but this has been less so for

**Table 1**  
**Total Yields Over 26 Years**  
**and Discounted Annual Net Returns Per Hectare, Saskatchewan:**  
**Wheat-Fallow Rotation vs. Continuous Cropping**  
**(Price = \$4/bushel; discount rate = 5 percent)**

Topographic Soil Class <sup>a</sup>						
	High	Moderate	Low			
	Yield <sup>b</sup>	Expected Annual Net Return	Yield <sup>b</sup>	Expected Annual Net Return	Yield <sup>b</sup>	Expected Annual Net Return
W-F	43.7t	\$117.45	42.2t	\$112.74	34.1t	\$87.29
Continuous	76.8t	\$69.86	76.7t	\$69.76	62.3t	\$54.45

<sup>a</sup> High, moderate and low are topographic classes, 2, 3 and 4, respectively (Rennie and de Jong 1989)  
<sup>b</sup> Total expected yield over 26-year period in metric tonnes (t).  
Note: Data on farm costs are from Economics Branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (1989).

Saskatchewan. The reason is that the SF ratio is correlated with average annual precipitation, which varies among regions, and is lowest in Saskatchewan.

Recommendations for reducing soil erosion in the dryland cropping region of western Canada involve a reduction in tillage and in SF, either by continuous cropping or using chemical fallow in place of tillage fallow. Unless economic factors are properly considered, evidence often gives the impression that there are substantial benefits from these conservation practices. Consider, for example, a study by two Saskatchewan soil scientists that recommends continuous cropping over the fixed, W-F rotation because it provides greater yields and reduces soil erosion (Rennie and de Jong 1989). The authors use the higher total yield over a twenty-six-year period as evidence that continuous cropping is preferred. The data are provided in Table 1, as are calculations of the annualized discounted net returns under the two cropping alternatives. The economic calculations indicate that farmers annually sacrifice between \$32.84 per hectare (\$13.30 per acre) and \$47.59 per hectare (\$19.27 per acre) by not following the agronomic practice that the authors recommend. Using the same "innovative acres" data, Weisensel (1988) comes to the same conclusion. However, variability in annual returns is ignored in these data, and variability is much higher under continuous cropping, thereby making this recommended soil conserving practice a risky venture.

Finally, the authors suggest that chemical SF is preferred to continuous cropping for soil conservation reasons, but, given the price of chemicals at that time, this is an even less profitable proposition. Evidence for this comes from two economic studies. A Saskatchewan study (Weisensel and van Kooten 1990) rules out the use of chemical SF as an alternative to tillage SF due to its expense, except when the soil has already been significantly eroded and land has no alternative use outside of crop production. An

Australian study rules out the use of chemicals to control wild oats in wheat production, finding that tillage fallow is a less expensive strategy for weed control (Fisher and Lee 1981). Both of these studies employ more intensive management strategies found from dynamic optimizing or optimal control models.

### More Intensive Management by Flexcropping and Stewardship

Recent evidence indicates that there is sufficient time to consider methods for dealing with soil degradation on the majority of (non-marginal) farmland. Consider, for example, an economic study using data for the brown soil zone of southwestern Saskatchewan (Weisensel and van Kooten 1990). For farms in the study, the average depth of the A and B horizons (solum depth) is just under 40 cm. Under the prevailing SF rotation *and assuming no soil regeneration*, the time required to erode 90 percent of this topsoil is ninety-three years if a high rate of soil erosion (equivalent to that occurring on a field with a slope of 10-24 percent) is assumed; the required time rises to 198 years if a low rate of erosion (that associated with a 0-3 percent slope) is assumed.

A number of economic researchers, beginning with Burt and Allison (1963), have used optimal control theory, specifically dynamic programming (DP), to determine optimal *flexcrop* strategies for dryland cropping regions. The term *flexcropping*, originally developed by soil scientists (Brown et al. 1981), refers to a strategy that relies upon the state of the system — in this case, the amount of soil moisture at spring planting time — to determine whether or not it is worthwhile to plant a crop. Determination of the critical spring soil moisture level — above which one would crop and below which one would fallow — was based on a yield criterion with little or no economic content. Bole and Freeze (1986) extended this approach by including a criterion for maximizing current year profit, while optimal control models (such as DP) maximize discounted profits by taking into account how current decisions affect future profits.

Using stochastic DP, Burt and his colleagues simply determined critical soil moisture levels that would give the highest expected net worth, taking into account the uncertain effect that cropping or SF (the decision variables) would have on next year's soil moisture. Of course, critical soil moisture levels are region specific and their determination is affected by other factors that affect yields (for example, fertilizer, solum depth), input costs, the type of crop seeded, and output prices. In the case of a decision between planting spring wheat, say, and tillage SF, the present value of net returns (that is, farm wealth) is maximized if one plants wheat whenever soil water is above the optimal critical level and employs tillage fallow whenever it is below this level.

Weisensel and van Kooten (1990) also used stochastic dynamic programming to identify critical soil moisture levels for the decision to either plant spring wheat or SF, but they included chemical SF as well as tillage SF as a choice available to the decision maker. They found critical soil moisture

**Table 2**  
**Erosion Under Flexcrop Strategies in Southern Saskatchewan**

Item	Scenario							
	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Price (\$/bus)	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Discount Rate (%)	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5
Erosion Rate	low	low	high	high	low	low	high	high
Years Required to Erode 36 cm of Topsoil*	285	269	157	135	373	362	195	185

\* Expected number of years to erode 40 cm of solum to 4 cm.

Source: Weisensel (1988).

levels for different topsoil depths, discount rates and prices, and they assumed varying rates of soil erosion. Monte Carlo simulation was then used in conjunction with the optimal critical moisture levels to determine time paths for soil erosion. The results are presented in Table 2 and can be compared with the aforementioned rates of erosion for a fixed, SF rotation. It turns out that the flexcrop strategy yields higher net returns than the fixed, SF rotation, but, although not shown here, it does result in slightly greater variability in returns (that is, slightly greater risk). To make a valid comparison between these two strategies, it is necessary to determine the benefits associated with a reduction in risk, something that is difficult to do.

Continuous cropping and chemical SF are two recommended conservation alternatives to the SF rotation; the flexcrop results indicate that, at very low levels of solum depth, one would employ chemical SF in place of tillage SF in an effort to save soil. In the model, chemical SF was employed as a soil conservation strategy, but possible adverse off-site effects were ignored. Compared to continuous cropping, returns to flexcropping of spring wheat in conjunction with tillage SF are substantially higher and risk is lower, although soil loss is obviously somewhat greater. However, compared to the prevailing SF rotation, substantial soil conservation can take place without drastic and expensive changes in agronomic practices. All that is required is that farmers measure available soil water at spring planting time and base their planting decisions on flexcrop rules that consider the probability of adequate precipitation. The conclusions in this regard are supported by research at Montana State University (Burt and Allison 1963; Burt and Stauber 1988), Washington State University (Young and van Kooten 1988), and Australia (Fisher and Lee 1981).

In a further study of the Saskatchewan data, van Kooten et al. (1990) explicitly took into account the effect of farmers' concern for stewardship on soil loss in making their decisions. Assuming high rates of soil erosion, the researchers found that a farmer with a "relatively high" concern about soil loss (and a beginning solum depth of about 40 cm) would deplete the soil in about 275 years. This compares with 93 years for the SF rotation and 198 years for the flexcrop strategy. The opportunity cost to producers is estimated to be about \$25 per acre in present value terms or about \$1.25 per acre per year. However, at prevailing solum depths, one cannot distinguish a

farmer who is concerned about soil conservation from one who is not by his or her cropping practices. Only when the soil has eroded significantly does one observe that a more stewardly farmer crops more intensively or uses chemical fallow in order to conserve soil.<sup>11</sup>

Flexcropping has really never caught on in the dryland cropping regions of North America. Farmers do use a crude form of this technique, for example, when "gut feeling" tells them that, as a result of higher than normal winter precipitation, they can plant a crop on a field that would otherwise be fallowed. The contribution of flexcropping would be to make such decisions more scientific and less risky. The reasons for neglecting the more intensive management approach suggested by flexcropping are that it is not on the research agenda of most agricultural scientists, and the tools for analyzing it are only now being taught in graduate programs in agricultural economics. But the methodology here does have two advantages. First, agronomic decisions made today have an effect on the future state of the system and, thus, on future economic costs and returns. For example, planting wheat this year will likely lead to less soil moisture available for crop growth next year and to an increase in weed infestation. These time-dependent effects are taken into account by better management tools such as dynamic programming. Second, DP can incorporate random variables and can find an optimal policy, which is not guaranteed in the case of simulation models, for example.

One of the problems that economists face is that "many agronomic experiments have not been designed to provide the type of information necessary for use in economic models" (Fisher and Lee 1981: 186). In the research example illustrated above, soil moisture was the variable upon which decisions to plant wheat or summerfallow were made. However, it is possible to include additional considerations in a management-intensive, flexcrop regime. In addition to soil water and depth, weed or disease infestations and prices are important variables describing the state of the agronomic system. Decision variables could include planting of winter or spring wheat, planting of other crops, use of reduced or conventional tillage practices, the amount of chemical to spray or fertilizer to use, and so on. However, data requirements for building dynamic optimizing models are quite large and the needed data are generally not available. Yet, in comparison to some studies of soil erosion that require the physical removal or addition of topsoil on experimental plots, economists only require data collected during normal, everyday farming activities. Data can be obtained at lower cost and are more realistic of actual agronomic practices.

## Discussion

Economics is an important consideration in soil conservation. Without adequate compensation or other financial incentives, farmers will not adopt conservation strategies that are not financially viable to them, no matter how agronomically sound or socially beneficial they may be. Indeed, the American Society of Agronomy adopted a definition of sustainable agriculture that

requires agronomic strategies to be economically viable for farmers in *both* the short and the long term (Rennie 1989: 8). Table 2 and the earlier discussion indicates that the problem of soil degradation is not so pressing that we are forced to make choices that are economically unwise. For example, continuous cropping to avoid tillage summerfallow in southern Saskatchewan may drive some farmers into bankruptcy, while chemical SF may do the same. An alternative approach is to begin by making adjustments to existing government programs and urge farmers to become more intensive managers. Erosion would be reduced, although it is by no means clear that long-term yields are likely to be much affected. Farmers with a greater ability to withstand risk might think about adopting flexcrop strategies; others might wish to experiment with other strategies, some of which may focus on conservation.

While there may be valid reasons for a government role dealing with soil erosion, that role is likely to be more modest than recent disaster scenarios have implied. Governments do, of course, need to be concerned about future food security; but the available evidence indicates that erosion does not seriously threaten the national food supply, certainly not over the next fifty or even 100 or more years. There may be off-site costs associated with erosion, however. Water erosion causes agricultural chemicals to pollute river systems, causes siltation of hydro dams, or causes downstream physical damage when run-off rates are enhanced. Wind erosion can cause reduced visibility, which may be a road hazard, and can lead to higher costs of maintaining homes and operating businesses due to dust or dirt, and to possible respiratory problems. The case for providing incentives to reduce erosion might involve incentives in order to encourage fewer practices leading to erosion where off-site costs are likely. There may also be an economic case for government to seek cost-efficient solutions to farm erosion problems, where these can be shown to permit more efficient production processes. This is quite different from suggesting that subsidies need to be provided in order to make existing soil conserving strategies financially viable. The economics of both on-site and off-site use of soil conserving strategies need to be considered.

The case for significant and relatively broadly based subsidies to encourage low-erosion farm practices is particularly weak in the Prairies, however. Off-site costs tend to be high where there are significant population concentrations likely to be affected by nearby soil erosion. The main off-site effects are likely to be in areas where wind erosion affects a major urban centre, or where wind or water erosion are likely to lead to siltation of ditches, watercourses or livestock water facilities. These situations undoubtedly exist, but it is not obvious that they occur frequently. The major current technology for dealing with wind and water erosion is to encourage continuous cropping or chemical fallow. However, there continues to be concern about the off-site costs of chemical use as well (Madden 1988: 1168). But the major reason for concern with soil erosion has been fear that some marginal soils will be lost to agriculture forever, as a result of possible irreversibility of the erosion process. The economic costs of permitting that erosion to take place are not large because erosion-prone soils tend to be

low-yield soils on the fringes of agriculture, either in the southern Prairies where moisture is limiting, or in the north where low soil fertility and variable topography combine to produce low yields.

The possible irreversible loss of the agricultural potential of eroded soils continues to haunt the debate about soil conservation. It is our view that even worst case scenarios would not lead to erosion so serious as to permanently remove significant quantities of land from cultivation, and yield-enhancing technology has been a far more pervasive influence on agriculture than has soil erosion.

### Conclusions

Far too little of Canada's soil conservation research agenda has had an economic component. We are only beginning to understand 1) the role of government programs, particularly how different programs are at odds with each other; 2) the implications of soil erosion for on-farm risk, and the effect of soil conservation strategies on management of farm risk; 3) the economics of agronomic practices, including soil conserving strategies and flexcropping; and 4) the establishment of sufficient field data bases that would permit developing strong empirical relationships between yield, on the one hand, and such variables as soil depth, soil moisture, weed infestation, nitrogen levels on the other. Agronomic research linking erosion and yields is still in its infancy in Canada. Much of the available evidence is from so-called "scraping" studies, which are able to provide yield estimates for only the most extreme cases of rapid erosion. For most of the kinds of erosion that occur, such studies are incapable of examining the agronomy or the economics of soil regeneration and soil redeposition. Regeneration in particular has important implications for the long-term productivity of soils, and yet most soil research continues to be based on a view of soil as a stock resource that is incapable of regeneration. The neglect of regeneration and redeposition must bear at least some of the burden for public pressure for government to "do something" about soil erosion.

Nor is there much available information in Canada concerning the off-site costs of soil erosion or degradation. The available estimates of off-site costs in the Canadian Prairies tend to be inferences from studies of off-site costs generally. Crude inferences from those studies suggest that costs are high in areas where there is a large population concentration or where there are other important industries (including tourism) that are adversely affected by soil erosion. Aside from the visual aspects of soil erosion for passersby, it is not clear that most of the Canadian Prairies fit the description of locations at which off-site costs are likely to be large. Nevertheless, off-site costs are the major unexplored area of erosion costs on the Canadian Great Plains. More recent interventions have emphasized the on-site dimension of costs. The focus to date on the effects of soil erosion on farm output seems to be an issue with minimal potential payoff, and now may be an appropriate time to begin to refocus the debate on broader issues associated with soil conservation.

## NOTES

1. An example is a study prepared in the early 1980s by the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Committee of the Canadian Senate (Senate of Canada 1984: 12-14).
2. In tropical areas, soil forms at lower rates of about 0.01 to 0.50 mm per year (Barrett 1991).
3. Tropical soils covered with natural vegetation lose 0.02-1.00 mm per year (Barrett 1991).
4. In the popular press, topsoil is the combination of the A and B horizons; in the scientific literature, topsoil refers to only the A horizon, while solum refers to the combination of A and B horizons. Although the A horizon includes more organic matter, both the A and B horizons are important for soil erosion, because, once the B horizon is reached, organic matter can be added through the spreading of animal manure, pulp mill residues (Van Hum 1993), or by planting a crop that is subsequently plowed under (green manuring). In the brown soil zone of southwestern Saskatchewan, for example, the average thickness of the A horizon is approximately 15 cm (sample data from Wiesensel and van Kooten 1990).
5. It is important to draw a distinction between the existence of soil erosion and the costs associated with that erosion. The key element is the damage function. Suppose, for example, that grain production did not occur and was possible only with subsidies from government. Suppose, further, that there exists no alternative use for the land, and there are no farm practices that would permit revenues from producing grain to exceed costs. Were these assumptions true, the on-farm damages from soil erosion would be zero, regardless of the rates of soil erosion.
6. If one-third of the population of the Canadian Prairies is affected by soil erosion and costs are similar to those found in the New Mexico study, then the off-site costs of soil erosion amount to more than \$500 million per year, which is much higher than the on-site costs.
7. These estimates are derived from national average rates of yield loss from erosion, not the much lower figures (cited earlier) which appear to be characteristic of the northern American Great Plains.
8. Low/zero tillage systems typically involve costs due to additional herbicides and lower yields associated with low/zero tillage, but bring with them lower costs of fuel, labour, and machinery. One recent study challenges the view that yields are lower with low/zero tillage (Lafond et al.). Most, however, indicate that the added herbicide costs and yield differentials of low/zero tillage systems do not offset the lower fuel and related costs (Walker and Young 1986: 88; Zentner et al. 1991). The preference for conventional tillage systems appears to become particularly pronounced when farmers are risk averse (Mahli et al. 1988; Zentner et al. 1988).
9. Irrigation is also a cause of land degradation, by leading to higher levels of soil salinity (Reisner 1986: 473-88). Subsidies are provided to farmers in southern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan to irrigate land, but assessments of land degradation in western Canada generally ignore the contribution of irrigation.
10. The Western Grain Stabilization and Special Canadian Grains programs have been replaced by the Gross Revenue Insurance Program (GRIP) and the Net Income Stabilization Program (NISA). These programs are, in turn, in the process of being changed or abandoned. However, the purposes of these programs are to enhance incomes (by raising prices) and/or reduce risk, thereby enabling farmers to concentrate on grain production. In addition, GRIP participation has been based on acres cropped, regardless of soil quality.
11. Stewardship practices were confined to chemical SF and more intensive (i.e., more frequent) cropping. Other soil conserving practices were not considered, nor was concern about possible adverse effects of chemical use.

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## Book Reviews

*Against the Flow: Rafferty-Alameda and the Politics of the Environment*, by George N. Hood. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1994. Pp. 232.

*Winning Back the Words: Confronting Experts in an Environmental Public Hearing*, by Mary Richardson, Joan Sherman and Michael Gismondi. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993. Pp. 199.

In the early 1980s and 1990s the environmental movement in the Canadian West came of age, challenging orthodoxies of economic development that had previously characterized the region. At one time governments, corporations and engineers had considerable latitude to build whatever megaproject they wanted with little public scrutiny; that era has now passed. Controversies such as those over the Oldman River Dam and the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill in Alberta and the Rafferty-Alameda dams in Saskatchewan have made the decision-making environment for megaprojects much more complex, difficult and uncertain. We are still waiting for the seminal work that encapsulates and explains this change. In the meantime, we are fortunate to have the recent publication of two fine case studies on two of these projects, the Rafferty-Alameda dams and the Alpac mill.

Together the books represent a dialectic of sorts of the environmental movement. Both books were written by participants in the developmental process, but participants with widely different points of view. *Against the Flow* by George N. Hood represents the point of view rarely seen in print, that of the government proponent in a project. The authors of *Winning Back the Words*, Mary Richardson, Joan Sherman and Michael Gismondi, on the other hand, represent the perspective of the outsider, those attempting to challenge the claims of project proponents. Combined, the two provide fascinating insight into many of the key questions raised by the environmental movement, such as the meaning and management of nature, the meaning of rationality in the twentieth century, the role of experts, the public, values and power in environmental decisions. In the space that follows each book will be individually discussed then related briefly to the questions raised above.

The first book, by George N. Hood, has many of the ingredients of a Shakespearean drama: intrigue, complexity, a bewildering cast of characters, heroes and villains (depending on your point of view of course) and the naked use of power to accomplish one's objectives. Hood, as director of planning and operations and later vice-president of the Souris Basis Development Authority (SBDA) which oversaw the development of the Rafferty-Alameda project, is in a perfect position to offer an insider's perspective on the events which began in 1985 and culminated in 1993 with the completion of the dams.

The project, as Hood aptly relates, began simply enough, then quickly became complex, threatening to spin out of control, as different bureaucratic actors, provincial and federal, environmental groups, politicians, the courts and the media became involved. Initially, the Rafferty-Alameda

project was born out of a desire to solve a critical problem in the North American West — the need for water. In Saskatchewan and in the neighbouring state of North Dakota where the Souris River emerged from Saskatchewan before it meandered over the border again into Manitoba, there was either not enough water or too much water. Hence the expressed need to manage it. Managing water in the North American West has traditionally meant building dams and dividing it among prospective users — agricultural, industrial, urban. This by itself could be contentious — “whiskey is for drinking, water is for fighting” is a familiar western saying — but by the late 1960s with the rise of the environmental movement, first in the United States, later in Canada, the process had become even more contentious. The impact of the environmental movement upon dam building was first felt in the American West. There the environmental movement in state after state and water project after project had fought water developers to a standstill. So much so that environmentalist and author, Wallace Stegner, could proclaim in the 1980s that “the great days of dam building are clearly over.” The United States Corps of Engineers, notable for the many dams they had built, and aware of the potential for litigation, tried to warn Hill and the Saskatchewan engineers that the project could take eighteen years to complete. Naively, the Canadian engineers bragged that in Canada such a project would take only three years. In the end it took seven years.

Why Hill and his engineers were so wrong in their prediction, but in the end successful in terms of results, is what makes this such an important book. Rafferty-Alameda represents a watershed of its own (no pun intended) in the environmental movement in the Canadian West, signifying the arrival of a new era in project development.

On 12 February 1986, when the Progressive Conservative government of Grant Devine announced its intention to build the Rafferty-Alameda project, it was hailed as a “multiple-benefit water management project” that would provide flood control, irrigation, recreational opportunities and cooling water for a \$500 million thermal-electric power station. As Hood relates, even as it was originally conceived, the project was complex, involving environmental approval, the participation of American interests who stood to gain by flood control protection, and a federal license under the International River Improvements Act. Coordinating all this would have been trying enough, but Hood and the SBDA soon found themselves ensnared in a web of difficulties. Partisan politics soon bedevilled the project which was being built on the home turf of Premier Grant Devine. The New Democratic Party, now an urban-based party, soon found fault with the project. The project’s political problems were soon compounded by a flawed environmental impact statement, chaotic decision making and bureaucratic politics at both the federal and provincial levels, and the opposition of environmental groups who charged the dams were not economically justifiable, environmentally acceptable or legally defensible. The successful court challenge by the Canadian Wildlife Federation forced a reluctant federal government to enforce its environmental review assessment process guidelines, bringing a temporary halt to the project.

Hood does an excellent job of taking the reader through this complex process, relating how an embattled and dogged SBDA managed to forge ahead to successfully complete the project, fending off all challenges, environmental, legal and political. So byzantine were the legal and political machinations that an SBDA lawyer asked Hill in astonishment: "Is it always like this?" The utter complexity and, at times, fierceness of the struggle to complete the project is well documented. Particularly valuable for students of public policy is Hood's portrayal of the hard-boiled bureaucratic politics at both the federal and provincial levels of government. Reading Hood's account makes one wonder, can there ever be coherence in Canada's environmental policy, particularly as it pertains to megaprojects?

Valuable as Hood's account is, there are aspects of it which should trouble the reader. Much of Hood's actions and those of the SBDA are reflective of a common problem in decision making, that is, overcommitment to a course of action. That is, individuals or organizations that suffer setbacks attempt to "turn the situation" around or demonstrate the ultimate rationality of the original course of action by pouring more resources into it, rather than perhaps cutting their losses. In the end Hood and the SBDA won, but the question that is never adequately addressed is: was this project really worth it? Was the public good served? These questions of value seemed to have been lost along the way and we are all poorer for it.

On the other hand, it is precisely this question of value that *Winning Back the Words* raises as it challenges the language of government, politicians, experts, and representatives of the proposed Alberta-Pacific bleached kraft mill along the Athabasca River in northern Alberta. Utilizing new technology, the huge \$1.3 billion mill would produce pulp drawn from a wood supply the size of New Brunswick. Immediately, questions were raised by the public over the government's rapid commitment to northern forestry development without public discussion, the decision to build the mill in a farming community, the shortcomings of the review process which excluded logging impacts from the environmental impact assessment, and the effects of dioxin and furan in the pulp-effluent on the fish that form part of the diet of Native Canadians living downriver.

As a result of these unexpected demands, and the threat of litigation following the Rafferty-Alameda court decision, the federal and provincial governments agreed to establish the Alberta-Pacific Review Board in 1989 to conduct what was reputed to be the most comprehensive scrutiny of a pulp mill ever conducted in Alberta.

The purpose of the authors in writing *Winning Back the Words* is to bring readers inside the Alpac environmental hearings process and let them feel what it was like to participate in the discussions about the environment, economics and democracy. This the authors accomplish through the well selected use of quotations by hearings' participants. The presentations of the words of the participants are necessarily prefaced by a chapter on discourse analysis which attempts not only to demonstrate how language was used to "gain, maintain and consolidate power," but how dominant

discourses could be subverted and counter discourses of the less powerful asserted. One tactic drawn directly from the Rafferty-Alameda experience was to set the federal and provincial politicians, bureaucrats and experts against one another for the ultimate purpose of opening up the hearings' process to wider public scrutiny.

Following this brief theoretical chapter, the authors proceed to address, in the chapters that follow, a variety of critical issues beginning with the public challenge to the terms of reference of the review panel itself. For example, were they wide enough? This is then followed by a cogent discussion of the meaning of sustainable development. Here the authors analyze figures of speech used by government and industry to justify the mill, for example, the Alberta government's contention that the aspen of the boreal forest was a weed, a nuisance, and of no previous value until the mill came along.

Further chapters are dedicated to critically examining the role of science, ethnocentrism, and Native and local knowledge in the hearings' process. They ask such critical questions as what is an expert? What is the expert's role in environmental public hearings? Clearly the quantitative, technical testimony of the recognized "experts" was privileged in the hearings, but not without challenge. The authors carefully draw out differences exhibited during the hearings between quantitative versus qualitative knowledge, Western versus traditional knowledge, and expert versus local knowledge. In the end, the touted objectivity of Western science, rationality and expert authority are demonstrated to be heavily value laden and a mask for political power.

In the end, the mill, like the Rafferty-Alameda project, was constructed. The question the authors raise is: was public participation a waste of time? The answer is mixed. While the mill was approved, public pressure did delay the process and lead to mill design and operation changes. In addition, the environmental movement in Alberta was at least momentarily invigorated. The fact remains, however, that parliamentary governments with their strong executive authority can withstand considerable public pressure in the pursuit of an objective.

While the authors have related a superb account of the hearings' process, it is not without its shortcomings. First, the book does not situate the hearings in any historical context and thus a vital question goes unanswered. That is, why at this historical juncture were opponents of the mill able to mount such a strong challenge? What has changed in terms of social structure and public values in Alberta and Canada in the past twenty or thirty years that makes governments think twice before they proceed with megaprojects? Second, the authors are too modest when they fail to identify themselves as university employees and many of the hearings' participants as associated with the university in some way. Surely the role of the university in society as a source of counterexpertise and discourse should be explicitly acknowledged. After all, was it a mere coincidence that the greatest uproar over the seven pulp mills being built in the Peace-Athabasca

watershed was over a pulp mill proximate to Athabasca University? What if the mill had been built in a more remote location? Would the hearings have been that extensive?

These caveats aside, this very readable book should be a welcome addition to university courses on the environment, public policy, science, ethics and ideology.

Together the books confront the reader with some very important questions. First, they force us to think anew on the extent to which nature can be managed and manipulated for economic and political profit. Both the aspen of Alberta and the water of Saskatchewan in the end became commodities to be bought and sold and used in the marketplace, both part of the modern drive to dominate and refashion nature. This is a process that has been aided and abetted by science, technology and our contemporary and impoverished concept of rationality with its emphasis on instrumental reason. Instrumental reason thinks carefully and systematically about means while neglecting ends. Thus nature, values, traditional knowledge and philosophy are destroyed or denigrated. In such a system the experts, the scientists, with their focus on means become key actors in the policy process. Those who raise questions of value, purpose and the greatest good are depicted as irrational and their concerns and objections of little consequence. Ultimately, technical expertise and instrumental rationality subvert participatory democratic processes with analysts who represent the rulers rather than the ruled. The claim of positivists that there can be a value free science has of course been challenged by post-positivists who assert that the analytic methods of experts and scientists are value laden.

The key question raised in both books, implicitly by Hood whose concerns are with the "how," that is, how can we complete this project, not why we should build it, and more explicitly with *Winning Back the Words*, is how do we bring values and ends back as an integral part of reason? To do this means not only redefining reason itself but also science to include values more explicitly. Science then would become more accessible to the public at large and public participation in environmental decision making would be taken more seriously. To accomplish this would mean experts, scientists, administrators, corporate executives and politicians would be required to share power and control. However, power is seldom given, it is, in most cases, taken. Those attempting to make public public participation in environmental decision making more meaningful face a long uphill struggle. *Winning Back the Words* shows us how far we have come. *Against the Flow* shows us how much further we have to go. One should not be read without the other.

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*Law, Agriculture and the Farm Crisis*, edited by Donald E. Buckingham and Ken Norman. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1992. Pp. 155

Lawyers, like politicians, economists and bankers, do not enjoy a large quotient of farmer goodwill. There is the perception that these people can pronounce and prescribe without suffering the consequences, that they are not on the front lines exposed to shifting commodity markets, exchange rates, interest charges, government programs or weather. There is also the knowledge that many lawyers make a living serving the financially powerful. All cannot be shavers, some must be fleeced, and lawyers are often near the scene of the fleecing. In rural Canada this gives rise to sardonic jokes. How many lawyers does it take to grease a combine? One, but you have to run him through real slow. The sadistic twist to this drollery may also reflect certain less defendable aspects of rural culture, including a reflexive suspicion of book learning, and of cosmopolitan, talkative people, associated with urban places.

The lawyers whose arguments are featured in this slim volume generally qualify as friends of the farm community. As friends, moreover, they do not shrink from asking difficult questions. The chapters originated as contributions to a conference entitled, "Agricultural Law in Canada: The Emergent Discipline and Pressing Issues." Convened 13-14 March 1992 in Saskatoon, the conference had financial support from the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan; the Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario; and, the Westminster Institute for Ethics and Human Values, London, Ontario. The contributors included courtroom lawyers, government legal advisors, lawmakers, law school professors, an agricultural journalist, a psychologist and an agricultural economist.

The conference was a first step towards making agricultural law a specialty at the University of Saskatchewan. Towards that same goal, the College of Agriculture and the College of Law are joint sponsors of a Centre for Agro-Ecosystem Research and Policy that will open in July 1995. Donald Buckingham, co-editor of this volume, and Marj Benson, who contributed a key paper and teaches agricultural law, will be among the faculty staffing this new centre.

The book has three parts. The first provides a discussion of agricultural law as a discipline and legal specialty. Sam McCullough reminds us that agricultural law focusses on industry-relevant topics in the field of contracts, torts, real property, commercial transactions, taxation, and so on. It also deals with the statutes and regulations unique to agriculture, and with the particular issues that arise in the areas of credit, financing, insurance, estate planning, bankruptcy, marketing, labour and cooperatives. Agricultural law has developed as a specialized discipline in the United States, at least since the 1970s. In Canada, the specialty is just starting to achieve an institutionalized presence.

The second part of the book focusses on the role of legal competence in the development of agricultural policies. Benson suggests that lawyers and

legally educated legislators have responded to political mobilization in the farm sector. This led, for example, to the foreclosure legislation of the 1930s, the debt moratorium laws of the 1970s, and the Farm Land Security Board system of the 1980s, instituted at the national level in 1986 as the Canada Farm Land Security Act. Legal expertise has been instrumental at key junctures in the development of the organizations and institutions we recognize as Canadian agriculture: marketing boards, crop insurance schemes, income stabilization schemes and networks of agencies that deal, for example, with orderly exchange relations in the grain trade. Of course it would have been fair game to mention as well that lawyers were also involved in fighting legislation designed to facilitate the establishment of effective agricultural cooperatives and marketing boards.

Reflecting on the development of key institutions governing creditor relations and land tenure, Donald Purich reminds us of the need for further social invention and reform. The farm crisis reveals the perils of a land tenure system that revolves around mortgages and fee simple freehold ownership. As Purich points out, financial institutions owned more than 1.2 million acres of Saskatchewan farm land in 1991, slightly more than the portfolio of the Saskatchewan Land Bank at its peak in the 1970s.

The third part of the book deals with legal aspects of the farm crisis. Ronald Cumming examines the history of constitutional wrangling around legislative initiatives to deal with farm debt. Donald Layh provides a critical review of existing legal measures, highlighting some of the inequities visited on farmers and creditors. The existence of competing interests and unequal circumstances is directly addressed. Laws designed to deal with the farm crisis, or with government debt, have different implications for landowners and tenants, for debtors and investors.

McCullough provides a detailed analysis of the legal structure of contemporary farm safety net programs. Buckingham provides a detailed and largely sympathetic reading of the role of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In this chapter on the crisis in international trade, he also carefully reviews the kinds of farm support programs allowable under GATT. There is no discussion of CUSTA or NAFTA.

Four chapters in the last section of the book address the roles of environmental regulation in moving towards a more sustainable system of farming. Neil Hamilton reviews American legislation linking farm programs to measures to reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. Richard Gray considers various approaches to improve the environmental performance of the farm sector. His list includes reform of government policies to remove adverse incentives, investment in public goods such as sustainable agriculture research, identification of market mechanisms to pay for environmental protection, and development of appropriate regulatory and taxation regimes.

Lawyers with an agricultural background, specialized legal knowledge, and the requisite sensibilities, can help individual farm operators to deal

with financial institutions and set up appropriate farm business arrangements. As Benson suggests, farmers and farm organizations should also consider the role of legal expertise in addressing the collective interests of rural society — renewing and inventing appropriate organizational, institutional and regulatory frameworks for the development of agriculture and rural communities.

This book provides a useful record of a conference that brought together an international group of experts with practical and scholarly interest in the field of agricultural law. It is cleanly edited and, given its origins, uncommonly readable. Some of the chapters will seem technical to the average reader. The interested lay person who ploughs through these papers, however, will be rewarded with a broad understanding of the contribution, and potential contribution, of agricultural law. The book makes good reading for students of agricultural policy, providing accounts of policy issues and policy processes by practitioners with firsthand knowledge. It is of obvious relevance to lawyers and prospective lawyers who may be attracted by a specialization that provides close contact with agriculture and rural communities.

The focus of the book is Saskatchewan and Canada, but the authors introduce experiences from the United States and Europe and thus provide a useful comparative perspective. Welcome, also, is the self-critical discussion on the limits of legal remedies, and the dearth of legally informed research on policy alternatives to deal with issues such as tenancy, intergenerational resource transfer and environmentally sustainable farming systems.

Although the book covers a wide range of legal issues — some in considerable depth, some quite lightly — it is not exhaustive. I was left wishing that there had been more discussion of topical areas such as farm labour, taxation, contractual integration, leasing and farm business organization. Of course this was not meant to be a survey course textbook. Many of these topics are covered in key handbooks (Purich, 1982; Harl, 1990). Moreover, if some issues receive short shrift, this must be weighed against the virtues of a book that is affordable and digestible, providing a scholarly yet accessible introduction to the field.

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*The Records of the Department of the Interior and Research Concerning Canada's Western Frontier of Settlement*, by Irene M. Spry and Bennett McCardle. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1993. Pp. 210

I well remember my first foray into the concrete bunker of the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa as an M.A. student from Saskatchewan with only a few precious days in the nation's capital. I was doing research on Methodist missionary John McDougall and I hoped to locate some records of the Department of the Interior left by McDougall when he was commissioned in 1906 to report on the land question of the Doukhobors of Saskatchewan. No archivist was able to give me much assistance in my search, except to inform me what a hopeless task this likely was. As the days passed I began to think that the Department of the Interior records truly were a product of our colonial status in the West. In desperation, my visit almost over, I called a friend back home in Saskatoon who had recently completed a thesis on the Doukhobors; she was able to very quickly direct me to the papers of the McDougall Commission. I still have copies of them somewhere, although I've never done anything with them as, after my unhappy experience in Ottawa, I was obliged to alter my topic, and eventually I based my M.A. thesis upon published primary sources readily available in the West.

Especially for these reasons, I am particularly grateful for the tremendous amount of work that has resulted in Irene Spry and Bennett McCardle's book. I can now direct the attention of my students to this book in order that they might avoid a similar dismal experience upon arrival in Ottawa.

The records of the Department of the Interior are vital to an understanding of western Canadian history. From 1873 to 1930 this federal department was responsible for the survey, administration and disposal of western and northern Canadian public lands and resources. At various times the Department of the Interior was responsible for other functions in the West including Indian Affairs, immigration, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, parks, and wildlife administration. These records are essential for researchers in a wide diversity of fields, for example, those studying Metis history, claims or genealogy, as they include the whole Metis land grant record. Spry and McCardle wrote an excellent introductory article on existing research with suggestions in this and other sections as to what remains to be done. They have also provided an introduction to the administrative history of the Department of the Interior in order to understand the creators of the records. Reading Spry and McCardle's history of the records, it began to dawn on me for the first time why it was so difficult for an archivist to be very helpful in my search of some years ago, I was not aware of how dispersed these became after 1930 when a large proportion were sent to the three prairie provinces, with the last shipments taking place as late as 1978. There are no complete lists of what was sent to the provinces. A regrettable amount was destroyed at various times. There has never been a central index available for these documents which record so much of the history of the prairie provinces.

Other features of the book that make it an invaluable resource for researchers include a section on research strategies for the six most common types of projects. There is a section of related personal papers of prime ministers and ministers of the Interior, and related records of institutions or departments that created records closely linked to the activities of the Department of the Interior. Department of Justice records, for example, are vital to understanding diverse issues such as Metis land, and the eligibility of certain women for homesteads. There are concise discussions of such issues as the unique, overlapping and conflicting areas of jurisdiction between the Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs. Throughout the text there are intriguing suggestions for further research — such as that on p. 140 describing the remarkable variety of Indian-white claims and counterclaims to particular parcels of land, which generated at least two interdepartmental investigations and many prolonged negotiations. The authors also note that while we have a number of studies of wildlife conservation in the western provinces, most of these fail to deal with the relationship between government policy on Native hunting and wildlife conservation, noting that many conservation measures instituted in western Canada were in reaction to episodes of conflict between Native wildlife exploitation, often for subsistence purposes, and non-Native claims, often for commercial or recreational purposes.

This book will be of great use to scholars and archivists. The authors would likely be the first to admit however that the catalogue is not a complete guide (I don't know, for example, how I would go about relocating the McDougall Commission). It should be mentioned that it is an extremely attractive publication with a section featuring examples of maps and posters that were an essential component of the work of the Department. Scholars should be encouraged to consider drawing upon such non-documentary sources in innovative ways. Maps, for example, were not value- and judgement-free compilations, but social constructions or cultural texts that conveyed messages of control, progress and development.

One problem with the book is that there is no note on the authors who are very familiar to many of us, but are perhaps not as well known among a new generation of scholars. Irene Spry is a distinguished economic historian, now professor emeritus of the University of Ottawa, best known for her work on the John Palliser expedition. Bennett McCardle is an archivist at the National Archives who has written another extremely useful guide to researchers: *Indian History and Claims: A Research Handbook*, 2 vols. (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1982).

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*Fashioning Farmers: Ideology, Agricultural Knowledge and the Manitoba Farm Movement, 1890-1925*, by Jeffery Taylor. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994. Pp. 163.

The volatile politics of the Canadian Plains region has attracted the attention of scholars for decades. This study, based upon the author's doctoral dissertation, is one of the latest additions to this growing list. It is also a particularly valuable contribution because of its essentially multi-disciplinary approach.

Taylor's argument is that a radical tradition of rural protest in Manitoba was submerged by a business-oriented philosophy of agriculture which came to dominate the province during the early decades of this century. The vehicles for this change were the institutions of agricultural knowledge, specifically the Manitoba Agricultural College. Taylor traces the evolution of this conservative philosophy in Manitoba, and examines the way in which it came to dominate public discussion of agricultural issues in that province.

Taylor's insights into the formation of ideology are due in large part to his methodology. He outlines his approach in his first two chapters and, for those who are not frustrated by the often heavy prose of the social sciences, they are illuminating. Taylor's borrowing from recent feminist scholarship is especially noteworthy because it provides him with analytical tools to delve into the often overlooked role of farm women in the development of rural communities.

The breadth of Taylor's approach makes the narrowness of his focus that much more regrettable. This study is concerned with the agrarian politics of Manitoba, and only occasionally ventures further west. While Taylor has helped us to understand why Manitoba's farm movement was so different from the two other prairie provinces, an effort to compare respective ideological developments would have made the contrast more vivid. Perhaps by leaving such issues untouched Taylor is issuing a challenge to future scholars to apply his approach to Saskatchewan and Alberta. Hopefully the pens will be picked up soon.

When such studies are launched they should reveal the important role of American populism in sustaining radical agrarian politics on the Canadian Plains. Unlike Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta had large American populations who were already familiar with much of the conservative business-oriented philosophy discussed by Taylor. Some subscribed to it, but many did not and this kept alive in those provinces the radical sentiments which declined so quickly in the keystone province.

There is another problem with Taylor's study. Agricultural educators in all three provinces continually complained about their lack of progress because they could not reach a large enough rural audience. This was one of the main points they advanced when canvassing for more funds. If Taylor is correct, then these agricultural educators were far more successful than they realized. By not addressing this issue though, Taylor leaves open the possibility that there were other, perhaps more important, factors at work in converting Manitoba farmers to a conservative ideology.

While not without its weaknesses, this volume is an important addition to our growing knowledge of how Canadian Plains agriculture came to be what it is today.

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*The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years 1886-1903*, edited by Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993. Pp. 708.

The story of the Mormon settlement of southwestern Alberta in the closing years of the nineteenth century has long fascinated historians, geographers, sociologists and journalists. In 1887, a small party of Mormon families crossed the border from the United States and established a settlement on the banks of Lee's Creek only a few miles north. Like many others who immigrated to the unsettled lands of the Canadian West, these settlers were refugees from religious persecution. Unlike others, they were also polygamous.

Polygamy had been practiced in Mormon society since the 1840s, usually by the more devout and well-established members of the Church. Charles Ora Card was in many ways typical of those who "observed the principle" and practiced polygamy despite increasing pressure on the Mormon Church by the United States government to renounce the practice. He was a pioneer farmer, businessman, and Mormon church and community leader. Card had married four women, though he was divorced from his first wife who reported his whereabouts to the authorities at every opportunity and made his life a misery. After arrest for contravening antipolygamy legislation Card escaped from custody and lived, as did many other polygamous Mormons, "underground," effecting disguises and travelling between "safe houses" at night.

Card contemplated moving to Mexico with one of his wives but was instructed by church president John Taylor to explore the possibility of establishing a settlement in Canada. In 1886, Card and two companions reconnoitred southern British Columbia and southern Alberta. In 1887 he led a small party of polygamous Mormons to Canada and established the first Mormon settlement in Canada on the banks of Lee's Creek.

From 1871 until 1903 Card kept a diary: a daily record of his travels, emotions, business dealings, and unwavering commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Card played a leading role in establishing the Mormon community in Canada so his diary reveals much about the process of early Mormon colonization and the details of pioneer life in western Canada. Until the publication of *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years 1886-1903* researchers seeking to use them faced a number of

hurdles. The original diaries, available at the archives of Brigham Young University, were extremely difficult to read, for they were written in faded pencil by a man on the go. Card used abbreviations, various spellings and sometimes confused his chronology when writing up his diary a week after events took place. Until recently not all the diaries were assembled and the record was incomplete.

Donald Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card have compiled and edited Card's diaries from 14 September 1886, the eve of his departure to reconnoitre settlement opportunities in Canada, until 9 July 1903, when his diary abruptly ends, some three years before his death on 9 September 1906. Transcription of the diaries alone would be a formidable task but Godfrey and Card have been meticulous in cross-checking all Card's diary entries, eliminating confusion in names and chronology and providing numerous explanatory notes which clarify entries and guide the reader to supplementary sources or scholarly works which deal with the subject of the entry. The editors also provide a forty-page introduction which sets the diary in context, outlines the geographical, religious, political and economic environments within which Card operated, and also gives an authoritative biographical sketch of Charles Ora Card. A comprehensive index which embraces Card's diary entries and the editorial commentary adds to the usefulness of the volume. This book is also enhanced by maps showing Card's travels and the Alberta settlements.

It is unfortunate that the editors did not include more illustrative material showing some of the individuals with whom Card had dealings, people such as the charismatic John W. Taylor, C.A. Magrath and, of course, his wives Sarah Jane Birdneau (from whom he was divorced in 1884), Sarah Jane Painter, Zina Young Williams and Lavinia Clark Rigby. Only Zina's portrait is included, since she came to Canada with Card; but his diaries make it clear that his other wives remained an integral part of his life throughout the Canadian years. A bibliography of material relating to Card and the Mormon settlements in Alberta would also be a useful addition to the volume.

This is an important source which will be valuable to all interested in Mormon history or the social history of western Canada. Although a few scholars have previously used Card's diaries, either consulting the originals or a preliminary typed transcription prepared by Clarice C. Godfrey and Melva R. Witbeck, this edition promises to enable a wider variety of researchers to contribute to the interpretation of the Mormon frontier in both the American Intermontane West and the Prairies of southern Alberta. Card and Godfrey are to be congratulated on their excellent editorial work. One hopes that they will extend their work and apply the same dedication to producing a similar version of Card's earlier diaries.

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*Help Us to a Better Land: Crofter Colonies in the Prairie West*, by Wayne Norton. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994. Pp.125.

Settlement of the Great Plains of North America is a continuing fascination for residents of the prairie provinces of Canada and for those of the northern states of the United States. Probably one of the mains reasons for this fascination is the fact that much of this settlement took place in the last 125 years; therefore, many of us have some familiarity with details of this settlement because we have heard or read about it or have even known some of the settlers involved.

This is a major reason why Wayne Norton's book *Help Us to a Better Land* has been so eagerly purchased and read by many people of southeastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba and by others who were born and grew up there and have moved away. The book provides a clear, yet moving, account of the settlement of these Scottish crofters (actually both crofters and cotters). They came from Scotland's "Western Isles," that is, the Outer Hebrides (Lewis, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, Barra and South Uist) to Pelican Lake in the Hilton-Killarney area of Manitoba in 1888 and to Saltcoats, Assiniboia (now Saskatchewan) in 1889.

Other more popular, less totally researched accounts of the difficulties of these Scottish settlers, at the same time desperate and courageous, have been the subject of magazine articles and a few small local books (reproduced, but not formally published).

In Norton's book we have a short, yet sufficiently detailed, account of the historical background of the reluctant migration of this group of seventy-nine Scottish families who came to western Canada in 1888 and 1889. Their recruitment, transport and arrival was an early attempt at government-assisted immigration which was only partially understood by the British and Canadian governments when they developed the scheme. It was certainly little understood by the somewhat desperate, economically poor Scots and their families who departed from the craggy, windy Outer Hebrides. The ocean crossing was rough and many were seasick. Parting from friends and relatives had been hard to bear and they had little knowledge of the land to which they were coming. Besides, the officials of both governments involved with handling the settlers before departure, and in finding acceptable homesteads, seemed about as uncertain and ill-prepared as the settlers. These crofters and cotters (the latter were labourers who did not even rent land) knew only small crofts of the Outer Hebrides; fortunately, their lives had made them afraid of neither risk nor hard work. However, they and those officials appointed to guide them and aid them had no real appreciation of the problems of breaking virgin prairie and turning it into cultivated fields. So far as livestock and poultry were concerned, the settlers probably had substantially more knowledge about the problems of raising such animals in our climate than did these same officials.

Although farming methods of the time were well established for eastern Canada settlers who came to farm, the prairies were not as certain of their

techniques, even after many years of experience; no wonder these new settlers were further bewildered. There was provision for purchase of wagons and oxen, ploughs and harrows and a few other basic tools. The economic aid to the head of each family (£120 or about \$600 at the rate of exchange of the day) had been reduced by the cost of discharge of debts before departure, and the settlers' time of arrival ruled out any harvest of field crops in the first year. To their everlasting credit, many family heads, wives and older family members soon got farm or domestic work to supplement these funds. Still many of them were soon out of cash and in some measure of debt.

The foreword to the book credits these settlers with "a remarkably resilient sense of identity that had grown from a long tradition of selective resistance to the assimilative pressures of an Anglo-Saxon majority" (p. xi). No wonder the combination of such a past and the difficulties the settlers had in their first years here in Canada brought so much confusion and bitter objection. Probably these feelings were most clearly portrayed by the words of John McKay to Sir Charles Tupper at Saltcoats in 1893: "We should never have come." Tupper is recognizable to most of us through grade school studies as one of the "Fathers of Confederation" and in 1893 he was the Canadian High Commissioner to London and a member of the Imperial Colonisation Board. The words of T.J. Lawlor, a Killarney (Manitoba) merchant of that time are prophetic too: "Fancy a people taken away from fishing scenes and dumped upon the prairie — and no provision made for seed. Gaelic may be a very nice and expressive dialect but you cannot raise wheat with it, and these people had nothing else" (p. 36).

John McKay gave up his first homestead in 1906, and moved to another homestead a few miles away in the Barvas area, nearer other fellow settlers. The original homestead was NE 2-25-2. This quarter section was then acquired by a "land company," subsequently rented by my grandfather, John Jowsey, in 1909 and purchased by him in 1912. I have owned it since 1957 and my wife and I have lived on it since 1985 and are still involved in farming it. Broken crockery, nails and rusty remnants of shovels and forks are still found where John McKay and his family lived. Even in the 1950s my father could show me the depressions where the McKays had dug shallow wells to get water for themselves and their livestock.

That some of these crofters from the Outer Hebrides and other "turn of the century" settlers stuck it out in such circumstances will be forever to their credit and our benefit as present citizens of Canada. Wayne Norton's book is a scholarly, yet readable, account that includes sufficient detail on this early government-assisted immigration scheme. Succeeding chapters follow the lives and difficulties of the settlers involved up to 1906, and provide appropriate contrasts to other "turn of the century" settlements in western Canada. Therefore it is much more than a description of an "isolated attempt at settlement" as some of the British and Canadian officials said.

*Help Us to a Better Land* is logically separated into chapters with a list of references and notes separated in the same way. It is well indexed and there

are tables of homestead locations and a collection of black and white photographs. Happily I found no typographical errors but there is one case (p. 34) where I am not sure whether the author meant "virulent" or "vitriolic" in reference to Malcolm McNeill's denials. A clear characterization of abbreviations for boards, committees, etc. where they are used first in each chapter, for example ICB (Imperial Colonisation Board), CNWL (Canadian North West Land Company), would have been useful to many readers.

I cheer the author for his thorough and patient research and rejoice in the publication of this book as a vital part of our Canadian heritage.

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*Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, edited by Catherine A. Cavarnaugh and Randi R. Warne. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993. Pp. 224.

This collection of ten papers on women in Alberta is part of the Alberta Nature and Culture Series, which is intended to provide an interdisciplinary forum for works of general interest to a wide readership. Although I am a legal academic, and approach the task of reviewing a book from another discipline with hesitation and humility, this interesting and accessible collection is likely to appeal to many tastes. The various papers explore and illustrate how women in Alberta stood on new ground in all senses of that term. In their different ways, the authors capture prairie life and convey how the geography, unique history and contemporary realities of Alberta shaped the lives of the women who have called this province home.

The editors have done a fine job bringing together papers which not only cover diverse subjects but which also range in methodology, sources, themes, manner of presentation and time period. There is something to be learned in each of these well-written and informative papers. Michael Owen discusses the attempts of the Methodist and United Church WMS missions in eastern Alberta between 1904-40 to "civilize" both the region's original inhabitants and its many immigrant people. The paper by Catherine C. Cole and Ann Milovic on "Education, Community Service and Social Life: The Alberta Women's Institutes and Rural Families, 1909-1945" explains the vital role played by women's voluntary associations during that time. Collette Lassiter and Jill Oakes's article outlines the evolution of cowgirl dress, illustrates the power of "official" images, and questions the relationship between popular culture and practical realities. Barbara Evans presents a pictorial record of photographs taken between 1917 and 1922 by a woman named Jessie Umscheid. Nanci Langford's article explores the postsuffrage period and analyzes the political apprenticeship of Alberta women between 1916-30. Linda Trimble questions the role played by female legislators in Alberta between 1972-91 by reviewing the transcripts of political debates within the provincial

legislature, asks whether women make a difference in political office and identifies a number of encouraging trends. Patricia Roome reminds us of the voices which are missing and provides a good overview of some of the sources which can be found in "Remembering Together: Reclaiming Alberta Women's Past." Three of the papers in this collection address activities at the University of Alberta. (It would have been helpful had information been provided about other universities and postsecondary institutions.) In "From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970," Elaine Chalus examines how the changing role of women affected undergraduates at the University of Alberta during the 1960s as revealed through the student newspaper, *The Gateway*, and the activities of the "Wauneitas," an all women's club. Margaret-Ann Armour offers a description of WISEST and its program to encourage female participation in the fields of science, technology and engineering. Pat Rasmussen tells the story of the Women's Program and Resource Centre at the the University of Alberta between 1981-91.

In this collection there is no attempt to explore a singular or unifying theme. Rather, the individual papers are presented as snapshots of certain women in defined activities at particular moments of time. When put together, they form a vibrant collage which captures the strength, courage and commitment to change shown by women in Alberta.

If the authors share anything it is their talent for looking beyond the stereotypic picture and challenging conventional wisdom by their solid primary research and sound analysis. Patricia Roome comments:

In remembering together, our voices speak out against the myths and stereotypes of women embedded in western Canadian history and challenge the dichotomies which have circumscribed women's experience. Writing women into Alberta's history began with a deconstruction of the frontier myth to expose the heroic pioneer's dominance and unmask the masculine image of the West. (p. 172)

Many of the papers debunk, or at least qualify, old myths, add information to the standard story and provide new insights which help explain the multifaceted contributions of Alberta women. One example is Nanci Langford's questioning of the common claim that women's political activism culminated with the achievement of suffrage in 1916, only to disappear until the emergence of the women's movement of the 1960s. She shows that, in fact, the postsuffrage years were important and productive both for the gains made and the critical lessons learned.

While a primary concern of the authors is the place of Alberta women in public institutions, some of the most enduring images and poignant passages concern how women made the effort to meet together in an attempt to combat the loneliness and isolation some experienced as part of their private prairie lives. As one author notes: "For women, 'with two rooms to live in — once a month to town and nothing to spend when they got there,' the sense of isolation and futility could be overpowering." Whether gatherings were organized by missionaries or voluntary associations, there is a sense that they

served a similar function to the women's consciousness raising groups of the sixties and seventies: a place where women gave voice to what they may have thought were individual problems. In 1920, Emily Murphy looked back upon the history of the Women's Institutes and reflected that,

The Women's Institutes arose out of the needs of lonely women on isolated farms. These women desired to meet at stated periods for the exchange of counsel and amenities, to say nothing of the opportunity of exchanging recipes, dress patterns and community news.

In my view, the editors have achieved their stated purposes of helping readers become more aware of women's experience in Alberta, of sparking discussion, and of facilitating the entry of new voices into the conversation. While they invite new voices, it is often the voices of the women themselves which come through most clearly from this collection. Many authors drew heavily from original sources and this gives the papers a rich immediacy and a lasting resonance. For example, it is difficult to forget the tribute to Alberta women made by Mrs. McCorquodale, editor of the *High River Times*:

we would have no difficulty recognizing the Alberta women in Heaven  
... with pencils and notebooks, they would be in little groups beside the  
river of life putting the finishing touches to resolution B72894 urging  
that more rural children be taken into the Heavenly Choirs.

A similarly gripping message is conveyed in another form in Barbara Evans's article where she uses Jessie's uncontrived photographs to convey positive and life-affirming images of farm life. Her images challenge the commonly held stereotype of the farm women as long-suffering and overburdened and were consciously selected to capture the energy and commitment of these women. In explaining why she did not take photographs during the Depression, Jessie said:

it didn't seem there was any point in taking pictures of a duststorm, nor  
the army worms and that sort of thing. We didn't think it was anything  
too nice to take pictures of.

One of my favourite voices of the past is a quote from Lassiter and Oakes's article, "Ranchwomen, Rodeo Queens, and Nightclub Cowgirls: The Evolution of Cowgirl Dress." The story concerns a teenager, who in 1886, found herself running the cattle ranch which was the family's primary asset. She found that acceptable female attire was too restrictive and responded in the following way:

First, I discarded, or rather refused to adopt, the sun-bonnet, conventional headgear of my female neighbours. When I went unashamedly about under a five-gallon (not ten-gallon) Stetson, many an eyebrow was raised; then followed a double-breasted blue flannel shirt, with white pearl buttons, frankly unfeminine. In time came blue denim knickers worn under a short blue denim skirt. Slow evolution (or was it decadence?) toward a costume suited for immediate needs. Decadence having set in, the descent from the existing standards of female modesty to purely human comfort and convenience was swift. A man's saddle and a divided skirt (awful monstrosity that it was) were inevitable. This was in the middle nineties.

The strong symbolism of these gestures has been repeated in many contexts and the idea that after the initial "decadence" the descent was swift is a good organizing theme for much of what was accomplished by the Alberta women discussed in this rich and rewarding collection.

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*Democracy and Possessive Individualism: The Intellectual Legacy of C.B. Macpherson*, edited by Joseph Carens. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993. Pp. 298.

Forty years after its initial publication, C.B. Macpherson's *Democracy in Alberta* remains a landmark achievement. Combining political theory and political economy within a broadly Marxian framework, *Democracy in Alberta* offered an interpretation of the political experience of Alberta which all serious analysts of the politics and history of that society have felt compelled to address. Macpherson's account of the class character of the populist response to external economic forces, and the consequence of this response for democratic government, has elicited a wide variety of responses, favourable and unfavourable. Its stature among works which have treated the distinctive character of prairie societies is still considerable, even in the face of recent scholarship which has criticized Macpherson's accounts. His general analysis, moreover, still seems fruitful in the light of the wave of conservatism sweeping North America today.

*Democracy and Possessive Individualism: The Political Legacy of C.B. Macpherson* has virtually nothing to say about *Democracy in Alberta*, and that indicates its fundamental shortcoming. More than a matter of overlooking or ignoring Macpherson's contributions to the study of Canadian politics (the book was after all published by an American publisher and has an American editor, albeit one that teaches at the University of Toronto), the underlying problem of this volume is that it fundamentally distorts Macpherson's work and legacy.

This volume began as a conference in memory of Macpherson at his home institution for almost forty years, the University of Toronto. Yet it is a grudging tribute indeed. It is less a celebration than a funeral dirge, signalling the end of his era at that University. With this volume, his work is consigned to the mausoleum of dead ideas, so that less threatening modes of political theory can carry on as usual, without the sting and buzz of critical intelligence.

Through his work, Macpherson defended the need to integrate political theory and political economy, very much as he attempted to do in *Democracy in Alberta*. He took his departure from Marx's critique of political economy and the critical social theory associated with this project. As

William Leiss notes in his contribution to *Democracy and Possessive Individualism*, Macpherson's work has affinities with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Understanding Macpherson's legacy requires taking this commitment to a critical social theory, and not merely the thesis of possessive individualism, into account.

The agenda for this reinterpretation is set by Joseph Carens' introduction to this volume. While claiming to pay homage to Macpherson's critical legacy, Carens in fact denudes it of its liberatory intent. As the title of this book indicates, Carens separates, in manner contrary to Macpherson, the concerns of democratic theory and possessive individualism. The theory of possessive individualism is not a traditional theory. That is, it is not simply a description of a current or historical state of affairs. It is a normative theory that can be used critically to assess the potentialities and possibilities of transformation to more humane and liberated society. In Macpherson's view, democracy and possessive individualism are inseparably linked together through this critical aim. A critique of society is implied in the very analysis of possessive individualism. Macpherson's theory is a diagnosis of the problems and prospects of the present in light of the hope for a more democratic society in the future.

Separated from its critical intent, Macpherson's work can be assimilated in the prevailing discourses. It can be considered another version, more radical and optimistic perhaps, of the type of liberal political economy practiced at elite American schools. This is precisely what Carens achieves in his introduction to this work. It is significant that the proper name "Marx" is, as far as I can determine, never mentioned in Carens' introduction. This whole aspect of Macpherson's own legacy is essentially ignored.

By and large the contributors to this volume fail to see the critical character of Macpherson's work. The problems and prospects of capitalism and the role of Marx in Macpherson's outlook are, with a couple of exceptions, conspicuously underplayed in the essays included here. While some have a degree of scholarly merit, they do little justice to the scope of Macpherson's concerns. Their contribution to an evaluation of his legacy is uneven at best.

Several of the essays assess the adequacy of the concept of possessive individualism as a description of the way liberal theorists understood their work. The model of this line of argument is the valedictory paper by James Tully, which begins the collection on a less than auspicious note. Tully, a student of one of Macpherson's staunchest critics, the English political theorist John Dunn, follows Dunn's critique of Macpherson. Dunn interprets the theory of possessive individualism as thesis about the unity of the liberal tradition from Hobbes to Bentham, and chides Macpherson for empirical shortcomings. Tully dutifully repeats these criticisms with the aim of refuting Macpherson's thesis. While Tully provides a helpful guide to the debates about Macpherson's analysis, he remains mired in traditional (that is, empirical) theory. He loses touch with the critical intent of Macpherson's thought.

Other articles by Louise Marcil-Lacoste and Nancy Rosenblum suffer from similar deficiencies.

A second group of essays attempt to relate Macpherson's agreements to current issues in "postmodern" political theory. Many postmodernists reject Macpherson's brand of critical theory because of its link with a totalizing Marxist discourse. They consider harmonistic notions of social unity to be inherently linked to a repressive social order. However much the harmonistic assumption of ethical unity may hamper Macpherson's notion of a desirable postcapitalist society, a point brought out more effectively and with more subtlety by John Keane's thoughtful article, each of these critics fail to come to terms with the extent to which Macpherson's conception of politics, at the least, breaks rank with the Marxists of his time, who often failed to grant the political realm any independent function. Thus in many ways the postmodernist critics owe a debt to Macpherson's work.

A good example of this debt are the essays by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Their interesting attempt to fuse a notion of rights with a critique of social and institutional power owes a debt, which they acknowledge, to Macpherson's unorthodox analysis of the relation between politics and economics. However, because they both rely on a notion of politics as essentially antagonistic — one which is always based on a friend-foe relationship — they take Macpherson's insights in a direction which he certainly would have rejected. At the very least, one should, given Macpherson's own commitments, confront this conception, with the alternative possibility that some kind of reciprocity not exhausted by the friend-foe antagonism is essential if we are to have social relations at all. Plurality and antagonism are not identical.

William Connolly's essay is one of the few to address the political economic dimension of Macpherson's work. Connolly pays homage not only to Macpherson, the radical democrat, but also Macpherson's concern with the economic basis of political theory. However, Connolly's own alternative notion of equality, influenced by Nietzsche, sees liberal equality as a sham. Connolly's version of a postliberal ideal is wholly unappealing. He associates Macpherson's conception of equality as the right of all to equal use and development of their human capacities as connected by necessity to the idea of a centralized command economy and a harmonistic theory of society. In contrast, Connolly offers a Nietzschean vision of the heroic individual struggling against fate with no illusions of redemption. In the interests of this robust conception of political action, which is only open to the few strong enough to tolerate it without illusion, we must accept limits on the pursuit of equality. For the latter only produces a mass man who lives in the world Connolly has heroically transcended.

These are not Macpherson's concerns. In contrast to Connolly's robust (male-oriented) heroic posture, Macpherson's democratic socialist ideals seem positively humane. Unlike Connolly, who collapses any meaningful distinction between (unrealized) liberal ideals and totalitarian control — for both are caught in the same vice of western humanism — Macpherson had a

sense of the ideals of solidarity and freedom that were the heritage of that tradition. Doing justice to those ideals is not to consign them to the ash heap of history, but to redefine their meaning—perhaps with some new theoretical tools.

The question of a good society, so central to Macpherson, is at the heart of essays by John Keane and William Leiss. Not coincidentally, they are the most interesting and thought-provoking of the entire collection.

John Keane's article, by far the strongest in the collection, is a constructive engagement with Macpherson's position. (Other contributors, notably Jane Mansbridge and Virginia Held discuss aspects of Macpherson's democratic theory and offer useful insights.) Keane offers a sustained and serious attempt to examine the normative assumptions underlying Macpherson's project. He identifies several major trouble spots in Macpherson's theory, each of which is related to the ontological assumption of an harmonious resolution of social conflict in postcapitalist society: Macpherson's ethical postulate of the noncontentious nature of developmental needs, his conception of the abolition of the state, and his assumption about the possibility of overcoming scarcity.

While Keane's sharp critique is generally incisive, he too falls prey to the problems which arise from an attempt to subordinate Macpherson's ideas to currently dominant paradigms. Keane tends to exaggerate Macpherson's reliance on an unreconstructed Marxian heritage. Macpherson's version of developmental democracy, as noted above, gives more credence to modern notions of democracy than Marx did. He offers at least the basis of a fusion between liberal political conceptions and a Marxian critique of political economy. Especially in his last writings, Macpherson indicates the possibility of a distinctively political public sphere.

William Leiss's enigmatic essay, which closes this collection, returns us to the relation of Macpherson's thought to its critical heritage. Leiss's focus on Hegel's philosophy of history reminds us that, in spite of his interest in the English tradition and his focus in English liberals, Macpherson had clear links to the Hegelian/Marxist heritage. He stood in the tradition of those who attempted a developmental history with a critical intent.

While this aspect of Leiss's approach is admirable, he draws a grand but questionable historical synthesis. As Leiss sees it, the modern era is shaped by three major idealist projects: liberalism with its ideas of human dignity; democratic socialism, which emerged with the modern labour movement; and national liberation, which grew primarily among third world anti-imperialist movements. From a different angle than that of postmodernists, he sees these projects as totalizing. Each posited an either/or of socialism, humanity or barbarism. Their idealism was carried out in the hope of total victory over the forces of domination and oppression. Each "god" failed, bringing with this failure deep theoretical and personal disillusionment. Because these dreams have been characteristic of the modern era, their dissolution signals the close of this era, one wrecked on the reefs of an unsolved and unsolvable conflict between capitalism and socialism. The

decline of the great superpowers marks the end of a world historical struggle between the two great ideologies. Yet this has not meant the end of history. Leiss foretells a period of apocalyptic struggle before a new era of history asserts itself.

Perhaps William Leiss possesses the wisdom of the delphic oracle, but I tend to think his own version of the gods that failed takes the totalizing power of pure ideas, especially of philosophical ones, much too far. For he makes each historic epoch into a self-contained (if contradictory) internal relation, impenetrable by any external force. This makes for dramatic portrayal, but poor social theory. I think Leiss's history of modernity needs to take a theme from Macpherson himself and look to the interpenetration of liberalism and democracy, rather than seeing modernity as a set of mutually opposed projects. The transformation that we are currently undergoing might be better understood using precisely the kind of political economic analyses that Macpherson recommended. It does not seem to me that the decline of superpower rivalry heralds the end of the struggle between capitalism and socialism, but an intensification of conflict, as the forces of global capitalist expansion win the power to dismantle and oppose even the economies of large nations. Today's political economic conflicts will take place on a terrain other than the nation-state.

I think that Macpherson was right: the spirit of modernity still remains in the ideals of freedom and dignity, and in a version of political economy that, if not socialist in the old sense, still takes account of the demand for human solidarity and well-being. These ideals can still speak to us in a renewed developmental history.

In my view, this is the place where a renewed creative appropriation of Macpherson, and of the heritage of critical theory and political economy, can take place. Unfortunately, many of the contributors to *Democracy and Possessive Individualism* are not in the same ballpark. They believe they are the real thing, but this is mostly the replacement team. This is a shame because Macpherson's work deserves a better fate, especially that part of his thought that does not play ball with liberalism and postmodernism. What Macpherson was most concerned about, the connection between political theory and political economy, is only rarely broached. Anyone really concerned with Macpherson's legacy will have to look elsewhere — a far better place to start would be the collection edited by Alkis Kontos, *Powers, Possessions and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). Strangely this collection is omitted from the select bibliography included in *Democracy and Possessive Individualism*.

Brian Caterino  
Rochester, NY



### Letter to the Book Review Editor

I was most distressed by R. Bruce Shepard's review of Donald G. Wetherell's and Irene R.A. Kmet's *Homes in Alberta: Buildings, Trends and Design, 1870-1967* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1991). Shepard makes several observations, all of which impugn the integrity of the authors and the agencies that assisted in funding the book. Shepard argues that the book's problems "stem from its origin as a commissioned work." Shepard does however note that there is "no evidence that the Alberta government departments which sponsored this study influenced the research findings or interpretations." As the Director of the Historic Sites and Archives Branch of the Department of Community Development, one of the sponsoring agencies, I can assure the reader that this was the case. It is the policy of the Branch to subject each of its academic studies to the rigours imposed by the individual university presses as well as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's Aid to Scholarly Publishing Programme. In the case of the Wetherell/Kmet book, the University of Alberta Press subjected the book to the same rigorous review that it gives all of its titles. It is disturbing that as a reviewer Shepard finds the need even to make the comment. Would he make a similar comment about the work of a university-paid scholar? Are historians taught such questionable ethics during their university training, that they cannot free themselves of their paymasters or from their positions within the power structure, be it a bureaucratic or an academic one? Would this mean, for example, that were Dr. Shepard to write an article about Diefenbaker or about Diefenbaker's role in Saskatchewan politics, that it should be subject to additional scrutiny because of his paymaster?

Shepard however is more concerned with the books "overly narrow or Alberta focus." To him it "underscores a disturbing trend in studies emanating from Alberta — to insist upon a parochial provincial viewpoint." He argues that the book should have compared Alberta to Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Shepard's comments are disturbing. He is suggesting that a local or provincial focus to social issues like housing or urban development are not valid. This would mean that excellent studies like Paul Voisey's *Vulcan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), or Alan Artibise's *Winnipeg* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) or David Breen's recent study of the Energy Resources Conservation Board published by the University of Alberta Press are without merit because they are not regional or comparative in nature.

Perhaps Shepard is indulging in an age-old book review technique — if you haven't anything to say, criticize the book for something it never intended to be. Wetherell and Kmet never intended to do a regional history, although they were certainly free as far as their sponsors were concerned to indulge in as many regional comparisons as required. But this is not really the implication of Shepard's point. By inference, Shepard is suggesting that Alberta is not a valid parameter from which to study housing or for that

matter any other subject. This is where Wetherell and Kmet prove him wrong! Alberta had unique provincial housing policies that shaped the texture of Alberta's urban environment and the quality of housing of its people. The volume is particularly strong on the Social Credit years and the impact of federal policies. Saskatchewan and Manitoba have never had problems with the study of social problems using provincial boundaries as a parameter.

In a final shot, Shepard comments that "the format of *Homes in Alberta* also reflects its commissioned foundation." In his mind this means "well bound" and "wide margins." I guess to be respectable academic books have to be poorly bound and poorly designed. Well, Dr. Shepard should check his facts. The University of Alberta Press's award-winning designer alone determined the format of the book. I gather it was chosen because the Press felt the book had a reasonable potential to be of interest to a wider non-academic audience. The book has been reportedly seen on the shelves in a major food chain!

The Shepard review is part of a wider debate on public history and its relationship to academic history. The debate is, in my mind, a non-starter. What matters is not who pays the historian's salary, but rather the quality of scholarship and analysis. Is the use of evidence imaginative? Is recent historiography acknowledged? These are the questions that Shepard should have answered in his review!

Frits Pannekoek  
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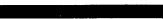
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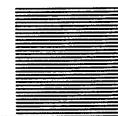
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