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Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Depression*

Depression, drought, dust and grasshoppers are the words which usually come to mind first in considering Saskatchewan history during the 1930s. The Province was simultaneously subjected to the ravages of two unrelated phenomena, a world-wide economic depression and a prolonged period of drought, which combined to provide the blackest period in its history. The coincidence of depression with drought meant that the Province suffered to a considerably greater extent than any other in Canada. The Royal Commission on Dominion Provincial Relations discovered at the end of the period that the average per capita income in Saskatchewan fell by seventy-two per cent, a decrease twice that of Nova Scotia,¹ and that the financial burden of the depression was five times that of Ontario and the Maritimes.² Moreover, while in most provinces the low ebb of depression had been reached by mid-1933, the worst years for Saskatchewan inhabitants were 1937-38. Thus the suffering endured by the province during this period was both prolonged and intense.

The responsibility for the provision and administration of relief in the urban municipalities of the province lay with the local authority. The provincial City and Town Acts had made these units of government responsible for health, police, fire and street illumination services. In addition the urban municipality had the duty of providing certain services for the protection of human life. These included the prevention and control of disease, the maintenance of hospitals, the provision of medical care or assistance to indigent persons, and direct relief to inhabitants.³ In normal years revenues enabled the urban municipality to fulfill these functions satisfactorily. However, the depression caused the number on relief to increase dramatically, and costs rose proportionately. In 1936, the cities in the Province advanced eighty-three times as much relief as they had in 1927.⁴

Obviously municipal finances could not bear these burdens. If unemployment relief became too great a strain, the municipality would appeal to the Provincial Government for assistance. Similarly in times of acute distress the Province could seek Dominion aid. However, throughout the whole depression decade unemployment relief was considered to be primarily a local responsibility and problem. Financial help from the Provincial and Federal Governments was offered only on an emergency basis. Both senior governments disclaimed the responsibility of administering relief in the average urban centre, and refused to contribute towards administration costs. Saskatchewan municipalities and the Provincial Government

* This article is based in part on an unpublished master's thesis by the author entitled "Urban Relief Administration in Saskatchewan in the Depression." The thesis was submitted in 1969 to the College of Graduate Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Campus.

¹ *Report of the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations* (hereafter R.S. Commission) vol. 1, p. 150, table 50.

² *Ibid.*, p. 164, table 58.

³ *Submission by the Government of Saskatchewan to the Rowell-Sirois Commission*, vol. 1, 47-48.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

constantly urged that the Federal Government should organize and finance relief, and initiate a scheme of national unemployment insurance. Throughout the whole decade, however, the Federal Government insisted that the administration of relief was a municipal responsibility. A letter to a Saskatchewan relief recipient in 1939 illustrates this point:

The Dominion Government while assisting the Province of Saskatchewan, do not administer the granting of assistance to individuals. This is the responsibility of the Municipality in which you reside, who must decide to whom, to what extent and under what conditions assistance shall be granted.⁵

The fact that urban municipalities were held responsible for relief, combined with the hope that the depression would not last for long meant that all dominion and provincial assistance was considered to be on a temporary basis. Hence relief policies in the 1930s consisted of a veritable patchwork quilt of yearly enactments, followed by dominion-provincial and provincial-municipal agreements, at annual or monthly intervals. Posterity has almost universally condemned the way in which the problem of relief was tackled. The Rowell-Sirois Commission concluded in 1938: "It is clear there was no co-ordinated or carefully planned relief policy in Canada in the Depression."⁶ The governments simply adopted whatever method existed for dispensing temporary relief and "extended it *ad infinitum*."⁷

Prior to 1934 the Dominion Government contributed a fixed percentage of relief costs. After September of that year a system of monthly grants-in-aid was instituted. The Province was left to determine what proportion of municipal relief costs would be paid from this grant. Each branch of government tried to extract a greater portion of relief costs from the others. The constant interaction between the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments and the attempt to shift responsibility from one authority to another meant that the average relief recipient was totally confused as to who exactly was in control. Numerous recipients referred to the system as that of "passing the buck", while an individual closely concerned with their problems contended that a "vicious system of shirking responsibility was instituted."⁸ Relief administration becomes even more complicated when the different types of relief and the various categories of recipient are considered.

Fundamentally two types of unemployment relief could be administered by an urban municipality—public works schemes created to absorb the unemployed, and direct relief, which consisted of the provision of the necessities of life; food, fuel, clothing and shelter. The former of these methods was undoubtedly the more desirable, since it kept relief recipients in useful work. It was also far more expensive to operate than direct relief. Both labour and material costs had to be paid. In a prolonged period of depression it was not financially viable. Public works schemes were, therefore, generally abandoned after 1932, when it was apparent that the depression was no temporary aberration. Direct relief was resorted to on an ever-increasing scale.

⁵Archives of Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Bureau of Labour and Public Welfare, (L.P.W.), roll 38, file 41.

⁶R.S. Commission, vol. 1, p. 172.

⁷J. H. Gray, *The Winter Years*, (Toronto, 1966), p. 14

⁸Archives of Saskatchewan, F. Eliason Papers, Biography of a Swedish Emmigrant (sic), 51.

Normally four classes of relief recipient could be distinguished in a Saskatchewan urban municipality; residents, transients, the physically fit single, homeless unemployed and the physically unfit single, homeless unemployed. The urban municipality was financially responsible for the relief of its bona-fide residents only. These were persons who had a defined period of self sustaining residence in the locality. Initially this was a six months period. After September, 1934, the residence qualification was changed to twelve consecutive months. In 1936 it was altered further to twelve cumulative months in a three-year period. Transients were persons without residence qualifications. They were granted relief at the expense of the Federal and Provincial Governments. The Dominion and Provincial Governments shared the costs of the relief of the single homeless unemployed; the physically unfit were cared for in the urban centres and the fit were relieved in Federal Government camps specially created for the purpose.⁹ Although the municipality bore the burden of relief costs for bona-fide residents only, it had to pay administration costs and medical expenses for both the unfit single homeless unemployed and the transients relieved through its offices by the Dominion and Provincial Governments. This proved a source of continual dissatisfaction to the municipality, and eventually some changes were instituted.

To the urban municipality the relief problem was a practical one requiring action. To those in need the question of relief was neither constitutional, nor political, nor economic, nor administrative. It was simply a matter of where the next meal was coming from. A study of the relief problems in Saskatoon illustrates how the problems faced by an urban municipality were handled.

Initially in Saskatoon relief was directly controlled by the City Council, working through the relief department, which consisted of a Relief Officer, assistants and investigators. As the depression deepened and the numbers on relief increased, it became impractical for the Council to superintend relief administration so closely. In the first half of 1932 it was estimated that at least fifty per cent of all Council meetings had been taken up with the consideration of relief problems. Moreover, the number of meetings had increased dramatically in this period. To the end of June, 1932, there had been fifty-four meetings compared with thirty-five for a similar period in 1931. Two standing committees, appointed to look after relief matters had been meeting continuously.¹⁰ Consequently in October, 1932, the council decided to appoint a separate body, the Civic Relief Board, to superintend the administration of relief and investigate any complaints. The Board consisted of eight persons: seven citizens and the mayor. They were appointed by the resolution of the Council, and had to submit a monthly report on the relief situation in the city to the Council. The initial life of the Board extended until June, 1934, after which date a new Board was to be appointed annually.¹¹

In the first few months of its existence the Civic Relief Board was allowed to determine various aspects of relief policy in Saskatoon. One of the primary concerns

⁹L.P.W. roll 30, file 3, circular 58, T. M. Molloy to the Towns and Villages, September 28, 1934.

¹⁰Saskatoon Council Minutes, July 18, 1932.

¹¹*Ibid.*, October 3, 1932, Bylaw No. 2277.

of the Board was to keep relief expenditure to the minimum. In an early meeting it endorsed a policy of requiring relief recipients to repay the city for any assistance given, whether in kind or cash.¹² A little later the Board asked the *Star-Phoenix* to insert a news item requesting all citizens who had any information concerning families who should not be on relief to pass it along to the Board for investigation.¹³ The Board organized itself into a series of special committees, each one responsible for an aspect of relief policy. One of the most important of these committees was the one in charge of the relief store which the city operated. On the recommendations of this committee changes were made in the commodities sold in the store. The Board functioned in close association with the Relief Officer, who made a weekly report at meetings.

Relief administration under the Civic Relief Board, however, engendered dissatisfaction and unrest among recipients. The taxpayers on the Board naturally adopted a parsimonious attitude towards relief. Their main concern was to keep costs down. Their penchant for thriftiness manifested itself when they decided that eggs and lard were to be supplied at the butcher's shop which the city operated instead of at the relief store, and charged on the recipient's meat voucher. On this occasion the value of grocery vouchers decreased while there was no appropriate increase in the value of the meat voucher.¹⁴ A month after this innovation the *Star-Phoenix* commented that "there was a 'feeling' between the Board and the unemployed which should not exist."¹⁵ In October, 1933, the Council took stronger control of relief affairs when it passed a resolution enabling it to lay down policies which the Relief Board was *forced* to implement.¹⁶

Ill feeling, however, persisted. Consequently when the question of the appointment of a new board for June, 1934, came up, it was decided that the Board should be discontinued and Council once again took a direct charge of relief administration. Although control of direct relief reverted to the Council, a Relief Appeal Board was created to lighten the burden of relief at council meetings. This board was to consist of the Mayor and City Commissioner serving in an advisory capacity, and two members of the council, serving on a rotating basis for three months each. The Board was to meet every two weeks to hear the appeals of relief recipients who had complaints.¹⁷ By 1935 the number of complaints necessitated weekly meetings.

As an appeal tribunal the board could not hear delegations. This was a perpetual source of annoyance to the local associations of the unemployed with which Saskatoon abounded, since these could not represent their members. The most frequent appeal coming before the board was for reinstatement on relief. The appeal had to be made in writing forty-eight hours before the scheduled board meeting. This was to enable the Relief Officer to refresh his memory of a certain

¹²Civic Relief Board Minutes, October 12, 1932.

¹³*Ibid.*, November 14, 1932.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, February 27, 1933.

¹⁵Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, March 16, 1933.

¹⁶Saskatoon Council Minutes, October 17, 1933.

¹⁷Saskatoon Council Minutes, June 5, 1934, Bylaw No. 2396

case history, so that he could make a verbal report to the board to enable it to judge the validity of the appeal. In many respects, the Relief Officer became the most important person at meetings, since it was invariably his department which had cut the appellant off relief. He was usually able to provide adequate justification for his action. Consequently few appeals appear to have succeeded.

Saskatoon was one of the few cities to have an appeal board. Its advantages were appreciated by T. M. Molloy, who described the Board as follows to a complainant:

The Appeal Board has among its members the Mayor, some aldermen, all persons not only capable of weighing all the facts in connection with such case, but who are interested in seeing that the relief costs of Saskatoon are kept to the minimum, and that persons on relief shall not suffer for want of assistance.

I was informed, therefore, that when a case has run the gauntlet of the Relief officials, and has been reviewed by the Appeal Board, we may rest assured that no undue hardship will be caused any family by reason of the policy which has been adopted by the City.¹⁸

In actual fact the advantages of the Appeal Board were largely illusory. The unemployed could air their grievances to an official body, but few succeeded in reversing the original decision of the relief department. Throughout the later 1930s the unemployed associations asked that relief recipients be allowed to appeal their case *before* relief was discontinued, so that unnecessary hardship would be avoided. One such organization was advised that its request could not be acceded to as it was "impracticable to carry it out."¹⁹

It was inevitable that there would be complaints about relief. It was impossible to satisfy everyone. However, conditions in Saskatoon must have been particularly bad or the unemployed extremely well organized to account for the numerous associations of unemployed which grew up there in the 1930s. In 1936 there were nine such organizations in existence; the Ex-Service Men's Welfare Association, the Fraternal and Protective Association of Saskatoon, the Single Men's Association for the physically unfit, the Single Workers' Union, the Married Transient Relief Association, the Transient Relief Association, the Disabled Veterans' Association, the Transient Emergency Association and the National Transient Union.²⁰ Unrest and organized associations on a substantial scale were to be expected in a large city. Saskatoon certainly experienced troubles in relief administration, most of which were concentrated round the person of the Relief Officer.

Both F. G. Rowlands, Relief Officer until 1933, and G. W. Parker, his successor, appear to have been unpopular figures. This was perhaps to be expected since the Relief Officer had wide powers, especially relating to the giving of relief on an emergency basis, and to newly-weds or the partners of a common law marriage.²¹ Rowlands and Parker were both ex-army officers, who were

¹⁸L.P.W. roll 38, file 41, Molloy to F. Eliason, May 27, 1935.

¹⁹Relief Appeal Board Minutes, June 21, 1937, reply to request of the Central Association of Unemployed and Welfare Associations of June 14, 1937.

²⁰L.P.W., roll 38, file 41.

²¹Saskatoon Council Minutes, June 18, 1932. It was the official policy of the city *not* to give relief to persons who had been married for less than one year.

occasionally lacking in "the milk of human kindness",²² although they were excellent administrators and organizers.

As early as December, 1930, relief recipients were urging that Rowlands be replaced. The Saskatoon Unemployed Association appeared before the Council complaining that light and water had been cut off from the unemployed and suggesting that: "In so far as the Mayor has continually stated that no one in Saskatoon should be permitted to go hungry, then we ask that Mr. Rowlands be replaced by a relief officer who will carry out the Mayor's wish."²³ The Council refused to comply with this request at this stage. But a crisis was reached in June, 1933, when the Civic Relief Board discussed the lack of harmony between the various branches of the relief department, particularly the investigating department, and the Relief Officer. It was decided that three members of the board should interview Rowlands and request that he apply for two months leave of absence with pay, after which he was expected to resign.²⁴

Rowlands lost no time over this. One June 2 the *Star-Phoenix* contained a small article on the resignation of the relief officer after fourteen years of service with the city. No reasons were given, but it was understood that there had been "disagreement with the Civic Relief Board on matters of policy."²⁵ Rowlands' resignation was met by many protests and the Council was inundated with demands from citizens and relief recipients for a judicial inquiry. From this it must be inferred that the Officer had been satisfying numerous relief recipients and applicants. However, he was not reinstated. G. W. Parker who had started work in the relief office only the previous February, was appointed as his successor. Parker held the position of Relief Officer throughout the remainder of the 1930s.

Ironically, Parker seems to have been the cause of more troubles than his predecessor. Apparently he was an extremely vigilant Relief Officer who liked to initiate and control every action in his department. From the vast amount of correspondence and cases he dealt with, he was obviously dedicated to his job. However, he tended to apply relief rules and regulations with the precision of an army officer, rather than the understanding of a welfare officer. As one observer pointed out to the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs: "Mr. Parker may be very efficient but he is also very severe and the constant complaint is that he refuses to see people."²⁶

Recipients were cut off relief with insufficient warning and not allowed to discuss their case with the Relief Officer. One recipient complained that he had been working part time with the approval of Parker to supplement his relief allowance. One day he went for his relief order and was informed that his relief had been discontinued. He naturally objected to the lack of adequate warning. Of all

²²Archives of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Relief Commission, roll A, file 4, T. Bunting, Investigation for the Saskatchewan Relief Commission, report on relief conditions in Saskatoon, March 13, 1933.

²³Saskatoon Council Minutes, December 8, 1930.

²⁴Civic Relief Board Minutes, June 1, 1933.

²⁵Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, June 2, 1933.

²⁶L.P.W. roll 37, file 41, J. W. Estey to P. M. Parker, January 7, 1936.

persons relief recipients were the least likely to have any extras stored up for times of hardship. The Appeal Board met only once a week. As the angry complainant pointed out, "five or six days were a long time to starve."²⁷ Fortunately the board reinstated this man on relief. Parker's action therefore, appears doubly reprehensible.

As his experience in relief administration increased Parker seems to have become overconfident. From 1936 onwards the Provincial Bureau of Labour and Public Welfare had great difficulty in stopping the Saskatoon Relief Officer from challenging their rulings. Molloy wrote to the City Commissioner Andrew Leslie, in early April pointing out that one cause of much trouble and inconvenience lay in the fact that Parker refused to take cognizance of the 1934 relief agreement which gave the Bureau the right to determine government relief cases, and stated that such cases were to be kept on relief until instructions were given to the contrary. No decision was made until after investigation, and this rested to a large extent on the facts supplied by the Relief Officer. In this respect Parker rendered splendid service, his investigations and reports were thorough and prompt. However, the Bureau reserved the right to interpret and apply regulations.²⁸ Parker had apparently been telling people to return to certain municipalities, when he had received instructions from Molloy allowing them relief in Saskatoon as transients.

The Relief Officer failed to distinguish between the individual recipient and the municipality responsible for his welfare. Parker preferred to punish the relief recipient by refusing him relief, rather than granting assistance and recovering expenditure from the municipality concerned. In spite of numerous suggestions and warnings from the provincial relief department, Parker continued to pursue what he himself considered to be the right policies, even though they contravened the official ones. In October, 1937, a memorandum sent to W. Dawson, Director of Relief, indicated that difficulties were still being experienced with the Saskatoon Relief Officer:

A terrific lot of correspondence could be avoided if Mr. Parker would give us the same co-operation as the relief officers of other cities are giving. Mr. Parker never considers a letter answered until it is answered in the way in which he himself wants it answered.²⁹

Occasionally Parker became incensed at one particular individual, and concentrated his anger and annoyance on that person. Frank Eliason, the secretary of the United Farmers of Canada in Saskatoon wrote frequent letters to Regina complaining about Parker's action in certain cases and asking for information. Invariably the Provincial Government referred these enquiries to Parker, who resented Eliason's constant intervention and tactics. Eliason was regarded by Parker as "nothing but an agitator, a trouble-maker" who apparently had "no idea of common courtesy with regard to minding his own business."³⁰ The fact remains, if

²⁷*Ibid.*, Mr. D. to Premier W. Patterson, March 23, 1935.

²⁸*Ibid.*, Molloy to Leslie, April 1, 1936.

²⁹L.P.W., roll 38, file 41, P. J. Boeckler to Dawson, October 21, 1937.

³⁰*Ibid.*, Parker to Molloy, December 10, 1936.

relief had been administered with less severity, there would have been fewer complaints.

Parker appeared to adopt a very superior attitude towards aliens on relief. One Austrian on relief who wanted to return to his homeland applied to the Saskatoon Relief Officer for assistance. Considerable difficulty was experienced in assessing this case, especially as the applicant's English was poor. At one stage Parker dismissed the man as a foreigner and a liar and wrote to Molloy: "I certainly have no intention while I am in this position to have any unnaturalized Austrian defy the regulations of this office."³¹ This type of prejudice again manifested itself in a later case. One Austrian complained to the Provincial Government about Parker's attitude towards aliens. Parker defended himself as follows:

I somewhat resent from an Austrian the inference that I have not a right to express my opinion. In fact, as no doubt you are aware, I have not hesitated, nor do I intend to hesitate to express my opinion with reference to such people as Mr. (X).³²

However, although the Relief Officer was entitled to express his own opinions, he was essentially the servant of the city council and for the most part he had to implement its policies.

Parker's anti-alien bias was really only the negative aspect of Saskatoon's policy of favouring British subjects or those in process of naturalization when recruiting men for employment in public works schemes. A resolution was passed to this effect at a Council meeting in June, 1930.³³ The city's initial response to the unemployment problem of the Thirties was public works projects. They hoped in this way to avoid placing large numbers of people on direct relief.

In the summer of 1930 the city embarked on a programme of sewer and water construction and sidewalk and lane paving. This relieved the unemployment situation considerably and hopes were expressed that the problem had been surmounted.³⁴ Fall, however, brought increases to the relief rolls, and it was estimated that one thousand five hundred persons would need assistance. Consequently the city made an agreement with the Provincial and Federal Governments, whereby a new subway was built and a system of storm sewers completed between October, 1930 and June, 1931.

In 1931 the city sought permission to build a bridge as a relief measure at an estimated cost of eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The Dominion agreed to pay three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the Province one hundred and forty thousand and the city the remainder.³⁵ The Broadway Bridge should have been completed by May 1, 1932. Extensions were granted until August 15, 1933.³⁶ After this date there were no Federal Government sponsored public works schemes

³¹*Ibid.*, Parker to Molloy, April 8, 1936.

³²*Ibid.*, Parker to Dawson, August 12, 1938.

³³Saskatoon Council Minutes, June 16, 1930.

³⁴*Ibid.*, June 23, 1930.

³⁵*Ibid.*, November 9, 1931.

³⁶*Ibid.*, December 19, 1932.

in the city until 1939, when the Liberal Government initiated a scheme whereby the Federal and Provincial Governments paid for labour costs and the city paid for material expenditure other than the purchasing of tools and equipment. The project consisted of recovering stones from the river bed, and grading and ditching underdeveloped streets.³⁷ Once again the preference for naturalized citizens was apparent, with a resolution passed by Council giving them first preference in the work.³⁸ However, for the greater part of the 1930s relief in Saskatoon was mostly direct aid.

Initially the City of Saskatoon adopted the policy of making relief recipients sign an undertaking to repay relief advanced to them. This was abandoned in November, 1933.³⁹ Thereafter relief recipients on the whole had neither to work for nor repay relief. The only recipients who had to perform any regular labour were those who had insufficient casual earnings to pay their own electric light and water bills. These cases were credited with forty cents an hour for work done, which usually consisted of wood cutting, and the city then paid their bills. In December, 1936, approximately three hundred men were working eight hours each month to pay off their bills.⁴⁰ The only time the city demanded work from certain relief recipients was as a punishment for breaking regulations or making false declarations.⁴¹

Direct relief consisted of the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and medical care, although these were not necessarily given to all relief recipients. Each case was judged individually and relief given according to need. There were three main classes of relief recipients in Saskatoon throughout the 1930s; bona-fide residents, transients and families receiving relief at the expense of other municipalities through the Civic Relief office. The largest groups were the transients who were the responsibility of the Dominion and Provincial Government and residents who were the direct responsibility of the city. Although financial responsibility for their relief lay in different hands, both groups were served by the same relief administration. Ideally there was to be no discrimination of treatment between transient and resident unemployed.⁴²

Because of the scale on which relief was required in the city, the major pre-occupation of the Council was that costs should be kept to a minimum and that administration should be efficient. An early problem was to find a satisfactory method of providing food since most relief recipients needed this form of relief. Until 1932 the city used the relief system which had existed since 1921. By this, recipients were given food vouchers specifying certain goods. These were exchangeable at any local store. Unfortunately the system was open to abuses. Some merchants in order to procure and keep trade allowed recipients to purchase commodities other than those specified, and made a profit by overcharging the

³⁷*Ibid.*, July 3, 1939.

³⁸*Ibid.*, August 14, 1939

³⁹*Ibid.*, November 16, 1933.

⁴⁰L.P.W., roll 38, file 41.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, Saskatoon's reply to L.P.W. circular letter 151, February 17, 1936.

⁴²L.P.W. roll 37, file 41, Molloy to Mr. E., January 29, 1936.

unemployed for this privilege.⁴³ Moreover, there was the detailed work of issuing relief orders, receiving and approving accounts and keeping extensive records in the City Treasurer's Department. In the 1920s when relief had been a minor concern in the city this scheme had worked well. In the 1930s it was inadequate, cumbersome and costly. Consequently, as a possible solution, council considered the idea of operating its own relief store at which all relief recipients would be required to deal. The city would keep costs to a minimum by being able to purchase goods wholesale. Corruption would similarly be reduced. The idea of establishing a relief store was discussed frequently at council meetings in 1931 and a committee set up to study the details.

Inevitably there was considerable opposition to the idea from both relief recipients and local merchants. The local Grocers' and Butchers' Retail Merchants Association claimed that it was unfair to their bona-fide, tax paying members for the city to set up in competition and monopolize the relief trade, which was becoming a major part of their livelihood. Moreover, it was an added injustice to merchants who had extended credit to relief recipients. If the city operated its own store, they would never be repaid. Petitions were presented to the council indicating that the establishment of a civic relief store would throw merchants on relief too.⁴⁴ The relief recipients argued that the store would prevent them from buying their goods at the cheapest price, and would eliminate the small element of choice which the open voucher system had given them. The Saskatoon Unemployed Association suggested that cash relief or "face cash value" cards negotiable at any store would be more satisfactory to their members.⁴⁵ The Council was prepared to try this. As a result from November 13, 1931 onwards, grocery orders were issued to any store requested by the recipient and stated merely the total value of the order, allowing more freedom in the selection of food.⁴⁶

However, the innovation did not work to the satisfaction of the Council. After further discussion and investigation it decided to establish a civic relief store, opening on June 1, 1932.⁴⁷ The Council reverted from the food quotas on a cash basis to a commodity basis once more. In determining the list of foods and quantities, regard was had to the size of the family on relief and the ages of any children. Food was classified on a unit basis, with a maximum of sixteen units allowed to any one family. In terms of food three units covered five quarts of milk, fifty cents worth of meat and ten loaves of bread. A man and his wife were allowed eight units and would use the remaining five to purchase tea, sugar, vegetables, fruit, soap, and matches.⁴⁸ Throughout the history of the store continual changes were made in the lists of available commodities and numerous attempts made by the Civic Relief Board to ensure that diets were properly balanced.

All modifications did little to alter the simple fact that relief recipients and local merchants did not like the store. The former complained of the lack of choice,

⁴³Saskatoon Council Minutes, June 8, 1931.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, April 11, 1932.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, November 9, 1931.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, November 10, 1931.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, May 19, 1932.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, May 19, 1932.

the high prices and poor quality of goods sold. Moreover, there was no delivery system. In the cold winter months recipients from all over the city had to trudge to the store for their groceries, instead of being able to go to their nearest shop. One alderman asked if free street railway transportation passes might be given to families taking the larger orders to enable them to make their journey home more easily.⁴⁹ The request was refused.⁵⁰ Between May, 1932 and October, 1934, when the store was abolished, the Council received regular delegations from relief recipients and local merchants asking for the abolition of the store. It was described as having been established "on a straight pattern from Soviet Russia".⁵¹ This accusation marked a reversal of roles on the part of the administration and the unemployed. The former was accused of Soviet tactics instead of the latter. The Fraternal and Protective Association declared that Saskatoon was the only city in North America where the unemployed were subjected to such "demoralizing and degrading treatment", and contended that they were being treated "as convicts or a herd of cattle."⁵² The city conceded that there was some ground for complaint. However, the store was continued because for the city it was cheap, efficient and easily controlled. Substantial savings were made by wholesale buying. In December, 1932, the net gain was estimated to be \$1,122.54 and in January, 1933, \$1,038.75 was expected.⁵³ This money could be used to defray other relief expenses.

Dissatisfaction with the store reached such a peak in early 1933 that the Provincial Government decided to investigate. This decision was sparked by the activities of A. W. Wylie, a grocer of the city, who sent an outspoken letter to Premier J. T. M. Anderson alleging that the city was making a profit on the relief store and charging the Federal and Provincial Governments for this. As Wylie pointed out, "The time of depression has passed by, and in its place we have something very, very much more to be dreaded 'oppression'—think it over."⁵⁴

Simultaneously the Government was receiving a series of protest letters and petitions about relief conditions in Saskatoon. The unemployed sent a memorandum of their grievances, which included an attack on the Civic Relief Board and its practices. There was alleged discrimination in the distribution of food from the relief store. Some recipients had to line up, others received their supplies at home. The unemployed asked for cash or open vouchers, claiming that they could purchase on average twenty to twenty-five per cent more from their allowances if this was granted. The Civic Relief Board was seen as the sole cause of all trouble and violence was threatened if reform was not forthcoming.

One of the most interesting pieces of information sent to the Government was contained in a secret supplement to a petition from the Fraternal and Protective Association of Unemployed Citizens and Taxpayers. This warned that the personnel

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, June 6, 1932.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, August 15, 1932.

⁵¹Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, March 7, 1933, comment of M. Jorgenson.

⁵²*Ibid.*, January 30, 1934.

⁵³Civic Relief Board Minutes, December 21, 1932.

⁵⁴Archives of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Relief Commission, roll A, file 3, Wylie to Anderson March 11, 1933.

of the relief board were a "number of the deepest died old Grits of Saskatoon, who will stop at nothing to bring discredit on the present administration."⁵⁵ The board was supposedly trying to get the unemployed to blame the Government for the poor conditions in the city. These political ramifications to the discontent may have hastened government intervention. Whatever the motivation the Saskatchewan Relief Commission, at the suggestion of Premier Anderson, organized an investigation into Saskatoon relief administration. The Reverend Thomas Bunting was appointed to go to Saskatoon on March 14, 1933, to meet the unemployed and attend a meeting of the relief board.

Bunting found conditions in Saskatoon far from satisfactory. People were not getting the proper proportions of food and many went without for one and a half days before they received their next allowance. Bunting suggested that an open voucher system for issuing food supplies might prove more satisfactory. The relief board appeared quite unconcerned about conditions and harsh in their application of relief regulations. Bunting went so far as to suggest that they be dismissed.⁵⁶

This suggestion was never acted upon. The Government could not interfere so directly in civic affairs. However, it could exert more subtle pressures to make way for a policy change in respect to the relief store. In September, 1933, T. M. Molloy attended a meeting of the relief board at which he informed the members that the policies of the Federal and Provincial Governments with regard to relief in future were that "purchases should be through the regular channels of trade and that wherever possible Canadian goods should be purchased in preference to those from foreign countries."⁵⁷ Eventually the council decided to allow relief recipients to purchase their groceries through regular trade channels. As of October 1, 1934, the relief store ceased to exist.

Before closing the store Council held a plebiscite in September, 1934, among the relief recipients to ascertain the preferred method of obtaining food relief. There were three choices offered by the plebiscite; the relief store, the open voucher system or cash. Three hundred and sixteen out of the three hundred and seventy-one persons voting favoured the cash system, and so the Council implemented this policy. Although this undoubtedly pleased the majority of recipients, there remains the strange fact that only ten per cent of the approximately three thousand and four hundred eligible to vote in the plebiscite, took advantage of the opportunity to register their opinions. The *Star-Phoenix* suggested that the relatively small vote was due to effective picketing by the Saskatoon Worker's Associations. "Throughout the week every effort was put forth by the pickets to prevent the jobless from voting. 'There is a catch in it,' was the contention of more than one who took part in the boycott."⁵⁸ This would indicate that the relationship between the unemployed and the civic authorities was far from harmonious.

The institution of a cash allowance for food relief proved permanent and gave greater satisfaction to recipients and merchants than any previous system. Initially

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, roll A, file 3.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, Bunting to the Saskatchewan Relief Commission, March 14, 1933.

⁵⁷Civic Relief Board Minutes, September 21, 1933.

⁵⁸Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, September 24, 1934.

money equivalent to the retail price of the food required was given to recipients once each week. In February, 1935, the Council decided to give allowances once every two weeks to give the recipient greater purchasing power and to economize in relief administration costs.⁵⁹ From January, 1936, onwards Saskatoon used the Dominion Government Labour Gazette retail price index to calculate food costs, and determine increases or decreases in allowances. There were periodic manifestations of discontent as to the amount of money being given. In June, 1939, the Central Council of Unemployed and Welfare Associations requested that the food allowance be increased fifty per cent for a two week period on the occasion of the visit of King George and Queen Elizabeth, "to enable those on relief to properly observe this momentous occasion."⁶⁰ This request was refused. On the whole, however, the unemployed in Saskatoon found cash relief preferable to any other. Some recipients boasted about conditions in the city after October, 1934. Lorne Lynne, when addressing the Prince Albert strikers in 1936 informed them that their standard of living was forty per cent below Saskatoon's and that the Saskatoon unemployed had never struck because they were able to make the city authorities see their point of view.⁶¹

If the city had solved the problem of food relief there still remained three other important aspects of policy to be dealt with; clothing relief, the relief of the single, homeless unemployed and the relief of non-resident families in the city. Dissatisfaction with the provisions made for clothing came from numerous relief recipients. The problems of providing adequate clothing appeared only gradually. Most relief families could manage for a while. Eventually the day would come when there were no more cast-offs and the family was forced to seek the assistance of the Clothing Relief Bureau. Initially clothing relief in Saskatoon was organized by six service clubs. They worked on a voluntary basis and collected money and second hand clothes, wherever they could. As the numbers on relief increased and the need for clothing became more pressing, the Clothing Bureau, which the service clubs had formed, sought financial assistance from the City Council. On July 1, 1931, they asked for, and received, a sum of one hundred and sixty-five dollars a month to pay the salaries of officials needed to operate the Bureau on a full time basis.⁶² This grant was increased to two hundred dollars per month in October of the same year.⁶³ In the early years of the depression the Bureau had complete control of clothing relief and it appears that its administration was efficient. It evolved into a miniature relief department with a filing system to keep track of every case in the city. The Bureau served as a clearing house for the good works of service clubs, women's organizations, churches and private individuals. In addition the Bureau co-operated with the Relief Department officials and did follow-up work that they had neither the time nor the resources to undertake.⁶⁴ Eventually, however, it was necessary for the Council to make a regular grant to the bureau for the purchase of clothing, bedding and footwear, on a scale large enough to meet the demands of relief

⁵⁹Saskatoon Council Minutes, February 4, 1935.

⁶⁰L.P.W., roll 38, file 41.

⁶¹Saskatoon *Star Phoenix*, March 30, 1936.

⁶²Saskatoon Council Minutes, July 6, 1931.

⁶³*Ibid.*, October 13, 1931.

⁶⁴Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, November 15, 1932.

recipients. Greater contributions necessitated stronger central control. Consequently in June, 1933, the Bureau was abolished and a Clothing Relief Depot established, administered by the city rather than the service clubs.

Inadequate clothing relief was a perpetual complaint of the Saskatoon unemployed. Toward the end of the 1930s they demanded that a cash grant, equivalent to twenty-five per cent of the food allowance, be given to enable relief recipients to purchase their own clothes rather than being forced to take the offerings of the civic depot. Women especially resented the garments given to their families. The regimentation of the styles, the cheap quality of the material and the lack of variety were the standard complaints. Matters reached such a state in mid 1938 that a delegation of women appeared before the Council asking for cash for clothing. They contended that the use of the clothing depot was placing a large percentage of citizens in a position of pauperism, reducing their initiative and self-respect. The most deplorable fact was that children were "growing up in this system of regimentation and general drabness" and being forced into "inferior positions" since their clothing marked them as children on relief.⁶⁵ In the following year the Council sought the permission of the Provincial Government to give the desired cash for clothing.⁶⁶ The Government agreed and on April 24, 1939, the Clothing Relief Depot was abolished.⁶⁷

The relief of single, homeless men was another problem which concerned the city for the greater part of the depression decade. Before government sponsored and operated camps were set up in 1932 to absorb the physically fit single unemployed, civic authorities were responsible for their care. In the winter of 1930 such large numbers of homeless men had gathered in Saskatoon that it was decided to establish a relief camp at the Exhibition Grounds where board and sleeping accommodation could be provided.⁶⁸ The Provincial Government promised to pay two-thirds of the cost of relief provided in this way and in addition to furnish the camp with cooking utensils, stoves and blankets. P. J. Philpotts, an ex-army officer, was made superintendent of the camp and a local doctor was appointed to treat all the sick and to visit each day for parade inspection.⁶⁹

From its opening the camp was a seed bed for discontent in Saskatoon. Even after November, 1932, when control of the camp passed to the Provincial Government,⁷⁰ there were constant complaints about conditions and agitation to hasten improvements.

Philpotts threatened to resign in April, 1932, because a band of radical agitators was preventing camp order and discipline, and co-operation from the Saskatoon police force was not forthcoming.⁷¹ In February, 1933, the situation again became

⁶⁵Saskatoon Council Minutes, June 20, 1938.

⁶⁶L.P.W. roll 38, file 40, City Clerk M. C. Tomlinson to Minister of Municipal Affairs Parker, March 1, 1939.

⁶⁷Saskatoon Council Minutes, April 24, 1939.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, December 8, 1930, 570 men had registered with the relief department.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, December 8, 1932.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, November 7, 1932.

⁷¹Archives of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Relief Commission, roll A, file 2, Saskatoon Relief Camp.

acute. A certain radical leader, appropriately called Sam Scarlett, was cited as the mainspring of unrest. He had apparently just been released from jail and was inciting the camp inmates to revolt. Posters urging "Slave Camp Workers" to wake up and organize, and cartoons depicting the Saskatchewan Relief Commission as a fat man pulling the balloons of greed, incompetence, ignorance and prejudice were circulated. Discontent continued throughout March. An investigation by the Saskatchewan Relief Commission revealed that the radical element in the camp was well organized and in close contact with various groups of unemployed in the city of Saskatoon itself. In May, the inmates staged a demonstration when attempts were made to transfer fifty of them to the camp at Regina. One police officer died as a result of injuries suffered during the demonstration. It was decided to transfer the men remaining in the Saskatoon camp to a Federal relief camp at Dundurn, and the Saskatoon camp was closed on June 30.⁷² The city was thereby relieved of the headache of caring for large numbers of the physically fit single unemployed.

There remained the problem of caring for the unfit persons in this category. Initially the city paid fifty cents per day for the board and room of such persons. In January, 1937, a request was made that this allowance be increased to sixty cents. Considerable dispute ensued as the Provincial Government refused to contribute eight per cent of this total, since only fifty cents were allowed to the single unfit persons in Moose Jaw and Regina. Mayor R. M. Pinder pleaded the city's case for the increase by pointing out that the extra money paid helped to keep boarding house owners off relief, since recipients could afford to pay a little extra for their accommodation.⁷³ The Government, therefore, agreed to the increase. Later in the year recipients asked that this money might be paid in cash rather than voucher form. The Council granted their request,⁷⁴ and the relief of such persons caused little further trouble to Saskatoon administrators in the 1930s.

The problem of relieving families from other municipalities and transients became particularly acute in the second half of the 1930s. In some respects these were the most difficult problems with which Saskatoon relief officials had to deal. In June, 1935, the Relief Officer reported to the Appeal Board that the number of applications for relief from persons moving into the city from country points was increasing daily.⁷⁵ When such a person or family applied for relief, the Relief Officer referred the case to the Provincial Government so that it could determine where responsibility lay. While investigation was carried out, relief was administered at the expense of the Government. If the enquiry revealed that the family was transient then relief was continued at the expense of the Government. If another municipality was found to be responsible then negotiations began for the return of the family. Some municipalities rather than having persons returned preferred to relieve their indigents by reimbursing the city in which they were residing. Occasionally a family would refuse to return, in which case relief might

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³L.P.W., roll 38, file 41, Pinder to Molloy January 19, 1937.

⁷⁴Saskatoon Council Minutes, November 15, 1937.

⁷⁵Relief Appeal Board Minutes, June 7, 1935.

be given at the expense of the Government. Thus it was a possible, and indeed a frequent, occurrence for persons with residence qualifications in another municipality to be receiving relief in Saskatoon.

This situation was a source of perpetual annoyance to the civic officials. The reason for this was essentially financial. Outsiders were using the facilities of the city, their children were being educated there, and yet they were paying no taxes for these privileges. Moreover, such persons affected wage schedules detrimentally. The majority were prepared to accept employment at any rate. As a result local citizens were thrown out of work, wage schedules lowered and the city's relief bill increased as bona-fide residents lost their jobs. In July, 1936, the *Star-Phoenix* estimated that there were six hundred families from rural points on the city's relief lists.⁷⁶ This figure seems exaggerated since in December of 1937 official records put the total at forty-four families.⁷⁷

Saskatoon was also faced with the problem of families moving into the city from rural points, maintaining themselves for the necessary twelve months and then applying for relief. In October, 1936, approximately thirty families of this kind applied for relief and Relief Officer Parker expressed his concern to Molloy: "This is a most serious situation, and more especially due to the fact it is fast approaching our winter season."⁷⁸ One particular case annoyed the Relief Officer. A certain family had applied for relief twelve months previously and been refused because of the lack of residence qualification. Somehow they managed to sustain themselves in the city for one year and reapplied. There was no alternative but to grant them relief.⁷⁹ Occasionally the rural municipality from which such people came was suspected of assisting them to go to Saskatoon. In December, 1937, Parker reported to the council in regard to two families who had apparently moved in from rural areas in order to establish themselves for relief. It was believed "in each case the rural municipalities in question not only encouraged but actually assisted the family to come into Saskatoon."⁸⁰

It must be pointed out that the corollary of objecting to the relief of outsiders in Saskatoon was to require all indigent persons, who were the responsibility of the city, to be returned there for relief. This policy was rigorously followed. No exceptions were allowed. Occasionally this could result in hardship. A woman who had been in the Prince Albert Sanatorium and whose parents lived in that city, was informed on her recovery that she must return to Saskatoon for relief.⁸¹ The harshness of this can be understood if the costs of relief and the numbers affected are considered. Relief officials were forced to keep strictly to policies because of the scale on which relief was required.

Direct relief costs in 1930 were exceptionally low. They increased sixty times in 1931, doubled in 1932 and doubled again between 1932 and 1934, which was the

⁷⁶Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, July 9, 1936.

⁷⁷L.P.W., roll 38, file 41.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, Parker to Molloy, October 29, 1936.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*,

⁸⁰Saskatoon Council Minutes, December 6, 1937.

⁸¹L.P.W., roll 38, file 41.

peak year of expenditure for the city. Costs decreased a little in 1935, and fell by almost one-half in 1936, with slight rises in 1937 and 1938, followed by a continuous and fairly swift decline. The reason for relief costs during the first half of the decade being more expensive to the city was that prior to December, 1936, Saskatoon paid a third of such expenditure. After that date the city financed only twenty per cent. Consequently, the total cost of direct relief in 1934 and 1937 was almost the same, approximately seven hundred thousand dollars.

However, even though civic contributions decreased in the later 1930s, the actual final cost of relief to Saskatoon remained high. This was due to the system adopted to finance relief; debenture issues on a large scale. Interest costs increased over four times between 1933 and 1940, and the burden of debt continued to trouble the city into the 1950s. Moreover, even though the city's share of actual direct relief decreased from 1935 onwards, it still had to pay total medical and administration expenses. These were substantial sums, approximately thirty thousand dollars per year. Administration expenses alone in 1939 were almost twenty times the cost of direct relief in 1930.

Saskatoon experienced the same difficulties financing relief as Prince Albert. Provincial payments were continually in arrears. In December, 1937, the Province owed the city one hundred and ninety-six thousand dollars.⁸² A constant complaint was the amount of interest which the city had to pay in order to borrow money to finance the provincial and federal shares of relief, pending payment. In 1938 the Council pointed out that it had cost the city \$4,218,26 more for interest than it would have done if reimbursement had been made within two weeks of rendering Saskatoon's account.⁸³ Similarly in 1939 the Council drew to the attention of the Provincial Government the fact that it had cost the city some seven thousand one hundred dollars for bank interest on money borrowed in 1938 to finance the province's share of unemployment. The delay in payment, apart from the expense, embarrassed the city since it endangered its ability to secure further temporary bank advances.⁸⁴

Throughout the 1930s the City Council urged that the senior governments should assume larger shares of relief costs. In December, 1932, it suggested that the city's share be limited to a sum not exceeding ten per cent of the total, which should include administration and hospital costs.⁸⁵ Similarly in 1936 the Council reaffirmed this plea, although it suggested that a preferable state would be for the whole burden of unemployment relief to be removed entirely from the urban municipality.⁸⁶

As the depression deepened the actual per capita cost increased as did the number of people on relief. During 1933 and 1934 the average cost per person per month increased by fifty cents, and it was estimated that it would increase by one dollar and seventy cents in 1935. In December, 1930, 1610 people were on

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Saskatoon Council Minutes, May 8, 1933.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, February 27, 1939.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, December 9, 1932.

⁸⁶L.P.W., roll 37, file 41.

relief or about four and one half per cent of the population. In 1931 the number on relief had increased to two thousand five hundred.⁸⁷ In 1932 this figure doubled.⁸⁸ In 1933 and 1934 about eighteen per cent were receiving aid. No statistics are available for 1935 to 1937 but the numbers on relief probably remained about the same. In 1938 there was a decline with an estimated fourteen per cent on relief and after this date the numbers continued to decline.

A study of urban municipalities suggests that the depression does not present a one-sided picture of dust, drought and despair. While the economic depression and consequent unemployment brought misery, suffering and humiliation to many, it also provided an environment in which charity and community spirit could operate. The work of local service clubs and generous individuals helped to make life for those on relief a more acceptable state.

The numbers in Saskatchewan on relief varied between ten per cent and twenty-five per cent in the urban areas. In Saskatoon between fifteen and eighteen per cent were on relief, a figure perhaps not as high as might have been expected. The main problem for the urban centres was not so much the depth of depression as the duration. While unemployment was considerable it was in the second half of the decade that suffering became most widespread and intense. The early Thirties had exhausted municipal finances and administration. In some centres more difficulties were encountered in the second half of the decade in the form of complaints, political agitation and transient invasions. Saskatoon, however, faced its greatest problems in the first half of the decade but after the institution of cash relief in 1934 most bona-fide residents were satisfied. Rural dwellers seeking assistance and the lack of finances to cope with relief requirements were problems that affected all urban centres.

In all urban centres studied the need for relief was large enough to necessitate the creation of special committees or positions. The key figures in relief administration were the Relief Officer and his staff, since they came into daily contact with recipients and had to enforce the various aspects of relief policy. Although the Relief Officer was essentially the paid servant of the city or town, his attitude made a great difference to the way in which relief was administered. Relief Officers inevitably were targets for criticism and abuse. In Saskatoon, the added effects of an unco-operative Relief Officer were apparent.

The war and increased prosperity reduced the number on relief rolls but since there always are those in need a number of changes arose out of the experience of the Thirties. Relief procedures in Saskatoon and Prince Albert showed signs of being the most progressive since cash relief is the method favoured by the Saskatchewan Welfare Department today. When the C.C.F. party formed the Government in 1944 certain changes were made in the social services of the Province. On November 2, 1944, the formation of a new department, the Department of Social Welfare introduced a fresh approach to welfare problems. Social and economic security were recognized as the fundamental right of every human being. Welfare

⁸⁷Saskatoon Council Minutes, 1931.

⁸⁸L.P.W., roll 30, file 3.

became a financial, consultative and preventative service, not a matter of handing out money each week to the needy. Because such a program demanded long range planning, an efficient province-wide administration was created with eight branch offices established in urban centres from which services could operate.

Direct relief turned into a social aid programme and became a joint municipal-provincial undertaking. The municipality was still in charge of relief administration and the residence laws were still operative. However, there was more central control and organization than there had been in the 1930s. The attitude toward indigents was finally changing; "The Public assistance dollar has been one of the most important investments made in the Canadian way of life. It has enabled children to live in a large measure a normal life, with parents, home, church, school and recreation."⁸⁹ Welfare remained solely a municipal-provincial function until March, 1956, when an agreement was reached between the Federal and Provincial Governments, by which the former was to pay forty-five per cent of social aid and the municipality twenty-five per cent. Further changes were introduced by the provincial Social Aid Act of 1959 by means of which the municipalities were reimbursed each month by the Province for all social aid issued and were billed annually for a per capita share of province-wide costs. "This, in effect, did away with the residence requirement inherent in the age old concept that relief of the poor was a local responsibility."⁹⁰

ALMA LAWTON

⁸⁹Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare, 1948-1949, p. 47.

⁹⁰Department of Social Welfare, Publication, Social Welfare in Saskatchewan, 1960, p. 19.

Experiences of a Depression Hobo

During the depression many of the unemployed in Canada took to the road and travelled about the country in an attempt to find work or better living conditions. Their chief mode of travel was "riding the rods" as non-paying passengers on the railway. In the course of the decade of depression many of these travellers crossed the country several times and became very knowledgeable about how to live the life of a hobo and survive in a society which did not seem to want them. Predictably they tended to become very bitter and cynical about society and to lean toward radical ideas which, if nothing else, at least offered some hope for change.

The following passages were taken from letters written to the late Mrs. Violet McNaughton by a young English immigrant who for a time was numbered among the single unemployed men in Canada. As far as can be determined the author of these letters had emigrated to Canada about 1930 and worked on a farm in Western Canada. When he joined the ranks of the unemployed he travelled first to Toronto and then to Vancouver. Eventually he again travelled east this time as far as Halifax and finally he worked his passage home. Unlike many others he managed by various stratagems to stay out of jail and out of the relief camps which were experiences shared by many of his fellow travellers. The passages have been selected from a few letters to illustrate some of the writer's experiences on the road. Names have been omitted but spellings remain as in the original.

THE EDITOR

[June 1932]

I arrived in Toronto a week ago but have not got work yet. The trip down took 5½ days and I did not visit any jails. My total expenses were 50 cents but I ate a [sic] slept well.

On the Saturday night of April 15 my friend and I took the last street car out to Sutherland having previously found out that a freight train was leaving for Winnipeg during the early hours of Sunday morning. We slunk around the yards till we came upon a brakeman and asked when the freight for the East was pulling out. Before he could reply a torch light beamed in our faces and the "bull" asked "Where are you guys going?" "East"—"Winnipeg." "Well that freight won't pull out till seven to-morrow morning." We thanked the policeman for this information and retired to the shadow of a nearby Pool Elevator, lighted cigarettes and attempted to keep warm. Even I, with 2 pairs underclothing, 2 shirts, a sweater, my brown suit, overalls, overcoat, winter cap & 2 pairs sox was getting chilly. Presently we became restless & walked out onto the tracks to espy an ancient looking empty coach with a light in it. Prowling lower we observed a notice on the side telling us it was for the use of stockmen only. A brakeman informed us that the coach was to be put on the freight to Winnipeg for the use of some stockman travelling. We entered the coach, found a fire burning in the stove, wiped the dust off the seats, spread them out bed fashion & were soon asleep. We were suddenly awakened by the guard who informed us that the train was pulling out in 5 minutes and that a "bull" was going to travel with the train. Observing the "bull" walking down the side of the train we waited till he rounded the end before ourselves, hopping out, walked after him & inspected the box cars. All but one were sealed, this "one" being half full of coal. There were already about ten other travellers sprawling in various positions amongst the coal.

The first division stop was Wynyard and here my friend turned back. He had a warm bed in Saskatoon, a mother, father and home—not work. He explained that

he was a decent fellow, had never been in jail in his life & didn't like freight riding. What would his mother say if he was arrested? Besides, supposing there was no work in Toronto what would we do? We'd be arrested, vagrants. He had never been in a big city before, our money would not last long, we might even starve to death! In other words, he'd had enough—just chicken hearted.

The sun was warm and I rode on top of a box car all day. Towards evening the train pulled in at the next division stop, Bredenburg. I was hungry & made for the town semi-satisfying my appetite in a "Chinks". Returning to the train I fell in with two of my fellow passengers of the coal car who had been "bumming" the houses. They were lads of 23 also heading for Toronto—happy but broke. Arriving at the tracks we walked boldly towards the freight & walked right into the "bull" who instantly showed his ignorance. "What the hell d'you fellows want here." We put him right as to our wants whilst he accompanied us to the entrance of the yards and the freight steamed out. He informed us that should he see us around again he would put us all in "clink". One of my new-found confederates thanked him very much and suggested that as we had lost the freight and had nowhere to sleep we should very much appreciate his hospitality. But the "bull" was not so hospitable & we slept in the C.P.R. roundhouse beside a boiler. I slept well inspite of the sudden change from feather to concrete mattress. Following morning a pail & water from the boiler brightened our appearance & we made for town agreeing that the inhabitants should pay dearly for their ignorant railway cop. Meeting the oldest resident, I think he must have been, on "Main Street" we enquired as to the whereabouts of the local "town bull", the mayor, the residences of the station agent, the railway cop and the R.C.M.P. local. With this information we commenced our labours for breakfast. Seeing a man working in a garden we wondered whether he would like our aid or company. He was not impressed by either but gave us \$1 for "eats". Entering the local hotel we explained our circumstances and gorged for 25 cents per head. During the morning we lay down on some open prairie & slept till roused by a crowd of children who had come to inspect us. One yelled "Hobo, hobo we've got some candy for you", but as I got up hopefully they took to their heels [sic] and ran for town. Our stomachs [sic] informed us dinner time had arrived, one of the boys set out for the mayors house and brought back a fine "hand out" which we consumed. The other set out for another of our addresses, split some wood & received a "sit-down". Then it was my turn to go "bumming". I set out for a large house set back from the town which looked hopeful. I tapped at the door nervously and a large man poked his head cautiously out of the door letting out an equally large dog as he did so. My knees knocked and I stuttered something about work & eat. The man told me he did not feed tramps & would set his dog on me. I moved towards the dog which instantly fled with its tail between its legs and the man slammed the door. As I was walking down the path the man popped his head out of an upstairs window and threatened to inform the police if I did not "get clear" immediately.

Towards evening the Winnipeg freight pulled in and we boarded it as it pulled out of the yards. There were no "empties" but a stock coach on the back, so we sat on the steps of this. As dusk fell we stopped for water at some place & the

guard sighted us. He came up & inspected us, then unlocked the coach & told us to get in there for the night, we might go to sleep on the steps & fall off. Next morning we awoke to find our freight standing in the Portage La Prairie yards. Two "bulls" walked up the train, inspected the seals, glanced at the stock coach where we had assumed an attitude of sleep once more, walked off. We left the freight at a street crossing outside Winnipeg, yelled at a passing truck driver and were whirled into the city. The two lads I was with got a free shave at the Barber College and we learnt that the city was handing out meals to transients. After much walking and enquiring we obtained meal tickets and set out for the soup kitchens, which used to be the C.N.R. Immigration Hall where I stopped when first in Canada. The meal was awful! We walked down a counter gradually accumulating our ration which consisted of a piece of bread & square of butter, a small dish containing about a spoonful of sugar, a tin bowl containing a green fluid sometimes called soup, a tin plate on which had been dumped, dirty potatoes, two large hunks of fat, some carrots and thick gravy, and a mug contain [sic] hot water the same colour as weak tea. We sat on a bench containing males of all types, nationalities and descriptions and attempted to eat. The gentleman on my right had developed a strange habit of wiping a running nose with the back of his hand between each mouthful which did not increase the flavour of my meal. A large bowl of rice was placed on the table for desert but as I had my plate already filled with leavings I did not try any.

We left the soup kitchens and made enquiries about the times of freight trains. There was one leaving from the C.N.R. Transcona yards at around midnight for Toronto. We commenced the 9 miles walk to Transcona.

On the way out we passed over a bridge on the side of which some humorist had written with chalk "I'm fed up; for further information drag the river." Over the bridge is St. Boniface where there is a large catholic church, seminary, school, nuns home etc. etc. Whilst passing the seminary and admiring its size and beauty we espied the kitchen through a basement window. Thoughts concerning the higher arts vanished from our heads, we looked at each other, looked for the nearest door, and entered, coming upon a fat cook. I moved my hand over my chest and wore my most pious expression and one of the boys addressing the cook as "brother" explained that we were extremely undernourished and should be pleased with some bread. The cook prepared some sandwiches containing cold slabs of steak and we departed praising the Lord, the cook and ourselves.

Towards late afternoon we arrived at the yards, parked ourselves on the grass outside the fencing and built a fire of old ties—and commenced a 7 hour wait. We consumed our sandwiches which were delicious—I think I'll become a priest.

As time passed more "travellers" appeared and settled around our fire; soon we had about a dozen fellow "unionists" and grew to discussing "this world of ours" as men often do. In London there are cockney tales, in Scotland, Scotch tales and on the road, hobo tales. Hoboes also have quite a language of their own. The same as farmers but without the large variety of 'swear words' usually associated with the barnyard.

The depression, the railway companies and Bennett were our chief topics. We wisely listened to each others views on depression. Its due to tariffs, to immigration, the price of wheat, the U.S.A., Russia, war, their "big-bugs", religion, the "bohunks". Nothing but war will bring back prosperity; no cancellation of war debts; no socialism; no God;—let's have the good old days; scrap machinery, to hell with motor cars, deport the Reds, deport the "bohunks", oust Bennett . . .

[Later in commenting on his experiences in Ontario and in particular one incident in which he had been told to leave a town the author gave the following as his personal attitude toward the depression.]

Quite evidently there is no use for a penniless person in this land of opportunity; a person without work and money is considered an outcast, no town or city wants him but he can usually get two meals per day and exist because even Canadians do not usually let dogs starve. When a person has lost all his money and cannot get work he can either take to the road and become a bum or stop in his home town and get a free bed and two meals a day from the city relief for which he has to do as many hours work per week. I estimate that this scheme breaks the spirit of the average man within a year; hence I chose the road. My spirit is by no means broken I just feel angry and the harder Canada kicks me the more I'll retaliate. I do not consider myself an ordinary "bum". If there is any work to be done I'll do it providing I receive what I consider a decent living wage. I will certainly not work for my board and I will not work for the pittance many are receiving today.

Until such time as I get a decent job I intend to live well, dress respectably, eat all that's good for me, keep myself clean and have clean clothes. Canada generally will pay for this. I will obtain what I need by bumming and other comparatively honest methods. If such ways and means should fail I shall resort to thieving and other criminal ways of which I have some knowledge.

[In the fall of 1932 the author made an unplanned trip to Vancouver where he stayed for about a year. The following excerpt from a letter written in October 1932 describes this trip.]

I don't know whether you were worried by any unusual noises the night we left Saskatoon but the C.N.R. bull at Nutana Yards was suffering from throat trouble and was roaring at some hobo who annoyed him. I imagine his voice could be heard all through Saskatoon and should you have failed to hear him it is entirely due to the Saskatoon Street Car Service. Our freight left around midnight & we could have easily consumed more malted milk and pie. . . .

The journey to Edmonton was devoid of excitement; we just stayed in an empty box-car and talked, smoked, ate, slept. Diamond behaved like a veteran the way he slept in that jumping, rattling car was envious. We left him at Edmonton & spent the night in the Sally Ann. After a good dinner we returned to the tracks & learnt that a freight was leaving for the south at 11.55 that night. That day a store had been held up in the city consequently the bulls were active. We walked onto the tracks shortly before midnight to be instantly accosted by two bulls. A few questions & they decided we were not the fortunates who held up the store & merely ordered us "to get to hell out of the yards". A freight began to move & we shut ourselves in an empty refrigerator car, figuring it was the train going south.

Next morning we opened our bedrooms & observed mountains. We had jumped the wrong train & were bound for Vancouver. It was too late to turn back so we gave up any idea of more threshing.

There were about twenty other passengers on the train. We spent our days perched on top of the cars and nights inside the empty refrigerator. Only on top of a box-car can one enjoy the real thrill of constructing that line through the Rockies, enjoy the thrill of mountains towering almost vertically above on the one side and drops to distant valleys & creeks on the other; wondering why the rocks didn't roll down on the train & the train roll over the artificial ledge to the depths below.

The train took two days to cross B.C. Our supplies, gotten in Edmonton, lasted us the first & the second morning we arrived in the fruit district. The freight stopped for water early, conveniently close to an orchard. The free travellers disembarked en-mob and disappeared amongst the trees to emerge as the freight started with pockets, caps, shirts containing the forbidden fruit of Eden. I ate more fruit that day than I had consumed since leaving the Niagara Fruit Belt. Towards night we stopped at New Westminster and a brakeman warned us that the police were waiting on the freight in Vancouver. We jumped off 6 miles out of the city and walked in. . .

My present abode is a mission and I am pulling the religious stuff once more; last night I was presented with a New Testament by a well meaning gentleman who actually does believe in the stuff including Adams rib. . . .

This mission is known as the "Refuge" besides various illegal terms. Two stories above a garage comprise the institution. The top storey houses about 350 bunks built of wood in two tiers. The lower floor is used for feeding. Men lounge around here most of the day reading sensational trash in magazines, playing cards, smoking and generally trying to forget 'what might have been'. Men are only fed here if they can prove they have resided in B.C. more than so many months. Each day transients gather like wolves around the kitchen and eat up any food that is left over. The Refuge is only one of many similar relief kitchens. . . .

[February, 1933]

I am at present marvelling and gloating over the relief system, and my own ascent to the highest favor of single unemployed relief. You remember months ago my arriving in Vancouver and the daily scrounge for food and a bed. How I entered the 'Refuge' and stopped there for some weeks through excuses, work, and religion. How I obtained provincial relief, evaded the camps, and was transferred to the Central City Mission. One step accomplished.

Last Monday I arose early and made my way to Hamilton Hall where the single receive their relief tickets. A hawkish horn-rimmed faced gentleman is in charge there. I approached his desk and smiled sweetly. He looked up from an attempt to appear studious and carefully opened his mouth as if fearful that his upper false teeth might drop. Evidently Sunday and the spring weather humored him for his usual snarl had transformed to a polite, sane question. "Well, Blondie, what can I do for you, to-day?"

Encouraged by this show of sanity my lips remained spread and the smile expanded to my eyes, giving one the impression, I imagine, of a dog happily chewing razor blades. "Lots, if you want," I answered. "I am fed up with the Mission. Of course, Mr. Caldwell has treated me very courteously but I am studying, and its utterly impossible for me to concentrate in that environment. I can now get books from the library and I want to do about eight hours study per day."

The relief bloke seemed impressed, he studied my duplicate white card and my own card, looked stern and questioned. "What are you studying?"

"Er . . . hum," my brain groped for high sounding words, "Phrenology, psychology, entomology"—thinking of the mission stiffs and the beds.

He scowled as if to convince me that he did not believe in these new fangled religions. With a strange wiggle of his nose he allowed the horn windows to slip nearer the tip and gazed wisely and fatherly over them at me. He crossed the 'Central City Mission' stamp off my card and wrote a note which I took to another Johnny at another desk who handed me two weeks tickets on cafes, value \$3.50, and two weeks bed tickets, value \$2.10, for any rooming house in the city that takes relief men.

I am enclosing some cafe pamphlets that men hand the stiffs as they enter Hamilton Hall. There are so many on relief in Vancouver that the cafes actually advertise for the business. In fact, many cafes here only keep open through the business the relief men give them.

[July 1933]

Some weeks back I was finally cut off relief for refusing to go to camp. Since then I have been obtaining odd-jobs and manage to scrape by alright, but its a rotten existence. I never did have any ambition to cut lawns, clean windows, and chop wood.

The Journal of Eleanor Shepphird Matheson, 1920*

Part I

THE PAS TO LAC LA RONGE, AND RETURN, BY CANOE

Mrs. Matheson kept this journal of a canoe trip of almost 700 miles in the summer of 1920, when she and her husband, the Rev. Canon Edward K. Matheson of Battleford, and Miss Kate Halson of Toronto accompanied Archdeacon Mackay on a pastoral visit to Indian missions.

They travelled in two large Chestnut canoes, manned by four Indians. Miss Halson was the only member of their party new to the West. Mrs. Matheson had come from Toronto to the Diocese of Saskatchewan in 1899; her husband was born in the Red River Settlement and had come to Saskatchewan in 1877. In 1891, he had made a trip to Lac la Ronge and Stanley from Prince Albert, by way of Montreal Lake.

In that northern country, John Alexander Mackay was completely at home. He was born at Moose Factory in 1838, the son and grandson of Hudson's Bay Company factors. Bishop Horden of Moosonee had trained him in mission work, before he entered St. John's College at Red River; and after his ordination in 1861 he served at The Pas and Stanley until 1877, when Bishop McLean appointed him first to Battleford and then to Prince Albert to assist in the establishment of Emmanuel College, where later he was principal. He was appointed Archdeacon in 1882.

His influence with the Indians was remarkable, and he agreed to serve as Agent for the Government in the troubled area at Battleford for two years following the Rebellion. During his lifetime he became widely known as a Cree scholar, and his work in translations was extensive. On this trip, however, the qualities he revealed were those of a man experienced and able in all the ways of the north country, host to his friends in surroundings that he loved.

Yet in 1920, the Venerable Archdeacon was eighty-two; and he was to continue such strenuous travelling up to the time of his death in 1923. Canon Matheson was sixty-five, and his wife ten years younger, about the same age as Miss Halson, for whose sake the Archdeacon had planned this trip with such care. They had become friends through her interest in mission work, as Dorcas secretary for the Woman's Auxiliary to the Missionary Society. Mrs. Matheson delighted to say, "We went as chaperons".

Forty-seven years later, in 1967, plans for Canada's Centennial included the travelling of old fur-trade routes, and four members of the Historic Trails Canoe Club of Saskatchewan were assigned the Sturgeon-Weir. They decided to begin their canoe trip at Otter Rapids and travel to The Pas, a distance of 322 miles. One of their number, Milow Worel of Regina, took with him a copy of Eleanor Matheson's journal, and it proved a helpful guide. His notes, indicate some of the changes that have taken place since 1920. These notes are preceded by the initials M.W. and the date 1967.

The Journal begins with Canon and Mrs. Matheson's departure from Battleford by train at 8 a.m. on August 3, 1920. They travelled to Prince Albert first; and then to Hudson Bay Junction, where they stayed for one day.

RUTH MATHESON BUCK

AUGUST 5: Left Hudson Bay Junction at 3.50 a.m. Met Miss Halson and party on train. Arrived at The Pas at 8.25, and there the dear Archdeacon met us. Had a delightful trip down the Saskatchewan River, and were able to go up the creek, and land at the School. . .¹

*Journal is in the possession of Mrs. Robert Campbell, of Kenora, Ontario.

¹The Mackay School had been built by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1914 on the Devon Reserve to which the Indians had been moved some years before, when The Pas became a town and the original Mission Island was transferred to it. The School was burned in 1933, and was not replaced until 1957 when Mackay School was opened at Dauphin, Manitoba.

AUGUST 7: Went to The Pas with the Archdeacon. Got medical supplies² for nurse at Lac la Ronge. Found Mr. Waddie, the Agent, a most delightfully kind man who gave us a generous supply of drugs and dressings. Archdeacon got all his outfit for out trip, and altogether we had a very pleasant and successful day.

[MONDAY] AUGUST 9: Left the Mackay School at 10 a.m. Made short trip in our canoes to the mouth of the creek. Staff and all the children gave us a royal send-off. Landed, and the Archdeacon got a cup of tea ready. At 11:45 the Arthur J- came along and picked us up. As the weather was simply perfect we had a delightful sail. To our pleasure we found Joseph Chamberlain³ on board. He looked so well and is teaching at The Barrier.⁴ Miss Halson made him happy with the thought of an organ, and Christmas gifts for his school children. We got to his destination at 7 p.m. The landings are always picturesque. We sailed on until too dark to steer, then tied boat up until 4 a.m. next morning.

AUGUST 10: Got up at 4.00 a.m. Except myself. I waited until 5.00. Today is cool and cloudy. Called at Cumberland House and had a nice sail to Sturgeon Landing. Arrived at 10.30 a.m. Met Captain McLeod and his wife, had a cup of tea with them, then went to Mrs. Hayes' stopping-place⁵ and had most delicious cake and lemon pie. Men got poles for rapids and we loaded up and made a start on our long canoe trip [in "The Mackay" and "The Matheson"]. Half a mile from [Sturgeon] Landing we poled our first 4 rapids, 6 and 7 were too rapid for us, so we made our first portages.⁶ Came up the Sturgeon River another three quarters of a mile, and made our 3 rd. portage—Rat Portage. A pretty sight to see our men poling up to it.

Just before we got there, we passed Goose River on our right. Poled through No. 9 and 10. We portaged 11. Poled 12 and 13. Here we met two men from Beaver [Amisk] Lake. Went on 3 miles and poled up 14, 15, 16—the 16th. short but very heavy. No. 17 a very long heavy one, striking rocks a great deal. No. 18 longest and hardest yet, but we poled through it. . . .

AUGUST 11: . . . Immediately on starting, encountered rapids No. 19. Very longest yet, all of 3 miles. Took 1½ hours to pole through. Just after passing these rapids

²Mrs. Matheson, as Eleanor Shepphird, had been an early graduate of the Deaconess Training School in Toronto, with instruction in nursing as part of the course. Much of her life was devoted to that work.

³A former pupil of the Battleford Industrial School, where the Rev. E. K. Matheson had been principal from 1895 to 1914 when the school was closed

⁴M.W. 1967 A few empty buildings remain. There is no settlement now.

⁵M.W. 1967 A small marble statue that overlooks the river is in memory of Mrs. Hayes' six-year old daughter, who died in 1924. There is a store now at Sturgeon Landing, and a drug dispensary that Mrs. Gale operates, using a two-way radio when medical instructions are needed. Fishing seems to be the main source of employment for the Indians of the settlement; and some guide, trap, or fight fires. Mederic Poirier, who has lived at the Landing since 1930, recalled its "2 Days"—one was while the Oblate Fathers maintained their successful school, with its farms and gardens, its lumbering and fishing, from 1925 until fire destroyed it in 1952. "The chimneys of Namew" rising above the trees still indicate the ruins. The other "Day" had been that brief interlude in the early 1920's when rich copper ore from a mine at Flin Flon, 25 miles to the north, was hauled by teams to the Landing for shipment by barge to the railroad at The Pas. Charlie Morgan of Star City was said to have had 209 teams on the trail.

⁶M.W. 1967 There is a swift succession of rapids in this stretch of the Sturgeon Weir.

we came to the boundary line⁷ between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Rapids No. 20 short and easy. Just here we met a canoe with 4 Indians. Yesterday afternoon we met one also, with 2 men. Passed through No. 21 and camped for breakfast at 8.30. Archdeacon fried bacon and eggs. We had marmalade, also very big appetites. Started off again at 9.30 and went through a long rapids, No. 22. Took 35 minutes. River very beautiful here, lovely pines, poplars, while the banks are built of granite, or at least the rocks look like it. The boulders in the rapids are an immense size—yards and yards long. All have rough coral-like tops. 23 short but very heavy. The men look very picturesque poling, their bodies sway so much as they keep time with their poles. Really hard work too.⁸ No. 24 called “Crooked Rapids”. It certainly is crooked, most fierce and strong. Took us 2½ hours of very hard poling to get through them. Our canoes got caught in the rocks at a very fierce and strong place. Many beautiful bays in this part of the Sturgeon River [Lower Sturgeon-Weir].

. . . Paddled a short distance when we came to End Rapids—about a mile and a half long. It is a very, very hard one to pull against. At times the men could hardly hold the canoe against the strong current, but we came safely through. Sturgeon River⁹ was called the Evil [Maligne] River by the old voyageurs.

Just before we got to End Rapids there was a beautiful bit of water 2 miles long and ½ mile wide. At 12.30 noon we entered Beaver [Amisk] Lake. Just here are a few people, but many dogs who all howled in unison as we passed by, until we came to a place where Robert landed, but found no one at home. This was once called “Beaver City”.¹⁰ We went for about 20 miles in Beaver Lake. The rock formation is much the same as in the Muskoka Lakes. . .

AUGUST 12: . . . Entered the mouth of the Pine River [Upper Sturgeon River] at 5.55. Here is a small settlement of Indians on north bank of Pine River. Got a nice duck and lost one also soon after entering river. A few miles down saw a little cemetery¹¹ on the bank. The Cross stood there with its message to all who pass by. Soon came to Pine [Spruce] Rapids. It was 6.55. Here we made our first portage on the Pine River. The rapids a very fine sight. Next rapid called Snake Rapids. Here we make our longest portage, about 1 mile.

Arrived very soon after (10.35) [at Snake Rapids], and walked across portage easily in 25 minutes. The men poled the canoes up the rapids and arrived ten minutes later. . . .

We got to Scoop Rapids at 2.35. There is a very short portage here, about 90 feet long. There is a very beautiful double falls. . . It has a wonderful basin at one place where you can see the fish lying, and scoop them out with a net. Archdeacon caught two with a hook.

⁷M.W. 1967 The 2nd Meridian is no longer the boundary line, which is just east of Sturgeon Landing now.

⁸M.W. 1967 The passage down the Sturgeon Weir is difficult. To pole or paddle *up* would require real strength and stamina.

⁹M.W. 1967 The stretch from Amisk Lake to Namew, or the *Lower Sturgeon Weir*.

¹⁰M.W. 1967 A Government campsite here. A wooden bridge crosses End Rapids.

¹¹M.W. 1967 This Roman Catholic cemetery is still used though it is miles from any habitation. Most of the crosses are weathered, the names obliterated; others freshly painted, with the one family name of Custer.

It is a most beautiful, wild and lonely place. The river up to this was about 200 feet wide, but here it narrowed to a gorge of 30 feet.

We had a good dinner, sitting near the rapids, after we had spent some time admiring them. The river widened out a very short distance from the rapids. Left at 4.20 and we had a nice long sail, but the heat was intense. Came through a small rapids before reaching Leaf Rapid. Here we went through Leafy portage, and the men carried all the things and one canoe, but Robert and Henry ran the rapids with theirs, as did the man and his boy who have kept near us all day. We left there at 6 p.m. . . .

. . . We came to a very strong and turbulent rapids,¹² quite exciting getting through. Archdeacon and Miss Halson went a different way and were almost stranded and had great difficulty getting through. . . . We camped at 7 p.m. and quite late the Archdeacon made a batch of doughnuts.

AUGUST 13: . . . We left at 5.40 and very soon came to Birch Portage.¹³ There is a fine rapids here. [The river] Comes through a gorge about 60 feet wide and has quite a fall. We only see the foot of it as we begin to portage some distance below and came out quite a distance above.

Here we saw horses and cows and a little Indian village. Our friends are still with us. Quite a little tot walked the portage in her bare feet. It is a very picturesque sight to see the men carrying the luggage over a portage. They go at a little jog trot, or some call it a "dog trot" and have what they call portage straps. These have a broad band to go on the forehead and go around a box or something heavy and flat then they pile all sorts of things on top. One man can carry a canoe alone. If alone he carries it on his head. If two carry it, they carry it on their shoulders, one man at each end. When we got over Birch Portage, we were in a beautiful bay or lake. It is called Birch Lake [Upper Sturgeon-Weir] and is two miles wide in places. The shadows are beautiful in it. . . .

After coming about ten miles we came through a small rapids. . . . Since yesterday evening, the shores on both sides have been rock. We camped for breakfast and left again at 9.40 a.m. Came to "Little Island" Rapids [Dog Rapids] at 11.00. Here is a very short rapids, but divided by a rock island . . . and after crossing these rapids entered Rook [Corneille] Lake, which is full of beautiful islands, heavily wooded. Made Rook [Corneille] Portage and embarked again at 1.00 p.m., went a little way then camped for dinner. Set off at 2.30 and were soon in Pelican Narrows [Mirond] Lake. It is also full of islands. A very heavy forest fire raging to the east of us, about twenty miles away. Had a fine sail. We came quite close to the fire as we sailed along, not more than 5 miles away. . . .

AUGUST 14: We did not start until 7.00 a.m. as we had only a few miles to make. The lake was very rough and the men had a very hard pull for the 7 or 8 miles. The lake was in a fury. Two or three miles down we came up to the Treaty party

¹²M.W. 1967 Leafy Rapids. Mile 190 Hanson Lake Road.

¹³M.W. 1967 Department of Natural Resources has constructed a set of skids here, rising up the high bank and down the other side.

and as we all left that point there were 10 canoes—such a pretty sight. When we landed, the Inspector of Revillon Bros. met us and took us to his house, giving us the freedom of it. We had dinner there and in the afternoon made a big batch of bannock.

Had supper at the camp and at 6.00 had service. Quite a number present. It is quite a nice little church, too small and very bare, but they have a little organ, and one of the men taught himself to play by ear, so as to play for the services.¹⁴

AUGUST 15: . . . Service was at 10.30 and the church was packed, in fact all could not get in. It was a grand sight to see all these men and women so reverent and devout. They sang and responded so well. The men all have short hair, and not one blanket to be seen. The women mostly in black, and all have black shawls over their heads, or silk handkerchiefs—not one coloured one to be seen, and only two hats. . . .

We went up to see the Treaty party and also get a view of the bay. There is a beautiful view of the lake and islands, the islands are well wooded. We looked into the Roman Catholic church, a very fine large church, pews and everything else. It was all decorated with flags and bunting. How I wish our people had such a church home.

After that we sat around the fire and talked until thick darkness fell. Mr. Ryan was with us. We were able to get mail off here with the Treaty party.

AUGUST 16: . . . Archdeacon had a service for those who were wind-bound and did not get in for Sunday. Church was well filled for this 7 a.m. service. Yesterday there were 2 baptisms and today a marriage—Peter Ballendine and Caroline Daylight were married. She had a sad, shy face, but is said to be a very fine girl. After the ceremony, they passed by a guard of honour, all firing a salute, and as they passed, the guard followed, firing all the way.

We then said good-bye to our friends at Revillon Bros. Mr. Symonds and his staff were most kind. As we left the Indians fired a salute, in fact a regular fusilade. . . . At 12.30 we made a portage at Medicine Rapids, and the men poled up the canoes. Very narrow gorge in one place. Great beetling rocks everywhere, some crowned with pines and poplars, after we got into a river that has no name except “the three portages”.

After we passed these three portages we got into “Burnt Woods Lake”. It was very beautiful, lovely islands, well wooded. We sailed all afternoon and camped on an island at 6 p.m. . . .

AUGUST 17: . . . Sailed along famously and finally got to a nameless river filled with reeds and lily pads. [Pixley and Lindstrom Lakes.] At the end we came to a small strip of land called Frog Portage where we cross over and are at the renowned Churchill River. Here is the height of land where the Churchill River in high water flows over and runs into the waters which empty into the Saskatchewan River. We

¹⁴M.W. 1967 This log church, with a small extension, still stands. Nearby is a community hall which may serve for special services.

actually saw the water running over, and I washed my hands where the water was flowing quite rapidly.

Here we had breakfast, and at 10.20 started off. The Churchill simply a big lake here, full of islands [Trade Lake]. We had a good wind and sailed gloriously for half an hour, when the seas ran so high that we had to spend 5½ hours on an island, windbound. Started off again at 4.15, still high seas, so bad we had to make for an island, but must have come 6 or 7 miles in the 37 minutes. Landed for the first time in a lovely sandy bay on an island where we made camp for the night. . . .

AUGUST 18: . . . We left at 6:00 a.m. and had a glorious sail across Mountain [Trade] Lake to Mountain [Grand] Portage. . . . We had breakfast there, and after coming a short distance, came to the rapids again. The men carried the canoes, and we came out into a wide expanse of river again. These rapids are a hundred yards or more in width, a great volume of water pouring over them. They are a beautiful sight, coming up towards them.

Soon we got to Keg Falls. . . . The men surely had a desperate time getting through [the] long rapids. In one place we were driven back three times. . . . Camped for dinner at 2.15 on a beautiful mossy island. Archdeacon cooked fish for dinner. Henry B. shot 3 ducks. Left at 3.10 and had only gone on 20 minutes when we saw something black on the shore of an island. We went up and found it was a porcupine. Robert knocked it on the head with the axe, and we brought it along.

A few minutes more brought us to Island Rapids where we had to portage, and as the river had risen 5 feet, it was quite impossible to make the Island Portage, but had to make one ourselves. It was a most hilly, rocky, rough place. . . . The rapids were simply glorious. I never dreamed we had anything half as beautiful in this northland of ours. The whole way is a feast of grandeur, wonderful rivers, lakes, islands, massive rock, a great variety of beauty. . . .

About 4.40 we came to another rapids, a small one, but very difficult to get through. Tried one way, were forced back, boys got out on rock and helped to lift the canoes over. Camped at 6.45 on the mainland. . . .

AUGUST 19: Only got 3 or 4 miles to Sand Ridge Portage [Potter or Drinking Falls] on Junction [Nistowiak] Lake, where there is a most beautiful rapids. Had to camp here all day and night, as it rained and a strong head wind against us. . . .

AUGUST 20: . . . Came three miles when we got to Rapid River [Nistowiak] Portage where the waters from Lac la Ronge empty into the Churchill over a most beautiful and magnificent falls over 70 feet. It is called Junction or Rapid River Falls. It is a glorious sight and when the sun shines there is a rainbow in the mist, which rises far above the tall pine trees. . . .

We came to another portage (a short one) only a quarter of a mile away. Fine rapids here. . . . but small. Had breakfast here (duck and ham) and were very hungry. Left here at 9.45 and started up the Rapid River [Iskwatikan Lake]. . . . At 11.30 we came to a short rapid which we got through nicely.

At 11.45 came to fishing station 12 miles from Stanley . . . came to another portage $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, a very pretty one. Quite a nice rapid here called Rabbit Falls [Rapid or Montreal River Falls]. . . Camped on the mainland for dinner at 2 p.m., finished up the last of our biscuits. Terribly rough, rocky, sidling place. If you made a misstep you would go down the rocks and land in the water. Before dinner we passed "Fairy Rocks", where there are caves and very wonderful formations of rock. Two figures are standing out in bold relief just as if they had been carved. Much of the rock looks like marble.

Got into Lac la Ronge a little before 3 p.m. . . .

AUGUST 21: Was very sorry to hear rain coming down early in the morning. We got up at 4.30, had a light breakfast. Had things ready to start in a few minutes if necessary, but there was a strong head wind and we are again windbound. Only 25 miles from Lac la Ronge Mission. The Archdeacon thinks that "the Prince of the power of the air" has to do with such things. We call this camp "Reindeer Moss Camp" for that moss abounds. "Dorcas" (Miss Halson) did the week's wash while I made bannocks. Had a good meal, bacon, eggs, etc. and as the wind did not seem quite as strong, we started out at 11.15. Had only got around the island when we found there was a heavy gale. Terribly hard work for the men to pull. Archdeacon did not think we could face it, but we made 13 miles. Then the men had to give up. We found our canoes were both leaking and had to camp while they were repaired. By that time we were windbound again for nearly four hours. Had a nice rest on an island and had tea there. The men baked their Sunday supply of bannock. Robert shot 3 partridges. The wind calmed down a little and we started off at 6.30, on our last 12 miles as we supposed, but the men paddled on for all they were worth to try to make it. It was a glorious night, soft air, moonlight, and northern lights all combining to make it a perfect night.

At 10.30 we came to the conclusion that we were helplessly lost on Lac la Ronge. We hunted for a camping place and got one of the roughest yet, but by 11.30 tents had been pitched, prayers were over, and we were ready for bed. . . .

AUGUST 22: Sunday, and here we are away from Lac la Ronge Mission still. Got up at 4.30 had some tea and bannock, struck camp and started off at 5.50. We had to retrace our way, hunting for an opening out of English Bay. It took two hours to find one and another hour to get on the right route. At 9 a.m. we stopped for breakfast, and resumed our journey at 9.50. . . .

We arrived at Lac la Ronge Mission at 1.10 p.m. after a long and anxious search for it, and seven hours of hard paddling and sailing. . . . Great was our joy when we saw the church, All Saints, so well known to us by name.

-(To Be Continued)-

Book Reviews

POLITICS IN SASKATCHEWAN. Edited by Norman Ward and Duff Spafford. Don Mills, Ontario: Longmans Canada Limited. 1968. Pp. 314. \$7.50.

The fourteen essays in this welcome volume treat aspects of Saskatchewan's political history that have received comparatively little attention from either the political scientist or the historian. Though the territorial period has been the subject of scholarly examination and there are valuable studies of the C.C.F. in its rise to and exercise of political powers in the province, the period from 1905 to 1944 has been largely neglected. This seems strange, for certainly it is not without interest. The fact that the provincial Liberal party managed somehow to contain the farmers' movement for nearly a quarter of a century, in marked contrast to the fate of the Liberals in Alberta and Manitoba, demands a more careful analysis of that period than it has received even in such admirable studies as W. L. Morton's *Progressive Party in Canada*. That Saskatchewan, although her provincial Conservative party, even during the Anderson interlude of 1929-1934, has shown nothing but weakness, should become in mid-century a chief bastion of federal conservatism, requires more explanation than a reference to the *charisma* of Diefenbaker and Hamilton or to the failure of the Liberals to develop acceptable farm policies. That the present Liberal government of the province, led by a former member of the C.C.F., should seem to many to be far to the right of the federal Liberal administration must at least suggest that Saskatchewan's political history is worthy of attention.

Though the editors modestly disclaim any pretension that *Politics in Saskatchewan* is a definitive study, it certainly adds substantially to the literature available. The majority of the authors are political scientists, though economics and law are also represented. While many of the essays have an historical dimension and are significant contributions to political history, the position taken is essentially presentist and very much influenced by a desire to explain Saskatchewan's recent rejection of what was by Canadian standards a government of the left for what appears to be, in spite of its Liberal label, a government of the right. Many of the essayists appear to be seeking evidence in Saskatchewan's political development of a latent conservatism not made politically effective until the election of 1964. This is most explicitly, and very effectively, demonstrated in Evelyn Eager's article, "The Conservatism of the Saskatchewan Electorate". "Contrary to the legend of radicalism which has grown up about Saskatchewan political life", her first sentence asserts, "the electorate of the province has shown the traditional conservatism of a farming population." She elaborates this point in a lucid and helpful review of the history of Saskatchewan politics, to which many readers will find it convenient to refer when reading some of the other articles, and in her last paragraph concludes, "Even with the susceptibility for change which unsatisfactory economic conditions produces [sic], the Saskatchewan voter has withheld support from any movement which has not trimmed its radical edges and included practical benefits among its proposals." If conservatism in politics may be equated with a disinclination for change, Dr. Eager's reminder that in sixty years of Saskatchewan history govern-

ments have only four times been turned out of office has something to say to the other prairie provinces. In sixty-four years Alberta has only turned out two governments. Manitoba, with nearly a century of political history behind her, has been more daring but the administration that began with Bracken in 1922 and ended with Campbell in 1958 has a continuity that gives it a claim to longevity unrivalled even by that of Mackenzie King.

Other essays offer evidence to support Dr. Eager's thesis, among them Patrick Kyba's "Ballots and Burning Crosses—the Election of 1929", with its emphasis on the emotional defence of a social system seen as threatened by alien elements. Keith A. McLeod's "Politics, Schools and the French Language, 1881-1931", discusses much the same emotionally charged issues. In the longest article of the volume, Edwin A. Tollefson finds the bitter dispute over medicare difficult to assess in its effect on the election of 1964 but the ultimate acceptance of the plan by C.C.F., Liberal and Conservative parties seems to lend force to some of Dr. Eager's observations.

Escott M. Reid contributes his fascinating essay on the Saskatchewan Liberal machine before 1929. Reprinted from *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* for 1936, it stands up well against the test of time. Observers of prairie politics have generally conceded the classic effectiveness of this organization but it must be admitted that it is easier to describe it than to document the description. The statement that patronage "gave the party the votes of practically all the provincial civil service" is illustrated by the votes cast in the Weyburn Mental Hospital in one election and in the Provincial Hospital at North Battleford in another. This might not convince the most rigorous quantifiers among the present generation of political scientists.

David E. Smith's study of the membership of Saskatchewan's Legislative Assembly applies more fashionable techniques and comes to the conclusion that Saskatchewan now has two "integrative parties", with the C.C.F. succeeding where the Conservatives had failed. "No better proof exists", he asserts, "that Saskatchewan possesses a political system distinct from her neighbour Alberta than this two-party system." Similar methods are applied in collaboration with John C. Courtney to the curious behaviour of the voters of Saskatoon in 1964, when in the provincial general election they returned the C.C.F. candidate and in a federal by-election shortly afterwards the Progressive Conservative. The conclusion here is less dramatic. It appears that if the same voters vote for different parties at provincial and federal elections, it affects the result.

The role of the Liberals as an integrative party appears again in Andrew Milnor's study "The new politics and ethnic revolt: 1929-1938". Dr. Milnor, incidentally, provides an image of the Farmer-Labour Group in 1934 that has exceptional charm. It "leaped determinedly", he says, "grabbed the bit, and attempted to lead." If farmers in Saskatchewan were still using horses one can understand why some preferred the Liberal party. Though this reader found it difficult to follow the author's argument his conclusion appears to be that in the depression decade non-English groups turned towards the protest parties.

"Political Economy and the Canadian Wheat Grower", an essay begun by the late Professor V. C. Fowke and completed by his son, Donald V. Fowke, examines the view that Canadian policy has always been and continues to be, "made for Canadian agriculture rather than by it." Basing their conclusion on a discussion of farm-machinery tariffs, the Hudson Bay route, the Crow's Nest Pass rates, grain-handling facilities, and price control, the Fowkes discount any assertion that the "over-representation" of rural voters in both the provincial and federal parliaments produces a "rural tyranny" at Ottawa. In an increasingly urbanized Canada this summation of the views of one of Canada's most eminent economists has a particular interest.

In other chapters C. E. S. Franks deals with the relationship of the Saskatchewan legislature to the executive, Duff Spafford with the "Left wing", 1921-1931, Elizabeth Chambers with the referendum and the plebiscite and June Menzies with votes for Saskatchewan women. Norman Ward's concluding essay on the contemporary scene provides further evidence that, as Dr. Eager suggests in her opening survey, Saskatchewan does not really believe in violent change. "The transition from the C.C.F. brand of democratic socialism to Mr. Thatcher's free-enterprise system has been neither so abrupt nor so drastic as 'Socialism *versus* Free Enterprise' might appear to suggest."

L. G. Thomas

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TALES OUT OF SCHOOL. By Robert Tyre. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. 1968. Pp. 237. \$5.25.

TEACHERS OF THE FOOTHILLS PROVINCE. By John W. Chalmers. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1968. Pp. 244. Illus. \$6.00.

There is an obvious comparison to be made between Mr. Tyre's *Tales Out of School* and Dr. Chalmers' *Teachers of the Foothills Province*. Both of these books focus upon the many reasons why teachers were disenchanted with the way the various school systems were looking after their interests and the interests of their students; both books trace, in some detail, the effort of fledgling teacher organizations to become strong and effective professional associations. Mr. Tyre sets out to analyze events between 1905 and 1967 leading up to the formation of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation as it is today; Dr. Chalmers attempts to do much the same thing for the Alberta Teachers' Association.

After providing the background for the formation of teacher organizations in their respective provinces, both authors go on to describe the growth of these organizations in the face of apathy, heartbreak, and general misery caused by a depression of hitherto unknown magnitude. Events depicting the turbulent relations between teacher organizations and their respective provincial governments, the constant confrontation of teachers and trustees, and the clash of dominant personalities are imaginatively woven into the fabric of both stories.

It is at this point that a comparison of the two books becomes difficult. They are so different in style and presentation that it comes as a surprise to realize

that they have in fact a similar subject and purpose. As the title indicates, Mr. Tyre's book purports to be a "readable account of the Federation's growth and development." As such, the assumption can be made that it is not intended to be a highly documented historical account; rather, the emphasis seems to be on conveying to the general public the reasons for the feelings and convictions that characterize the teaching profession in Saskatchewan today. Dr. Chalmers' book, on the other hand, can be classed as a more scholarly work, carefully organized and well-documented. The emphasis here is on conveying to the reader, in some systematic and chronological sequence, the events which culminated in the ATA of today. It might be said that *Teachers of the Foothills Province* is a history; *Tales Out of School* is a story.

Among the defects of *Tales Out of School* the most frustrating one for the reader to cope with is the half-hearted provision of source references which at best can be described as intermittent and imprecise. One reads, for example, about the problems faced by a teacher named Campbell. The reader learns that a rate-payers meeting was held on "A typical autumn nightfall. . . .By milking time the path to the barn was blotted out by a deeper darkness that sent long tendrils of shadows into the corners of farm kitchens. . . ." (p.73)

The reader is then given a detailed description of the lamp used to light up the school room where the meeting was to be held. This information is followed by a description of those present:

They crowded into the classroom until there was only standing room left. . . . The last person to arrive flattened himself against a door and stayed there. He would have made a rare picture. . . .

He was short and stocky with a long, dropping moustache and a broad Slavic face—stranger to a razor for at least a week—which had been well seasoned by wind and rain and dust and frost. His thick black hair was matted and grey with blowing topsoil and the wind had playfully garlanded it with bits of straw. His brightest feature was a greased-smudged red shirt tucked under tattered overalls which hung at half mast with one shoulder strap missing. (p. 74)

Interesting? Of course, but can the question of source be so easily dismissed in the name of interest? Was the source of this remarkable information a letter? An interview? One cannot help but speculate about the accuracy of the description of the meeting and the role played in it by Mr. Tyre's vivid imagination. In any case, the same criticism cannot be applied to Dr. Chalmers' book.

Moreover, Mr. Tyre's book contains far too many misprints. A good proof reader would have saved Mr. Tyre from such embarrassing typographical errors as *conservation* for *conversation*, *lead* for *leave*, *re placing* for *replacing*, to list a few. As well, the manner in which quotations are set up may make for some confusion and frustration on the part of the reader. One is often uncertain as to where one quotation ends and another begins. That a respectable publisher should have allowed a book, with so many slips in it, to go to press under his name is inexplicable, to say the least.

Having said this, one should add that sections of *Tales Out of School* indicate that Mr. Tyre can write in an extraordinarily competent and interesting manner.

He seems to be at his best when he is describing conditions during the "dirty thirties", a period, incidentally, which Dr. Chalmers either fails to explore in some detail or fails to use to his best advantage. Mr. Tyre, when writing about the plight of the teachers in the Thirties, displays a sensitivity which is so evident in his book *Saddlebag Surgeon*. This fact alone makes the first half of *Tales Out of School* inspiring reading, even though, on the whole, Mr. Tyre tends to be somewhat extreme in his praise of the teaching profession and rather severe in his criticism of school trustees.

Mr. Tyre also seems to have the happy knack of choosing situations to write about which have maximum impact on the reader. A touch of irony here, a bit of humor there, some pathos here, a tragedy there, and the reader is swept up into the topsy-turvy world of the depression. As well, when he wishes, Mr. Tyre can tell us with commendable brevity what we need to know. It is the more unfortunate, therefore, that in the latter half of the book he chooses to devote so much time to a listing of names of people. As a result, the last three or four chapters are vaguely reminiscent of a planned testimonial, a consequence, perhaps, of the fact that this is a commissioned book.

Dr. Chalmers' long years of experience in the field of education are evident in his book. He approaches his task in an orthodox fashion. He opens by referring to a meeting of the Alberta Education Association in 1916 and finishes almost 300 pages later by referring to a 1966 "love-hate syndrome" involving the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Teachers' Federation. In between these two extremes there is evidence of careful research, accurate documentation, good organization, and a genuine concern to tell the story of the ATA as it really happened.

By contrast, Mr. Tyre's book appears poorly organized and repetitious. We are told twice, for example, about John Diefenbaker shooting gophers, even though Mr. Diefenbaker's contribution to the teaching profession and to the development of the STF can be classed as being strictly minimal. Then, unlike Dr. Chalmers who rigidly restricts the scope of each chapter, Mr. Tyre has a tendency, in any one chapter, to skip back and forth across 30 or more years of history. Chapter two, for example, is a whirlwind treatment of events from approximately 1905 to 1957; and, within a space of eleven pages the reader is exposed to the Diefenbakers, William Lyon Mackenzie King, James Gardiner, M. J. Coldwell, Alvin Hamilton, and a teachers' strike. Such a lack of organization and coordination is not evident in Dr. Chalmers' book.

However, Dr. Chalmers does not have the flair for writing that Mr. Tyre does, nor does he have Mr. Tyre's sense of the dramatic. In spite of the fact that Dr. Chalmers' book is the better of the two, academically speaking, one still cannot help but speculate about the quality of *Teachers of the Foothills Province* had it been possible to combine the scholarship that went into that book with the very readable style of *Tales Out of School*.

A final word about *Tales Out of School*. Although Mr. Tyre logically concentrates on the past, many events discussed in his book sound strangely familiar and

relevant to the teaching profession in 1969. Teachers and would-be-teachers might therefore find this book profitable and stimulating reading.

J. O. MICHAYLUK

* * *

THE BATTLEFORDS: A HISTORY. By Arlean McPherson. Saskatoon: Modern Press. 1968. Pp. 264. \$5.00.

Bound by the demands of the fur economy, the early history of the Battlefords reflected many of the problems, struggles, hopes and failures characteristic of a frontier society. Geography, however, dictated its strategic importance in matters of defence and transportation, thus making it an obvious choice as the early political and economic capital of the North West Territories. Surviving the harrowing experiences of floods, drought and Indian uprising, the early inhabitants acquired a stubborn adherence to rising expectations. Although this promising future was dashed by the re-routing of the C.P.R. and the relocation of the capital at Regina, the Battlefords continued to maintain a slow but enthusiastic growth—retaining “big city” mentality without “big city” weaknesses. This progressive spirit, established by heritage, is still reflected in the civic pride of its citizens. The history of the Battlefords also contains a unique feature seldom found among the civilizing processes of mankind—the simultaneous development of two communities. As a consequence, the constant and unrelenting rivalry between Battleford and North Battleford for railways, settlers and industry makes for some of the most interesting and fascinating reading available to any student of regional history.

Arlean McPherson has graphically and dramatically illustrated the historic transition of the Battlefords. Combining historical comprehension with literary skill, she has managed to condense an encyclopedic body of information into a well documented and readable survey of popular history. Interspersed with an excellent choice of pictures, her words take on an added and meaningful perspective of the toils and tribulations, the hazards and the hopes of those who strove to transform a hostile environment into a civilized entity.

If criticism is to be ascribed, then it must be directed towards the author's ability to whet the reader's appetite. On occasion, interest is generated along a particular train of thought only to find that its natural extension is missing. A case in point is the excitement created by the discovery of oil in the Battleford's vicinity. The reader is left wondering whether this development was merely ephemeral and whether important economic and social consequences, combined with political ramifications, were evident.

The smooth flowing exposition manifested in the early chapters often becomes slightly overburdened with statistics and superficial summaries in later chapters. This is explained by the author that the first 160 pages were more carefully researched as a consequence of academic standards. The reader, however, having become accustomed to literary excellence, might feel a bit disappointed that the quality generated by scholastic demands could not be extended to meet the needs of public consumption. An extra 40 pages devoted to a more thorough analysis of the post-1914 period might well have eliminated this problem.

In no way is this criticism intended to detract from the over-all value of Arlean McPherson's treatise of *The Battlefords*. When the final page is read and the book is laid aside, one cannot help but feel a sense of awe and pride towards those who successfully challenged the unknown, tamed their environment and made the heritage of the Battlefords meaningful and exciting. To elicit such a response from any reader should be construed as a mark of success by any author.

PETER TARNOWSKY

* * *

OF US AND THE OXEN. By Sarah Ellen Roberts. Saskatoon: Modern Press. 1968. Pp. 260. \$6.50.

Sarah Ellen Roberts was a rather frail woman who came west with her husband and three grown sons in 1906 to homestead near Stettler, a then sparsely populated part of Alberta. During her first bleak winter there, the author kept an almost daily record of events. This journal comprises the first part of *Of Us and The Oxen*. In 1915 she took up the story again and completed her account of six years of pioneering on the prairie.

Superficially this is a quiet story of family happenings—of such things as housekeeping in a tent, building a log home, fashioning poplar furniture, walking across to the neighbors to bake bread, and of turning the sod and watching the first crop grow. However, at another level it is an exciting story of survival against great odds, for the Roberts family arrived in Alberta poorly outfitted to wrest a life from the frontier. The head of the family had been a doctor in the eastern states before coming west; his wife was the daughter of a professor; they had little ready cash; and had not even brought essential household goods west with them. Several months after their arrival Mrs. Roberts' stove and heavy bedding finally reached them. However, Dr. Roberts and his family showed great courage, endurance and resourcefulness in defying the elements, and of necessity developed a kind of genius at "making-do" with what was at hand. Fortunately for the family exchequer the sons were of age to hire out, and Frank's account of working at the engine yards in Hardesty depicts another aspect of life in the homesteader's west.

Although the leisurely pace of the book at times drags slightly, Mrs. Roberts has much to say to today's younger generation. She wrote, with no intent to publish, but so that her children and grandchildren might understand and value what had gone before. The picture of a closely-knit family, considerate and appreciative of each others needs and strengths, emerges. Although the years were characterized by hardship and privation, loneliness and disappointment, yet they were, to Mrs. Roberts, amply rewarding.

ARLEAN MCPHERSON

Notes and Correspondence

We have received a request from Harry E. Chrisman, 10245 W. 14th Avenue, Denver, Colorado, 80215 for information about Marion Olive who apparently came to Canada in the late 1890's and worked as a cowboy in southwestern Saskatchewan or Alberta. Anyone having any information about Mr. Olive is asked to get in touch with Mr. Chrisman.

We have been asked to draw to the attention of our readers a new publication called *B.C. Studies*. This new magazine was established to publish articles written about British Columbia in anthropology, archaeology, history, economics, sociology and other related disciplines. Annual subscription rates are \$5.00 and can be obtained by writing to *B.C. Studies*, Room 203, Auditorium Building, University of British Columbia, Vancouver 8, B.C.

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