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Contents

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF CAMPS IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1933-1936	Lorne A. Brown	81
EDGAR DEWDNEY AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE REBELLION	Mrs. Jean Larmour	105
BOOK REVIEWS		117
Atwood, In Rupert's Land: by Irene M. Spry.		
Woodcock and Avakumovic, <i>The Doukhobors</i> : By R. Carter		

COVER: "Map shewing Mounted Police Stations & Patrols Throughout
the North-West Territories, During The Year 1889."



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Unemployment Relief Camps in Saskatchewan, 1933-1936

THE efforts of the federal government to deal with the problem of the single, homeless unemployed in Saskatchewan from 1933 to 1936 were based on federal policies which were applied on a nation-wide basis. The methods chosen to deal with the problem, in Saskatchewan as elsewhere, were meant to minimize the possibility of violent upheavals in the urban centres. An examination of the state of the single unemployed during these years reveals that the fear of violence and even insurrection, though greatly exaggerated by the authorities for political and economic reasons, was not entirely unfounded.

The people who, as a group, suffered perhaps more than any others from the economic depression were the unskilled workers in primary industries such as mining, forestry and agriculture and the unskilled workers who depended upon the many facets of the construction industry. The severe decline in the price of primary products dealt a stunning blow to what had always been an unstable part of the economy. In Saskatchewan the disastrously low prices for agricultural products combined with repeated crop failures destroyed the livelihood not only of farmers but of the thousands of transient labourers who depended upon seasonal agricultural work. The same factors spurred on the near collapse of the construction industry in the private sector and federal and provincial public works came nowhere near taking up the slack. The people deprived of their livelihood comprised a class which had played an indispensable role in building Canada. They had been the mainstay of the forestry industries, railway and road construction and maintenance and were absolutely essential for seasonal agricultural work. Many were recent immigrants who had been lured to Canada by the propaganda of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian government. During prosperous years they did much of the most undesirable work at lower than average wages and during the Depression they were the first to be sacrificed.¹

As the economic situation worsened the federal government was pressed strongly by the provinces to assume responsibility for the transient unemployed and particularly the unmarried transients. Municipalities, hard pressed to look after their permanent residents, were reluctant to do anything to look after transient single men. Provinces were likewise reluctant to assume responsibility on the grounds that if any province provided adequate food and shelter or provided work on relief projects for the single unemployed they would be inundated by an influx from across the country. This was particularly true of British Columbia where unemployed from other provinces gathered in large numbers because of the moderate climate during the winter months and in the hope of employment in the forestry and other primary industries. The same was true to a lesser extent of the Prairie provinces during the summer months when thousands would migrate from other provinces in the hope of obtaining work in the agricultural sector and failing

¹H. M. Cassidy, "Relief and Other Social Services for Transients," in L. Richter, ed., *Canada's Unemployment Problem* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1939), IV.

this, would congregate in the cities and require relief. The practice of "riding the rods" across the country had become a common pastime of the single unemployed. It was this mobility, mainly an enforced mobility, which made the problem of the single unemployed even more a federal issue than unemployment in general and caused the provinces to demand federal action.

By 1932 the radical political potential of the single unemployed was becoming increasingly apparent to the federal government. Workers in primary industries such as mining and lumbering and the unemployed in the urban centres were given little assistance by the established unions in the Trades and Labour Congress (T.L.C.) and the All Canadian Congress of Labour (A.C.C.L.) who were busy trying to hold themselves together in the face of the Depression and were, at any rate, too conservative to take the militant action which the times required. The result was that new unions were built by left-wing militants under the auspices of the Workers' Unity League (W.U.L.) which was dominated by the Communist Party. Unions and associations of the unemployed sprang up in most of the major cities and many of the larger towns throughout Canada. Many such associations grew up spontaneously but the largest and most effective were built by supporters of the Workers' Unity League. Demonstrations, hunger marches, strikes and disturbances became more widespread than at any time since 1919. All of this was going on at a time when the country was gripped in an orgy of anti-Communism unequalled before or since in Canadian history.² The federal and most provincial governments were applying R. B. Bennett's "iron heel of ruthlessness" against radical political and labour unrest in a wholesale fashion. Political deportations, raids on the headquarters of the Communist Party and affiliated organizations, arrests under Section 98 of the Criminal Code and the use of police to suppress strikes, demonstrations and even public meetings were widespread.³

The people feared most of all by the political authorities at all levels of government were the single transient unemployed. Having no families to provide for and often no firm roots in any one locality they were the most difficult to intimidate by threats of cutting off relief or even imprisonment and the latter was hardly feasible given the large numbers involved. By 1932 it was estimated that there were a minimum of 70,000 single homeless unemployed transients who congregated in the cities when they were not travelling between cities. These unfortunates, along with the hundreds of thousands of other unemployed, were becoming frustrated and militant to the point where the federal government believed that disorder could become general. Reports from welfare authorities and the police indicated that trouble might soon escalate to the point where the armed forces would have to be used on a large scale.⁴ Many businessmen and newspapers were urging that more

²Stuart Jamieson, *Toil and Trouble: Labor Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada 1900-1966*. Prepared for and received by the Federal Task Force on Labor Relations, Oct. 15, 1968, pp. 227-228.

³Cassidy, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 197, and Jamieson, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

⁴Public Archives of Canada (PAC), *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 10, File 46. Memorandum by Chief of the General Staff, June 13, 1931, on a meeting of C.G.S., the Adjutant-General (Secty. of Militia Service) and the Quartermaster General, in which plans were made for calling out the Non-Permanent Active Militia and the Permanent Force should it become necessary. McNaughton thought that about 20,000 of the N.P.A.M. might have to be mobilized in the autumn and "might probably be on duty for some considerable time."

be done to get the single jobless out of the cities before major trouble erupted. Others were recommending for humanitarian reasons that a "peacetime army" of the unemployed be organized to construct great public works as a means of alleviating economic suffering and raising the morale of the populace.

During a tour of the country in the summer of 1932 General A. G. L. McNaughton, Chief of the General Staff, observed the deteriorating situation and conceived the idea, which he sold to Bennett's cabinet, of establishing, under the auspices of the Department of National Defence, relief camps throughout the country for the accommodation of physically fit single homeless males. The scheme was begun by Order-in-Council on October 8, 1932, and was to be carried on by successive Orders-in-Council until the spring of 1936. It got underway on a major scale during the spring and summer of 1932 when, by agreement with the provinces, the Dominion assumed responsibility for all physically fit single homeless unemployed men. It was during May and June of 1933 that Dundurn relief camp became the major centre for accommodating the single unemployed in Saskatchewan.

From the very beginning, in Saskatchewan and elsewhere, the primary purpose of the camps was to keep young men out of the cities and the camps were compulsory for thousands of the single unemployed who were cut off relief and left with a choice between the camps or facing arrest for vagrancy.⁵ Even "riding the rods" became more difficult as the RCMP and railway police reversed their earlier policy of leniency in this regard. The camps were not meant to accommodate *all* the physically fit single homeless unemployed but merely to relieve congestion in those cities where trouble was most likely to break out and camps were located, where possible, with this purpose in mind.⁶ The camps also made it possible to step up the intimidation of those single unemployed who obtained relief jobs on farms or remained in the cities. The threat of being sent to a camp could be and was used to discourage would-be critics among relief recipients.⁷ From the beginning to the bitter end R. B. Bennett and his government insisted publicly that residence in the camps was purely voluntary though it was clear to anyone familiar with relief policies in the cities, and this included a significant proportion of the population, that many of the single unemployed had no choice in the matter. It was this type of credibility gap which helped to discredit the Bennett government and assure broad public sympathy for the camp inmates when they rebelled against the authorities as they occasionally did.

Unrest among the unemployed in Saskatchewan cities prior to the establishment of Dundurn relief camp in 1933 appears to have been fairly widespread though

⁵P.A.C., *Bennett Papers*, Microfilm page nos. 494713-23; Hugh G. Farthing to A. E. Millar (P.M.'s secretary), Sept. 7, 1933, and Sept. 8, 1933. Also Mayor Andrew Davison (Calgary) to A. E. Millar, Oct. 6, 1933. Microfilm p. 494237, R. K. Finlayson (assistant to P.M.), memo to A. E. Millar, Oct. 6, 1933. "It would be a great mistake to lose sight of the main objective that the government has in this work, namely to keep urban centres clear from such single men as more readily become amenable to the designs of agitators." See *Regina Leader Post*, May 11, 1933 for a statement by Premier Anderson about Saskatoon single unemployed being forced to go to Dundurn.

⁶P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 58. C.G.S. to D.O.C. 13, December 14, 1934.

⁷P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 58.

in magnitude, and probably intensity, it had not reached the proportions of the situation in the larger urban centers like Winnipeg and Vancouver. Saskatchewan, lacking any large urban centre, was generally less troubled by demonstrations and disorder (excepting the Estevan-Bienfait coal miners' strike of 1931) than any of the other provinces outside of the Maritimes. There were, however, organizations of the unemployed in Saskatchewan's four major cities and many of the smaller urban centres by the summer of 1932.⁸ From 1931 much of the organizing in Saskatchewan had been done by the Workers' Unity League. As the agricultural and employment situations deteriorated and the grievances of the unemployed mounted their organizations used increasingly militant tactics.

In Saskatchewan as elsewhere the married unemployed were provided with relief by the municipalities with financial assistance by the provincial and federal governments. The provincial government, and this was also true in other provinces, played a more direct role in providing for single transients. Until the autumn of 1932 the two main methods used by the provincial government were to try to place as many single unemployed as possible in farm labour jobs and to provide relief employment for some in work camps which the province began setting up in the autumn of 1930. At one time the province had twenty-three such camps with the larger ones being in the vicinity of Prince Albert National Park.

In the autumn of 1932 when the federal government began to take a more active interest in the single unemployed the province, in co-operation with the federal authorities, commenced with a three-pronged attack upon the problem. By federal-provincial agreement an allowance of \$5 monthly would be paid to "destitute unemployed homeless single men or women now resident in any urban centre of the Province who will accept work on the farms in the Province."⁹ The \$5 monthly plus room and board would, in most cases, constitute the total wages received by these workers. The farm labour plan was supplemented by federal work camps operated by the Department of the Interior in Prince Albert National Park, where the pay would also be \$5 monthly, and a few provincial work camps, though these were being phased out in anticipation of an expanded federal program. By federal-provincial agreement the Saskatchewan Relief Commission would also operate concentration camps in Saskatoon, Regina, and Moose Jaw where the single unemployed would be provided with food and shelter until they could be placed on farms or in work camps.¹⁰ The camp in Moose Jaw was for single unemployed ex-servicemen and was begun largely by the efforts of the Canadian Legion. The program of the Department of National Defence began too late in the year for them to establish work camps in Saskatchewan until the spring of 1933 at the earliest.

⁸By 1933 there were six such organizations in Saskatoon alone with three of them affiliated to the Workers' Unity League.

⁹Archives of Saskatchewan, *Saskatchewan Relief Commission (S.R.C.)*, Thomas Molloy (Deputy Minister of Railways, Labor and Industry) to Municipal Councillors, October 27, 1932.

¹⁰Archives of Saskatchewan, S.R.C., roll B., memo on Saskatoon Relief Camp. Unsigned and undated but probably written by A. Kendall, Manager, Field Service Branch, Unemployment Division of the Sask. Relief Commission, shortly after May 8, 1933.

Before the Saskatchewan and federal governments launched their expanded programs in late October and early November, 1932, the unemployed, single and married, had alarmed the provincial authorities on several occasions. The RCMP in Regina were sufficiently alarmed that they requested and received from the Department of National Defence an issue of 300 bayonets and 30,000 rounds of .303 ammunition in October, 1931.¹¹ Demonstrations were numerous with perhaps the largest being a May Day parade in Regina in 1932 which involved 10,000 participants and spectators and resulted in scattered violence and nine arrests. On October 27, 1932, several hundred relief workers employed on city relief projects in Regina went on strike under the leadership of the Regina Unemployed Workers' Council. Mayor McAra blamed the strike on five or six leaders who allegedly forced the majority to strike against their wishes though news reports indicate that the strike had widespread support with the support of a large majority on at least some work projects.¹²

At the same time as the strike of the married relief workers in Regina, federal officials were conferring with the provincial cabinet and both governments were issuing announcements about their plans for the farm labour scheme and the relief camps. The associations of the single unemployed complained loudly against working for \$5 monthly and being segregated into relief camps which unemployed leaders in Regina referred to as "slave camps". Delegates of the unemployed from Saskatoon and Regina waited on Hon. J. A. Merkley, provincial Minister of Railways, Labour and Industry and demanded \$25 monthly or \$1 daily for farm or camp work. In Saskatoon the provincial government had authorized the city to provide the single unemployed with meal tickets pending their removal to farms or work camps. On October 27 Mayor J. E. Underwood exacerbated an already tense situation by announcing that before obtaining meal tickets men would have to register at the government employment office and signify their willingness to take farm work. "Throughout the day unemployed thronged around the relief office, many of them in an ugly mood and threats of disturbance were noised abroad although no disorder occurred."¹³ On November 2 a proposed protest march of the unemployed was cancelled after being banned by the Mayor. That the authorities expected trouble was evidenced from the fact that RCMP were ready to assist city police, special constables had been sworn in and tear gas bombs were in the hands of police. Instead of a march the unemployed held a meeting on Market Square and declared that, though it was banned in advance by the Chief of Police, they would hold a mass rally in front of the relief offices on November 7 to protest, among other things, establishment of the relief camp at the Exhibition grounds. On November 7 about 80 RCMP and city police dispersed the rally and the result was what the Canadian Press called "the bloodiest riot ever seen in this city".¹⁴ Dozens of unemployed and policemen were injured but apparently only one policeman was hospitalized. Several people were arrested for unlawful assembly. Further

¹¹P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 10, No. 46, C.G.S. memo of October 16, 1931.

¹²Regina *Leader Post*, October 28, 1932.

¹³*Ibid.*, October 27, 1932.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, November 8, 1932.

outdoors meetings were temporarily banned and the resistance of the unemployed against the new government plans appears to have waned for the time being.

With the approach of winter the single unemployed registered in large numbers and were absorbed into the various sections of the federal-provincial relief program. About 8000 were placed on farms with the numbers in work camps at Prince Albert National Park and the concentration camps in the three major cities fluctuating from month to month. There appear to have been about 600 accommodated in the National Park and about 1200-1500 in the three city camps during the early spring of 1933.

During this time the Department of National Defence (DND) was making plans for opening a number of projects across the country as soon as weather permitted. The decision as to where projects would be located and on what scale depended upon where useful work could be done, the state of unrest in the various localities and the demands of provinces and municipalities for particular public works. From the standpoint of the DND enlargement of existing facilities and construction of additional permanent facilities at the militia camp near Dundurn would be a useful project and one which the Department was well equipped to undertake. Plans were made for opening a relief camp for these purposes if and when the situation warranted one. Events in the Saskatoon relief camp during April and May were to move the provincial government to urgently demand that the federal government expand its camp program with all possible speed.

That there would probably be some trouble in the Saskatoon relief camp was evident from the fact that the establishment of the camp had been one of the factors contributing to the increased unrest in Saskatoon during November, 1932. Many of the people who had raised objections in November would be inmates of the relief camp. Added to this would be the environment of the camp which was designed as a temporary holding centre pending transfer of the men to farms or work camps and not as a work camp itself. The men were given food, shelter, medical care and some necessities such as clothing and were required to perform minor fatigue duties such as washing dishes and cleaning the camp. They were not, excepting a minority who were hired to perform cooking and other more specialized camp duties, required to do much work and hence they had time on their hands to dwell on their grievances and could be easily organized. The author has not been able to locate copies of the specific regulations which the supervisors attempted to enforce at the Saskatoon relief camp. However, it was reported in the press that the camp was to be "of a military character" and it was under the supervision of a former military officer, Captain P. J. Philpott, M.C., then president of the local branch of the Canadian Legion and vice-president of the provincial command.¹⁵ There were attempts to introduce some military routine into the camp and it is likely that, given the rules commonly in force in camps of this nature at that time and the attitude of the authorities towards the single unemployed, there would be little agreement between the supervisors and the men on how the camps should be

¹⁵*Ibid.*, November 3, 1932.

operated. The environment appears to have been eminently suitable for the development of radicalism and militant protest.

Militant agitators, many of them supporters of the Workers' Unity League, lost no time in organizing the inmates of the Saskatoon camp. Superintendent Philpott was faced with trouble two months after the camp opened.

As early as January, 1933, I encountered and reported, organized opposition and propaganda, to the Relief Commission's policy of drafting men to Prince Albert National Park Work Camp. I received a ruling from the Commission under date of February 4 that inmates refusing to proceed to Prince Albert camp when drafted should be dismissed from my camp and reported to local police as vagrants.¹⁶

Philpott attempted to carry out this policy but was unable to do so and attributed this to insufficient co-operation from the Saskatoon City police and the militancy of the camp inmates. He cited an instance when, with police assistance, he evicted five people but they were only kept over night in the police station and returned to camp the next day. "By this time inmates had rallied to the cause of the malingerers, until I was powerless to evict and keep out the troublemakers."¹⁷ Philpott reported on numerous occasions during January and February that he was unable to fill drafts for the National Park work camps "due to the fact that a radical organization within the camp had gained sufficient influence over the men generally that there was a total disregard of constituted authority."¹⁸ He also reported instances of men refusing to do camp fatigue and destroying camp property.

That the radicals had the support of the general camp population is evident from the report of an official of the Saskatchewan Relief Commission (SRC) who visited the camp on April 5.¹⁹ He found the morale of the camp entirely broken down and the inmates under the influence of an unnamed radical organization which he claimed was led by about twenty men. "I found the Superintendent and his assistants in a state of nervous excitement due to the continued demonstrations which had been conducted within the confines of the Camp during the past months."²⁰ The SRC official reported that delegations were hourly making demands upon the Superintendent and his Assistant and that as many as eight or ten meetings were held daily where a crowd of from 300-600 men "were addressed in violent language and advised to make further demands for better food, clothing and tobacco, and at the same time refusing to perform any kind of work, including the necessary fatigues."²¹ The Chief Constable of Saskatoon and the officer in charge of the local RCMP recommended that action be taken to avoid more serious trouble but not until more police were available to cope with the situation. The SRC insisted that the grievances of the men were unfounded except the one concerning sanitary conditions and that this was the fault of the men themselves. The Com-

¹⁶Archives of Saskatchewan, S.R.C., roll B, undated memo on Saskatoon Relief Camp.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

mission embarked upon a program to restore order and institute a cleanup "putting the premises in a sanitary and healthy condition."²²

Captain P. J. Philpott resigned as Superintendent on April 7 and was replaced by Captain L. G. Woodward who had been recommended by the Mayor of Saskatoon and members of the Civic Relief Department. New regulations were passed which included a ban on speeches and demonstrations and there were greater efforts to enforce them. RCMP officials had previously been posted at the camp and on April 11 a full troop of mounted RCMP arrived in Saskatoon to be on hand in the event of trouble. At least one police spy was placed among the men.²³ The authorities appear to have been preparing for a showdown with the radicals not only in the Saskatoon relief camp but throughout the province. May Day parades were banned in Regina and Saskatoon. In the latter city two troops of mounted police were posted near the Market Square during a rally of about 500 persons. In Moose Jaw RCMP and city police were stationed at the relief camp where one alleged Communist agitator was arrested and charged with creating a disturbance. Both parades and meetings were banned for May Day in Moose Jaw and a labour hall was raided by RCMP and city police who seized banners, lapel buttons and a list of names of about 100 single unemployed whom they claimed had refused to go to work camps at the pay offered.²⁴

There were some indications that the radicals were concentrating their forces for a potential showdown at Saskatoon relief camp. The population of the camp greatly increased in late April and early May and the Superintendent claimed that the "Reds" had sent out word to their supporters in Prince Albert and Moose Jaw to congregate in Saskatoon.²⁵ The author has seen no documentary proof of this but, whatever the reason, the camp population at Saskatoon swelled from 391 in February to about 1,000 in early May by which time there were only a couple of hundred in each of the Regina and Moose Jaw camps. The Saskatchewan Relief Commission decided to transfer some of the Saskatoon inmates to the Regina camp and to include the most militant men in the first draft of fifty in an effort to deprive the men of their leadership and make it easier to reassert the authority of the camp supervisors. The camp inmates demanded, to no avail, that the Commission call for volunteers to go to Regina since overcrowding was the ostensible reason for the transfers. On May 7 the fifty men chosen by the Commission were given notice that they must board the train at noon, May 8, for transportation to Regina and, failing this, they would be evicted from the Saskatoon camp and denied further assistance at any relief camp in Saskatchewan.²⁶ Their names were posted around the camp. This brought the crisis to a head and led to a violent clash with the police the next day.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, September 21, 1933. It came out at the trial of the arrested men that Constable H. M. Wilson of the R.C.M.P. had been in the camp as an undercover man from April 18 to May 8.

²⁴*Ibid.*, May 1, 1933.

²⁵Superintendent Woodward to A. Kendall, May 6, 1933.

²⁶Undated S.R.C. memo, *op. cit.*

The fifty men refused to accept transfer to Regina and they and their supporters protested that the single unemployed should be allowed to go to or remain in the camp of their choosing. A resolution to the same effect was passed by the executives of seven Saskatoon labour and unemployed organizations including the Trades and Labour Council, and sent to Superintendent Woodward on the night of May 7.²⁷ Neither side would back down and on May 8 the fifty men did not report for transportation to Regina but announced that they intended to remain in the Saskatoon camp and would be at the dining hall for supper as usual at 5:30 p.m. Meetings were held at the camp during the day to solidify support for their position. The Superintendent called in the police and at 5:30, city police and RCMP, mounted and on foot, arrived at the camp. Saskatoon Police Chief G. M. Donald announced that the fifty men scheduled for transfer would be allowed to eat supper at the camp only if they agreed to board the train for Regina immediately afterwards. This they refused to do and a fight broke out between inmates and police in the waiting room of the dining hall. Simultaneously with this mounted police attempted to disperse a crowd of from 200 to 300 men in front of the dining hall and a riot ensued. "Wheeling their horses again and again, the policemen chased the fugitives all over the grounds, striking right and left."²⁸ During the riot Inspector L. J. Sampson of the RCMP was struck by a flying rock and fell from his horse; he was killed when the horse dragged him about 100 yards and his head struck a telephone pole. About thirty people were arrested during and after the riot. Of twenty-six people eventually brought to trial eleven were convicted of rioting, eleven of unlawful assembly and four were acquitted. Four of the twenty-two were also convicted of one or more charges of assaulting a police officer. A man charged with manslaughter in connection with Sampson's death was acquitted. The twenty-two convicted were sentenced to prison terms ranging from five to twenty-one months.

The reaction of the provincial government to the May 8 disturbance was to demand that the federal government provide more accommodation for the single unemployed in work camps and to attempt to whip up anti-Communist hysteria in the province. Premier Anderson wired to Hon. Wesley Gordon, federal Minister of Labour, the night of the riot relating the seriousness of the situation and stressing the urgency of getting at least 200 additional men into National Park camps.²⁹ The Deputy Minister of Labour telephoned General McNaughton the next day "to say he was in receipt of a rather hysterical telegram from Premier Anderson of Saskatchewan" and asked McNaughton if it would be possible to construct a relief camp at Dundurn without delay.³⁰ The DND agreed to this and arrangements were forthwith made with the provincial government for the transfer of men from the provincial camps as quickly as facilities could be made available at Dundurn. When Premier Anderson publicly announced the establishment of Dundurn relief

²⁷Archives of Saskatchewan, S.R.C., Letter (illegible signature) to Superintendent Woodward, May 7, 1933.

²⁸*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, May 9, 1933

²⁹P.A.C., Department of National Defence (DND), Unemployment Relief, Vol. 23, File No. 44, Anderson to Gordon, May 8, 1933.

³⁰P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 48, 331A, McNaughton memo., May 9, 1933.

camp he used the occasion to describe Saskatoon as the headquarters of Communism in the province and to rededicate himself to the destruction of Communism and all its works. "As long as I live in public life I shall do all in my power to drive those disciples of the 'Red Flag' out of Saskatoon and out of the province."³¹ The Premier announced that initial accommodation at Dundurn would be for about 600 men and that about two-thirds of these would be transferred from Saskatoon camp. "If the men from this camp refused to go (and he thought the majority would go) the city would be advised to furnish no relief and the police would be ordered to deal severely with begging and vagrancy."³²

Dundurn relief camp, known to the Department of National Defence as Project 44, was originally planned for a twelve month period with the intention that it would employ up to 1,000 of the physically fit single unemployed. The plans were later extended by successive orders-in-council and Dundurn developed into one of the half dozen largest relief camps in the country and was not closed down until July, 1936, when the entire relief camp system was abandoned by the federal government. Dundurn was used to service most of Saskatchewan and to accommodate most of the single unemployed who were not taken care of by the farm labour scheme and the National Park camps which continued to be operated by the Department of the Interior. Only two other small projects, each accommodating fifty to sixty people, were operated by the DND in Saskatchewan. One was a project at White Fox where men were employed at Forestry conservation and cutting ties for a railway spur at Dundurn. The other involved building a provincial airport at Ladder Lake. Dundurn was made capable of accommodating about 2,000 people and there were seldom fewer than 1500 during the peak winter months.

Much of what presently constitutes Dundurn military training camp was built by relief labour between May, 1933 and July, 1936. The construction done in this period included forty-five permanent buildings of a residential or service nature, several miles of road and a railway spur, a landing field and a rifle range, power and telephone lines, sewer and water lines and bridges. The total expenditure, including the cost of machinery and building materials, came to \$1,287,215.11. The number of man-days of relief provided was 1,043,984 which meant an average expenditure per man-day of \$1.23. It must be remembered that the \$1.23 per man-day included the cost of materials and machinery used, board and room, medical care, clothing and personal essentials and 20c *per diem* for labourers as well as salaries and expenses for supervisory staff and some specialized labour. Captain N. I. Fraser of the Royal Canadian Engineers, Officer in Charge of Dundurn Camp in September, 1936, estimated that the total cost of the construction and improvements, if they had been carried out by contract, at \$556,391.00.³³ That the government expenditure was over twice this amount (assuming Fraser's estimate to be reasonably accurate) is probably due partly to the fact that the work was done with the use of as little machinery as possible. It was DND policy

³¹Regina *Leader-Post*, May 11, 1933.

³²*Ibid.*

³³P.A.C., DND, Captain N. I. Fraser to N.D.H.Q., September 4, 1936.

to do as much work as possible by the most primitive methods so as to avoid heavy expenditures on machinery and maximize the number of man-days relief which could be provided.³⁴ The excavation of earth and gravel, clearing of brush and many other jobs which would ordinarily be done by machines was done largely by hand. The actual extra cost to the government of building things the primitive way, at least in the short run, was much less than might appear at first glance given that the government would have to provide relief in any case regardless of whether the men were working. The relief camp scheme was, in fact, used by the Department of National Defence to construct military facilities which the government would probably not have financed otherwise.³⁵ It did not add to the morale of the men to be doing make-work jobs at 20c a day, which they knew could be done more efficiently by machines and this was reflected in their work efficiency. There are no figures specifically for Dundurn camp but the labour efficiency of the relief camp workers across the country was found to be 48.7% that of ordinary labour employed at prevailing rates and it was found that overall efficiency dropped as time passed.³⁶

In Dundurn, as in camps across the country, the single unemployed were provided with food and lodging, medical care, necessary clothing when they had none of their own, and an issue of tobacco. They were required to work eight hours per day five and one half days per week. The pay of 20c *per diem* became one of the chief grievances of camp inmates and one of the major criticisms levelled at the camp system by the Opposition political parties, the press and the public. Where it was possible skilled tradesmen among the inmates were encouraged to work at their trade to maintain their proficiency but would be paid at the same rate as if they worked at common labour. In some instances skilled tradesmen from the locality who were married were employed at regular union rates. This was the case in Dundurn where a few skilled tradesmen from Saskatoon were employed. Where horses were needed nearby farmers might be hired as teamsters who would supply their own horses and this was also the case at Dundurn. Civilian engineers at Dundurn as elsewhere were hired from among unemployed engineers who were recommended by the Engineering Institute of Canada. Likewise, the College of Physicians and Surgeons were consulted about the hiring of medical personnel.

The senior supervisory staff at Dundurn consisted of both civilians and regular army personnel and the camp was run as a civilian operation with no military drill and no uniforms worn by members of the military. The junior supervisory personnel, under which category was included specialized workers like cooks, were chosen where possible from the inmates of the camp. They were paid a monthly salary which was somewhat more than 20c *per diem* but much less than would have been received in regular employment. Some idea of the proportion of staff to labourers can be seen from the plans proposed for Dundurn camp for the period April 1

³⁴John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), I, p. 271.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶G. M. LeFresne, *The Royal Twenty Centers: The Department of National Defence and Federal Unemployment Relief 1932-1936* (Unpublished B.A. thesis, Royal Military College, Kingston, 1962, p. 179.

to September 30, 1935.³⁷ These plans called for 1,711 labourers, 45 teamsters and 129 supervisory personnel for a total of 1885 men. Included among the supervisory personnel were 4 foremen, 18-sub-foremen, 51 gang bosses and 19 cooks. Also included in this category were four truck drivers, a machinist and a tractor operator. Examples of monthly salaries paid to junior supervisory staff were: Cookee—\$10; gang boss—class I—\$25; cook, Class IV—\$25; clerk, Class III—\$20; gang boss, class II—\$10; first aid man—\$10.

The fact that the relief camp system was operated under the Department of National Defence meant that the camps were probably run more efficiently and at less cost to the government than might have been the case otherwise. The use of army officers at regular army pay as administrators (and they would have been paid anyway if there had been no relief camp scheme) meant a financial saving. The experience of DND in handling large numbers of men under circumstances similar to relief camps was also a factor adding to efficiency. There was also generally less crude political patronage in terms of hiring personnel and granting contracts largely because the system was administered under the supervision of the Chief of the General Staff and National Defence Headquarters (N.D.H.Q.) which minimized interference from party politicians. Career army officers had a vested interest in not unduly favoring either of the two major political parties. There was, however, some patronage in letting contracts for supplies and services. Lists of businesses eligible to bid for contracts were supplied by F. R. MacMillan, M.P. for Saskatoon who occasionally made suggestions on the hiring of personnel as well.³⁸ After the change of government in 1935 the same privileges were extended to A. MacG. Young and D. A. McNiven, M.P.'s for Saskatoon and Regina respectively.³⁹

There were also many administrative problems encountered at Dundurn camp including the incompetence of some members of the senior supervisory staff and corrupt practices on the part of others. An investigation by the DND and RCMP in April and May, 1934, indicated that rations had been stolen and that the Sergeant in charge of Fuel, Light, Rations, and Mechanical Transport at the camp had defrauded the government of \$1,001.10 by arranging, in conjunction with the employees of a Saskatoon produce company, payment for 100,110 pounds of potatoes which were never delivered.⁴⁰ The Sergeant was discharged and convicted in civilian court of defrauding the public. The investigation also revealed inadequate accounting procedures by camp officials. On January 4, 1935, a Court of Inquiry composed of the Quartermaster General and the District Accountant of Military District 12 (headquarters at Regina) conducted an inquiry at Dundurn camp into irregularities concerning the preparation of allowance (wage) sheets for the project.⁴¹ It was

³⁷P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, H.Q. File 1376-11-10-1, undated.

³⁸P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Vol. 155, F. R. MacMillan, M.P. to Col. D. M. Sutherland (Minister of Defence), May 7, 1934.

³⁹P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Vol. 158, Quartermaster General to D.O.C. 12 November 16, 1935.

⁴⁰P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Vol. 168.

⁴¹P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Project 44, Proceedings of Court of Inquiry.

discovered that the officer in charge of administration who was also the camp accountant had, in collaboration with a clerk, been collecting pay in the name of labourers who were no longer at the camp. The amount involved was only \$39, and the guilty parties had not kept the money personally but had used it to cover up for funds which had been stolen from the petty cash fund because of the carelessness of the Accountant. The Court of Inquiry found the Accountant and the clerk responsible for the irregularities and the Camp Superintendent, Captain E. J. FitzHenry, negligent in his duties because he had known of previous irregularities but had not reported them.

What was important about the Court of Inquiry and follow-up investigations was not the minor irregularities uncovered but the evidence of much more widespread incompetence. A report from Brigadier H. E. Boak, District Officer Commanding of M.D. 12, to the Adjutant-General on January 17, 1935, was extremely critical of the administration of the camp.⁴² Boak claimed that FitzHenry was incompetent and that the discipline and administration of the supervisory staff was greatly inferior to what it should be. He recommended that FitzHenry be relieved of his duties and that other administrative personnel, excepting the Medical Assistant, be retained pending a test of how they operated under a new Superintendent. FitzHenry was replaced as Superintendent and some other positions were changed by demotion of the occupants and matters seemed to improve somewhat, at least temporarily.

One of the serious problems at Dundurn, and a cause of much dissatisfaction among the inmates, was the quality of medical care provided. There was a 24-bed hospital at the camp designed to be used for minor illness, minor surgery and convalescence, with the more serious cases being handled by Saskatoon hospitals and doctors who then billed the DND for their services. It was intended that there would be a full time doctor at the camp but the DND had great difficulty obtaining one at the salary they were prepared to pay. The Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons were of little assistance in this regard and appeared more interested in assuring that any doctor hired must, even if fully qualified elsewhere be registered with the College and pay the \$100 registration fee.⁴³ The result was that for most of the time until February, 1935, the camp was serviced by a part time doctor who had a full time practice elsewhere. Between visits by this part-time doctor the camp hospital was left in charge of a non-qualified Medical Assistant whom DND officials knew to be incompetent.⁴⁴ "The hospital [before March 1, 1935] was not clean and was badly run; there was excessive consumption of drugs and rubbing alcohol, and I received numerous complaints affecting the interior economy of the hospital."⁴⁵ The DND might have resolved the situation in July, 1934, when they

⁴²P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Project 44, Brig. H. E. Boak, D.O.C. of M.D. 12, to Adjutant-General, Jan. 17, 1935.

⁴³P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Vol. 167. Young to Blair, March 1, 1935, and Young to D.O.C. 12, June 2, 1933. See also File H.Q. 1376-11-10-2 Volume 1 on medical arrangements in Vol. 167.

⁴⁴P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Project 44, H. E. Boak to Adjutant-General February 14, 1935.

⁴⁵P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Vol. 167, D.O.C. 12 to Adjutant-General, December 4, 1935.

had a chance to hire Dr. Phyllis L. Steele but she was rejected by the Director General of Medical Services on the grounds that a woman would be inappropriate.⁴⁶ The Medical Assistant was not fired until January, 1935, and then the grounds given were not medical incompetence but "using obscene and threatening language to the Camp Superintendent."⁴⁷ The situation improved on February 1, 1935, with the appointment of Dr. W. K. Blair who became the full-time doctor until he resigned to accept another position on December 7, 1935. After some difficulty and delay another full time doctor was appointed and remained until May 20, 1936, by which time the relief camps were in the process of being closed down.

Unrest among inmates in the DND relief camps was general across the country from the spring of 1933. A chart compiled by General McNaughton indicated that between June 27, 1933, and March 31, 1934, there were 57 disturbances in relief camps, which were large enough to be reported to N.D.H.Q. in Ottawa.⁴⁸ One large camp, Long Branch in Ontario, had to be closed and the nearly 700 inmates discharged because they refused to work and the supervisory staff could not maintain control. In the same period at least 21 inmates received prison sentences resulting from their involvement in the disturbances. Another of McNaughton's charts reveals that up to December 31, 1933, a total of 3,379 men (including the whole Long Branch camp) had been expelled from the camps for disciplinary reasons.⁴⁹

As people were expelled from the camps they went back to the cities where they would often demand relief from the municipal authorities and if this was refused would sometimes be maintained through the efforts of the unemployed associations. They could be imprisoned for up to six months for vagrancy but as their numbers increased the provincial authorities discouraged the courts from imposing long sentences because this would mean more expense to the province and virtually turn the gaols into relief camps. General McNaughton complained of what he considered to be the undue leniency of the courts and argued that they should impose maximum penalties as a deterrent but this policy was seldom followed.⁵⁰ The federal government even prepared legislation and plans for special prison camps known as "Camps of Discipline" for the incarceration of agitators and people who did not co-operate with relief officials.⁵¹ The intention was that these prison camps would be established in any province where they were requested by provincial Order-in-Council.⁵² This request was never made and the country was spared establishment of Camps of Discipline. What the situation revealed, however, was the length to which the federal government was prepared to go and the fact that the DND relief camps were far from successful as a stabilizing political influence. The struggle of the single unemployed for a better deal had merely been transferred from the cities to the relief camps.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, District Medical Officer of M.D. 12 to Director General of Medical Services N.D.H.Q., July 24, 1934, and the reply of D.G.M.S. to D.M.O. 12, July 31, 1934.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, D.O.C. 12 to A.G., December 4, 1935.

⁴⁸P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, File 359 (Vol. I).

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Series II, Vol. 57. McNaughton to A. E. Millar, March 2, 1934.

⁵¹P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 41, File 314 (Vol. 1).

⁵²*Ibid.*, Vol. 41, File 314 and File 359 (Vol. 1).

An analysis of why the DND relief camps were unpopular among a large segment of the single unemployed should begin with an examination of the rules and regulations which N.D.H.Q. insisted be strictly enforced in all camps. These rules were extremely authoritarian and, in effect, deprived camp residents of their most elementary civil rights. Section 353 of the Policy and Instructions for the administration of Unemployment Relief Camps for Single Homeless and Unemployed Men reads as follows:⁵³

The following rules regarding complaints will be observed:

(a) One of the fundamental and most necessary rules for the administration of Unemployment Relief Camps is to forbid anything bearing the appearance of combination to obtain redress of alleged grievances. Appeals for redress by means of any document bearing the signature of more than one complainant, or by organized committees combining to make a complaint, are strictly forbidden.

(b) If any man has a complaint or accusation to bring against a member of the supervisory or administrative staff, such complaint should be laid before the Camp Foreman, who, if necessary, will transmit it to District Headquarters or Camp Superintendent.

(c) If the Camp Foreman neglects or refuses to attend to a complaint, the complainant may bring the matter to the notice of the District Headquarters or Camp Superintendent.

(d) The Department will not countenance any steps to bring accusations before the tribunal of public opinion, either by speeches, or letters inserted in the newspapers, by men actively employed on Relief Work. Such a proceeding is a glaring violation of the rules and shows a contempt for properly constituted authority.

(e) It is the duty of the Camp Foreman to investigate all complaints, and, when receiving complaints for transmission to superior authority, to point out to the parties concerned any irregularity in the means they employ in seeking redress. In hearing complaints or statements, etc., Camp Foreman are advised to invariably have another member of the Supervisory Staff present as a witness to all proceedings. The complaint, when forwarded to District Headquarters or Camp Superintendent, is to be accompanied by a statement and recommendation if any, of the Camp Foreman.

(f) No application or complaint should ever be made to the Civil Power, except through the Camp Foreman or with his sanction.

The above quoted rules were strictly enforced and supervisory personnel who disregarded them were promptly dismissed. Anyone refusing to work, disobeying the rules or deemed an agitator could be "discharged for cause" whereupon he would be blacklisted from all government camps and often denied relief in the cities as well. Men expelled from the camps were given no transportation back to the city and this was an added incentive for good behaviour, especially during the winter months. The rules were invariably defended by R. B. Bennett and his Ministers on the grounds that they were no stricter than those which would apply in "any well conducted lumber camp" which perhaps reveals something about their concepts of the proper relationship between capital and labour. The other argument used constantly by government leaders, and which they knew to be true only in the

⁵³P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Policy and Instructions for the Administration of Unemployment Relief Camps for Single Homeless and Unemployed Men.

most legalistic sense, was that the camps were not compulsory and men who were dissatisfied could leave at any time.

The actual physical conditions in the camps, and this was particularly true of Dundurn, compared favorably with privately operated work camps of the time and were frequently better in terms of sanitary conditions. The same was true of the food (based on the standard army ration) which was sufficient to maintain the men in a healthy condition though good food was sometimes ruined by poor cooks and there were many complaints about both the quality and the quantity of the food. The food costs per man-day were exceptionally low, ranging from 19c to 22c, and for a small additional cost the DND could have improved upon the army ration. Many of the men were familiar with camps run by the Department of the Interior where the food was generally greater in quantity and of better quality and it was a frequent demand of inmates that the DND camps be brought up to these standards. General McNaughton, obsessed with the need for economy, attempted to solve the problem by complaining of the "unnecessary extravagance" of the Department of the Interior camps and requesting that they reduce their rations to conform with DND standards.⁵⁴ It was also the policy of N.D.H.Q. that, if extras were to be provided for special occasions such as Christmas, it would have to be done either by donations from the public or by cutting regular rations so as to accumulate some surplus.

The primary cause of dissatisfaction in the camps was not, however, the petty stinginess of the DND or the condition of the physical facilities though these were often the type of specific grievances which would provoke a strike or a demonstration. The fundamental reason for unrest and militant action, plain to anyone except the federal government by 1935, was the sense of indignation felt by the men at the denial of their rights and the waste of their lives.⁵⁵ A large percentage of camp residents were men in their early twenties who, under normal circumstances, would have looked forward to obtaining jobs, marrying and raising families. At a time when they were just getting started in adult life there were no jobs available and the government of the day, unable or unwilling to provide them with work and wages, pushed them aside and decreed that they should be satisfied to live in work camps at twenty cents a day and with few rights and little hope. This might have been tolerated for a time but as the "temporary" camps continued for months and then years (provincial camps had been established in 1930) and it appeared they might become permanent, the indignation of the single unemployed increased—directed by the more politically sophisticated among them and spurred on by the arrogance of the authorities. The relief camps became fertile areas for militant organizers and perhaps the most dedicated organizers in the country were the supporters of the Relief Camp Workers' Union, one of the many branches of the Workers' Unity League.

⁵⁴P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, File 377.

⁵⁵P.A.C., *Bennett Papers*, Microfilm pp. 495782-88. By 1935 Bennett was receiving dozens of submissions and letters from the most respectable sources on what the men and the public thought of the camps.

The amount and intensity of unrest in Dundurn relief camp appears to have been, until the prolonged strike of December, 1935, on a lesser scale than in most Alberta and British Columbia camps. One of the reasons for this was because Dundurn was a permanent militia camp and as facilities were constructed they could be used by the relief workers. The accommodation, dining, recreational and other facilities were designed as permanent structures and were greatly superior to those in most camps where the buildings were temporary and of a more rudimentary kind. The recreational program was, for instance, one of the best in the relief camp system and athletic teams from the camp often competed in Saskatoon and surrounding towns. This kind of program helped to maintain the morale of the men. Another factor was that many of the men could find employment on farms for perhaps a month in the spring and another month in the autumn and then return to the camp. This helped to relieve the tedium and to provide the men with some extra pocket money. Dundurn, unlike many DND camps, was not in an isolated wilderness area and had some social intercourse with the surrounding communities. At the same time it was far enough from Saskatoon that collaboration with radical unemployed associations in that city was difficult. Dundurn was also easy to police because of it being the only major DND camp in the province. In British Columbia agitators sometimes entered camps under assumed names after they had been blacklisted. Once an agitator was expelled from Dundurn he was neutralized in Saskatchewan outside of the cities.

The authorities kept a watchful eye on Dundurn with the help of the RCMP from Hanley and Saskatoon and by means of camp constables appointed to patrol the area and police spies who were placed among the men. Most militants and potential militants were spotted and expelled before trouble could erupt. On August 14, 1933, the regular report from M.D. 12 to the Adjutant-General noted that discipline was good, and "all cases of insubordination, refusal to work, etc., have met with instant dismissal from the camp."⁵⁶ The report of November 20, 1933, stated that a Communist organization had attempted to introduce agitators into the camp but the situation had been dealt with by police authorities. This report also mentioned a rumour that there was a plot to burn down the entire camp so that it could not be resurrected before winter and the men could go into Saskatoon but concluded that there was no organization within the camp capable of such a feat. Dismissal for cause appears to have been used frequently during the initial period of the camp. From May to December 31, 1933, there were 115 inmates expelled for disciplinary reasons.⁵⁷ Insubordination could take many forms. One man was dismissed when the supervisors found a socialist book among his belongings. The vigilance of the authorities combined with other factors seems to have kept the camp free of major disturbances for the first two years of its existence and the inmates appear to have had some antipathy to radicals. A letter from Attorney-General M. A. MacPherson to R. B. Bennett on February 12, 1934, mentions the latest group of alleged agitators who were put out of the camp

⁵⁶P.A.C., DND, Unemployment Relief, Project 44, D.O.C. to A.G., August 14, 1933.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, Vol. 47, File 328.

a few weeks previously and relates a story told to him by Assistant Commissioner Wood of the RCMP about a police spy who posed as a Communist and was told by the inmates that if he did not keep quiet they would put him out of the camp themselves. MacPherson concludes in a burst of optimism. "I understand there is some opposition to the camps in Ontario, but certainly this story which is absolutely true, indicates that we are not having any difficulty at Dundurn and that the men there are most appreciative."⁵⁸

As time went on dissatisfaction increased at Dundurn as it did almost everywhere and during the On-to-Ottawa Trek of June 1935 about 200 inmates left Dundurn camp to join the trekkers in Regina. The walkout from Dundurn was organized mainly by members of the Trek indicating the lack of organization within the camp itself. A delegation from Regina addressed a meeting of Dundurn inmates adjacent to the camp on June 15. The 200 men left the camp on June 18 in an exceptionally quiet manner by legally discharging themselves as was their right under the regulations.⁵⁹ They proceeded to Saskatoon and were transported to Regina in trucks hired by their supporters. The Dundurn recruits played no prominent part in the events surrounding the Trek in Regina. They did not comprise a unit by themselves but were dispersed among the existing units to allow them to learn the tight discipline, which was a notable feature of the Trek, from the seasoned veterans from British Columbia. The Dundurn trekkers of 1935 do not appear to have had a list of grievances specific to Dundurn to add to the grievances common to all camps which were included in the list of demands publicized by the On-to-Ottawa Trekkers. These demands included:⁶⁰

1. Work and wages at a minimum rate of 50c per hour for unskilled workers and trade union rates for all skilled work.
2. That all camp workers be covered by the Workmen's Compensation Act and adequate first aid supplies be carried on the job at all times.
3. That the camps be removed from the control of the DND and all blacklisting be abolished.
4. That democratically elected committees be recognized in every camp.
5. That there be instituted a system on non-contributory unemployment insurance.

When the Trek was disbanded in Regina after the riot of July 1, the Dundurn recruits returned to their homes or to the camp according to the agreement worked out with the provincial and federal governments.

During the months from July to December, 1935, unrest among the unemployed in Saskatchewan, inside and outside of Dundurn camp, appears to have been building up. The organized unemployed in the cities objected to attempts to force them to accept lower than standard wages for farm harvesting work or be cut off relief and the struggle against this helped to develop contacts between

⁵⁸P.A.C., *Bennett Papers*, Microfilm page nos. 495029-30, M. A. MacPherson to R. B. Bennett, February 12, 1934.

⁵⁹P.A.C., *McNaughton Papers*, Vol. 61, File 380 B. An outline of the events of the On-to-Ottawa Trek.

⁶⁰P.A.C., *Manion Papers*, Minutes of meeting of Manion and Weir with Evans.

unemployed in the cities and the single unemployed in Dundurn camp and on farms. Many of the single men who took part in protests over this issue in August would be back in the Dundurn camp in late autumn and more inclined to be militant than previously. There was, during the summer and fall of 1935, considerable public discussion of conditions in Dundurn camp and criticisms by organizations like the United Farmers of Canada.⁶¹

One of the grievances of the men in Dundurn, or in most camps, was the procedure for voting in federal elections. Under existing electoral procedures a majority of inmates in relief camps were, in effect, disfranchised because they had not lived in the camps for a long enough consecutive period to meet residential qualifications (most men leaving camps for varying periods during the summer months) and the government refused, despite repeated attempts by the Opposition and demands by the Relief Camp Workers' Union to extend the right of absentee voting to relief camp inmates so that they could cast ballots for candidates in their home constituencies.⁶² The right to vote had been one of the chief demands of the On-to-Ottawa Trekkers in June and was an issue which was of particular interest to Dundurn inmates because of the federal election campaign and the fact that they had been allowed to vote in the 1934 provincial election. This and other issues added to the resentment against the authoritarianism of the camp system and made it possible for the Relief Camp Workers' Union (R.C.W.U.) to become organized in a really effective manner for the first time in Dundurn camp.

Growing unrest among Dundurn inmates and the resulting increase in strength of the R.C.W.U. was reflected in a major strike which began on December 12, 1935, and was not completely terminated until January 23, 1936. For at least four days the strike was actively supported by about 800 of the 1526 men on strength and the authorities lost effective control of the camp for about 10 days.⁶³ The strike was set off spontaneously when the camp authorities attempted to evict two young men, aged 18 and 19, on grounds of insubordination and refusal to obey camp regulations. They resisted eviction and about seventy men congregated to prevent their removal. On December 13 warrants were issued for the arrest of the two men for allegedly assaulting members of the supervisory staff while resisting eviction. They took refuge in one of the huts where their supporters refused to give them up and 800 of the camp inmates came out on strike in their support and began picketing so that the work of the entire camp ground to a halt.

What had begun as a spontaneous protest quickly became a well organized strike with the R.C.W.U. playing a prominent role. Camp authorities claimed that about 50% of the men could be persuaded to work but were prevented from doing so by pickets and that at least 100 police would be needed to protect any of the men who went back to their jobs. As it turned out some of the men did go back to work on December 14 with no violence reported but over half of the men

⁶¹Regina *Leader-Post*, August 15, 1935.

⁶²*House of Commons Debates* 1935, Vol. II, pp. 1124-25, 672, 980-88, February 11, 1935.

⁶³The account of this strike is based on a diary of the strike kept by the C.G.S. as well as memos and correspondence in DND Papers, Unemployment Relief, Vol. 168.

stayed out until December 17 and there were still 596 reported on strike on December 20 with many of those who were working employed at the hospital or on camp fatigue by consent of the strikers. The authorities were faced with a situation where they either had to make concessions or resort to the use of police force which would have almost certainly resulted in bloodshed.

There was a similarity between the situation in Dundurn camp in December and the situation in Regina which preceded the Riot of July 1 in that the provincial government authorities took a conciliatory attitude towards the strikers. The difference was that the government at Ottawa had changed hands and was more willing to listen to the advice of the provincial government. Had the situation been left to the discretion of DND officials there would almost certainly have been bloodshed at Dundurn in December. On December 13 the strikers decided that they would not return to work until the two men in question had been reinstated and the Superintendent agreed to negotiate grievances concerning the food, the tobacco issue and the 20c *per diem* allowance. The strike leaders also requested a telephone conversation with Saskatchewan Attorney-General Davis, who was at that time in Ottawa, indicating that they had more faith in the provincial than in the federal and particularly the DND authorities. Davis played a key role in how the strike was handled because of his authority over the police. On December 13 Davis ordered the RCMP not to attempt to forcibly arrest the two men or to take any other action until they had fully investigated the situation.

After a meeting between Davis and the Minister of Defence it was decided to send the Rigg Committee, previously appointed by the federal government to investigate and report upon the relief camp system, to Dundurn to attempt to negotiate a settlement with the men.⁶⁴ The Committee returned from Alberta where they had been investigating camps and began negotiations with strike leaders at Dundurn camp on December 15. The strike committee stood firm on its demands that the two men be reinstated and the Rigg Committee, over the objections of the Superintendent, suggested that this might be a suitable compromise. A mass meeting of 100 men was addressed on the night of December 15 by Rigg and by John Young of Saskatoon on behalf of the R.C.W.U. and the Workers' Unity League but no decision was made on the Rigg proposals. On December 16 General Ashton, C.G.S., urged the Minister of Defence not to reinstate the men or make any other concession even if it meant using force to restore order.⁶⁵ On the same day Brigadier Boak, D.O.C. 12, suggested swearing in 150 special constables from the men within the camp who opposed the strike and using them to restore order or as an alternative bringing in a large force of RCMP on the railway spur by night. On the morning of December 16, the Rigg Committee had presented proposals for ending the strike to a mass meeting of 700 strikers. These proposals included the reinstatement of the two men and the promise that the committee would include the men's complaints in their report to the government on the camp system as a whole. This was

⁶⁴Chaired by R. E. Rigg, senior civil servant with Department of Labour.

⁶⁵General Ashton to Minister of Defence, December 16, 1935. Vol. 168, DND.

rejected by the mass meeting and a new list of demands were presented, which included:

1. Investigation of the canteens and the monthly reports signed by a chartered accountant,
2. Allowances on days when work could not be done,
3. Retaining of sufficient clothing when leaving camp,
4. Demotion of straw bosses and foreman when there was just cause,
5. A man on trial (presumably for dismissal with cause) should be notified and allowed to bring witnesses,
6. No man over 55 to go to work unless he wants to.
7. Better food facilities and investigation of cooks,
8. New clothing instead of second-hand,
9. Free cigarette papers with tobacco issue,
10. Camps pay fare of individuals with just reason to leave camps.

The Rigg Committee left the camp failing to reach a settlement and recommended that no further concessions be granted on the grounds that it would undermine the authorities of the camp supervisors and encourage organized resistance elsewhere.

The DND officials proceeded with preparation to use force. On December 18, Brigadier Boak informed Attorney-General Davis that he had been instructed to restore order and requested that the necessary police be provided by dawn on December 19. The Attorney-General declined to send police and on December 19 Boak began applying pressure by referring to the Federal-Provincial Agreement under the Relief Act, under which the Province had agreed to supply police in the event of disturbances. Boak also argued that the regular pre-Christmas allowances should be paid on December 20 and it was unsafe to bring the cash to the camp without a large police guard. Simultaneously with this, the C.G.S. was bringing pressure on his Minister in Ottawa. The Attorney-General still refused to send police and argued that the extent of the strike was gradually declining anyway. The Chairman of the Strike Committee had, in fact, deserted the strike and gone back to work after the Rigg proposals were rejected and all necessary work around the camp was being done. Only the non-essential work such as construction was still included in the strike which now involved about 675 men. The rejections of the Rigg Committee proposals had caused a split in the strikers. It was pointed out that the strike had been free of violence and the Acting Attorney-General cautioned the DND against provoking violence. "May I recall to you the riots experienced at Estevan, Saskatoon, and Regina and urge upon you that you seriously reconsider the necessity of immediate police action before a move is made which may result in similar consequences."⁶⁶

The DND, having ruled out further significant concessions to the men, proceeded to exert further pressure on both the men and the Attorney-General. On December 20 the men who were still on strike were informed that those who returned

⁶⁶Vol. 168, DND, J. W. Estey (Acting Attorney-General) to Brig.-General H. E. Boak, December 19, 1935.

to work immediately would not suffer the deductions from pay commonly used in relief camps to compel men to work. Under this system men who refused to work were charged 60c *per diem* for board and room for each day they spent in camp and this was deducted from their pay. While offering to free the men from this penalty the DND refused to pay the 20c *per diem* to men who had been on strike. The Attorney-General was informed that this might cause a disturbance and police would be needed. A mass meeting of 800 men rejected the new proposal but more men did return to work and on December 21 there remained only 474 actually on strike. In keeping with the policy of the strike committee an undetermined number of strike supporters were working at camp fatigue duties. The project was still out of the control of the authorities in that a large proportion of the men refused to work and yet had to be fed and could not be ejected until the provincial government agreed to send the necessary police. The DND authorities kept up pressure on the federal Ministers and the provincial government for forcible action. Boak again demanded that police be supplied under the federal-provincial agreement and this time set the latest possible date for police action at December 23.

The provincial government still refused to send police and began working on plans to transfer men to Prince Albert National Park where they could be accommodated in Department of Interior facilities. By December 23, the strike was beginning to lose much of its strength anyway. Men who had relatives nearby were taking Christmas leave, a few were returning to work and on some days it was too cold for anyone to work so that a strike became less relevant. By December 27 only 140 men were listed as being on strike and by then the DND officials had decided to wait until the number declined more and then pressure the Attorney-General into sending police when the number of strikers had reached an irreducible minimum. By now arrangements had also been made to transfer up to 500 men to National Park camps on a voluntary basis. It was thought that some men who objected to Dundurn camp would not object to a National Park camp where conditions were generally somewhat better and discipline less rigid. The transfer to the National Parks camps began in early January, 1936. Only men in particularly good physical condition or with some bush experience were chosen for these camps and of 260 who volunteered on January 7 the Superintendent of National Parks, who was at the camp to choose them personally, rejected 100. By now only 102 men were on strike and more pressure was applied to the Attorney-General to use force. He still refused and worked out an agreement whereby about 60 of the remaining 100 agreed to go to Prince Albert National Park. Part of the agreement was that the accrued board and room of 60c *per diem* would be dropped and that those men who had gone to work at Dundurn after the deadline for abrogation of accrued charges (December 21) would also have their charges dropped and would not have to work them off. The only other concession from DND was that strikers refusing to go back and who would leave camp voluntarily would be given transportation back to the point from which they were admitted to Dundurn. A few left camp under this agreement. By January 16 the Attorney-General had agreed to use force if necessary to get the remaining strikers evicted if they did not return to work or leave voluntarily. Police arrived in the camp on January 22 and of

40 men still on strike 39 returned to work and one was evicted. On January 23 sixteen of those who returned to work the previous day were evicted for refusing to perform the normal amount of work.

The long December-January strike revealed a number of things about the way the DND chose to operate relief camps and about how the single unemployed viewed life in the camp. The DND made no concessions of significance other than agreeing to reinstate the two men whose dismissal had provoked the strike and agreed to this only under pressure from the Rigg Committee and the provincial government. Later they made the other minor concessions under pressure from the provincial authorities and perhaps federal Ministers. They made no concessions on the list of demands of the camp workers mainly on the grounds that the men should never gain anything by organization and militancy. The relief camp inmates, as the regulations clearly stated, had no rights except those decreed by the Department of National Defence. The other notable thing about the DND handling of the strike was the insistence upon the use of force when it was plain that the strike could be settled and even defeated, as it eventually was, by other means.

The fundamental causes of the strike are equally revealing. The Rigg Committee report looked mainly at the superficial causes, citing such things as Communist agitation and too many people in one camp, though their report on the camps as a whole saw them as less than desirable institutions which should be closed down as soon as possible. Nor were the primary causes individual grievances of a minor nature such as inadequate dining facilities, a lack of cigarette papers and other annoyances. These things merely added to frustrations and were not important enough in themselves to spark a strike. An examination of the contents of *The Agitator*, official organ of the R.C.W.U., which was illicitly distributed fairly regularly in Dundurn camp in the winter of 1935-1936 and was designed for use in the Dundurn camp only shows that very little attention was paid to grievances about food, clothing, cigarette papers, etc., though they were mentioned. Most of the space was devoted to attacks on the indignity of working for 20c a day, demands for work and wages and attacks on the entire camp system.⁶⁷ When the strike was provoked by the attempted eviction of two men the strikers had no list of demands. The list was produced later when the authorities agreed to reinstate the two men and it appeared the strike might be settled. A *Star-Phoenix* reporter who covered the strike and interviewed many of the men found that their grievances were more general than specific. "But whether an acquiescence to all their demands would settle the trouble is doubtful. They are rebelling against the condition of society in and out of the camps."⁶⁸ By 1935 men in the camps did not need specific reasons for rebelling. The fact that they were in the camps was enough in itself.

After the end of the strike in January, 1936, there were no more major disturbances at Dundurn camp though men continued to be "dismissed for cause" at frequent intervals. The new Liberal government instituted a policy of bringing the

⁶⁷DND, Vol. 168.

⁶⁸Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, December 27, 1935.

camps more directly under the Department of Labour. Previously the Labour Minister had been nominally in charge of the camps but the N.D.H.Q. had been given a blank cheque for their administration and all the major decisions were made by Order-in-Council on the advice of the Chief of the General Staff. Few significant changes were made under the new regime. One change was that the pay for laborers was raised to 50c *per diem* on March 1, 1936. Two months later the camps were in the process of closing down altogether as had been suggested in the Rigg report. Nearly all the camps including Dundurn were closed down by June 30, 1936. Most of the Dundurn inmates found jobs, though often only temporarily, on farms or with extra gangs on the railways as part of a plan worked out by the federal and provincial governments. In the autumn of 1936 the struggle was continued in the cities.

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Edgar Dewdney and the Aftermath of the Rebellion¹

THE rebellion of 1885 had disrupted the whole North-West and brought unrest and uneasiness to the settlers of the area. However, the rebellion had also brought commerce and ready cash into the area, alleviating for the time being many of the ills of the settlers. The restoration of peace and order, it was hoped, would bring much needed new settlers. Edgar Dewdney's task as Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories was to restore confidence in the peace and progress of the territory. His task as Indian Commissioner for the same area was to re-establish governmental authority over the Indians, to ensure that rebellion would not recur and to resume the policy of agricultural development on the reserves. The leaders and participants in the rebellion had to be punished as a deterrent to any who would follow their course, and as a guarantee to the new and prospective settlers that such rebellion would not be tolerated. This process was to occupy some time since the underlying causes of discontent had not been removed, and rumours of new outbreaks persisted. The first step in this direction was the trial of those accused of responsibility for the uprising.

The trial of Louis Riel began in Regina on July 20, sentence being passed on August 1, 1885. The jury found him guilty of high treason but recommended that mercy be extended to him. There was no mercy available, for Judge Richardson sentenced Riel to be hanged, a sentence which Dewdney approved. "Riel came out in his true light on making his final speech," Dewdney wrote to the Prime Minister. "He just showed that he was a consummate villain [sic]—I hope sincerely that he will be hanged; he is too dangerous a man to have a chance of being loose on society."² Sir John replied, "The conviction of Riel is satisfactory."³ Hayter Reed, the assistant Indian Commissioner whose position took him throughout the territory, agreed on the punishment of Riel. "I trust Riel will swing, for if he does not, it will have a great prejudicial effect on the minds of the Indians."⁴

After several reprieves to consider the question of his sanity, the law was allowed to take its course and Riel was hanged November 16, 1885. A rash of pamphlets and writings condemning the hanging appeared in the eastern press as well as in predominantly Métis areas in the Territories. The clerk of the Territorial Council, A. E. Forget, was alienated by this event. Dewdney said that he could no

¹This article is adapted from Chapter IX of the author's unpublished M.A. thesis, "Edgar Dewdney, Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, 1879-1888," University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, 1969.

²Archives of Saskatchewan, *Macdonald Papers*, Duplicates of the Dewdney, Macdonald correspondence held in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Letter, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 7, 1885, p. 346.

³Glenbow Foundation, Calgary, Alta., *Dewdney Papers*, 1861-1926, Vol. III, August 17, 1885, p. 570.

⁴*Macdonald Papers*, Reed to Dewdney, August 31, 1885, p. 367.



Edgar Dewdney

longer trust Forget after the hanging.⁵ However, most of the settlers in the Territories, motivated by fear of Indian massacres, approved of Riel's death. It is likely that the Territorial Council was urged by Dewdney to pass a resolution approving of the hanging of Riel, for the preamble to the resolution mentioned meetings in different parts of the Dominion which had condemned the Dominion Government. Only a dedicated Conservative would have worried about this aspect of the situation. The Territorial interest in effective disposal of Riel was also apparent in the preamble to the resolution, passed December 12, 1885:

Whereas the peace, progress and prosperity of these Territories would have been jeopardized and a feeling of insecurity would have existed among the settlers had the man . . . who had not shrunk from the terrible responsibilities of inciting the Half-Breeds and Indians to armed insurrection, been permitted to escape the just penalty of his misdeeds; . . . Therefore this Council desires to place on Record its endorsement of the action of the Dominion Government in allowing the sentence of the Court to be carried into effect.⁶

Father André, spiritual adviser to Riel, applied to Dewdney for Riel's body after the hanging, but Dewdney insisted that the law must be observed and the body buried within the precincts of the jail.⁷ Father André produced a will which Riel had made, appointing him executor of the estate. This was an order to which Dewdney felt that he must accede, but he was much afraid of the consequences. He reported that Orangemen had a scheme to take the body away, perhaps to mutilate it; others might take it to Quebec to stir up trouble there.⁸ However, Pascal Bonneau, a strong Conservative and friend of Riel's who had been suggested as a guard for Riel's body, had told him "that after a few days he could take the body up, put it on the train and take it to St. Boniface, and no one know anything about it."⁹ Secrecy was observed in the removal of Riel's remains and no trouble on this account developed in the Territories.

The trials of the other participants in the rebellion were conducted at Regina and Battleford, and extended into the autumn. Although Dewdney was in favor of the death penalty for Riel, he sought clemency for the remainder of the offenders. "It is my own most earnest desire to prevent the further effusion of blood if by any means possible," he wrote.¹⁰ He felt that W. H. Jackson, Riel's secretary, was "crazy"¹¹ and should therefore be absolved of responsibility. Hon. A. Campbell, Minister of Justice, wrote to the prosecuting lawyers that the Government would be satisfied if "thirty or forty leading half-breeds or white men and leading Indians" were found guilty.¹² In all there were forty-six half-breeds, eighty-one Indians and

⁵*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. III, Dewdney to Macdonald, April 12, 1886, p. 614.

⁶North-West Territories, *Journals of the Council of the North-West Territories of Canada, 1877-1887*. (Hereafter cited as *J.C. N.W.T.*), Session of 1885, p. 61.

⁷*Macdonald Papers*, Telegram, Dewdney to Macdonald, November 16, 1885, p. 403.

⁸*Ibid.*, Dewdney to Macdonald, November 18, 1885, p. 409.

⁹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Dewdney to Macdonald, November 18, 1885, p. 404.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Dewdney to Macdonald, June 6, 1885, p. 318.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹²Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, (House of Commons), (Hereafter cited as *S.P.*), 1880, No. 4, "Annual Report of the Department of Justice," Letter, June 20, 1885, p. 12.

two whites held for trial.¹³ Forty-four of the Indians were convicted on various charges, mainly treason-felony,¹⁴ eleven being condemned to be hanged, although three were reprieved; chiefs Big Bear and Poundmaker received three-year sentences which were reduced after one year; eighteen of the half-breeds were sentenced to terms varying from one to seven years; the two white men were discharged.¹⁵

Dewdney was worried about the sentencing of Poundmaker as he was the adopted son of Crowfoot, the powerful chief of the Blackfoot tribe. Crowfoot had written to Dewdney requesting that Poundmaker be pardoned.¹⁶ Dewdney had also been informed that there would be trouble if Poundmaker were hanged.¹⁷ He wired Macdonald to intervene in preventing the cutting of Poundmaker's hair, which was customary for convicts. He also assisted Poundmaker to wire Crowfoot "not to think anything of the trouble he was in."¹⁸ In December, the Territorial Council passed a resolution recommending that the Government reconsider the individual cases of the half-breeds and Indians on compassionate grounds and where possible "extend the clemency of the crown to them."¹⁹ In February 1886, the Prince Albert *Times* reported that Ignace Poitras senior, Joseph Arcand and Moise Parenteau had been pardoned.²⁰ No doubt this helped to dissipate some of the ill will and unrest among the Métis settlers.

Efforts to restore order on the affected reserves began soon after the surrender of the Indians. Macrae, an Indian Agent, and Reed visited Poundmaker's camp to collect arms and plunder, and farming operations were undertaken. By the middle of June, corn, potatoes and barley were being sown.²¹ New farm instructors had been appointed by Reed under Dewdney's direction and every effort was made to return to normal. Reed accompanied the commander of the military forces, General Middleton, to Fort Pitt where he attempted to advance Dewdney's ideas as to the method of handling the Indians,²² and to re-establish order among them.²³

That both Indians and settlers remained upset was evident in a letter from Father Lacombe about the Blackfoot Indians.²⁴ Dewdney, General Middleton and Father Lacombe went to Blackfoot Crossing where they found the reports of trouble had no foundation.²⁵ The rumours of and the possibility of more trouble in the Territories prompted the Government to introduce legislation forbidding arms and ammunition to all in the territory, without a permit issued by the Lieutenant-Governor. This Bill was passed July 16.²⁶

¹³Canada, Parliament, *Debates of the House of Commons*, (Hereafter cited as D.H.C.), 1886, March 8, Mr. Thompson (Antigonish), Minister of Justice, p. 61.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 378.

¹⁶*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 13, 1885, p. 350.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, J. H. McElree to Dewdney, August 11, 1885, p. 352.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 23, 1885, pp. 361-62.

¹⁹*J.C. N.W.T.*, Session of 1885, p. 59

²⁰The *Times*, Prince Albert, February 12, 1886.

²¹*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, June 19, 1885, pp. 276-77.

²²*Ibid.*, Reed to Dewdney, June 23, 1885, p. 287.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁴*Ibid.*, Father Lacombe to Dewdney, July 11, 1885, pp. 330-31.

²⁵*Ibid.*, Telegram, Dewdney to Macdonald, July 27, 1885, p. 340.

²⁶*D.H.C.*, July 16, 1885, p. 3433.

For those tribes which had been involved in the rebellion fairly strict measures were taken. Their annuity payments were withheld to pay for the damage which they had done. Reed recommended that any future payments to those bands which had rebelled should be concessions, not treaty rights. Dewdney was in complete agreement with withholding annuity payments although he demurred on negating the treaties.²⁷ Later Dewdney reported that the policy of rewarding the faithful and depriving the rebels of their annuities had worked well. It kept alive the memory of the consequences of rebellion.²⁸ In 1888 the annuity payments to rebel Indians were partially re-established. A small percentage were paid in that year with the promise that more would be paid in the ensuing years, if they proved themselves worthy.²⁹

Reed also recommended that the tribal system should be abolished where possible in the peaceful tribes, a policy which had been more or less approved prior to the rebellion, but for those tribes which had rebelled and broken the treaty, the chiefs and councillors should be abolished. Dewdney noted that he approved of this suggestion, but it was not found feasible as some type of organization was required. All the Indians were to be disarmed although the northern Indians who lived by the hunt should be furnished with shot guns. Dewdney's recommendation was that the disarming should be done by persuasion, not compulsion.

If it is known by the Indians that we want to get their arms, they will be cached . . . but if they found we care little about it and they cannot get fixed ammunition they will sell their rifles.³⁰

Reed further recommended that all rebel Indians should require passes to leave their reserves, that Big Bear's band should be scattered among the other bands and that many of the Carlton bands, being uneconomic units, should be regrouped. Dewdney agreed that these recommendations should be carried out as far as possible. Reed noted several of the bands in Treaty Six which had held aloof from the rebellion and suggested that special recognition should be given to these bands. Dewdney agreed whole heartedly with this suggestion. He sent a report to Macdonald in which he mentioned those who took a loyal part during the rebellion, recommending that they be rewarded.³¹ The policy of insisting that the Indians work for their provisions had been adopted much earlier, but would be enforced as far as possible. However, Dewdney did not feel that the Indians could be brought under the Masters and Servants Act and made to give full value, as Reed recommended. The ponies and wagons of the Indians had been confiscated after the rebellion. Reed proposed to sell the horses, purchasing cattle in their stead. Dewdney agreed at first but later reconsidered, believing that the Government had no right to dispose of the Indian property without their consent.³²

²⁷*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. VI, Memo, Reed to Dewdney, July 20, 1885, pp. 1419-20.

²⁸*S.P.*, 1887, No. 6, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs," p. 106.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 1889, No. 16, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs," p. 124.

³⁰*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. VI, Memo, Reed to Dewdney, July 20, 1885, p. 1416.

³¹*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 7, 1885, p. 348.

³²*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. VI, Memo, Reed to Dewdney, July 20, 1885, p. 1420; *Ibid.*, Vol. V, Reed to Dewdney, August 29, 1885, p. 1239.

The Indian Commissioner's policy regarding the Indians who had been implicated in the rebellion was set forth in his report for that year:

Any Indians who thought that they could subsist better by the chase than by tilling the soil have been given a fowling piece, with the injunction that they must support themselves . . . As they fail in the future to gain their livelihood by their own methods they will have the proof of experience to convince them . . . Firmness in withholding assistance should be exercised, until they ask to be taken into the reserves, when the extension to them of fair and liberal treatment will complete the settlement.³³

The general policy "of liberal treatment during working times, and a refusal to issue food when unjustifiable laziness was shown," was adopted for all the Indian tribes not involved in the trouble.³⁴ Dewdney mentioned that this policy had been adopted prior to the rebellion with some of the bands and that in Moosomin's band, which had not joined the trouble, they had managed to save enough money to buy 100 sheep.³⁵ Reed reported at the end of August that most of the Indian bands at Battleford "bow to the inevitable and it would take very much indeed to get them to rise again," although the Stonies were still a little unsettled.³⁶

The Indians in the Edmonton area were still restless in August. Some of the rebel Indians had joined those at Bear Hills, keeping them in a state of agitation. Dewdney wrote Macdonald that he had "instructed Irvine to send fifty men there as soon as possible."³⁷ He also pressed Macdonald with the fact that "we must be very strict about the sale of ammunition."³⁸ The Peace Hills Indians in the same area were also unsettled.³⁹ Dewdney made a tour of the area during payments, promising the bands more working oxen.⁴⁰ He also invited the Bear Hills Indians to visit him in Regina. Father Scollen wrote that the Cree chiefs were much impressed and spoke of Dewdney's kind hospitality.⁴¹ These methods brought a more settled atmosphere to the Edmonton district.

In Treaty Seven Dewdney strongly recommended that C. E. Denny, a former Indian agent be reappointed as Indian agent for "he can do more with these Indians and find out what is going on better than any man I know."⁴² Denny had been appointed special agent at Crowfoot's request during the rebellion. He retained this position during the following winter although he left the Indian department the next year. He said that he had been promised the position of Inspector for the next year, but that this had not materialized.⁴³

Dewdney himself took the treaty money to Blackfoot Crossing at the end of September, stating that he anticipated that the late payment of treaty would reduce

³³S.P., 1886, No. 4, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs," p. 141.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. V, Reed to Dewdney, August 29, 1885, pp. 1232-33.

³⁷*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 13, 1885, p. 351.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 350.

³⁹*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. V, Reed to Dewdney, August 29, 1885, p. 1235.

⁴⁰S.P., 1886, No. 4, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs," p. xiv.

⁴¹*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. VI, Father Scollen to Dewdney, January 5, 1886, p. 1739.

⁴²*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 13, 1885, p. 350.

⁴³Sir C. E. Denny, *The Law Marches West*, (London: J. M. Dent, 1939), p. 228.

any tendency to roam.⁴⁴ There had been some unrest at Blackfoot Crossing caused by Herchmer taking brown coated men onto the reserve instead of the accustomed red coated police, but this misunderstanding had been cleared up.⁴⁵ Another cause of irritation was General Strange, who had led the military thrust against the rebellious Indians at Frog Lake and Loon Lake. He was a shareholder in one of the large cattle companies in the Calgary area. Dewdney advised the largest shareholder in the company to get rid of Strange, since he antagonized the Indians and was apt to cause trouble. Dewdney was afraid that Strange might cause trouble while the Governor-General was visiting the reserve.⁴⁶ No doubt this was possible, for Strange complained to Macdonald that Dewdney had "pooh poohed" the charges which Strange laid against the Indians, when Dewdney met him at Gleichen on the edge of the blackfoot Reserve.⁴⁷

William Pearce, Superintendent of Mines for the Dominion Lands Board, Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Turnbull, Commanding officer of the Cavalry School Corps, "A" Troop, in the rebellion, missionaries who had been in the Territories, and others wrote critically of Indian administration and advised on how the Indians should be treated. Although Dewdney relied heavily on the advice of Hayter Reed, who was in the field in constant contact with the Indians, and on that of the Indian agents, he objected to advice from other quarters, which he regarded as uninformed and unwarranted interference. However, he answered most of the criticism and advice with explanations of his policy to Macdonald.

To ensure that order was maintained after the suppression of the uprising, 300 of the militia remained in the West, while the police force was raised to its full strength of 1,000 men.⁴⁸ There were drawbacks to the troops, however. J. M. Rae, agent at Battleford, complained that the troops would not aid him in carrying out his Indian work. He also stated that what "little was left in our houses by the Indians had been carried away by the troops, in fact they act towards us as if they were in the enemy's country and we were the enemy."⁴⁹ P. G. Laurie, editor of the newspaper at Battleford, complained that his house had been looted,⁵⁰ while others mentioned the looting of Indian reserves by the military.⁵¹ Dewdney was conscious of the need for troops, but also of the problem they created.

If it were not for the effect it might have of making the Indians and half-breeds very impudent . . . I would like to have seen them all sent home. They are unaccustomed to Indians and are more than likely to get us into trouble, if brought in contact with them.⁵²

⁴⁴Macdonald Papers, Dewdney to Macdonald, September 25, 1885, p. 382.

⁴⁵Ibid., Dewdney to Macdonald, August 25, 1885, p. 361.

⁴⁶Ibid., September 25, 1885, p. 381.

⁴⁷Dewdney Papers, Vol. III, Strange to Macdonald, September 29, 1885, p. 574.

⁴⁸Macdonald Papers, Dewdney to Macdonald, June 23, 1885, p. 284.

⁴⁹Ibid., Rae to Dewdney, June 15, 1885, pp. 285-86.

⁵⁰A. R. Turner, ed., "The Letters of P. G. Laurie," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, p. 51.

⁵¹Norma Sluman, *Poundmaker*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967), p. 278; Canadian North West Historical Society Publication, Vol. I, No. V, *Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan*, (Battleford: Canadian North West Historical Society, 1929) pp. 158-59.

⁵²Macdonald Papers, Dewdney to Macdonald, June 23, 1885, p. 284.

Although there were objections to the militia there were also demands for its assurance of protection. Father Lacombe was much distressed about the removal of the troops, especially before the Mounted Police arrived. His letter expressing his unease was passed by Dewdney to Macdonald with the proposal that a strong force of Mounted Police be stationed near the Blackfoot reserve.⁵³ The *Prince Albert Times* mentioned Indian unrest in that area. The editor felt that these rumours were not without foundation. "We think steps should be taken immediately to give us greater protection."⁵⁴

Commissions were established to investigate causes of unrest in the Territories. The Half-Breed Commission, hurriedly appointed just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, held hearings throughout the Territories to ascertain the half-breed claim to land or scrip. It was hoped that this would reduce some of the cause of unrest. A Rebellion Losses Commission was established to compensate Métis and white settlers who suffered losses in the rebellion. On Dewdney's recommendation this Commission included a western man—at first Lawrence Herchmer but later Thomas MacKay, a prominent Métis.⁵⁵ The hearings held by these bodies provided a legitimate outlet for the expression of grievances felt by both Métis and white and tended to mollify these settlers.

The interruption of regular commerce and of seeding operations caused by the rebellion and the confiscation of food, seed grain and cattle by the military led to considerable hardship in the affected areas. As early as May 20, 1885 Dewdney telegraphed Macdonald that the settlers at Battleford were applying to him for clothing. He said that agent Rae had already spent \$600.00: "Am I authorized to do more for them?"⁵⁶ Rae wrote to Dewdney, on June 15, that the militia had taken all the Indian Department supplies. He also mentioned the plight of the settlers who had lost their cattle and horses.⁵⁷

The Government at Ottawa was not inclined to be overly generous in providing aid to the destitute. Macdonald suggested that there should be little need for relief at Prince Albert although Battleford and Frog Lake were a different question. The Government did not want to have people starving, Macdonald wrote, but it would not "vote extravagant sums to meet prospective or speculative losses." He ordered Dewdney to "take hold of this subject with a good deal of vigour and with a view to prevent imposition on the Treasury."⁵⁸ Dewdney's suggestion was that the police, who knew the people, would be the best ones to assess the relief needed.⁵⁹ He added that the settlers were better able to support themselves now that they had their horses back.

Earlier, Dewdney had wired Macdonald about the desperate circumstances of the Métis at Batoche.⁶⁰ Macdonald telegraphed Dewdney July 15 to arrange for

⁵³*Ibid.*, Lacombe to Dewdney, July 11, 1885, pp. 330-32.

⁵⁴The *Times*, Prince Albert, December 4, 1885.

⁵⁵*Macdonald Papers*, Telegram, Dewdney to Macdonald, July 7, 1885, p. 324; *Ibid.*, Dewdney to Macdonald, June 6, 1885, p. 267.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, Telegram, Dewdney to Macdonald, May 20, 1885, p. 248.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, Rae to Dewdney, June 15, 1885, pp. 285-86.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, Macdonald to Dewdney, July 5, 1885, p. 323.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Dewdney to Macdonald, July 7, 1885, p. 324.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, June 28, 1885, p. 320.

those at Batoche "and report your course."⁶¹ This was two weeks after Dewdney had wired concerning their destitution. Action had been taken however, for Dewdney's reply the next day, was: "Need have no anxiety 'bout Batoche at present. Lash just arrived states all who can freight can get employment and present needs of destitute families are supplied."⁶² The same day Macdonald reported in the House that the poor people of Batoche were not allowed to starve.⁶³

In obedience to Macdonald's demand for economy Dewdney reported that although 460 had been given rations at Battleford, this number had been cut to ninety.⁶⁴ This was decreased to eight or ten families in August.⁶⁵ Dewdney, on Macdonald's suggestion requested permission to take over militia supplies at Edmonton, if they were not spoiled, for use by the Indian Department and for the destitute at Batoche.⁶⁶ This would provide relief at a lesser cost than if the food had to be imported. One could speculate that the specification that the supplies not be spoiled was added by Dewdney.

While much was being done to settle the populace, and to restore confidence in law and order, many of the Métis remained in a disturbed state, a possible fuse to further explosion. Gabriel Dumont and a number of the other leaders in the rebellion had escaped into Montana, whence came rumours and messengers of unrest. One half-breed had been reported as saying "Last spring there was a rebellion but next spring there would be a war."⁶⁷ The half-breeds under Dumont would clear the white men out of their country. Dewdney wrote Macdonald early in November that Dumont, Dumas, Delorme and a fourth half-breed had been north among the Indians the previous month. "Since then a number of men have been leaving their Reserves and going south not taking their families with them."⁶⁸ The Indians were reported to believe that any fight would be worse than the last. Dewdney recommended that the Mounted Police should have more men at MacLeod. He had spoken of this to Irvine, Commissioner of the Police, and had sent Cotton, one of the officers, to the Piegan reserve to obtain information.⁶⁹ A few days later he wrote that "the exodus of our Indians from a couple of the Reserves in the north was occasioned by the fear of being arrested . . . We cannot find out where they are, but I feel sure they are south of the line."⁷⁰

Dewdney enrolled James Anderson to go to Montana to the Indian and Métis settlements for the purpose of obtaining accurate information about the Canadian half-breeds and Indians.⁷¹ At Billings, Montana, Anderson found no feeling about or interest in the late rebellion. However, he found Dumont and a large half-breed

⁶¹*Ibid.*, July 15, 1885, p. 326.

⁶²*Ibid.*, Dewdney to Macdonald, July 16, 1885, p. 328.

⁶³*D.H.C.*, 1885, July 16, p. 3455.

⁶⁴*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, August 7, 1885, p. 345.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, August 13, 1885, p. 353.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, August 25, 1885, p. 364.

⁶⁷*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. VI, H. Langevin to Dewdney, October 20, 1885, pp. 1432-33.

⁶⁸*Macdonald Papers*, Dewdney to Macdonald, November 2, 1885, p. 389.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 390.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, November 6, 1885, p. 393.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

population at Lewiston, Montana.⁷² Dumont stated that they all intended settling in the Turtle Mountain. The half-breeds in that area considered the late rebellion a mistake, Anderson wrote. He was confident that Dumont wished no more disorder, but he warned that Dumas meant trouble.⁷³ At Benton the feeling was against the half-breed rebellion, with approval for the execution of Riel. Anderson stated that Dumas and Dumont had had to abandon an attempt to raise funds there.⁷⁴

Anderson found that Little Poplar and his band, with some Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Indians, had been to Fort Belknap and the Crow reserve. However, the American government would drive them from the reserves.⁷⁵ There were no half-breeds at the Blackfoot agency and only a few at Sun River.⁷⁶ Anderson wrote that "should the half-breeds intend to give further trouble their base will be at the Turtle Mountains."⁷⁷ He recommended that the government pardon those who were tools of Riel.

Following this recommendation Dewdney gave a written guarantee to O. E. Hughes, the member for the district of Lorne where the Métis unrest had centered, "that the half-breeds who had identified themselves with the late rebellion will not be prosecuted or interfered with by the government."⁷⁸ It was hoped that this would relieve the anxiety of the Métis and persuade those who were doubtful, to remain farming or to return to their farms. There were still rumours of risings and unrest in the Territories at the end of December. Dewdney wrote to Macdonald, "it would be as well to accept the reports as constantly circulating of further trouble in the spring as having foundation and let it be known that the government . . . will not put up with any such nonsense—that if the present force is not considered sufficient to keep the peace then other steps must be taken."⁷⁹

In January Dewdney sent McKay to Turtle Mountain to assess the situation. He visited a number of centres finding that the word had gone out "to leave north as there would be a row in the spring."⁸⁰ He stayed in the area until February 24, when it was rumoured that he was a spy, and his usefulness was ended. I. G. Baker and Company also forwarded any reports which they had on half-breed and Indian activities. They forwarded a letter to Dewdney from a resident of Lewiston, stating that Dumont received mail from Jackson, from Manitoba and from the north.⁸¹ There had been a half-breed meeting in January, in that area. Later six Cree Indians, well armed, appeared in Lewiston, looking for Dumont.⁸²

On March 2, Dewdney suggested sending a "reliable man to Turtle Mountain to assure half-breeds they could return."⁸³ He added that there was an improving

⁷²*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. VI, Report of James Anderson to Dewdney, November 25, 1885, p. 1523.

⁷³*Ibid.*, Anderson to Dewdney, November 29, 1885, p. 1525.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, December 3, 1885, p. 1528.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, December 8, 1885, p. 1529.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, December 16, 1885, p. 1535.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 1536.

⁷⁸*The Times*, Prince Albert, December 25, 1885.

⁷⁹*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. III, Dewdney to Macdonald, December 29, 1885, p. 591.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, Vol. V, McKay to Dewdney, January 8, 1886, p. 1261.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, O. Richette to I. G. Baker & Co., February 1, 1886, p. 1275.

⁸²*Ibid.*, pp. 1275, 1278.

⁸³*Ibid.*, Vol. III, Dewdney to Macdonald, p. 606.

feeling towards the government among the half-breeds and Indians and he felt that such a move would increase this feeling.⁸⁴ Dewdney reported, March 30, "the messenger has today returned from Turtle Mountain. Those to whom we went are coming back. Others are anxious to return."⁸⁵ In the House of Commons Edward Blake asked "whether Mr. Dewdney has been authorized to inform the Indians . . . that no arrests will be made of any who took part in last year's troubles?"⁸⁶ Sir John denied that he had, but added that "to certain half-breeds in the vicinity of Turtle Mountain . . . who . . . were simply misguided . . . he has been authorized to say that if they will return and behave peacefully and loyally, they will not be disturbed."⁸⁷

Dewdney feared that there had been so many rumours of Indian risings during the winter that settlers and no doubt would-be settlers were nervous, that "our chances of immigration" had been damaged, and he suggested a flying column of military men be sent through the territory to calm the fever of unease.⁸⁸ He had contacted General Middleton concerning this possibility and he had recommended about 1,200 men to make up a flying column. Dewdney emphasized that it would be necessary to inform the Indians of the purpose of such an expedition even though the column would be advised to stay away from the reserves.⁸⁹ If such a column were to be sent Dewdney asked to be informed in time to prepare the Indians. Neither the Edmonton *Bulletin* nor the Regina *Leader* made comment about the proposed expedition but the Prince Albert *Times* welcomed the arrival of a flying column.⁹⁰ On February 14, Sir John wired Dewdney, "Flying column will probably go west."⁹¹ In reply Dewdney questioned the number of men being placed at 700 for he thought that a smaller number would suffice. Such a large force would "be a very expensive matter; does the present position of affairs warrant it?"⁹²

On February 16, Dewdney issued a proclamation that the soldiers were coming, although not to harm the Indians or take their arms. There would be no arrests made of any who took part in last year's troubles, he said. The soldiers were to keep the peace, to stop horse stealing and whiskey smuggling.⁹³ Wilfrid Laurier questioned Macdonald about this proclamation, for he had said that only the Turtle Mountain Métis were to be exempted from arrest for their part in the rebellion.⁹⁴ Macdonald had denied knowledge of this proclamation, which denial now required an explanation:

While I stated that the proclamation was not authorized and was not seen by us, we knew Mr. Dewdney had represented, as others had, that it was of great

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 607.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, March 30, 1886, p. 611.

⁸⁶*D.H.C.*, May 4, 1886, p. 1075.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. V, Dewdney to Macdonald, January 26, 1886, p. 1266.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 1269.

⁹⁰The *Times*, Prince Albert, February 12, and 26, 1886.

⁹¹*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. III, The reply to the telegram dated February 15, 1886, was on North-West Territory paper, but only the corrections were in Dewdney's handwriting, p. 599.

⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹³*D.H.C.*, 1886, May 13, p. 1257.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, May 4, p. 1075.

consequence, if new troops were sent . . . that they would be sent in such a way as not to alarm the Indian tribes.⁹⁵

Reed warned Dewdney that the prevailing opinion was against the formation of a flying column. Reed himself, however, felt that "no demonstrations which could be made by our soldiers would ever overawe the Indians. It would take a well disciplined and drilled regular."⁹⁶ By April 12 it had been decided not to send a flying column through the Territories. Robert Watson, member for Marquette, spoke in the House on this changeability. Dewdney had first announced that a column would be sent and then announced that it would not be sent. He felt that the effect of the announcement that no column would be sent would disturb the Indians even more.⁹⁷ When it was decided that no flying column would be sent, Dewdney requested that General Middleton's force be kept in the west until summer. By that time the Mounted Police under their new Commissioner would be better organized and trained.⁹⁸

The fear and unrest which had been generated in the Territories formed the basis of an indignant outburst in Dewdney's annual report as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for 1886.

Those unprincipled persons who, actuated by questionable motives, or by those undoubtedly of a degradingly selfish character, have endeavoured to circulate and keep alive rumours calculated to bring about the very condition of things which they pretended did exist and hypocritically professed to deplore . . . That no grave evils have resulted is equally a matter of surprise and a cause for thankfulness.⁹⁹

Hard times had played a part in the development of rebellion on the plains. Letters of those on the spot referred to rumours started by white men who wished to see a military force in the area to provide needed cash. These same conditions resulted in rumours of disturbances after the hostilities. No doubt these rumours received more attention following the insurrection even though there was less cause for rumour. Paul Sharp described a similar situation in the United States:

Army expenditures played such an important role in the region's economy that citizens constantly implored the government to expand its military commitments. They often pictured Indians as hostile and exaggerated isolated depredations into a state of warfare.¹⁰⁰

There were murmurings of unrest again in the spring of 1887. Dewdney reported that he expected such rumours would continue for years to come.¹⁰¹ However, he found a marked improvement in conditions, such an improvement that those who complained now said that the improvement was due to their outcry.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, May 13, p. 1258.

⁹⁶*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. V, Reed to Dewdney, March 1, 1886, p. 1284.

⁹⁷*D.H.C.*, 1886, April 12, p. 684.

⁹⁸*Dewdney Papers*, Vol. III, Dewdney to Macdonald, April 12, 1886, p. 613.

⁹⁹*S.P.*, 1887, No. 6, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs," p. 112.

¹⁰⁰Paul Sharp *Whoop-Up Country*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955) p. 128.

¹⁰¹*S.P.*, 1888, No. 15, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs," p. 188.

They stated that this improvement "was forced upon the Department by pressure from outside."¹⁰² They claimed that their clamor resulted in the dismissal of worthless agents and employees. Dewdney denied that the criticism of outsiders had forced the improvement in Indian Affairs. However, Indian Affairs appeared to be in a much better state than prior to the rebellion.

Dewdney's policies following the rebellion had relieved the immediate distress among Indians, Métis, and white settlers. He had imposed penalties on the rebellious Indian bands without the disruption of mass military retaliation, and he had continued to promote agriculture on the reserves. His conciliatory policy had encouraged the Métis to return to their settlements, and had dispersed the nucleus of potentially explosive Métis at Turtle Mountain. The knowledge that the government of the Territories was aware of unrest and prepared to act to eliminate trouble restored the confidence of the settlers. These actions, the return to more normal conditions, and the attention which the rebellion itself had focussed on the area, stimulated a renewed flow of settlement to the north-west.

Mrs. Jean Larmour

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 197.

Book Reviews

In Rupert's Land: Memoirs of Walter Traill. By Mae Atwood. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970. Pp. 222, \$7.95.

These memoirs are a lively and useful addition to the growing store of Western Canadiana concerned with the critical period just before the first Riel Rising.

Walter Traill, son of Catherine Parr Traill and nephew of Susanna Moodie, went from Ontario to Rupert's Land in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1866, following the example of his other brother, William. He observed and recorded the rapidly changing western scene while posted at Fort Garry, Fort Ellice, Fort Pelly, Fort Qu'Appelle, Touchwood Hills, Riding Mountain House, and finally Georgetown at the head of navigation at high water on the Red River where he was sent to handle the heavy traffic expected after Riel's departure and to establish a sales store and farm on the American holdings of the Honourable Company. His "life was one of change and adventure." (p. 61). He found it absorbing despite desperately hard work in busy seasons alternating with occasional dull periods with not enough to do. Especially he enjoyed the frequent travelling by Red River cart brigade, by dog train, and by boat brigade. He encountered a variety of fantastic characters, Indian, Métis and White, some well-known, such as Governor Mactavish for whom he had unbounded admiration and affection, and others unknown but representative of their time and place. His adventures lose

nothing in the telling. He brings to life Indian bands and their wars; the buffalo hunt; turbulent tripmen; and heroic dog drivers bringing the longed-for mail "packets". His descriptions leave a vivid impression of the beauty of the flower-carpeted prairie; of the devastation left by prairie fires and grasshoppers; of the problems of victualling posts and fur brigades; of providing wood for the first steamboats; and of experimental attempts at agriculture—including an ingenious use of dog trains to harrow a field!

Among the humorous and delightful accounts of adventurous episodes there is a considerable quantity of solid economic fact concerning such matters as prices, the Indian tariff, and Indian "debt"; freight rates and the revolution effected by the coming of steamboats and the shifting balance of communication with the outside world from the Hudson Bay route to the American route via St. Paul; escalating labour problems; and, above all, the recurrent shortages of provisions "in a country the produce of which is not sufficient to support what few people there are in it, without the greatest energy of men and of horses" (p. 167). Freeman and Indians were "getting to be very difficult to deal with when they have too hard a struggle for what is necessary to support life."

There was still a deep attachment and confidence between the Indians and the Company, an attachment so strong that Traill could sleep peacefully without a lock on his door with 30 Sioux, who had been involved in the Minnesota Rising, just outside, in the Indian Hall. Though many Indians had been led away by the free traders' liquor, they usually came back to their old loyalty, having learned in the end where they got better prices and fairer treatment. Nonetheless the great Company was clearly losing its firm hold over its vast domain. Isolation was at an end; free traders multiplied with their demoralising spirits; violence became commoner; the Indians more difficult to deal with; and labour less dependable and harder to procure. Moreover there was general uncertainty and anxiety about the future of the Company and its employees and the destiny of the country.

Traill's account of the Rising of 1869-70, in which that uncertainty culminated, begins with a hostile up-country view, based on long range reports and coloured by two exciting adventures, one a dash to Fort Garry to smuggle urgent despatches in to the Governor and two schoolboys out of the settlement, and the other a secret journey with a consignment of the Swan River District furs carried overland to United States territory to keep them from falling into Riel's hand. It ends with a close-up view while Traill was a "prisoner-guest" at Fort Garry, when he learned of "many extenuating circumstances" (p. 202).

The book is agreeably printed and produced, though it is a pity that there is no index and that in the otherwise very useful and clear end-paper map of contemporary trails, there are one or two errors notably the location of Fort Carlton on the South instead of the North Saskatchewan River. Much gratitude is due to Mrs. Atwood, the wife of a favorite nephew of Walter Traill's, for having helped and encouraged him to put the book together, editing it, and adding an informative biographical introduction. This is a fitting volume to appear in the

centennial year of Manitoba and the North-West Territories and the tri-centennial of the Honourable Company. It is to be hoped that a future second publication will carry the story on from 1870, the date at which these welcome memoirs end.

Irene M. Spry

The Doukhobors, By G. Woodcock and I. Avakumovic. Toronto; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968. Pp. 361. Illus. \$7.50.

Dissent, and confrontation, are no strangers to Canadian Society today. Most commonly, they are manifestations of a disenchantment with present-day institutions and mores. To an increasing extent young people—and those not so young—seek ways and means of escaping from a society whose values, they feel are irrelevant and perhaps evil.

All of this is nothing new to Western Canada. On January 24th, 1899, the first members of the Doukhobor sect arrived in Halifax, bound for settlement in that part of the country later to become the Province of Saskatchewan. They brought with them a strong, and in many of its teachings, attractive religious creed. Their Christian faith acknowledges no sacraments. There is no priesthood, church, or liturgy. They reject the Bible as a divinely inspired source of truth. To the Doukhobor, heaven and hell are merely states of mind. Traditionally, marriages were free unions bound by real and continuing love, not shackled by legalistic requirements of state or church. Those of this faith hold every other person in deep respect since, in their belief, there is something of the divine in every man and woman. Accordingly, to the Doukhobor the act of killing a human being is anathema. To do so is to destroy part of the "Christ spirit".

They also brought with them a way of life which, as far as its economic practices were concerned, was opposed to the tradition of private enterprise, then in reasonably full flower in the Canadian West. Individual homesteads were contrary to the Doukhobor tradition, which called for communal arrangements—carried on with great initial success on their prairie lands.

Not only did these newcomers follow economic practices which ran counter to the mainstream of Canadian experience. Their traditions also put them at least aloof from, and on occasion in active opposition to, state authority. Holding, as they did, to the credo that each individual possessed something of the divine essence within him, it followed that he alone was responsible for, and must guide, his behaviour. No outside authority could dictate his actions.

Here then were seeds of confrontation and dissent which were carried to the Canadian West as the twentieth century dawned. They were destined to provide, on occasion, something of a harvest of problems culminating in the activities of the small, extremist group, the Sons of Freedom, in British Columbia in the 1960s.

The authors of this book have provided—particularly perhaps for the non-Doukhobor reader—a scholarly, well-written, and fascinating account of the historical origin of the sect, and a detailed record of its activities, and development, in Canada. Fundamentally, however, the book is a disturbing one, and designedly so. The authors are concerned with “. . . profound questions about our own society”. Questions which certainly arise, historically, with respect to the Doukhobors. Equally, however, they arise with respect to other groups in contemporary Canadian society. Thus “How well has a democracy succeeded when it has failed to reconcile its most extreme dissenters? How far has the majority . . . the right to impose its principles and its way of life on a small and at first harmless minority?”

The book, in addition, is a welcome antidote to Simma Holt's *Terror in the Name of God*, published in 1964. That earlier work, while explicitly concerned with the activities of the lunatic fringe of the Doukhobor sect, the Freedomites, implicitly left this reader, at least, with the impression that anyone of Doukhobor origin must, of necessity, be capable of behaviour which would put the Mafia to shame. An impression which ran completely counter to the long experience which this reviewer has had in meeting, working with, and sharing friendships with many Canadians of Doukhobor attachment or origin—an experience which has been shared by countless others.

These authors, while in no way condoning the terrorist activities which the Freedomites have, on occasion, indulged in, are at pains to examine them within the context of the entire sect and its historical development. In so doing, however, they leave some questions unanswered. Thus: How is it that a group whose religious philosophy is gentle and pacific should be capable of spawning, in successive generations, a small handful of individuals whose public actions seem clearly to deny the tenets of that faith? Further, in light of the antiauthoritarian thrust of many of the teachings of the Doukhobor religion, how can one explain the leadership cult which, for a considerable time, dominated the sect and is still clung to by some members of it? The careful account which the authors give of the history of the group, both in Tsarist Russia and in Canada, and of the development of, and schisms in, its faith goes some considerable distance in suggesting possible answers to these questions. Perhaps complete objective answers do not exist. It may be that they can only be subjectively furnished to one who can himself look back on personal traditions, and experiences as a member of the Doukhobor sect.

R. Carter

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