

Saskatchewan History

Volume XXXIX No. 1
Winter 1986
\$3.00



Labour Relations and the Saskatchewan Coal Miners' Strike of 1948-1949.

A Trip to Île-à-la-Crosse in 1915.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Western Dominion Coal Mines Limited, Taylorton, ca. 1948. National Film Board photograph, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B2376.

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Published three times a year by the Saskatchewan Archives Board:
Chairman, Dr. B. Zagorin and Vice Chairman, Mrs. Elizabeth Crosthwaite.

Members: Hon. G. M. McLeod, Mrs. M. Powell, Dr. J. C. Courtney
and Secretary and Provincial Archivist I. E. Wilson

Subscription rates: \$9.00 a year or \$3.00 per copy.

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The Saskatchewan Archives Board
ISSN 0036-4908

LABOUR RELATIONS AND THE SASKATCHEWAN COAL MINERS' STRIKE OF 1948-1949

By Glen Makahonuk

The history of labour relations in the Canadian coal mining industry has been marked by many serious strikes. The Saskatchewan coal mines, while not as strike-prone as those in Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia, have experienced a significant number, particularly in 1908, 1915, 1931, 1932, 1938 and 1939.¹ The strike that broke out on 3 November 1948 was a result of the conflict between the operators and the miners over the issues of wages, hours of work, and the continuance of the United Mine Workers of America District 18's Welfare Fund, which was designed to provide retirement and unemployment benefits. The Welfare Fund became the major issue in the strike because the miners were determined to maintain control of their own economic benefits without any employer interference. The operators, on the other hand, were opposed to the Welfare Fund because they would not have control over its administration and it would also threaten their profits. The strike was fought during a major watershed in Canadian labour history. A new industrial relations system was in the making with the passage of labour legislation like the Dominion Wartime Labour Relations regulations PC1003 and the Saskatchewan Trade Union Act of 1944, and the election of the first Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government. The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature of labour relations in the Saskatchewan coal mines which led to the 1948 strike.

The operators' labour relations policies were influenced by the economic conditions of the industry and their ability to earn profits. Out of a field of seventeen mines, the four largest — Eastern Collieries of Bienfait Limited, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Coal Company Mines Limited, Roche Percee Coal Mining Company, and Western Dominion Coal Mines Limited — produced 95 percent of the coal mined during the 1940's. In 1948 these four mines produced 1,608,772 tons as compared to the 1,697,137 tons produced by the total field.² The mode of production was based on strip mining which had been introduced by the American-owned Truax-Traer Company in 1930. Strip mining was used whenever the seams were from five to ten feet in thickness and within one hundred feet of the surface. In this process an electric power shovel stripped the soil from the coal and a smaller shovel loaded the coal into the mine cars. But the major reason for strip mining in the Estevan area, according to the operators, was to alleviate "labour troubles" and the high labour costs associated with the deep seam method.³ Fewer workers were needed to operate stripping equip-

ment than were required in deep seam mines to hand dig out the coal. Crawford M. Thomson, president of Manitoba and Saskatchewan Coal Company, claimed that his company was "forced into stripping by reason of the fact underground costs increased so much due to labour cost".⁴ Owing to the change in the method of coal production and the introduction of more strip mining equipment, the number of miners dwindled from approximately 1,000 during the 1930's to 400 by the late 1940's.

The cost reductions associated with strip mining had made it a profitable industry, especially during the 1940's. To determine the profitability of the strip mining mode of production, however, one must examine the relationship of labour cost and productivity to the realization value. Table 1 illustrates the number of miners employed, the labour cost per ton of lignite, the productivity rate per man day, and the average realization per ton produced between 1939 and 1948. The obvious overall trend indicates a drastic decrease in the number of miners and a relatively stable labour cost, while the productivity rate had increased by more than 200 percent and the average realization value by over 46 percent, between 1939 and 1948. In short, the nature of capitalist development coupled with fewer miners and greater mechanization had increased not only productivity, but also profits. Based on the combined average operating results of the four major operators for the period 1945-1949, the average net profit per ton was 14.6 cents.⁵ Thus based on this data, the four major coal companies had a profitable earnings record to carry on their operations.

Table 1 — Miners, Labour Costs, Productivity and Average Realization, 1939-48

Year	No. of Miners	Labour Cost/ Ton	Productivity rate per man day	Average realization /ton
1939	726	\$.64	5.85 (tons)	\$1.31
1940	694	.58	7.20	1.28
1941	664	.58	8.35	1.30
1942	636	.63	7.87	1.35
1943	786	.65	8.31	1.46
1944	655	.73	8.66	1.48
1945	565	.60	11.62	1.52
1946	487	.54	12.10	1.67
1947	489	.67	13.20	1.86
1948	428	.65	16.52	1.90

Source: Canada. DBS. Coal Statistics for Canada, 1939-1948; and Graham Commission, *Report*, pp. 63-64.

The miners, on the other hand, were fully aware of the operators' attitudes and their attempts to increase productivity and profits at their expense. The Saskatchewan coal industry has been the scene of repeated strikes to gain union recognition, and has been argued in a previous article.⁶ It is not necessary to repeat that account here. It is, however, important to point out that the miners' success at unionization in the 1940's came under a new industrial relations system.

The new Canadian industrial relations system was influenced by American developments. The success of the Wagner Act in reducing violent labour strikes in the United States, provided a model for Canadian legislators, who were plagued by the consequences of similar recognition struggles. This does not mean that Canadian legislators were acting on their own initiative; rather, they were responding to the political and economic pressure of the reformist elements in the trade union movement.⁷ The Saskatchewan labour movement was no exception, for it had been instrumental in getting the Freedom of Trade Union Association Act passed in 1938. The Act made it lawful for workers to form or join trade unions and to bargain collectively with their employers. These rights, however, did not impose compulsion on the employers.⁸ Consequently, the demand for improvement continued.

In response to this union pressure, W. G. Baker, a unionist-politician in the Liberal government of W. J. Patterson, introduced Bill 51, "An Act Respecting the Right of Employees to Organize and Providing for Conciliation and Arbitration in Industrial Disputes", in 1943.⁹ The Bill, which was based on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of British Columbia (1943), was designed to repeal the Freedom of Trade Union Association Act and the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (IDI Act) (Sask.), as it applied to provincial matters, in order to improve the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. Also, it made provision for penalties to both employees and employers for engaging in unfair labour practices. Finally, the settlement of disputes would be based on the procedures outlined in the IDI Act. A strike could not take place until 14 days after a board of conciliation investigated the issue.¹⁰

The Bill was referred to the Select Standing Committee on Law Amendment, despite the pressure from employers' associations to defeat it. The Committee recommended that the government carry out an inquiry into the principles contained in the Bill and report its findings to the Assembly at the next Session.¹¹ As a result, in June 1943 the Patterson government appointed a Commission of Inquiry headed by Chief Justice Martin and Justice H. Y. MacDonald of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. The Commission, after hearing briefs from both unions and employers during July and August, issued a report in which they traced the development of labour relations legislation in Canada, the United States and Britain. They were of the opinion that strikes were mainly a result of employers' refusal to accept the principles of union recognition and collective bargaining. Consequently, they agreed with some of the principles of Bill 51 which asked for the right to organize, compulsory collective bargaining, conciliation procedures, penalties for engaging in unfair labour practices, but refused to accept the dues check-off provision.¹²

The Labour Relations Act, which resulted from the recommendations, however, did nothing more than outline the procedure for the application of the Dominion Wartime Labour Relations Regulations (PC1003) to Saskatchewan industries.¹³ PC1003 had been passed under the War Measures Act on 17 February 1944 as a means to grant union recognition by certification, compulsory collective bargaining, and compulsory conciliation machinery in wartime industries.¹⁴

It was not until the electoral victory of the CCF in Saskatchewan in June 1944 that labour would receive a favourable trade union act, rather than another



Strip mining with electric shovel, Western Dominion Coal Mines, Taylorton.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A5186.

labour relations act. The CCF had been working with organized labour to develop a program which had as its priority "The Right to Organize" whereby "the CCF will make it mandatory for employers to enter into collective bargaining with the labour union selected by the majority of the employees".¹⁵ David Lewis, national secretary of the CCF, wasted no time in contacting Premier T. C. Douglas to impress on him the importance of a proper labour policy in Saskatchewan because of "the long-term implications for organized labour throughout the country".¹⁶ The proper labour policy did not mean that the CCF government was to do the organizing work for the union movement. "The Government", according to Pat Conroy, secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL),

cannot do our work of organizing; they can only provide what we believe to be fit and proper mediums to enable us to do a good job. The Government cannot, and must not, be held responsible for the work which we in our Congress can do.¹⁷

To ensure that the proper legislation was drafted, Andrew Brewin and Ted Jolliffe, both prominent Ontario labour lawyers, were sent to assist the Douglas government.

The Trade Union Act, which was passed in September 1944, repealed the IDI Act (Sask.), the Freedom of Trade Union Association Act of 1938 and the Labour Relations Act of 1944. Workers now had the right to organize into unions of their own choosing, the right to bargain collectively, and the right to strike after conciliation procedures had failed. An employer was required to recognize his employees' union and bargain in 'good faith' with a view to the conclusion of a written collective agreement. The Act also placed restrictions on certain employer activities, especially during the certification procedure. For instance, it was an unfair labour practice for an employer to discharge an employee for union activity. Finally, it provided union security by means of maintenance of membership and compulsory dues check-off.¹⁸ According to the Political Action Committee of the CCL, this was "the best labour legislation in North America", and that for the first time labour was "getting a square deal from government".¹⁹

Lewis also notified Douglas about the importance of ensuring "that one or two of the major appointments in the Department [of Labour], such as Chief Conciliation Officer and private secretary to the Minister be carefully staffed with good strong and reliable people from the more active, more militant, and newer unions in Saskatchewan".²⁰ Douglas seemed not to heed Lewis' advice and made a few questionable appointments, especially C. C. Williams as Minister of Labour and H. J. Williams as Deputy Minister of Labour.

The more militant unionists and the Labour-Progressive Party immediately voiced their criticisms. Hue Elkin, president of the Packinghouse Workers Union in Moose Jaw, outlined his criticisms in a letter which ended up with Lewis. He pointed out that C. C. Williams was a former Regina mayor who had "refused the faintest semblance of support in any way" to the auto workers in their strike of 1942 when requested to do so by Gil Borgsford, a CCL organizer.²¹ J. H. Williams was worse. He had worked in the Department of Labour under the Bennett government before switching to the Liberals. "This man", according to Elkin,

has a very bad record with labour. He is the individual who did the government's dirty work to prevent Eamon from setting up CCL unions in the Province. He is

the fellow who conciliated with a 40 oz. bottle. . . . At the time of the laundry dispute here he plainly told the Union that they should all be fired if he had the handling of it.²²

His closing comment was "that these two men have not got general labour support".²³

Despite these appointments to the Department of Labour, the new labour relations climate stimulated a surge in union membership. Between 1943 and 1947 union membership throughout Canada increased by twenty-five percent, while in Saskatchewan it jumped an incredible 118.5 percent. The growth in trade union membership is shown in Table 2. This general trend included the Saskatchewan miners, who were anxious to join the United Mine Workers of America District 18 (UMWA) because of its bargain power. Consequently, in early 1945 the miners contacted the Calgary office for an organizer. John Stokaluk, Vice-President of the UMWA, was sent in February. He had little problem in signing up all the miners, save those at Western Dominion Coal Mines, who belonged to the Saskatchewan Coal Miners Union (SCMU).

Table 2: Distribution of Trade Union Membership Dec. 31, 1943-47

Province	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	Per Cent	
						Gain	1943-47
Nova Scotia	41,982	35,095	31,982	33,233	36,575	-12.9	
N. Brunswick	18,232	17,980	18,238	18,659	22,295	22.3	
PEI	383	925	721	823	714	86.4	
Quebec	188,714	175,993	171,203	208,546	210,260	11.4	
Ontario	211,970	210,952	204,399	236,729	286,981	35.4	
Manitoba	29,664	33,100	34,106	38,681	40,327	35.9	
Sask.	11,124	16,557	19,290	21,756	24,306	118.5	
Alberta	28,975	28,504	28,578	33,662	38,202	31.8	
B.C.	87,485	90,702	83,823	99,466	115,230	31.7	
Yukon	116	295	157	249	200	72.4	
Unspecified	<u>10,019</u>	<u>9,510</u>	<u>10,092</u>	<u>9,401</u>	<u>10,479</u>	<u>4.6</u>	
Total	628,664	619,613	602,589	701,570	785,569	25.0	

Source: Canada. Dept. of Labour. Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1945-49 and S. M. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, p. 280.

It should be pointed out that the SCMU had been established by the employees of Western Dominion in 1938. According to its Bylaws, the union confined its jurisdiction to only those miners working at Taylorton, the home of Western Dominion.²⁴ The policies of the SCMU were:

1. The maintenance of the organization fully autonomous and subservient to no other organization either national or international.
2. The creation and maintenance of the most harmonious relationship between employer and employee.
3. A never ending quest for benefits for its members and the maintenance and improvement of high standards of living and permanency of employment.
4. The closest co-operation and mutual assistance with the employer, knowing and realizing that commensurate with the prosperity of the employer will be the prosperity of the employees.
5. The direct negotiation and settlement of all issues that arise between the employer and the employees; the outlawing of strikes as a means either of

negotiation or settlement having learned from the experience of others that such method never results in benefits to the employees.²⁵

On 27 February 1945 John Stokaluk applied to the Wartime Labour Relations Board (LRB) to gain certification for approximately 200 miners.²⁶ At the 28 March 1945 meeting of the LRB, the operators opposed the UMWA's application on the grounds that their temporary contract with the government-created Mine Workers Central Union had not expired yet, and that the UMWA had agreed to withdraw from the field for the duration of the war and one year thereafter.²⁷ Because of the contradictory evidence, the LRB decided that a vote should be taken by all the mineworkers in the field.

Harris Johnstone, an Industrial Relations officer in the Dominion Department of Labour, was appointed the returning officer to conduct the vote. In order for Certification to be granted a majority of the eligible voters was required. The votes, which were conducted on 2 and 3 May, had the following result:

Company	Eligible Voters	Votes Cast	Yes	No	Spoiled
Havannah Collieries Ltd.	21	18	18	0	0
North West Coal Mine	3	2	2	0	0
Eastern Collieries Ltd.	19	17	15	1	1
Man. & Sask. Coal Mines Ltd.	119	104	102	0	2
Roche Percee Coal Mining Co.	11	9	7	2	0
Jenish Brothers Coal Mine	14	13	13	0	0
South Cambrian Mines Ltd.	13	6	5	1	0
Total	200	169	162	4	3

On 10 May 1945 the LRB granted certification to UMWA Local 7606 in all the voting mines, save South Cambrian which did not receive a majority from the eligible voters.

The certification had a significant impact on the labour relations in the mines. No longer would the operators be dealing with unorganized miners or small, independent unions. They would have to face a powerful industrial union which had a great deal of experience in collective bargaining and strikes. The power struggle would soon be put to the test.

The UMWA immediately contacted the operators to schedule a meeting to negotiate a first agreement. Surprisingly, it took only four days (4-7 June) to reach a settlement. Even though the operators had a management's right clause which gave them the sole and exclusive right to determine all matters pertaining to the operation of their companies, the UMWA still achieved some important demands, including the closed shop and dues check-off, a grievance procedure, health and safety provisions, a seniority clause, holidays and vacations, and a ten percent wage increase. The operators, however, wanted another meeting to formally sign the agreement. On 3 July when the operators and the UMWA met to sign, an unexpected event occurred. The representatives of Eastern Collieries, Havannah Collieries and Jenish Brothers refused to sign until Western Dominion was included in the agreement.²⁸ The UMWA viewed this as a stalling tactic and immediately filed a complaint with the LRB. The matter was promptly referred to M. M. Maclean, Director of Industrial Relations, who appointed H. S. Johnstone, Industrial Relations Officer, to confer with the parties in order to

reach a settlement. Johnstone's conciliation efforts proved successful, for the agreement was finally signed by the three remaining companies on 23 October 1945.

The agreement did little to alter the operators' attitude towards collective bargaining and the UMWA, which they believed was "a detriment to the industry".²⁹ Nevertheless, negotiations commenced again in July 1947 when Local 7606 submitted proposals for improvements in wages and working conditions and the establishment of District 18's Welfare Fund. The Alberta locals were first to establish such a fund in October 1946, when they forced the operators to agree to the provision

that a Welfare Fund shall be established by the payment of three (3) cents per ton on all coal sold or used by the Coal Operators who are members of the Association signing this Agreement or other independent Operators, and shall be known as the Welfare Fund of District 18, United Mine Workers of America, and which will be administered solely for the use of the Members of the United Mine Workers.³⁰

The Saskatchewan operators, of course, were opposed to any new proposals, particularly the welfare fund, which would increase the cost of production and thus reduce profits. "One of the main objections to the Union Welfare Fund", stated the president of Manitoba and Saskatchewan Coal Company, "is that there is no assurance as to its cost to the mines. . . . The Lignite Industry in Saskatchewan, with its low priced coal and man day production, cannot stand such inroads on its coal dollar."³¹ A deadlock quickly developed.

To break the deadlock, C. C. Williams intervened on 11 August 1947 with the appointment of a Board of Conciliation consisting of M. A. PacPherson, chairman, A. J. Morrison, the UMWA's representative, and Crawford M. Thomson, the operators' representative. The majority report recommended that the operators pay three cents per ton to the Welfare Fund and provide similar provisions as those in the Alberta agreements of October 1946. The operators reluctantly accepted the recommendations and signed a new agreement, which was to last to 30 June 1948.³²

Even though the welfare fund had been established, the operators still continued to oppose it. This certainly was the case in February 1948 when Local 7606 tried to force the operators to accept a recent Alberta and British Columbia amendment which called for an additional two cents per ton contribution. It was rejected flatly.³³ The rejection was a clear indication that the upcoming round of negotiations on 1 July, when the 1947 agreement came open, would be a tough and bitter process.

Local 7606 approached the 1948 round of bargaining determined to make significant economic improvements: an across-the-board wage increase of thirty-seven cents per hour, a forty-hour work week, and a ten cents per ton increase in the operators' contribution to the welfare fund. In a word, Local 7606 was seeking the same type of agreement that existed in Alberta and British Columbia. The Saskatchewan miners believed that they were entitled to these improvements because their productivity was at least two times greater than the Alberta strip miners who were receiving an additional, depending upon the job classification, thirty cents per hour (common labourer) to fifty-two cents per hour (mechanical loader).³⁴ But most important, the operators' profits were more than adequate to pay for these improvements.

National Film Board photograph, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B2373.



Servicing equipment, Western Dominion Collieries, Taylorton, ca. 1948.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A15775.



Electric shovel dumping, Western Dominion Coal Mines, Taylorton.

Negotiations opened on 1 July, but it was not until several meetings later that the operators came with a counterproposal which included a wage increase of ten cents per hour, a forty-four-hour work week, and a contributory pension plan to replace the welfare fund.³⁵ The union remained tough on its original position, arguing that

The District Organization maintains the same policy in its dealings with each section of the industry and with all groups of employees within the industry, it endeavours to secure rates of pay and working conditions which are standardized in order that no operator, or group of operators, may enjoy an advantage over his or its competitors through the payment of lower rates or through the creating of unfavorable working conditions. . . .³⁶

The operators made their final offer in the latter part of July. It was based on the condition that if the selling price of their coal was increased an additional twenty-five cents per ton, then they would pay a wage increase of eighteen cents per hour and contribute five cents per ton to a pension plan which would replace the existing welfare fund.³⁷ The negotiations broke off at this point, for the union refused to give up control of its welfare fund.

The iron law of industrial relations, as C. A. Seager has referred to it, prevailed, and the government was once again called in to provide conciliation services.³⁸ On 27 July 1948 C. C. Williams appointed a Board consisting of Professor John E. L. Graham of the University of Manitoba, W. G. Davies, Executive Secretary of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and N. C. Byers, management's nominee, to investigate three issues: a wage increase of thirty-seven cents per hour, a ten cents per ton payment to the welfare fund, and the renewal of the general clauses of the agreement which expired on 30 June 1948.³⁹ The Board hearings were held in Regina on 16-19, 23 August and on 1-2 September, but the majority report was not submitted until 21 October. It made the following recommendations:

- (1) The Union and the Companies should renew the General Clauses of the Agreement which expired on June 30 which govern the following matters: Management of Mine, Check-off, Employees of Others, Penalty for Absence from Work, and Seniority.
- (2) In the General Clause governing the settlement of local and general grievances, it should be provided that in the event of a failure of the parties to a particular dispute to agree upon an Adjudicator, they should request the Minister of Labour for Canada to appoint the Adjudicator.
- (3) Payment for public holidays should be in accordance with the application of the laws of Saskatchewan.
- (4) The present forty hour, five day work week should be retained.
- (5) A wage increase of twenty cents per hour should be granted, and have retroactive application to September 1, 1948.
- (6) The payment to the Welfare Fund should remain at three cents per ton, pending a re-examination of the basis of payment.⁴⁰

Byers agreed only to the general terms of the agreement remaining unchanged, and wrote a minority report in which he recommended a mere ten cents per hour increase, a forty-four hour week, and the replacement of the welfare fund with a pension plan.

The UMWA was prepared to accept the majority report in order to achieve a settlement. The operators, on the other hand, refused to accept the report, and even made further demands to have the check-off system abolished and to allow subcontracting of strip mining operations.⁴¹ In the last week of October, three additional meetings were held to try to resolve the dispute. The meetings proved

futile, for the operators continued to argue that they could not pay the increases recommended in the majority report, even though it was shown that the cost of implementing it would be "less than ten cents per ton".⁴² John Stokaluk responded to the operators' "ability to pay" argument with the comment:

... I have taken part in negotiation of agreements for some 24 years, maybe more when I was an official of a local union, and every time we went to ask for an increase, I never was at one meeting yet that it was not said that they were not able to pay: "if we pay that we'll be bankrupt", they said, and not many coal companies went bankrupt yet.⁴³

It was at the last meeting that Local 7606 threatened a strike, if the operators did not accept the majority report. The strike threat was a last resort, as Stokaluk later explained to the Graham Commission:

... the UMWA have never been anxious to pull the strike at any time. We use every means possible to get a settlement and achieve a new agreement without strike action. The strike is used as a last resort, when we can not reach agreement in any other way.⁴⁴

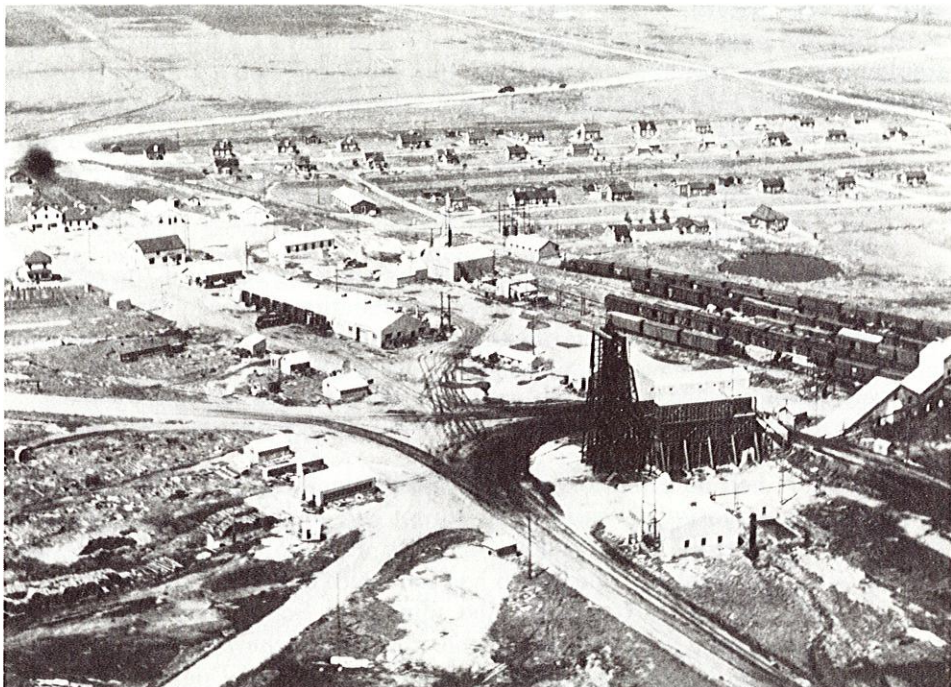
The operators had no intention of accepting the majority report or negotiating an agreement. Negotiations came to an abrupt end when Alex Robertson, president of Roche Percee Coal Mining Company and the operators' spokesman, walked out of the meeting. The Union had no choice but to call the strike.

At 8:00 AM on 3 November, 200 miners at South Cambrian Limited, Roche Percee Coal Company, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Coal Company, Eastern Collieries, North-West Coal Company, North-East Coal Company, and Jenish Brothers Coal Company answered the call to strike.⁴⁵ Picket lines were erected immediately at all the mines save Western Dominion. Initially, Brodie's company and the SCMU were not involved in the strike because they wanted "peace and harmony".⁴⁶ In fact, SCMU showed no interest in supporting the strikers and continued to produce coal for the Winnipeg market.⁴⁷

Because Western Dominion was still producing sixty percent of the field's total output, Local 7606 decided to close it down on 9 November. The Western Dominion miners honoured the picket lines but did not demonstrate any solidarity, and merely returned home in the hope that the mine would soon be opened. The UMWA had thus finally closed down the last major coal producer in the field without any violence breaking out. Only the owners of three small family mines were allowed to continue mining coal.⁴⁸ The Estevan town council feared that the shutdown of the field would soon cause a serious coal shortage within two weeks.

In response to the shutdown, C. C. Williams scheduled a conciliation meeting for 12 November. The meetings, headed by C. J. Murchison, labour relations board conciliation officer, had dragged on for three days before they broke off without a resolution of the dispute. The operators refused to accept Murchison's compromise of a wage increase of twenty cents per hour, a forty-hour week, and the continuance of the welfare fund.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the SCMU sent a delegation of one hundred miners headed by their president, J. J. Smart, and J. E. McCormack, Liberal MLA for Estevan, to find out what the government was going to do to open their mine.⁵⁰ Williams told them that the government would not break the strike because no provincial law had been violated. The meeting ended on Smart's threat that "The Union is going to hold a meeting when we get back and if the members decide to go through the picket lines, we'll go through We're not going to be pushed



National Film Board photograph, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R. B2370.

Western Dominion Coal Mines, Taylorton.

around.”⁵¹ Later Smart issued a press release explaining their reasons for not supporting the strike and their wish to return to work:

They [the UMWA] are on strike in this field. We are not on strike. We have our own independent union at the Western Dominion and are affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Labour. We have a contract with the Western Dominion Coal Mines Ltd. Under our contract we get the highest wages in the field. The lowest paid man gets \$1.10 per hour and the highest is \$1.63. We have a pension plan into which the men contribute five percent of their wages and the company contributes the equivalent.

We are quite satisfied with our contract at the present time.⁵²

Brodie, aware of his employees’ support, applied to District Court Judge E. S. Wilson on 16 November for an injunction to prevent picketing at his mine, and to allow his employees to return to work without any interference. The injunction was granted and his employees returned to work on 17 November. Brodie also filed suit for the damages caused to his mine by the UMWA picketers. But most surprising was the fact that he received assistance from two officials of the Canadian Federation of Labour, R. S. Clark, publicity director, and E. Smith, national organizer, who had been sent to help break the strike and to drive the UMWA out of the field. “We will . . . try”, according to Smith’s press release,

to take over the other mines in the Estevan area now under the Communist dominated U.M.W. I would like the public to know that the strike now in progress under the U.M.W. has all the earmarks of a political act — one which attempts to disrupt, rather than to deliver a service.⁵³

The CFL representatives immediately launched their raiding drive.

The operators tried to take advantage of the interunion conflict on the night of 22 November, when they bypassed both the conciliation board and the

UMWA executive and met with the strikers to discuss four proposals for settlement: a basic wage rate of \$1.10 per hour, payment for statutory holidays, a forty-four hour work week, and a contributory pension plan, providing that coal prices were increased by twenty-five cents per ton.⁵⁴ The strikers were not bought off with the proposals and turned them over to their executive for consideration. Since the proposals did not include the UMWA welfare fund, they were rejected.

The operators intensified the interunion conflict when they persuaded the SCMU to launch court action against the strikers in early December.⁵⁵ In fact, the operators paid their own lawyer, W. W. Lynd, to file the injunction on SCMU's behalf. Those names in the statement were Local 7606 and its executive members, Frank Dasrich, John Elechyson, Alex McDonald, Emerson McCullough and Bert Stock and the UMWA District 18 officials Robert Lovett, Angus Morrison, John Stokaluk, Edward Boyd and William Ure. They were accused of unlawfully watching and besetting Western Dominion property and also threatening and intimidating SCMU members.⁵⁶ For compensation, the SCMU asked for a reimbursement of lost wages, general damages, legal costs and any further relief the court found just.⁵⁷ Court proceedings, however, were postponed until March 1949.

The SCMU and the CFL, meanwhile, initiated another raiding attack on the UMWA miners at the Roche Percee Company. With the support of Alex Robertson, owner of the mine, Smith of the CFL made outlandish promises that if the miners switched from the UMWA to the SCMU, they would get a substantial increase in wages and benefits, similar to those at Western Dominion. As a result twenty-one of the thirty-seven Roche Percee strikers petitioned to join the SCMU.⁵⁸ They formed another union named the Saskatchewan Coal Miners Union (Roche Percee Division) and quickly signed a new agreement on 7 December. It made provision for a wage increase of eighteen and a half cents per hour, and forty-four hour work week, time and one-half for overtime, paid holidays, recognition of the SCMU as the sole bargaining agent, dues check-off, a pension plan, and a no strike/lockout provision during the life of the agreement.⁵⁹

The UMWA's response was to take militant action. On the morning of 8 December about twenty-five strikers and their wives marched to the Roche Percee mine to prevent scabs from crossing the picket lines. When they arrived they found McCormack, Liberal MLA, sitting in his car near the company office, while William Hubert, manager of the mine, and 19 SCMU members were inside. The strikers questioned McCormack as to his purpose at the mine and his failure to represent their interests. During the ensuing argument, the women dragged McCormack out of his car and gave him a good thrashing.⁶⁰ He was then told to leave amidst yells of "scab". A fight had also broken out between the strikers and the scabs who had come to McCormack's aid. The strikers overpowered the scabs, who quickly retreated to the office. No further violence occurred, even though the strikers stayed another hour yelling insults before the police arrived.

In order to prevent another picket line incident at the Roche Percee mine, W. W. Lynd, solicitor for the operators and the SCMU, applied to the courts for an injunction. Both McCormack and Smith argued that an injunction was needed because the UMWA was "Communist-led" and using "gangster tactics"

to intimidate those miners who wish to return to work.⁶¹ Judge E. S. Wilson of district court in Weyburn granted an injunction which ordered the UMWA "not to watch or beset the company's property or machinery"; nor to interfere or prevent the company from carrying out the collective bargaining agreement with the SCMU.⁶²

During this period of intense conflict, meetings had been going on between the representatives of the operators, the government and the UMWA to reach a settlement. Premier T. C. Douglas decided to participate at the 8 December meeting in Regina. Surprisingly, a settlement seemed imminent when the UMWA agreed to accept the operators' offer of a wage increase of eighteen cents per hour, a forty-four hour work week, and paid statutory holidays on the condition that the welfare fund was continued. The next day, however, Alex Robertson, the operators' representative, declared that all previous offers were withdrawn and "the matter *sub judice* and before the courts".⁶³

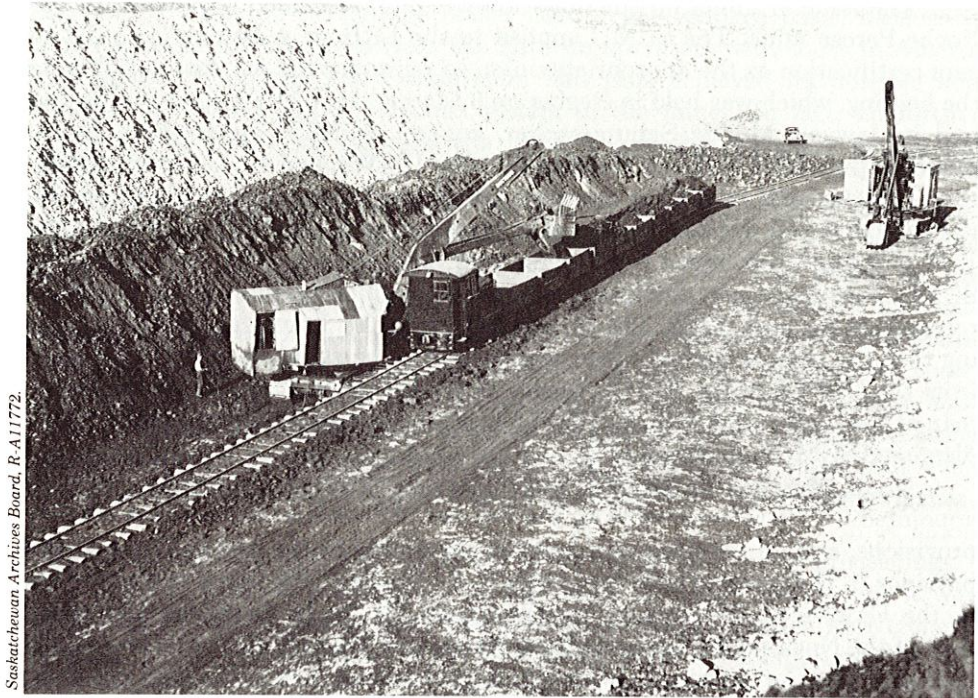
Douglas was irate at Robertson's declaration. He believed that the UMWA had bent over backwards to achieve a settlement, while the operators had dragged out the strike in order to break the union. No longer showing any patience for the operators, Douglas warned them that

the mines will either open under those conditions, or they will be opened under other conditions. The Government is prepared, if necessary, to put a controller in to operate those mines, and if it does, the men will go back on the majority decision of the Conciliation Board, and it will operate those mines until matters are finally settled. . . .⁶⁴

Douglas' threat to take control of the coal mines did not have the desired impact on the operators. Robertson announced that he would only recognize and negotiate with the SCMU, and as far as he was concerned, the UMWA did not exist. C. M. Thompson reiterated the operators' position that there was no need for further negotiations.⁶⁵ Both C. C. Williams and T. C. Douglas warned them that if the operators refused to negotiate, they would be charged with an unfair labour practice. Robertson was also notified that the UMWA was the only legal bargaining agent for the Roche Percee miners, and that he had an illegal agreement with the SCMU. Even though the meeting ended in a deadlock, another was scheduled for 22 December.

While the CCF government was trying to resolve the strike, the courts were busy with legal actions against the UMWA. On 10 December the Estevan detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrested John Elchyson, Alex McDonald, Tony Marklinger, Steve Klymyk, Joe Zimmerman, Donald Sears, John Sears, Gordon Hurlbert and Louis Trumbeckas on charges of unlawful assembly at the Roche Percee mine. The next day they appeared before Justice of the Peace W. J. Eckel, who scheduled their hearing before a police magistrate on 18 December. At the request of the secretary treasurer of Local 7606, the men were released on bail of \$100 pending their trial.⁶⁶

When negotiations resumed in 22 December, the operators merely resubmitted their initial offer. The UMWA reiterated their position that they were willing to accept the wage and hours of work offers, but not the pension plan. In fact, the negotiating committee stated that they had a commitment from their members to carry on the strike until the welfare fund was achieved.⁶⁷ Negotiations were once again adjourned.



Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A11772

Loading coal.

Only six of the original seven mines were still involved in the strike when negotiations resumed on 5 January 1949. Two days earlier David Woolley, manager of the South Cambrian Coal Company, had decided to cease operations "due to increased costs of production aggravated by the prolonged strike".⁶⁸ In any case, T. C. Douglas took command of the negotiations. He pointed out that public opinion was demanding an end to the strike because of the serious coal shortage, and he had no intention of letting the people suffer any longer. Since the UMWA and the operators had unofficially come to an agreement on the issues of wages, hours of work, payment of holidays, etc., the only item left outstanding was the welfare fund, vs. the pension plan. Douglas proposed that the welfare fund, based on its three cents per ton contribution, be continued, while the UMWA's request for an increase be arbitrated.⁶⁹ Even though Alex Robertson and C. Thomson were still opposed to the principle of a welfare fund, the operators agreed to Douglas' proposal on the condition that a royal commission be established to investigate the coal industry and the merits of a welfare fund as opposed to a pension plan. The conditions for settlement had finally been achieved.

An unexpected incident marked the signing of the agreement on 7 January. W. W. Lynd, the operators' lawyer, walked into the Council Chamber where the signing was taking place and called John Stokaluk and other union leaders "Communists" and accused the operators of "selling out to a bunch of communists". Douglas warned him that "if he didn't keep a civil tongue in his head, he would personally throw him out and might knock a few of his teeth down his throat, to boot".⁷⁰ Later that night, the miners voted on the agreement. A majority accepted the terms and agreed to return to work on 18 January.⁷¹

The issue of union jurisdiction, however, still remained unresolved at the Roche Percee mine. The SCMU applied to the LRB on 4 January in order to gain certification as the appropriate union to represent the employees.⁷² During the hearing, which was held in Regina on 8 March, the UMWA filed a reply and had its lawyer, Morris Schumiatcher, contest SCMU's application. Schumiatcher presented evidence showing that the UMWA had been granted certification by the LRB in 1945 to represent the Roche Percee miners. Furthermore, the company had negotiated several agreements with the UMWA prior to the 1948 strike and had signed a new agreement on 7 January 1949. And finally the SCMU was a company dominated organization which had not received official recognition from the LRB. The SCMU lawyer, W. W. Lynd, countered by arguing that the employees had taken a vote during the strike to switch affiliation from the UMWA to the SCMU. Based on the evidence, P. G. Makaroff, Chairman of the LRB, ruled that the UMWA was the appropriate bargaining unit and dismissed SCMU's application.⁷³

On 31 March 1949 the CCF government by Order in Council No. 1065/49 appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the miners' welfare and security provisions, and all problems and matters pertaining to the coal industry in the province.⁷⁴ Those appointed were John E. L. Graham, Professor of Economics at the University of Manitoba, as Chairman; Dr. R. D. Howland, vice-president of the Nova Scotia Research Foundation; and Roger C. Carter, a Saskatoon barrister. The Commission held two stages of hearings: one in Estevan, 4-9 July, and the other in Regina, 22-27 August. During the hearings all parties involved were allowed to testify and present briefs in order to support their respective positions. The Commissioners were thus able to uncover a wealth of information about the industry, including production statistics, methods of mining, employment trends, lignite markets, technological developments, corporate structure, financial statements, the nature of the labour force, wage rates, union organizations, state and industrial welfare provision, and most important, the pros and cons of the welfare fund vs. the pros and cons of the pension plan.

Their report, which was finally published in early 1950, included several recommendations concerning the industry and labour relations. As to the industry, the commissioners believed that the market could be expanded if the companies increased production of lignite briquettes. The cost of extraction would be reduced by the development of more efficient strip-mining techniques and equipment, rather than in a fundamental change in production methods. Since price cutting and competition were detrimental to the survival of the industry, the commissioners recommended "fixed" or "non-competitive" prices. Finally, they were of the opinion that the financial resources and earning capacity of the major mines would ensure a period of relative prosperity for the industry.

In terms of labour relations, the commissioners concluded that the UMWA and collective bargaining were essential for the improved welfare of the miners. Furthermore, there was a crucial need for a welfare fund which would protect the miners from the dangers associated with old age, disability and unemployment, especially "in the absence of sufficient provision for employee welfare by the State. . . ."⁷⁵ Since the financial evidence clearly indicated that the operators could afford contributions to the welfare fund, the commissioners recommended "that contributions from the companies under contract with the UMWA should continue to be paid to the Welfare Fund".⁷⁶ The basis of payment, however, was

changed to a payroll percentage rather than a per tonnage basis, because it would equalize contributions from the Estevan operators with those in Alberta and British Columbia. The Commission had thus achieved its purpose and restored an orderly labour relations system in the mines. In fact, no further strike was to break out between the UMWA and the operators during the 1950's.

The only outstanding issue was the court case involving the UMWA picketers. The case was brought before District Judge W. L. Clayton, who was acting as local master for the court of King's Bench in Estevan. The lawyer for the operators and the SCMU argued that the UMWA should be sued for damages because it had used threats and coercion to prevent non-striking SCMU members from returning to work during the strike. The UMWA's legal counsel countered with the argument that the UMWA had the right to picket during a legal strike in order to protect their members' interests. Clayton exercised some judicial creativity in his interpretation of the evidence and ruled that even though a trade union could neither bring suit nor be sued under present legislation, individuals could be. Consequently, he allowed the substitution of union officials, as individuals, to replace names of the unions in the trial proceedings.⁷⁷ The UMWA appealed his decision in the Court of King's Bench, but it was upheld by Justice S. McKercher. The UMWA contested Justice McKercher's decision in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. After a reexamination of the case, the Appeal court came to the conclusion that under the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights,

every person . . . shall enjoy the right to obtain and retain employment and that every person who deprives, abridges or otherwise restricts or attempts to deprive, abridge or otherwise restrict any person or class of persons under this act may be restrained in an injunction. . . .

It is a matter of common knowledge that efforts to prevent others from working, when it is desired to advance the cause of a striking labor union, are only effective when done in unions by a mass of workers . . . (and) that in the great majority of cases strikes are managed or controlled by strike committees of the unions involved.

This is exactly what is charged in these proceedings and in my view the plaintiffs are given the right of an injunction of the court.⁷⁸

The Appeal Court referred to a previous judgment issued by Chief Justice W. M. Martin in 1946 to support its decision.

From the authorities cited it is clear that a trade union cannot sue in its own name nor can it be so sued.

It is also clear that it can sue in a representative action and may be sued in such action if the parties selected as defendants are persons who from their position may be taken to fairly represent the union.⁷⁹

It is not too clear what the UMWA's next course of action was within the legal system. The matter could have been referred to the Supreme Court of Canada if the UMWA so wished. It seems, however, that the union reluctantly complied with the Appeal Court's decision, for there is no evidence indicating a trial at a higher court.⁸⁰

This paper has attempted to examine the nature of the labour relations in the Estevan coalfield which led to the 1948 strike. The conflict between the operators and the miners centered on economic factors. The operators wanted to maximize profits and have complete control of the mines, while the miners wanted to improve wages, working conditions and the welfare fund. The issue of

the welfare fund, in particular, heightened the conflict. To the operators the fund symbolized another erosion into their control of the mines and a direct attack on their profits. To the miners the fund represented their means to control their own benefits without employer interference. The miners, unfortunately, lacked solidarity because of the existence of two unions which had conflicting policies. The SCMU was a non-militant organization which was willing to compromise and cooperate with the operators within an orderly industrial relations system. The UMWA, on the other hand, was prepared to engaged in militant strike action whenever collective bargaining failed.

The strike was fought within the context of a new industrial relations system which had been established by the CCF government. The Trade Union Act of 1944 provided an orderly system in which union recognition and collective bargaining could take place. If either side stepped outside of the guidelines, then the iron law of industrial relations prevailed; the CCF government would intervene. This does not mean, however, that the CCF government was different from any other government in administering the iron law of industrial relations. In fact, the CCF appointment of a Royal Commission in 1949 was similar to the solution offered by the Conservative J. T. Anderson government when it appointed one in 1931 to resolve the Estevan strike and another in 1943 to prevent a strike over wage cuts.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the CCF government was instrumental in assisting the UMWA to achieve a partial success in its strike in that the welfare fund was maintained and wages and conditions were moderately improved.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ For a discussion of these strikes see G. Makahonuk, "Labour Relations in the Saskatchewan Coal Mines during the 1930s" (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1976) and "Trade Unions in the Saskatchewan Coal Industry, 1907-1945", *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, Spring 1978, pp. 51-68.
- ² Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Royal Commission on the Saskatchewan Coal Industry, 1949, (hereinafter referred to as Graham Commission). Exhibit No. A-11 "Financial Aspects".
- ³ SAB, Saskatchewan, Department of Natural Resources, Coal Administration Branch. General Files. H. Wallace, president of Eastern Collieries to J. R. Hill, Deputy Minister, Department of Natural Resources, March 24, 1941.
- ⁴ SAB, Graham Commission, Proceedings, July 8, 1949, Exhibit 77, p. 211.
- ⁵ For a breakdown of the income and costs associated with each ton of coal produced and sold see Graham Commission, *Report*, p. 20.
- ⁶ See G. Makahonuk, "Trade Unions in the Saskatchewan Coal Industry, 1907-1945".
- ⁷ Some excellent accounts of these labour struggles during the 1930s and 1940s are contained in: Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, the CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973; Stuart M. Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1906-1966*, Ottawa: Task Force on Labour Relations, 1968; Laurel S. MacDowell, 'Remember Kirkland Lake': *The Gold Miners' Strike of 1941-1942*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983; and Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980*, Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 1983.
- ⁸ *Statutes of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1938*, Regina: King's Printer, 1938, pp. 576-577.
- ⁹ W. J. C. Cherwinski, "Organized Labour in Saskatchewan: The TLC Years, 1905-1945." Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1972, p. 291.
- ¹⁰ See Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Report of Commission on Employer-Employee Relations, (Bill No. 51), 1943, December 1, 1943.
- ¹¹ Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly. Sessional Paper No. 73, April 10, 1943, p. 140.
- ¹² *The Labour Gazette*, February, 1944, pp. 145-148.
- ¹³ Cherwinski, *op. cit.*, p. 294.
- ¹⁴ For a detailed account of this legislation, see J. D. Woods, *Labour Policy in Canada*, Toronto: Macmillan, 1973; H. A. Logan, *State Intervention and Assistance in Collective Bargaining — The Canadian Experience 1943-1954*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956; Stuart Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada*, Toronto: Macmillan, 1974; V. Levant, *Capital & Labour: Partners? Two Classes — Two Views*, Toronto: Steel Rail 1977.

- ¹⁵ *The Saskatchewan Commonwealth*, May 13, 1942 cited in Cherwinski, *op. cit.*, p. 294.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 295.
- ¹⁷ SAB, T. C. Douglas Papers, No. 295 (7-2) Labour Unions, P. Conroy, Secretary-Treasurer, CCL to A. F. Langton, General Organizer CCL, September 1, 1944.
- ¹⁸ *Statutes of the Province of Saskatchewan 1944*, Second Session, Regina: King's Printer, 1944, pp. 207-215.
- ¹⁹ SAB, T. C. Douglas Papers, No. 295 (7-2) Confidential Draft Leaflet on Saskatchewan Labour Legislation (proposed by the Political Action Committee of the CCL September 27, 1944), p. 1.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, D. Lewis to T. C. Douglas, July 19, 1944.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, H. Elkin, president of Packinghouse Workers local to F. W. Dowling, Director UPWA, July 16, 1944.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ SAB, Graham Commission, Exhibit 1-16 SCMU Taylorton Division Constitution 1945, p. 3.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, Exhibit 75, Supplementary Brief of SCMU, 1 September 1949, p. 3.
- ²⁶ SAB, Saskatchewan Department of Labour, II. Saskatchewan Wartime Labour Relations Board, A. Correspondence. 14 Saskatchewan Coal Mines Bienfait. Application of UMWA District 18, 27 February 1945.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, Statement made by C. M. Thomson, General Manager Manitoba and Saskatchewan Coal Company 23 March 1945.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, J. Stokaluk to A. J. Smith, Chief Executive Officer, August 22, 1945.
- ²⁹ SAB, Graham Commission, Exhibit I-2 Brief of Alex Robertson, president of Roche Percee Coal Mining Company, July 4, 1949, p. 9.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, Exhibit I-3 Brief of United Mine Workers of America District 18, p. 8.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, Exhibit 74 Second Brief of Manitoba & Saskatchewan Coal Company August 26, 1949, p. 7.
- ³² *Ibid.*, Exhibit I-3, Brief of UMWA, p. 11.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ The common labourer rate was the lowest, while the mechanical loader was the highest. For a detailing list of the job classifications and wage rates see SAB, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour No. 25C Conciliation — Estevan-Bienfait Mine Operations. UMWA District No. 18, Calgary, Alberta. Comparison of Datal Wage Rates Estevan-Bienfait and Alberta Domestic Area — Drumheller and Lethbridge 30 June 1948.
- ³⁵ Saskatchewan, Department of Labour. *Fifth Annual Report, 1948*, Regina: King's Printer, 1949, p. 18.
- ³⁶ SAB, Graham Commission, Exhibit I-3 Brief of UMWA, pp. 6-7.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- ³⁸ "In the coalfields, a sort of iron law of industrial relations always prevailed: without a politician, a major strike did not get settled. Ironically, both sides officially regarded political intervention as unwelcome." C. A. Seager, "A Proletariat in Wild Rose Country: The Alberta Miners, 1905-1945", Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1981, p. 9.
- ³⁹ Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, (SFL), "In the Matter of Section 16 of the Trade Union Act, 1944; and in the Matter of a dispute between District 18 UMWA and certain employers engaged in mining coal in the vicinity of the village of Bienfait in the Province of Saskatchewan, Report of the Board of Conciliation."
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ⁴¹ SAB, T. C. Douglas Papers, No. 318 (7-24) C. C. Williams to T. C. Douglas November 2, 1948.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, W. K. Bryden, to C. C. Williams, November 18, 1948.
- ⁴³ SAB, Graham Commission, Proceedings, July 8, 1949. Exhibit 77, p. 177.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- ⁴⁵ Public Archives of Canada (PAC), RG 27 Vol. 467, File 148 Canada. Department of Labour. Coal Miners Strike Estevan, November 3, 1948. Re Reported Work Stoppage.
- ⁴⁶ SAB, Graham Commission, Exhibit I-11 Brief of J. Brodie, Western Dominion, p. 4
- ⁴⁷ Saskatoon *Star Phoenix*, November 3, 1948.
- ⁴⁸ Regina *Leader Post*, November 9, 1948.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, November 15, 1948.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, November 13, 1948.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, November 15, 1948.
- ⁵³ PAC, RG 27, Vol. 467, File 148, *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 20, 1948.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, November 23, 1948 and *Winnipeg Citizen*, November 24, 1948.
- ⁵⁵ The December 7 issue of the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that this was the first time in the history of the Canadian labour movement that a labour union sued another for losses incurred because of picketing. But this is not the first time that the operators have used one union to fight another. In the 1932-1934 period the operators had the support of the Saskatchewan Coal Miners Association to help drive out the radical Mine Workers Union of Canada. In the Nova Scotia coalfields, the Provincial Workmen's Association sided with the operators to fight off the UMWA District 26. For an interesting account of this conflict, see John Mellor, *The Company Store: James Bryson McLachlan and the Cape Breton Coal Miners 1900-1925*, Toronto: Doubleday, 1983.
- ⁵⁶ PAC, RG 27, Vol 467, File 148, *Regina Leader Post*, December 7, 1948.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, December 8, 1948.

- ⁶⁰ The *Toronto Globe and Mail*, December 8, 1948, *Sudbury Star*, December 8, 1948 and *Windsor Star*, December 9, 1948 referred to the attack on McCormack as an incident similar to the 1931 Estevan riot.
- ⁶¹ PAC, RG 27, Vol. 467, File 148, *Regina Leader Post*, December 9, 1948.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, December 10, 1948.
- ⁶³ SAB, T. C. Douglas Papers, No. 318 (7-24) Estevan Coal Strike 1948 Conference Between Representatives of the Government and of the affected Coal Operators and Union re: Settlement December 10, 1948, p. 1.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
- ⁶⁶ *Regina Leader Post*, December 11, 1948.
- ⁶⁷ PAC RG 27, Vol. 467, File 148 *Western Producer*, December 30, 1948.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Report of Industrial Dispute. D. J. Woolley to National Employment Service. January 6, 1949.
- ⁶⁹ SAB, T. C. Douglas Papers, No. 318 (7-24) Statement of Hon. T. C. Douglas on Estevan-Bienfait Coal Miners Strike, January 6, 1949.
- ⁷⁰ *Regina Leader Post*, January 8, 1949.
- ⁷¹ *The Labour Gazette*, Vol. 49, March 1949, p. 371.
- ⁷² SAB, Graham Commission, Exhibit 2-64 Labour Relations Board Saskatchewan. In the matter of the determination of an appropriate unit of employers for the purpose of bargaining collectively . . . Between: SCMU (Roche Percee Division) Applicant and Roche Percee Coal Mining Company Respondent and UMW District 18 Intervener.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 6 April, 1949.
- ⁷⁴ SAB, Graham Commission. Correspondence. George Stephen, Commission Secretary, n.d.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid. Report*, p. 43.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ⁷⁷ *Regina Leader Post*, December 21, 1950, p. 3.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ It seems possible that if a case of this importance went to the Supreme Court of Canada, it would have been recorded, for the Supreme Court of Canada hears cases which are on appeal from Dominion and Provincial courts. However, the *Canada Law Reports of the Supreme Court of Canada, 1952-1956*, Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1952-1956, makes no mention of such a case. Neither does the *Canadian Labour Law Cases Vol. 1, 1944-1959*, Ottawa: CCH Canadian Limited, 1959, which contains decisions of the Canadian courts published in CCH Canadian Labour Law Reports from June 1951 to September 1959 and of Provincial Labour Boards from May 1944 to the end of 1959, make mention of this case. Nor does the *Legislative Library Newspaper Index Covering in general the period 1949-1954 Vols. I, II and III and 1955-1959 Vols. I, II and III* list any reference to this case proceeding past the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal.
- ⁸¹ See SAB, Royal Commission on the Estevan-Bienfait Mining Dispute, 1931 and the Saskatchewan Royal Commission on the Coal Mining Industry of Saskatchewan, 1934.

CONTRIBUTORS

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A TRIP TO ÎLE-À-LA-CROSSE IN 1915

The following account was originally published in *The Press*, Battleford in the 17 February 1916, edition. It is an account of a journey made from Battleford to Île-à-la-Crosse in the fall of 1915, and was written by Rufus Redmond Earle, a Battleford lawyer, who was one of the members of the party that made the trip.

Born in Ontario in 1876, Mr. Earle became a school teacher and was principal of the Killarney, Manitoba high school from 1898 to 1901. He was admitted to the bar in Manitoba in 1904 and in the North-West Territories in 1905. In 1911, he served a term as Mayor of Battleford. At the time the article was originally printed, Mr. Earle was practising law in Battleford.

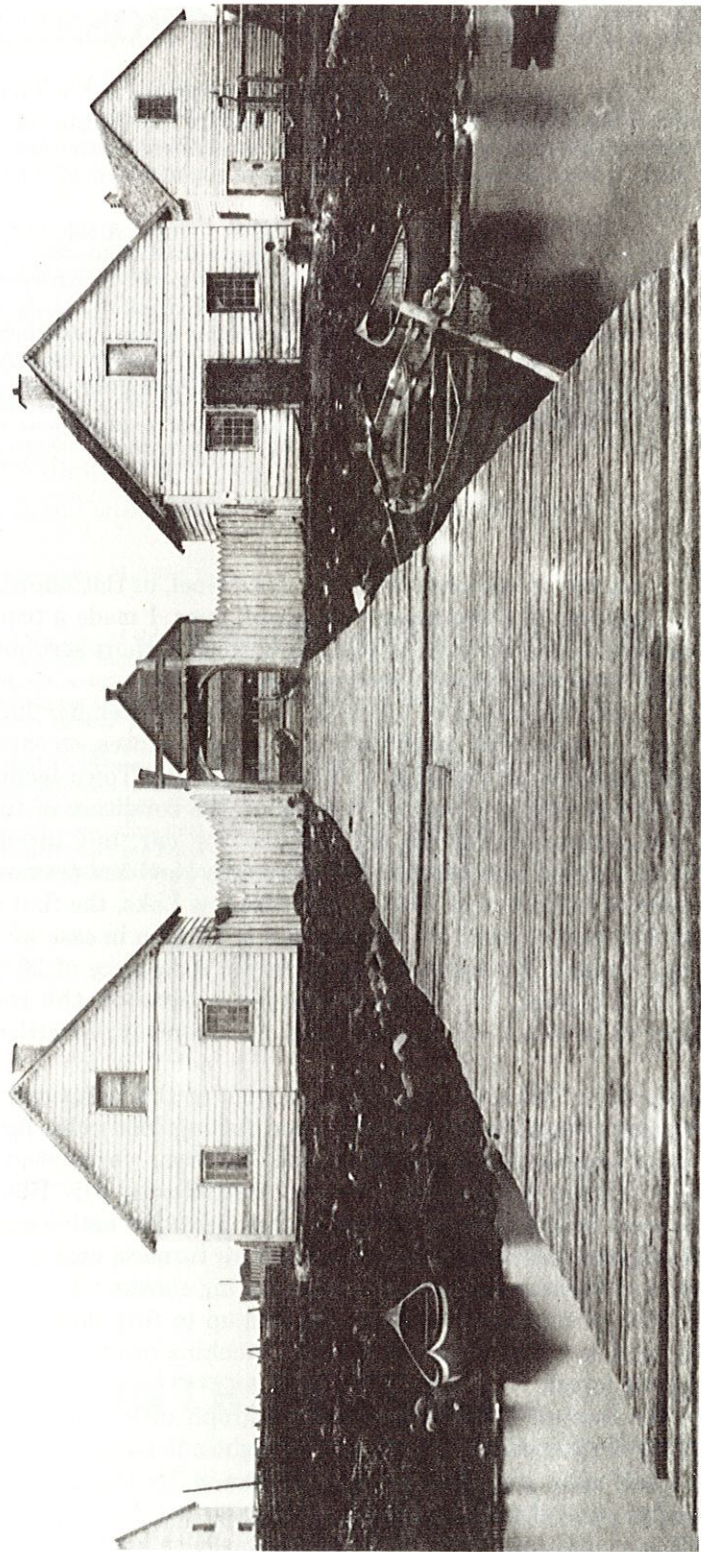
We are grateful to Dr. Hugh Dempsey, of the Glenbow Alberta Institute in Calgary, and editor of *Alberta History* for drawing Mr. R. R. Earle's account to our attention.

The Editor

Last fall, in company with Mr. J. D. Noel, of Battleford, District Superintendent of Government Telegraph lines, I made a trip to Île-à-la-Crosse and it has occurred to me that perhaps a short account of our trip might prove of interest to some of your readers.

We left Battleford at 7 a.m. on Monday, September 13th, 1915, by motor car, heavily laden with our grub box, blankets, valises, etc. It was a typical, fine snappy, western fall morning, and we left the Old Town feeling tip-top in every way. We had obtained various reports on the condition of the road north, and did not know how far we could go in the car, but intended to go as far north as the road was passable for a car. Mr. Noel had previously arranged with the telegraph linemen at Glaslyn and Meadow Lake, the first Government Telegraph Stations, to meet us with two rigs at Glaslyn in case we could not take the car any further. We reached The Narrows, a distance of 26 miles from Battleford, at 9 o'clock, having been delayed a little on the road, fastening our baggage more firmly on the car. Here, Mr. Dunbar, of Battleford, has a general store. There is a small settlement at this point, which is beautifully situated between Jack Fish and Long Lakes. A visit at this point will well repay anyone who enjoys beautiful scenery and good fishing. Six miles further on, following the road leading north west from the Narrows, we reached the ranch of Mr. Bourre, known to many in the two Battlefords. Mr. Bourre has evidently made good in this district. He has a large, beautiful native stone dwelling house, with full sized basement, heated by a hot air furnace, neat grounds and garden, a large herd of cattle and horses, and is raising considerable quantities of grain as well. The country all the way so far, and up to fifty miles and over north from Battleford, is a first-class farming and ranching district. After that you begin to strike the forest.

We reached Glaslyn, the first telegraph office in the main line north of Battleford (Meota is a loop line six or eight miles west) a distance of fifty-three and a half miles from Battleford at 11:30 a.m. By this time we had worked up a very fine appetite for our lunch. Here we met Mr. McCartney, the bachelor agent in charge, and fared most sumptuously at his hands. Mr. McCordick, the



Île-à-la-Crosse, 1908.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, Crean Album.

telegraph agent from Meadow Lake, was also there with his democrat and team ready to convey us from there to Meadow Lake. He reported, however, that we could go a considerable distance further with the car, so after completing our lunch we got away at 1 o'clock in the car, leaving Mr. McCordick to follow with his team. For about fifteen miles further the road was pretty fair, except for occasional stumps of chopped trees and many stones. We pushed on however, in the teeth of a blinding snowstorm which had come on about the time we reached Glaslyn, and which made it more difficult to manoeuvre the car over the stumps and stones. The road was steadily getting worse. We had a number of close shaves with the stumps, and the car caught them several times in spite of my careful driving. We kept on, however, being determined to shove the car as far as it would go. Finally, at 6 o'clock, it was getting very dark in the dense forest through which we were passing, the stumps had become very bad, and I was getting so tired driving the car, that we decided to go no further with it, having reached a distance of 95 miles from Battleford. When we got out to examine the car we found that we had torn off the pan underneath, evidently having caught it on a stump. We got it the next morning by going back on the road about a mile. We therefore decided to camp for the night, although there was no water available so far as we could see. We had a small quantity of drinking water in our water bag, however, and soon had the tent up, a roaring fire blazing and supper ready. There had fallen by this time, about two inches of snow, and we had to spread our blankets that night on the snow inside the tent. Taking everything into consideration, however, we spent a fairly pleasant night. For our coffee the next morning we had to melt snow, but despite this the coffee was fine — at least so it seemed to us. The night was exceedingly cold for this time of the year, and I nearly ruined the radiator of my car by neglecting to run off the water; in fact, it took all the next forenoon to get it thawed out, we having finally to light a fire in front of the radiator for this purpose. We thought that we were about fifteen miles from Meadow Lake and knew that Mr. McCordick was behind us with his team and democrat. We examined the road ahead and decided it would not be safe to risk the car any further. We therefore decided to wait for Mr. McCordick. He came along about noon, and we then transferred the baggage from the car to his democrat, and chopped down enough trees to allow us to back the car off the road, which is pretty narrow through the forest at this point. After eating lunch we drained the water out of the radiator, put the top up with all the curtains on, locked the car, and took everything out that could be easily carried off. We then left the car there awaiting our return. Between Midnight Lake and where we left the car we had passed the previous day The Divide, that is where the water begins to flow north; all south of this drains into the Saskatchewan River. It is in the vicinity of The Divide that some of the best moose shooting is. The fifteen miles between this point and Meadow Lake is pretty rough road. It took us about four hours to drive this, the democrat being heavily laden, of course, with the three of us and the baggage. We reached Meadow Lake at 7:30 p.m., cold, tired, and ravenously hungry. For a considerable distance around Meadow Lake there is first class farming land, open prairie in many places, interspersed with poplar groves, very similar to the Bresaylor district. The country around this point is practically all homesteaded. All the district from about 75 miles north of Battleford to near Meadow Lake is a splendid moose country. We had passed several hunters' lodges along the

road the previous evening. They also hunt bear, jumping deer, an occasional elk, together with duck, geese, timber wolves, coyotes, etc. There is a settlement of whites and half-breeds at Meadow Lake, and the district tributary thereto of about two hundred. The settlement has a substantial Roman Catholic church, school house, two general stores, and the Government Telegraph office. Meadow Lake is not so well supplied with fish as the lakes further on, Green Lake, and La Crosse.

There is a great deal of ranching carried on around Meadow Lake; in fact, between Meadow Lake and Green Lake the next day we passed through one of the finest hay flats it has ever been my experience to see. We passed through mile upon mile of hay nearly six feet in height, all very green and succulent. The ranchers have cut an enormous amount (thousands of tons) this year, and yet they have not cut more than half of it. I understand that at times this district is flooded so that it is impossible to cut the hay, but this year having been so dry, it was practically all available. Here, I learned, lived a client of mine, Mr. J. Clark Nelson, who has his ranch about 6 miles from Meadow Lake. Mr. Bouillet, who keeps a general store at Meadow Lake, is a Frenchman, from France, having moved, with his family, to this point about five years ago. One of his sons, a French Reservist, is now at the front fighting in the armies of the Allies.

We left Meadow Lake the following day, Wednesday, September 15th, at 2 p.m., and reached the half way camping place between Meadow Lake and Green Lake, known as Island Hill, at 9 p.m. We camped here in a beautiful open, dry pine grove, and enjoyed the night very much. We left for Green Lake at 7:30 a.m. the following day. The Government road and telegraph line follow pretty closely along the Beaver River, all the way to Green Lake, and thence to Île-à-la-Crosse. The country, with the exception of the Meadow Lake district, is densely wooded practically all the way from Midnight Lake to Île-à-Crosse, composed largely of spruce, pine, poplar, white birch, and tamarack. The poplar and other trees here grow to a good height from fifty to sixty feet. Sometime or other it is possible there will be a pulp industry established up north. Speaking of Island Hill, this is so called because in high water when practically all this hay flat district is flooded, this point is practically an island.

We reached Green Lake at 1 p.m., a distance from Meadow Lake of about 45 miles, and from Battleford 150 miles. Here the Hudson's Bay Company and Revillon Bros. have general stores both in charge of Scotchmen by the names of Campbell, not related in any way. Mr. F. G. Campbell, manager of the Hudson's Bay post at this point, is a very interesting personality. He has been thirteen years in the wilds, although apparently quite a young man at the present time — I should say not more than from thirty-five to forty years of age. He tells us that this is the nearest he has been to civilization during this period. He has been here only a few months, having previously been up in the Mackenzie River district. His wife is from Scotland like himself. They have one child, a little girl, who was born in the Mackenzie River district. Mrs. Campbell made the trip from the north last year with the child, and on home to her people in the old country before coming to Green Lake. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell have a very cosy comfortable home, and were exceptionally kind to us in every way. They insisted on us going up for tea in the evening, and then prevailed upon us to stay all night with them and have breakfast in the morning. We highly appreciated their kindness after the somewhat novel experience to us of having "roughed it" for

two or three days. Mr. Campbell had already arranged with two native guides to take us in one of the Company's canoes from Green Lake to Île-à-la-Crosse. We had already travelled from Battleford, a distance of 150 miles by land, and it is about 150 miles from Green Lake to Île-à-la-Crosse by water.

The next morning, Friday, September 17th, we left Green Lake at 8 a.m. with two native guides, Abraham McCallum and Celeste Merasty. It was raining quite heavily, and not at all prepossessing for such a long trip by water. We followed the Green River for about ten miles to where it joins the Beaver River, and then the Beaver River for the rest of the way to Lac Île-à-la-Crosse. The Beaver is a beautiful river, almost like a mountain stream. The water is clear and cold, and the banks are high and wooded right to the edge. The leaves had begun to take on their fall coloring, and for miles and miles the scenery was most beautiful. The water is very low at present; the lowest it has been for years, and it was a little difficult getting the canoe over the various rapids in the river. There is any amount of fish and duck, so that we had no difficulty in providing ourselves with all the fresh meat we required.

The guides regularly paddled from 8 o'clock until 11 o'clock, then camped from 11 o'clock till 12:30, when we all had lunch; at it again from 12:30 to 4 o'clock, when the guides have tea and bannock, then paddle again from 4:30 until 6 o'clock, when we put in for the night. It was this afternoon, while we were going down the river, that two beautiful young jumping deer came down to the river ahead of us to drink. We could easily have shot them had we so desired. This same afternoon we passed an Indian camp. They had just shot a moose and were preparing part of it for the table. We camped in a spruce grove, high up on the bank of the river this night, and arose the next morning, Saturday, September 18th, the guides at 5:30, ourselves at 6 o'clock. We left camp at 7:40. At this point I found my kodak film rolls that I had purchased expressly for the trip, did not fit, so that I could not from this time on take any more pictures, much to my regret. It was a beautiful morning and both the guides and ourselves were feeling in fine shape for the day's journey. The former informed us that we would be going through rapids pretty nearly all that day. It is most interesting the way in which these guides manoeuvre the canoe through the rapids. They seem to know every turn and bend in the river. When approaching a rapid, they discard their paddles and use green tamarack poles about two inches through and ten feet long, peeled and trimmed smooth. The man in the front stands up most of the time when the canoe approaches the rapids, and watching for the best place to steer to keep off the rocks. There is a continual stream of Cree language pouring back and forth from the front to the rear of the canoe from this time on, the two guides shouting instructions to one another. We, however, navigated all the rapids without accident, although it seemed to us that we had one or two very close shaves towards wrecking the canoe on the rocks. And, by the way, it is really wonderful the amount these canoes can carry. Coming back we brought an extra man for part of the distance, and the five of us must easily have weighed eight hundred pounds. Our grub box, tent, camp stove, blankets, valises, etc., must have weighed at least another seven hundred pounds, so that we had about fifteen hundred pounds in this canoe, which was only about eight inches above the water. Of course we walked the worst of the rapids, and from the shore had a still better view of the really interesting antics these native guides manipulating the canoe through the rapids. We reached Waterhen Creek, where there is an



Saskatchewan Archives Board, Crean Album.

Residential School, Roman Catholic Mission, La Plonge, 1908.

Indian village, at 9 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 18th. Here we found 32 bales of telegraph wire lying at the water's edge. We inquired from the natives, and learned from them that Mr. Perry, the telegraph line contractor, was short of wire up at Île-à-la-Crosse, that he had arranged with these natives to bring the wire down, and that they had failed to carry out their contract for lack of food. This seemed somewhat of a mystery of us, knowing the large amount of game available. However, Mr. Noel, after thinking the matter over, decided to arrange to have the wire taken down the river. We therefore gave them some of our supplies; bacon, bread, tea and sugar. They seemed greatly pleased at this, and had the canoe, with seventeen bales of wire loaded in a very few minutes, and followed us down the river. It was now cloudy and raining slightly. The guides told us it would be necessary for us to walk past some of the rapids which were now getting worse to navigate, and it was here that a misunderstanding occurred that cost us pretty nearly all the afternoon. One of the guides spoke broken French, and Mr. Noel, in taking the instructions, understood him to say that we would walk about two miles, when, as a matter of fact, it was about twelve miles that he wished us to walk. The result was that after we had climbed up the bank and found the Government road we walked between three and four miles when we decided that there must be something wrong. We then started back on the road, and after walking back pretty near to where we started from and not seeing anything of the guides, decided that we had better go back the other way again. It was now raining heavily, and we went down to the river at several points, but could see nothing of our guides or the canoe. Finally, after walking about fifteen miles in the rain, we got in touch with the guides, who had come up the road to meet us. We reached the canoe at the foot of the rapids about 5:30 p.m., being wet to the skin from head to foot. Everything in the canoe was wet

and we felt very much depressed. We got in, however, and went a few miles when we decided that it would be dangerous to go any further in our condition. We therefore put into camp. The guides certainly excelled themselves this evening in the speed with which they put up the tent and got the fire going. Soon we were drying ourselves comfortably at the big fire, and shortly afterwards the two men who were bringing down the wire reached us, and we all camped for the night together. During the afternoon, while we were trying to locate the guides, I had fired off my shot gun. The guides told us this had frightened four moose that were evidently close to the bank, and they had swum across the river ahead of the canoe.

I understand that the custom among the natives is frequently for several to go out together hunting moose. If one is shot the carcass is shared among all of the hunters, the hide going to the successful shot. I was very glad to learn that the natives are very careful not to waste anything. What meat is not required at the time is, in the summer smoked for future use, and in the winter frozen up for this purpose. The hide is tanned, made into moccasins, gloves, coats, etc. They are also, I understand, very careful to kill no more than they require, and if later opportunity offers to bring down another moose when there is really no need for it, they refuse to take advantage of the opportunity. In other words they look upon the moose particularly, somewhat as a rancher or farmer looks upon his own herd, that is, that they are their own particular property, and they govern themselves accordingly.

The next day, Sunday, was a pretty fine day although a little cloudy. We rose at 6 a.m. intending to go through the rest of the rapids and reach La Plonge that evening if possible. This we accomplished at 6 p.m. We were now about 35 or 40 miles from our destination, Île-à-la-Crosse. Here at La Plonge there is a large Roman Catholic Mission. It was a novel sight from the river to look up this dark, cloudy Sunday evening and see the buildings on the hill ablaze with electric light at such a distance from civilization. The mission here has an electric light plant of its own, the power being derived from damming up the creek at this point. They have sufficient power to run the electric light plant, and light the Indian school, the church and other buildings. They have also a steam heating plant installed to heat the school and church, a commodious saw mill, barns and other buildings. It is highly creditable indeed the enterprise shown in this connection. The success of the enterprise from the mechanical standpoint is mainly due, I understand, to one of the Brothers, Bro. Joseph Burnhouf who is apparently somewhat of a genius along this line. Although not an electrician he, I understand, has studied the matter up from books and installed the plant on his own initiative. He is a most interesting man to meet, speaks three languages, his native language, French, English and Cree, and is most intelligent and devoted to his work. He has a comfortable motor boat, which he built himself, and operates most successfully. The buildings of this mission were erected about nine years ago. They have over 50 Indian pupils, there being a priest in charge, together with four Brothers and four Sisters. They are also clearing the land and engaging to a small extent in farming. I was informed by Brother Burnhouf that they had oats, a small piece that went 75 bushels to the acre this year. They have also some cattle. It is Mr. Noel's intention, I understand, to have this point connected up with the government telegraph line which is distant about eight miles. They are naturally exceedingly

anxious that this should be done. Across the river there is quite a settlement, about 15 families of whites and Indians.

Our guides were pretty tired by this time and we decided to request Brother Burnhouf to take us the balance of the way to Île-à-la-Crosse in his motor boat. We found that we had only about 15 gallons of gasoline, which by the way costs from \$1.50 to \$2.00 a gallon at this point. He said it would take about ten gallons to make the trip that we wanted to make, which would leave him only about five gallons of gasoline for the rest of the season, as it would be impossible for him to get any more before winter. The Brothers were exceptionally busy at this time as they are now completing their new church and Bro. Burnhouf has supervision of same, and apparently many other duties to perform. Despite this, however, he very kindly consented to take us in his motor boat the next morning, and the guides were highly pleased over the news. Accordingly the following morning, Monday, we left in the Brother's boat at 8 a.m. and had a most beautiful trip down the Beaver river to Lac Île-à-la-Crosse in the forenoon. We anticipated some difficulty in crossing the lake in case there was a wind as the lake is very rough sometimes and people in canoes and even motor boats have occasionally to wait for several days at the entrance to the lake before they can cross to the settlement of Île-à-la-Crosse. We lunched on one of the islands at a beautiful sandy beach, and found the lake rather rough. By the way Lac Île-à-la-Crosse is a very large lake. It has bays leading off it from 15 to 40 miles long. The name, I understand, is derived from the word "lacrosse," the first settlers having discovered the Indians playing a game on one of the islands very similar to the game of lacrosse. For this reason they gave the name of La Crosse to the island, Île-à-la-Crosse. After lunch the Brother decided it would be all right to cross the lake to the mission, which we did. In crossing the lake the first object that meets the gaze is an immense cross erected on a high pole on a high point of land near the mission. The sight of this cross made somehow, and quite unexpectedly, a deep impression on me. It recalled most vividly in these wild surroundings the teachings of my childhood, learned at my dear old mother's knee, of that other lake spoken of so frequently in the Bible accounts of the journeyings of the Founder of the Christian religion. I thought to myself, does this cross and all that it stands for in our modern 20th century, rotten as it is with Tammany politics, graft and hypocrisy, war-ridden, and apparently half demented with the craze for pomp and display, explain why this mission was founded so many years ago. Does it explain why these people have given up the comforts of refined homes in many cases, and the privileges of the better side of our modern civilization to spend their lives among the races of Northern Canada endeavoring to uplift them to a higher standard of living. These devoted missionaries are endeavoring to teach the poor simple natives a better way to live and worship than their old way, so well described by the great Irish Canadian who met his death by assassination on the streets of Ottawa on April 8th, 1868, the eloquent Thomas D'Arcy McGee, describing the return of Jacques Cartier from Canada to his native country France:

"He told them of the Algonquin
Braves, the hunters of the wild,
Of how the Indian mother in the forest rocks the child,
Of how, poor souls, they fancy in every living thing
A spirit good or evil that claims their worshipping."

And at nine o'clock on the evening when we left the mission a couple of days later and I looked back over the beautiful moonlit waters of Lac Île-à-la-Crosse, the last thing I saw was not the commodious buildings of the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England, trading into Hudson Bay commonly called the Hudson's Bay Company, or the trading post of the more modern Revillon Freres, but it was the gigantic pole on the hill surmounted by the emblem of the religious faith common to Roman Catholics and Protestants, to Briton and German — the Cross of Christ.

We called at the mission and met Father Rappe, the senior priest in charge. Father Rappe informed me that he had been here since 1879, a period of 36 years, this being his first and only mission. The Indian school is closed here at present since the opening of the school at La Plonge. I understand, however, that they expect to get some Sisters in the spring, and if so they are going to re-open it, and it will then be a school for both whites and natives. I learned that Father Rappe frequently travels nearly one thousand miles in the year visiting his people. The church at this point is a large and commodious building and at times, I am told, is filled to the doors. As many as a thousand people are tributary to this point. We obtained some very interesting information with reference to this mission. It was established in 1840, seventy-five years ago, and the Sisters went in 1860. It seems to me that very few people are aware of the age and importance of this mission. Here also are the stores of the Hudson Bay's Company and Revillon Freres, and before the war broke out a very large trade was done at this point in furs.



Saskatchewan Archives Board, Crean Album.

Saw mill, Roman Catholic Mission, La Plonge, 1908.

At the present time, however, this industry is paralyzed by the war, and business is very flat as a consequence. It will no doubt pick up again after the war is over. The whole country up here is a veritable hunter's paradise. Game of all sorts is in abundance. The natives live well when times are normal. So long as they can get reasonable prices for their furs to enable them to buy flour, tea, sugar and tobacco, they are happy. Of course at certain times of the year it is more difficult for them to catch fish and get the other game, but they have all sorts of methods of preserving the meat — for example, as I have before intimated the moose meat they will smoke and dry, and thus preserve it in the summer. In the winter it is an easy matter to freeze it up. While we were there fish were in abundance and a splendid quality.

We went in the motor boat to find the construction camp of Mr. Parry, who is completing the telegraph line to Île-à-la-Crosse. We finally located the camp by running up a little creek leading into the lake. We found Mr. Parry and his men in good spirits with the line pretty nearly completed. Mr. Parry had an abundance of supplies at the camp, and treated us right royally while we were there. We stayed at Île-à-la-Crosse a day and a half. On the second day we went with Mr. Parry to the end of the wire, which was back seven or eight miles from the camp. Mr. Noel tapped the wire at this point, and endeavored to get through to Battleford. He had considerable difficulty in this, however, and it was not until about four o'clock in the afternoon that he was able to get his messages through to North Battleford, and have them repeated from there to Battleford. He forwarded telegrams conveying our greetings to the mayors of Battleford and North Battleford, and sent also some personal messages for ourselves to relatives at Battleford. Mr. Parry hoped to complete the line the following Saturday, that is September 25th, and expected to leave for Battleford with his men on the following Sunday, September 26th. He thought it would take him about two weeks to come in with his men and outfit over the government road. He will probably go back later, after the ice freezes, and put in the line across the water of Île-à-la-Crosse proper. High masts will be required for this purpose as the water span is pretty wide, and the ice at times jams badly. He will also, he tells me, if he is instructed, connect up La Plonge mission with the trunk line by putting in a loop line about eight miles. We left the camp on the evening of Tuesday, September 21st, called for a short time at the Île-à-la-Crosse mission, and then the Brother thought that as there might possibly be a wind on the following day it would be better to cross the lake in the evening. We therefore had a beautiful moonlight ride across the lake. The evening was mild and the trip was one of the finest I have ever enjoyed. We camped where the river joins the lake, and came up the Beaver River to La Plonge the following forenoon, where we had lunch at the mission. The officials at the point were exceedingly kind to us and supplemented our larder with some of their own fresh butter, bread, etc. We got away in the canoe, paddled up the river back towards Green lake about 2 p.m. and covered considerable ground that afternoon, part of the time with a sail constructed out of a loose piece of canvas, sailing with a fine north wind blowing. The following day we overtook and passed three men, fire inspectors, going up the river. Here also we passed, anchored in the river the gasoline launch of Mr. Beattie one of the government officials of the north. Friday, September 24th, was a very unpleasant day as it snowed hard all day. We stayed in camp all the forenoon and made about ten miles in the afternoon,

very uncomfortably. The following day we left camp at 7:15, picked up another man at Waterhen Creek who wished to come with us, promising to paddle all the way if we would let him come with us. This was the hardest day's paddle we had, about 40 miles to Green Lake which we reached about 7:15 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell of the Hudson's Bay post very kindly invited us again to spend the night with them at their house, which we did and were very glad to get under roof again, and get cleaned up and rested. On Sunday we got away about noon on our drive to the half way camp on the road to Meadow Lake and completed our journey to Meadow Lake the following Monday forenoon. Monday afternoon we drove the 15 miles from Meadow Lake to where the car was. Here we found Mr. Eli Nault with his gang of men working on the government road, and we camped with them. Mr. Nault is doing first class work, taking out the stumps and stones and levelling the road. He hopes to get through to Meadow Lake this fall. The following morning we started up the car and came home the ninety-five miles the same day, reaching Battleford at 6:40 p.m. . . .

Now for what impressed me most on the trip. Two things loom up largely in my mind as the result of the journey north. One is the importance of this government road and telegraph line, extending so far north from the Battlefords into the northern country. It ought to mean a great deal to both these places, as it will no doubt divert considerable fur and other trade this way, and have a tendency to open up this north country. The whole country as I have already intimated is a splendid game reserve, and what surprises me is the more people do not take advantage of it from this standpoint alone. Hunters in Ontario will go hundreds of miles to obtain no better shooting than can be found 75 miles north of here, at very small expense. For two or three fellows who wish to have a fine outing I know of nothing better. A good time to go is during the month of September when the flies and mosquitos give no trouble. With a canoe and one Indian guide, providing they are willing to paddle some themselves they could travel hundreds of miles throughout this district and enjoy outdoor life with the best of scenery and fishing, and shooting for their own use only, of course during the closed season, on the way.

The thing that impressed me the most, however, was the devotion and energy of the Roman Catholic missionaries in this part of the country. It certainly requires, it seems to me, great devotion to live the lives that these people are. There is no doubt of the beneficial influence that has been exerted over the natives through these missions; in fact apparently the only civilizing and refining influence of work in this country, practically speaking, is the Roman Catholic missions, and the effect is very noticeable throughout the whole country, in the manners and modes of living of the Halfbreeds and Indians. In conclusion I would say to the people of Battleford and North Battleford, take advantage of this government road, and learn more of the north country. It will repay the time and expense necessitated; in fact the actual expenses may be very light and a first class trip can be made in from three weeks to a month.

HOMESTEADING IN THE FLORAL DISTRICT

by *Melvin Berkner*

Melvin Berkner was the son of Frederick and Anna (Metzodorg) Berkner. His parents, as Mr. Berkner relates in this memoir, were tailors and had a business in Magnetawin on Parry Sound, Ontario. In 1905 Melvin's parents gave up their business and moved west to take up a homestead in the Floral district near Saskatoon.

This account describes some of the experiences the Berkner's had in establishing their new home in Saskatchewan. Frederick and Anna Berkner continued to farm. Anna Berkner died in 1926 and Frederick in 1943. Melvin, after war service, continued to farm the homestead until his death in 1976. He married Mary Rogers and they had one daughter, Joan. Joan married and moved to the state of Washington where she now lives.

We are grateful to Melvin's daughter, Mrs. Joan West, for making her father's account of his pioneering experiences available to us and for permission to publish it in *Saskatchewan History*.

The Editor

I was born in a little town in Northern Ontario called Magnetawin, named after the Magnetawin river up in Parry Sound district, it was not on a railroad at that time, and depended solely on the river for transportation.

I still have vague childhood memories of the boats that used to dock at the wharf back of the hotel. There were three paddle wheelers, the *Wawona*, the *Waneta* and the *Glenrosa*. They were owned by Captain Kennedy who was the "big wheel" around Parry Sound then.

There was a dry dock right behind our house into which they ran these boats when they needed repairs, and it was always a big day for me when I could sit on our back porch and watch them opening and closing the docks.

My father was in the tailoring business, and mother being a tailoress, they had developed a good business, with Dad catering to men's wear, and mother making ladies suits, etc. They both had grown up in the textile industry, having worked in woolen mills as children, and served as apprentices in the tailor shops until father finally moved up there and opened a shop of his own. Just why they ever settled in that remote part of Ontario I'll never know; like the fellow said when St. Peter gave him his choice to either go to Hades or Parry Sound, he said "Like a darned fool I went to Parry Sound".

After twenty seven years of measuring people for Sunday suits and overcoats and sitting on a tailor's bench, father finally came to the conclusion that there were better ways of making a living.

What started this train of thought was the fact that one or two of the inhabitants of our town had come out west and were occasionally corresponding. One of these was Dr. Tyreman, who had ventured out as far as Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and set up a practise there. He, by the way, was the doctor in attendance when I was born. I am sure many Prince Albert residents will remember this grand old man.

Now, to pull out roots from an established home and business and take off for some place on the plains half way across the continent, that has just been opened up to settlers, to start a whole new way of life is a decision that isn't usually made over night, so you may be sure that there was a lot of arguing about the pros and cons before mother was finally won over to the idea of leaving; and then only under one condition — that they sell the property and bring all the tailoring equipment with them. She wasn't too sure of this home-steading idea, and with the tailoring equipment plus enough good cloth, thread, buttons, etc. they could always start up in business again, without too much of an outlay in cash.

Once they had firmly made up their minds, they lost no time in posting the big, old house for sale. It was immediately purchased by Captain Kennedy who ran the fleet of river boats. Then came the job of packing and crating all the household things and getting them loaded on board a boat which ran to the nearest railhead, the boat being the *Wanona*. After bidding farewell to friends and neighbors we boarded, and were soon on our way down the river with smoke pouring from the funnel of the old *Wanona*. My last memory of Magnetawin was seeing the operator of the swing bridge waving to us from his tower as we passed.

After all the years of sweating in a tailor shop, father decided we should take some time out to visit with friends and relatives before coming out to the Prairies; so they proceeded to Waterloo to visit his sister whom he hadn't seen for nearly twenty years. It was in this town where both Dad and Mother had started their career as tailors, also where mother had been born, so they really had a wonderful time renewing old acquaintances.

It was soon time for the Toronto fair to open, so they decided to stop over, and take in the big show, and also do some shopping. It was here that I had my first ride on an electric street car which was indeed a thrill. Although Toronto had been operating a tram system for a number of years prior to this, their earlier cars had been horse drawn.

While in the big city Dad did some shopping on his own, for some items he thought might be useful when we reached our destination; some of these items were a double barreled shot gun, a complete line of carpenter tools, and many more items which he thought might be hard to purchase out west.

After a couple of days taking in the sights at the big fair and the city of Toronto in general, we boarded the Canadian Pacific Railway for the tedious journey to the vast unknown; this was in the month of June, 1905 — the year Saskatchewan became a province.

For those of us who have never travelled by train in those old wooden coaches that creaked and rattled and lurched over a road bed that hadn't as yet seen gravel, laid with little sixty pound rails, it will be hard to comprehend just how travelling in those early trains was; not only for passengers but for the train crew as well. Top speed was rarely more than twenty five miles per hour, and at

times they would slow down to a crawl. The coaches rocked so badly at times that the train men would flounder around like drunken sailors. The tourist coaches had a stove in one end where people could boil the kettle and make their own tea or coffee; these stoves were bolted to the floor to keep them from waltzing out into the aisle or perhaps jumping at some passenger who happened to be stumbling through the train. The road seemed to get gradually rougher, the farther west we got from Winnipeg. I will never forget my first view of Regina, Saskatchewan — it must have rained a lot before we got there, for the streets were a sea of sticky, gooey mud and water as far as the eye could see. I remember seeing a wagon stuck in the street up to the hubs in mud. I asked my Dad what made the man drive in there? They had thrown down planks and boards so people could get across the street from the station.

After spending the night in Regina we boarded the train again for the final lap of our journey to Saskatoon. When the train stopped at Dundurn, Dad got off to stretch his legs on the station platform, and who should he meet but Dr. Tyreman. He was in Dundurn to treat a patient who had been badly hurt in a runaway accident, and was now about to board our train on his way back to Prince Albert. As you can well imagine, they had a lot to talk about on the way to Saskatoon. I must say, that by this time, after viewing the country from the train windows had really impressed everyone who was seeing it for the first time, as indeed every easterner was. This vast open prairie, with nothing to break the horizon but popular bluffs, and here and there a homesteader's shack, some of rough lumber with perhaps some tar paper nailed on with laths to keep out the wind, others built of sod, with an odd one built of poplar logs plastered with alkali mud. I think by this time my parents were beginning to wonder if they hadn't been foolish to venture out this far.

We finally arrived in Saskatoon, and put up at the Queen's Hotel, which was a small frame building at that time, and Dr. Tyreman went on to Prince Albert.

The next morning father went out to try and locate our effects which had been shipped by freight. He finally found the car containing our things, side tracked among other cars containing similar cargoes. We had to arrange to have this car brought back to the Nutana side of the river, as there was no traffic bridge at that time, and the ferry cable was out. The June flood was coming down, so the river was quite high.

I forgot to mention that previous to locating our car, Dad had met a fellow named Ed Herr, who tried to persuade him to locate a homestead near him, when Dad told him he didn't want to be too far away from the railroad they went to the land titles office together, where Dad filed on a quarter just a half mile east of Ed's which the map showed was right next to the railroad; in fact on inspecting this land later, he found that the Canadian Pacific Railroad had cut across one corner of it.

The two of them proceeded back to the hotel for dinner, during which Ed suggested that we stay in his shack until we had a dwelling of our own. After dinner father went to see if he could find someone to drive mother and I out to Ed's place; as there was only one livery barn on the north side of the river, he inquired as to whether there was someone on the other side who had a team to drive us out. The liveryman said that crossing on the railway bridge was no problem for him, he had been driving across every day since the ferry stopped. I

must say that Dad was a little dubious, as the ties on that old bridge seemed quite far apart; but there appeared to be no other alternative, as there was no telling how long it would be before the ferry was back in operation.

In less than an hour this chap was at the hotel door with a team of broncs hitched to a democrat. After loading a small truck containing bedding along with a couple of suitcases, mother and I were helped on board. Dad was to walk out later. Poor mother, she had never had a ride like that before, those two broncs went across on the dead run, stepping off those ties without a miss, with the democrat bouncing right off its wheels. It only took a few minutes to make the crossing, but it must have seemed like an eternity to mother.

With this ordeal over, mother set about straightening her hat and veil, and recovering her composure. We were now heading out across the prairie following a wagon trail, in a south-easterly direction, then winding back and forth around bluffs and hills almost due south. After several miles we began to see the odd shanty here and there. These belonged to the Barr Colonists, who had decided to settle here in preference to going on to Lloydminster with the rest of the colony.

With this young team clipping along in a steady trot it didn't take very long before we arrived at our destination, a typical homesteader's shack. In fact a little above average in so much as it sported two windows. After unloading our baggage our liveryman wheeled around back for town, leaving mother and I to survey our surroundings. Mother entered the place and looked things over — a small cast iron range with some kindling on the floor beside it, a home made table decked with a few dirty dishes, a bed in one corner built of poplar poles, with hay to serve as springs, on top of which was an old mattress covered with a couple of blankets, a packing box by the window, which served as a wash stand and another one nailed to the wall fitted with shelves which did for a cupboard. A tea kettle, frying pan and saucepan completed the furnishings, with the exception of a trunk in one corner, a shotgun and rifle hanging above the door.

The first thing mother decided to do was to clean up the place. So after getting water from the well, she immediately put on a fire to heat water for washing dishes and scrubbing. It wasn't too long before things looked a little more presentable.

All this time I was out exploring. I had spotted a coyote which I took to be a dog; gophers were lots of fun, you chased them down a hole, and waited for them to pop up again and sit up to have a good look. Then there were grey squirrels around the bluffs, which would dart into the underbrush if you got too close. This open prairie seemed like paradise to a boy who had just come from a small Ontario town.

Night began to fall all too soon, and mother had to light the kerosene lamp; she was beginning to worry about Dad, wondering if he would find his way back out to this place. She would go outside every few minutes to gaze into the dusk, but it was soon too dark to see, so she put on the kettle and began getting supper. About this time some coyotes broke into a yapping chorus, they seemed to be very close to the house, and poor mother was frightened out of her wits; she had never heard of coyotes and thought they must be wolves. They kept up their howlings and yapping for so long that mother put a blanket over the window to see if shutting out the light would make them stop. It worked, so she left it there.

With no light to guide them, Dad got hopelessly lost, and spent the night out on the prairie; actually he found that he wasn't more than half mile away from the shack when dawn broke in the morning, but he had got off the trail in the dark and couldn't find it again. You can imagine our relief when he came in that morning, cold and hungry. But after drinking some good hot coffee and a hot breakfast and rest, he was ready to set off again, to see if he could locate the quarter of land which was to become our homestead.

When he finally located the quarter by the mound stakes and looked it over from all directions, he came to the conclusion that he hadn't made too bad a choice after all. For although there were several sloughs which were full of water at that time of year, there was still plenty of high ground to be broken up for crop, and the railroad cut across the north east corner of the quarter.

After his exploring trip, Dad made his way back to the shack to relate the merits of our land to mother, and discuss plans for building. After much discussion they finally decided on a two story, four roomed house with kitchen and living room down stairs, and two bedrooms above. Many of the houses to be built later were of similar plan, with the exception of perhaps an extra bedroom upstairs.

The next step was to locate a building site, so after dinner we walked down to find a suitable spot on some level ground not too far away from where the future road would finally be.

With the building site decided upon, Dad lost no time in getting started to dig a cellar for the house, he was almost half done when Ed Herr arrived back from Saskatoon and with his help they finished digging in a couple of days.

To get lumber out for building he borrowed Ed's team and wagon and started to haul from town. The lumber yard which was located on the south, or Nutana side of the river saved the steep haul up the "ferry hill", the ferry was again running by this time, Dad was able to get a man and team in town to help him haul. In a couple of days the material was stacked at the building site, and Ed started right in to build.

As soon as building got under way, mother got the men to put up a temporary shelter, big enough to accomodate a stove and table so she could cook the meals there and save time going back and forth from Ed's shack. It didn't take them long to accomplish this, they just stood up ship top board in form of an inverted V, using a two-by-four for a ridge pole to nail to; with one end boarded up and the other covered with a blanket, this made a fairly good shelter, in fact with a mattress put on the ground it even served as sleeping quarters at night.

I have often seen twisters of varied intensity, but never like the miniature tornadoes we used to see in those early years; you could see them sucking up the top soil and funnelling it skyward, sometimes miles away.

One of these twisters came roaring through the yard one day, just as mother was putting the dinner on the table. It only lasted a moment, but when it was over there was mother sitting among the wreckage, our little shelter just seemed to have exploded. There were stove pipes, pots and pans and broken dishes scattered all over the yard. The men ran to put the fire out in the stove for fear of starting a prairie fire. Mom broke out in tears, I am sure that at that moment she would have given anything to be back East in civilization again. The dinner consisted of cold beans that day, but no one minded much.

By the end of the week our house, although far from completed was advanced enough for us to move in. There were several trips made with Ed's team to haul out our belongings, also lime and bricks for building a chimney, and more lumber for a barn. By the end of another month, the barn was built and we had three horses and a cow.

We also had neighbors now; another family had settled on the next quarter south of Herr's, the Murrays, who had become tired of renting land and share cropping in the United States, and made up their minds to come to Canada and start up on their own. These people had brought their horses and some equipment with them. Both Ed Herr and Dad helped them build their house, a two room place with a shanty roof. Neighbors always pitched in with hammer and saw to help every new comer in the district put up his house.

Mrs. Murray had brought some chickens up with her, so it wasn't long before mother had a setting of eggs and a broody hen to hatch them. She made a shelter out of a large packing box. Later we built a sod chicken house with sizable pen built of poles and chicken wire to keep out the coyotes; there were plenty of them around at that time.

By now Dad had bought a new twelve inch two furrow plow, a wagon, and a disc, and was busy every day breaking land, until he had turned over about forty acres. Ed Herr had a mower and a rake, so they started haying together. Wild hay was plentiful, and it didn't take too long before they both had enough put up to last a year. With haying over, Dad made a trip with the team to Dundurn to see where he could buy a couple of young pigs. He came home that night with three weanling Tamworths, we kept them in the barn until we had built a pen for them out of poles.

One thing we were blessed with was plenty of good water, I am sure a well could have been dug practically anywhere on our place and got water anywhere from eight to twelve feet down. Dad dug two wells, one at the house, and another near the barn. He put a wooden pump in the one at the house.

About this time, we were to witness our first big prairie fire. It started a couple of miles south of us near the railroad. At first we didn't pay much attention to it as it seemed so far away, but after an hour or more we could see it was getting closer as the wind was in a southerly direction. Our neighbor Ed Herr had been watching it too, and when he saw the rate it was travelling he hitched up a team, and drove down to our place, where he picked up Dad and they drove to a high knoll where they could see what progress it was making. They weren't long deciding it was high time to start plowing fire guards. While Dad was getting the horses hitched to the plow, Ed filled a keg with water and loaded pails and sacks in his wagon. Dad plowed four furrows along the south of our quarter, they then back fired right to the railroad. By this time it was getting close, a roaring inferno, but our buildings were safe, as they had done a good job of backfiring. After making certain our place was safe, Ed and Dad went to see about his place which was protected on two sides by new breaking. There were very few early settlers who did not have to fight prairie fires at least once. With the miles of unbroken land, these fires were a formidable sight when driven by a strong wind. It was common to see miles of blackened country with even the trees in the bluffs blackened and dead. It usually took a couple of years to bring the grass back to normal.

With fall coming on, everyone was busy either cutting what little crop they had, putting up sod shelters for animals, getting up wood for winter, and countless jobs that had to be done before winter set in. Nearly everyone burned wood, there was always plenty of dry poplar and willow. Dad always stacked it up in the form of a teepee so he wouldn't have to dig it out of the snow.

Little did we know that the winter soon to come upon us would be the worst one ever recalled on these prairies, both for extremely cold temperatures and amount of snowfall. People who had been ranching here before the Riel Rebellion said they have never seen a winter so severe.

Most of the old timers who survived the winter of 1906-1907 are gone now; were they here today I am sure they could all tell of some harrowing experiences.

I can remember one occasion just before Christmas, when Dad started for town at dawn one morning, with the team and sleigh. He had to walk behind the sleigh whenever he got the chance, to keep warm, stopping often to take the icicles from the horses noses. It was sixty below when he got to the livery barn at 10:00 o'clock. He would never have attempted to make the trip to town in such weather had we not been nearly out of groceries and kerosene for lamps. Later that winter the snow got so deep that whenever people started to town, they would double up with two or three teams, and take turns breaking trail.

To add to the misery of the cold, were the blizzards, which sometimes lasted for days without let-up. I can remember one such storm which blew in from the east and lasted for three days with such fury that no one could get out to the barn to care for their horses or stock until it was over. When it finally did let up, we spent hours digging out around barns, wells, etc. before we could get animals fed and watered.

The train didn't get through from Regina for nearly a week after that storm; snow plows were getting stalled and the Canadian Pacific Railway was hiring all the men they could find to shovel snow.

It was during this period that Saskatoon grocery merchants ran out of some items such as tea, sugar, etc. I remember George Clement who was a C.P.R. lineman telling of using hard candies to sweeten his tea and coffee.

Derailments were common, as those light sixty pound rails didn't stand up too well in sixty below temperatures. On one occasion there were three trains off the track at one time; the passenger, a freight, and wrecking train, all between Saskatoon and Dundurn.

BOOK REVIEWS

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN MANITOBA: A HISTORY OF THE CCF-NDP by Nelson Wiseman. Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press. 1984 pp. 180, illus. \$20.00

Since Manitoba, and particularly its capital, is a seedbed of social democracy in Canada where the left has had consistent if not widespread support it is surprising that an attempt at a comprehensive study has taken so long to appear. This reviewer suspects that the continuing emphasis by scholars on the Winnipeg General Strike has clouded over less dramatic developments. However, be that as it may, a major part of the gap has now been filled with the appearance of *Social Democracy in Manitoba*.

Nelson Wiseman, a University of Toronto political scientist, begins his discussion of Manitoba's search for the New Jerusalem with a short chapter which attempts to provide the historical background to the province's political personality. Here he also outlines the role of Ontario, British and European ideological influences in shaping Manitoba's socialist tradition. The chapter ends with the 1919 Strike, which because of its failure Wiseman correctly concluded created an "aloofness" from revolutionary and syndicalist solutions among those on Manitoba's left.

Despite the negative impact the Strike had on reformist thought Wiseman stresses that it did lend credibility to moderate reformers like J. S. Woodsworth during the 1920s and under their guidance the Winnipeg-based Independent Labour Party rose to challenge and eventually alter the Liberal and Conservative-Progressive voting patterns in the province. In the 1930s the ILP merged with the new CCF which was seeking a broader base of support to create a viable social democratic organization with a clearly defined programme requiring support from the electorate. However, as such it shared the problems all such groups had. Moves to centralize its organizations for greater efficiency were greeted with resistance from autonomy-minded groups like the ILP within the federation. Meanwhile, CCF efforts through peoples' forums, study clubs and the like fell on deaf ears because its programme was so foreign to the average Manitoban. To compound its woes, the party was harassed from the left by the Communist Party and the right by Social Credit, both seeking closer ties with kindred spirits. Meanwhile, a minority within the Manitoba CCF had to be continually reminded that a united front with either could become the kiss of death. Therefore, the fledgling socialist party had little energy to resist the call from John Bracken for the creation of a nonpartisan wartime government in 1940. The coalition lasted only until 1943 when the national party's call for concrete post-war planning caught on with Canadians giving the moderate left new credibility and support.

The spectre of the Communist Party continued to haunt the Manitoba CCF, however, and despite the desire of both provincial and federal executives to ignore the appeal from the far left the party had to deal with two popular MLA's who were vocal LPP supporters. With Berry Richards and D. L. Johnson in the fold the right in the province was able to attack the CCF for being soft on Communism while the moderate left criticized it for cosying up to the Liberals who had LPP support at the time. Eventually both men were expelled but not

without considerable rancour. This internecine quarrelling contributed to the rapid decline of the Manitoba CCF from its late-war apex, and what support there was came from Winnipeg's organized labour which increasingly identified its interests with those of the party. Meanwhile, CCF plans to expand outside of the principle metropolitan centre brought limited results as most farmers preferred Roblin/Diefenbaker Conservatism.

In the light of the CCF's lacklustre performance after the war Wiseman is correct in calling the NDP's rise to power as "meteoric". This development was made possible by a gradual transformation in Manitoba's politics whereby the two old parties moved right vacating the centre to the New Party which was therefore able to broaden its support by attracting greater numbers of non-Anglo Saxon voters and poorer farmers. Reflective of this change was its choice of the young, dynamic and ethnic Ed Schreyer as leader who provided the obvious edge in the 1969 election. Wiseman carries the story of the NDP in power through the 1973 victory and the 1977 defeat, and adds an epilogue on the recent past under Howard Pawley.

As a political scientist Wiseman skillfully weaves his discussion of the evolution of social democracy in Manitoba in with such important matters as membership and organization within the various groups, the relationship of the CCF/NDP with the labour movement, and the question of leadership. Such are the things of which future undergraduate essays are made. Missing, however, is the blood and guts of the subject. One of the characteristics of the Canadian left is the incredible sacrifice which its promoters endured on an almost day to day basis. Endless correspondence with the faithful to maintain support, usually undertaken with little secretarial support, the thousands of miles travelled over horrendous prairie roads to attend poorly attended meetings in drafty halls followed by beer-and-cigarette-smoke discussions over policy and strategy, the knife fights and procedural wrangles to achieve minor victories at meetings and conventions, all contributed to the party's rise to power because the men and women believed its objectives of a more humane and egalitarian provincial government were worth the struggle. More on these matters would have paid immediate dividends to the reader.

Wiseman wisely avoids the obvious comparisons between developments in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, particularly during the late 1940s and the 1950s when one provincial party flourished while the other foundered. Nevertheless, in a party which relied so heavily on flying squads of organizers and orators to make up for limited local finances and human resources it is a shame that more was not said about the role outsiders played on the Manitoba scene. All that aside, however, *Social Democracy in Manitoba* is the best history of a provincial social democratic movement to appear to date. Thus it should provide a benchmark not only for those seeking to revise earlier provincial histories like S. M. Lipset's *Agrarian Socialism* and Leo Zakuta's *A Protest Movement Becalmed* but also for the extensive CCF history project presently under way at the University of Regina.

W. J. C. Cherwinski

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