

A HISTORY OF PRINCE ALBERT,
SASKATCHEWAN TO 1941

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PRINCE ALBERT, SASKATCHEWAN TO 1914

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PREFACE

This history had its origin in the winter of 1962, when the City of Prince Albert approached Dr. Hilda Neatby, Head of the History Department at the University of Saskatchewan. The work was undertaken in the fall of 1962 as a city centennial project and a thesis in history. The city of Prince Albert provided a scholarship. The writer was also the recipient of a scholarship given by the University of Saskatchewan to encourage advanced study in the humanities and social sciences.

For a person who had previously paid but one short visit to Prince Albert, the project was a journey into the unknown. Nevertheless, the history of that city was soon found to hold a peculiar fascination. As many visitors to Prince Albert have suspected, the story is essentially a tragedy. It was not mere fancy that led one citizen to predict, in 1883, that Prince Albert might outstrip even Winnipeg in size. The belief in a grand future was perhaps the most persistent theme in the early history of Prince Albert. It was, indeed, a town that seemed to possess every natural advantage, and a vigorous, intelligent people capable of turning nature's gifts into the ingredients of civic greatness. Instead, Prince Albert's day of glory was brief. The diversion of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the southern Prairies, and the quick relapse into the worldwide depression which characterized the last quarter of the nineteenth century, turned a bustling centre of civilization

into an economic and cultural backwater. The catastrophe of 1883 was not, unfortunately, the last which Prince Albert had to endure. Near the turn of the century began the development which, in barely a decade, converted the half-empty West into a vast agricultural empire. Here, too, because of its position on the fringe of the wheat belt, Prince Albert fared poorly in relation to other towns. In these years, also, the uncertainty of a future based upon the resources of the Northland first became evident.

In 1911, driven by a growing awareness of its inferior position, the city embarked on a project which promised to lead it towards a long-sought greatness. The building of a power dam at La Colle Falls is, in itself, a subject of rare interest. It ended, through causes not wholly within the capacity of the citizens to foresee, in one of the greatest financial disasters ever to befall a Western city. The three hectic years from 1910 to 1913 were also a time in which every city of the West strove for urban distinction, if not opulence. In this field, Prince Albert did not fail to keep pace. The city spent extravagantly on services which, even fifty years later, have not all been put to use.

The thesis ends on a note of regret and foreboding, as Prince Albert began the long descent towards financial collapse. The city's struggle to bear the massive burden of debt thus incurred forms a principal theme in the second portion of the history.

Interwoven with the theme of Prince Albert's search for greatness is the history of the civic government. Here is described the long evolution from the simple, though effective, institutions of the frontier town to the sophisticated administration of 1913. It is rendered, hopefully, with some appreciation of the difficulties faced by those persons whose task it is to govern a community.

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CHAPTER ONE

A MISSION IN THE WILDERNESS, 1866-1874

Until 1862, the future site of Prince Albert was no more than an Indian camp ground. The fur traders remained in the vicinity but a few years, and left only the ruins of three posts on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan. The first of these, Sturgeon Fort, was built by Peter Pond in 1776, one-quarter of a mile below the present mouth of the Sturgeon.¹ Situated where the plains dipped down to the river, it was intended to be a "Fort des Prairies," a provisioning post for brigades. But the trade moved steadily westward. Sturgeon Fort was abandoned in 1780 and burned down by Indians. Rebuilt the same year on a site facing the present Betts Island, it was used once more for only a short time.² In 1793, a third attempt to establish a post at the Sturgeon was defeated by the severe competition which its independent founder, David Grant, suffered from the Hudson's Bay and North-West companies.³ No remains have been found of a series of posts near the Sturgeon built between 1789

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1. A.S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (London, n.d.), p.318; O.C. Furniss, "Some Notes on Newly-Discovered Fur Posts on the Saskatchewan River," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XXIV, No.3 (Sept. 1943), p.269.
 2. Morton, op. cit., p.331.
 3. Ibid., pp. 461-62.

and 1805 by Grant, then of the XY Company, and that group's two major rivals.⁴

The first man to reside where a city now stands was James Isbister, a half-breed trapper and former interpreter for the Hudson's Bay Company.⁵ On June 3, 1862, with his Indian wife, Isbister began to live on what became River Lot 62 of Prince Albert Settlement, one mile east of the present penitentiary.⁶ There, in what was called Isbister's Settlement, a daughter was born to him in December, 1863, and duly baptized by the Church of England missionary at Nepowewin (now Fort à la Corne).⁷ By 1866 Isbister had moved away, and three families from Red River, two half-breed and one Indian, had taken up farming on the site.⁸

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4. Furniss, op. cit., pp. 271-72. The posts of the Hudson's Bay and North-West Companies were at the mouth of the Sturgeon. Grant's post was two miles above it.
 5. Office of the Synod of the Diocese of Saskatchewan, Prince Albert, marriage register and baptismal register of the Rev. Henry Budd.
 6. E.K. Matheson, "The Church of England among the English Speaking Settlers in the Diocese of Saskatchewan in the Earlier Years of the Diocese," Rev. Canon E.K. Matheson, D.D., Canadian North-West Historical Society Publications, Vol. I, No. 3 (Battleford, 1927), p.38.
 7. Baptismal register of the Rev. Henry Budd.
 8. The Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church, December, 1866, pp. 46-47. Extracts from the Record for the period from September, 1866, to January, 1867, are in the Archives of Saskatchewan. All other issues cited are in the United Church Archives, Victoria College, Toronto.

The founder of Prince Albert Settlement, and the man now honoured as father of the city, the Rev. James Nisbet, was a Scot who came to Canada at an early age, graduated from Knox College, Toronto, and served as Presbyterian minister at Oakville, Ontario. He was called west in 1862 to assist an old classmate, the Rev. John Black, at Red River. There Nisbet married Mary McBeath and began to learn Indian languages in preparation for missionary work on the plains.⁹

In contrast to a gaunt, rather bleak appearance, Nisbet's character was an epitome of the milder Christian virtues. Gentle, courteous, faithful, and persevering, he never embarked on any task without praying long and earnestly, and he found his greatest joy in patient submission to the divine will. His letters reveal a keen delight in the beauties of nature and a love of humanity which survived many disappointments. Physically hardy, skilled from his youth in carpentry, and possessing some experience in farming, Nisbet was well fitted to be both pioneer and missionary. Only time and experience were to show that he lacked the imagination and drive so necessary for mission work among scattered, mostly indifferent natives, and to reveal a delicacy of spirit which recoiled before the shocks of unfair criticism.

9. E.H. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan, 1866-1881," Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada, Third Series, Vol. XXVIII (1934), Section II, pp. 65-66.

Nisbet's chance came in 1865 when he was recommended by Black for mission work among the Cree Indians on the Saskatchewan. It was to be truly an expedition into the wilderness. As Nisbet explained, the mission site would be at some point at least three days' journey from any other mission or trading post, and so far removed from them that the party must carry at least one year's supplies and "a good deal of money, perhaps more than our [Foreign Mission] Committee can well spare."¹⁰

Advice on the location was sought from the leading authorities on the Saskatchewan district: the Hudson's Bay Company officials, the Church of England, and the Wesleyan missionaries.¹¹ By January, 1866, tentative agreement was reached that it be in the vicinity of Fort Pitt,¹² some 20 miles north of the present Lloydminster. It was arranged also that George Flett, a brother-in-law of John Black then farming near Isbister's Settlement and employed by the Hudson's Bay Company, should sound out the Indians and meet Nisbet on his arrival at Fort Carlton.¹³ Nisbet decided, however, to let the question of site rest. "Our

10. Home and Foreign Record, May, 1866, p.200.

11. R.J. McDonald, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan in the Nineteenth Century," Saskatchewan History, Vol. IV, No.3 (autumn, 1951), p.93.

12. Home and Foreign Record, April, 1866, pp. 167-68.

13. Ibid., April, 1866, pp. 167-68; June, 1866, pp. 231-32.

great anxiety now," he wrote, "is to find a band of Indians willing to receive us and the message which we shall take them."¹⁴

The immediate question was the number of men to be sent. Nisbet knew well that to maintain a fixed base and send a missionary to range over the plains visiting itinerant bands demanded at least two ordained missionaries; he believed that one man could not even set up a self-supporting post. But there was no other person to go, nor did the Foreign Mission Committee think itself able to pay another's way. A kind of compromise had to be made, therefore. George Flett was to join the mission as interpreter at the end of his engagement with the Hudson's Bay Company, a man whom Black praised as one who spoke Cree well, knew Indian character and ways to perfection, and had great influence over them. It was also decided that Nisbet's brother-in-law, John McKay, who in Black's opinion was also an excellent man, should be hired to accompany the party from Kildonan. Thus the matter was settled, with Black confident that "getting both [men] Mr. Nisbet will be better furnished for his work than any missionary I know of."¹⁵ Nisbet could only acquiesce, on the tacit understanding that a second missionary would be sent when finances allowed.

On June 6, 1866, eleven Red River carts drawn by oxen

14. Oliver, op. cit., p.67.

15. Ibid.

rumbled westward out of Kildonan. The next day departed a group composed of Nisbet, McKay, and their wives, of Mary Jane Nisbet and the two McKay children, and of three hired men and two women bound for Forts Pitt and Victoria.¹⁶

The party had scarcely lost sight of home when the first crisis arose. Word was received that the young sister of Mrs. Nisbet and Mrs. McKay had died at Kildonan, and an anxious debate was held about sending one daughter to comfort the grieving father. But, Nisbet wrote, "We finally came to the decision that [after our] having deliberately and prayerfully come to the conclusion to go on together, and having actually set out, providence seemed to say 'go forward.'" ¹⁷

The first half of the journey was arduous, the season being unusually cool and wet. At Fairfield (now Headingley) the party was delayed four days by heavy rain which turned into a snow storm on June 9. Nisbet wrote wearily of "fording streams...up to the middle in the water, and unloading and loading," and of crossing the flooded valleys of the Little Saskatchewan (now Minnedosa), Assiniboine, and Qu'Appelle rivers with an improvised scow and floats made of poplar poles. On Sunday, June 24, they paused to hold services in a tent, "glad of the institution of the holy day, that our horses and cattle might rest, and that we ourselves

16. Home and Foreign Record, September, 1866, p.331.

17. Ibid.

might be refreshed in body and mind."¹⁸ Beyond Fort Ellice the party made good time along the well-travelled trail, and after a three-day crossing of the South Saskatchewan, arrived at Fort Carlton on July 17.¹⁹

The selection of a site for the mission was now settled quickly. After inspecting all the desirable sites, George Flett had left a long letter "stuck upon a pole" by the trail one day's travel east of the South Branch.²⁰ For five days, therefore, Nisbet had pondered Flett's favourable report on the district around his own farm and the prospect of trekking 200 miles further. It is not surprising that on arrival at Fort Carlton, Nisbet should have been virtually determined to camp at the Sturgeon River instead of continuing to Fort Pitt.²¹ The advantages of remaining near Carlton were pressed upon him by Flett and all the Hudson's Bay Company officials there, especially by Chief Factor Lawrence Clarke. After a visit to the site of Flett's farm and to a place called Big White Fish Lake some two days' journey northwest of it, Nisbet pronounced the first to be more desirable in every respect.²² The site, according to

18. Ibid., p.332.

19. Ibid., November, 1866, p.12.

20. Ibid., pp. 12-14.

21. Ibid., October, 1866, p.367.

22. Ibid., November, 1866, P.14.

John Black, was an excellent place for farming, fishing, and wood; it was safe from Indian war parties, and unlikely to become a seat of war. It was also 200 miles nearer than Fort Pitt to the Red River settlements.²³ A little reflection convinced Nisbet that any central location might serve as a base of operations. As for a site for a school, Nisbet knew that when the Indians were willing to leave their children for instruction, one place would suit them as well as another.²⁴

But that decision did not lighten the difficulties which now lay more clearly before the missionary enterprise. Nisbet concluded from Flett's report that, although all the Indians would tolerate singing, prayer, and exhortation, there were "some entirely hostile to a mission; some indifferent; and none inviting us." Since no treaties had yet been made with the Indians, they expected large payment for the lands on which the missionaries might settle. "But," Nisbet asserted, "this we shall not give to any."²⁵

The last leg of the journey was begun at Carlton at five a.m. on July 25. A pleasant trip by boat down the North Saskatchewan ended at eight a.m. on July 26, 1866, when the Nisbet party landed at the foot of what is now Central Avenue.

23. Ibid., October, 1866, p.367.

24. Ibid., November, 1866, p.14.

25. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

At roughly the same time, George Flett arrived by land from Carlton with the mission's cattle.²⁶ The landing place was immediately picked as mission site, in order, said Nisbet, to keep the Indians "a little removed from the body of the settlers."²⁷ Nisbet saw, too, that here good farm land reached from the poplar-covered hill one-half mile south to the water's edge, whereas further west the mission must be built at some distance from the bank. The decision thus made was never regretted. After six weeks on the spot, Nisbet wrote: "The more that I see of the place where we have pitched our camp, the more am I satisfied of the excellence of the locality for a settlement."²⁸ On his return from a trip to Edmonton the same fall, he declared that "in the whole five hundred miles over which I have travelled...I have not seen any place with equal advantages."²⁹ Nisbet named the new settlement Prince Albert, in honour of the late consort of Queen Victoria.

Before the boats were unloaded, the missionary work had begun. Met by a group of eight Indians, Nisbet and Flett doled out tobacco, and in short, simple sentences which Flett translated, Nisbet assured the natives of their

26. Ibid., December, 1866, p.46.

27. Ibid., p.47.

28. Ibid., January, 1867, p.73.

29. Ibid., March, 1867, p.133.

intention "to do them good...by teaching them what will be useful... in this life, and what will fit them for a better life to come."³⁰ In reply the Indian leader came straight to the point, charging that Nisbet's party had come to take the land, and that settlers would soon come to steal the buffalo as well. After a second native had confessed that his people were a "beggarly set," Nisbet felt free to warn gently against interference with the missionary work. When the Indians, however, brought out moose skins to trade for tobacco, tea, flour, and printed cotton, Nisbet bought all they offered, giving them the very articles the missionaries most required themselves. And the first meeting ended with a lesson in prairie manners for Nisbet when one Indian asked Flett, "When you visit your friends don't you sometimes get hungry [?]"³¹

On the following day, the whole band came to parley with the missionaries. First taking Flett's hint "to launch out a bag of flour and a little tea," Nisbet seated all in a great circle, and talked about such topics as boats "made to go by wheels." He found that the Indians posed "some very shrewd questions." The friendly talk was interrupted when one man delivered a long lecture on the baneful effects of settlement, and demanded a skin (worth 2s. 6d.) for every five fish given to the Mission. But

30. Ibid., December, 1866, p.47.

31. Ibid., p.48.

Nisbet replied that the fish were to be kept for the Indians when they came hungry. This seemed to take the Indian aback, and no more was said about a skin for five fish. The interview ended with Nisbet well pleased with his diplomatic skill, and confident that Christian doctrine would flourish among this "covetous" and unsettled, but intelligent and peaceful people.³²

These hopes were strengthened when three Indians came to a short service held for their benefit on July 29, Prince Albert Mission's first Sabbath.³³ The same day there came in from the plains an old Christian Indian who had long prayed that God might let him see the missionary and Mr. Flett before he died.³⁴ When an Indian who had fallen from his horse came to the Mission, Nisbet was pleased to treat the injury, for he knew that this was "a kind of service they think a great deal of."³⁵

The good will of the Indians thus won, Nisbet's party made rapid progress in founding a permanent settlement. By winter two houses were ready, sixty loads of hay had been gathered, and John McKay had made the first of his annual

32. Ibid., pp. 48-50.

33. Ibid., p.50.

34. Ibid., p.51.

35. Ibid., p.50.

excursions to the plains for buffalo meat, tallow, and sinew.³⁶ Nisbet was much impressed with the fertility of the soil, the abundance of hay land, and grass standing as high as cattle. Despite the doubts of Hudson's Bay Company officials who thought agriculture impossible between Cumberland House and Edmonton, he believed that "if the seasons prove favourable it will be a most excellent place for farming and stock raising."³⁷ In fact, the very first season proved favourable, a fine harvest being reaped by the settlers west of the Mission.³⁸

Bright as the prospects were, however, the first season did not pass without a significant change in the mission's somewhat vaguely defined character. Not only his own love of manual work, but the knowledge that financial aid would be meagre and that a second missionary might be long in coming made Nisbet put all his efforts into building a secure, almost self-supporting base. Since he and the other men at the mission laboured as long and hard as any pioneer farmers, Nisbet was forced to postpone the work of "itinerating" to some future date. As early as September 1866, Nisbet was confident that more good might ultimately

36. Ibid.; ibid., January, 1867, p.72.

37. Ibid., p.73.

38. Ibid., November, 1866, p.14.

be done for the Indians if their children were collected in industrial schools where the boys might learn farming, cattle-raising, and carpenter work, and the girls learn house work.³⁹ But Nisbet was not merely shirking a duty which to him seemed fatiguing and unsure of success. By undertaking to induce Indian families to settle near the Mission, he was committed to the greater task of changing their whole way of life.

His first concern, therefore, became the Mission farm which prospered under his devoted care and hard labour and that of Adam McBeath, the school teacher who reluctantly became farmer as well. Nisbet found that "Everything grew much beyond our expectations, and we were supplied with garden stuff, potatoes, barley and some wheat of our own growing the very first season after our arrival."⁴⁰ Despite dry spells, early frosts, a plague of blackbirds one year, and the appetites of the Indians,⁴¹ crops remained bountiful, fifteen acres yielding 600 bushels of wheat two years in succession.⁴² It took only five years to build a handsome farm of 40 acres stretching

39. Ibid., January, 1867, p.73.

40. E.H. Oliver, "The Beginnings of Agriculture in Saskatchewan," TRSC, Third Ser., XXIX (1935), sect. 2, p.17.

41. Ibid., p.16. Nisbet noted in 1869, "The turnips will not be much as the Indians have been taking them as fast as they grow to any size."

42. Ibid.

1,700 feet along the river front, equipped with trim buildings, a threshing machine that cost \$500, and a circular horse power grinding mill.⁴³

Demanding as it was, the farm work did not prevent Nisbet from discharging his spiritual duties among the Indians with energy and more than a little success. From the beginning he held two Sunday services in Cree, with John McKay acting as translator, and a weekly prayer meeting.⁴⁴ By 1872, 70 children, 39 of them Indian, and ten adults had been baptized; 12 Indians and 18 others were on the communion roll; and 16 Indians lay "under hopeful discipleship," including, Nisbet observed without comment, one Indian and his two wives.⁴⁵ This was no mere drive for membership. Nisbet refused communion to many because of their ignorance and unchristian conduct. By 1872, 50 persons were attending the services in Cree, 70 those in English.⁴⁶ A church seating 120 was built that year to replace the schoolhouse which previously had served.⁴⁷ There

43. Ibid.; William Moore, Report on the Condition and Working of the Prince Albert Presbyterian Mission to the Indians on the Saskatchewan (Ottawa, 1873), p.11.

44. Home and Foreign Review, June, 1867, p.230.

45. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," TRSC, Third Sec., XXVIII (1934), sect. 2, pp. 77-78.

46. Home and Foreign Record, May, 1872, p.134.

47. Ibid., January, 1873, p.14.

were heartening signs of progress. On New Year's Day, 1868, an "old man who for many months would not come within hearing of prayer or preaching attended our religious service with his whole band of followers."⁴⁸ Forty-six Indians assembled on the third anniversary of Nisbet's arrival, one to testify, he wrote, that "even those who had been most opposed to us are fully convinced that we are seeking only their good, and are the foremost in their friendship."⁴⁹ After May, 1867, there were always some Indians camped near the Mission; at times there were 250, and a total of 500 came in one year.⁵⁰ Prince Albert Mission became known all over the plains, and one old Indian travelled fifteen days to see the missionaries.⁵¹

The Mission's educational work prospered also, despite lack of funds. Nisbet began lessons the first summer. By the fall of 1867, Adam McBeath was teaching not only the three R's but geography, history, English composition, and bookkeeping.⁵² Besides the 18 Indians who stayed as long as five years, the school took in the children of Hudson's Bay Company officers and the settlers who began early to come in

48. Ibid., May, 1868, p.200.

49. Ibid., January, 1870, p.74.

50. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., p.76.

51. Home and Foreign Record, January, 1868, p.76.

52. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., p.71.

from Red River. The fees taken for board and tuition were enough to pay McBeath's salary.⁵³

But despite these successes, the missionaries still faced serious obstacles in the shiftlessness and intractable temper of the Crees and their weakness for liquor. The first Indians to gather around the Mission were mostly the old, sick, and lame,⁵⁴ and Nisbet did not grudge the effort needed to meet their wants. But it soon became clear that the whole band were content to rely on his generosity and the force of their own implied threats. Three of the first six seasons were "starvation years," in which the Mission gave away or had stolen large quantities of produce, "not because," explained Nisbet, "we designed gratuitously to support any of the Indians, but [because] in the circumstances it was unavoidable."⁵⁵ Yet the recipients were slow even to say thanks; they remained "unreasonable and ungrateful," and frequently abusive.⁵⁶ It was "no incon-

53. Ibid.

54. Home and Foreign Record, August, 1867, pp. 291-93.

55. Oliver, "The Beginnings of Agriculture in Saskatchewan," TRSC, Third Ser., XXIX (1935), sect. 2, p.17.

56. Archives of the Prince Albert Historical Society, James Nisbet, Three and a Half Years of an Indian Mission (Prince Albert, December 31, 1869), p.2 (Historical Society Archives cited hereafter as PAHSA.) Nisbet's account was printed as an appendix to the Home and Foreign Record, May, 1870.

siderable step towards civilization" when they first borrowed the Mission carts to bring in meat for the winter.⁵⁷ When smallpox broke out among the Indians in 1870, Nisbet vaccinated 150 of them and not one died. After dispersing for the summer, however, they returned, lured more "by the casual advantages arising from the wheat, barley, turnip and potato fields, than by the religious instruction they might obtain at the Mission. I am sorry to say," wrote Nisbet, "that very few seem to have been much impressed by the remarkable deliverance wrought for them last year."⁵⁸ As for the task of civilizing the Crees, he found, "with old and young it is uphill work...the children are for the most part quick-tempered and impatient of correction; at home they are under no control."⁵⁹ The missionaries had "no greater obstacle to contend with than the liquor traffic" which undid much of their labour, and periodically brought "a lot of drunken Indians pushing their way into every room in one's house."⁶⁰

The task of teaching the Indians to farm proved equally discouraging. Although the men and boys seemed to learn much about farming, none settled in the first three years, and on the Mission farm Nisbet and his helpers

57. Ibid., p.6.

58. Home and Foreign Record, December, 1871, p.370.

59. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., p.77.

60. Ibid.

were left to do everything for themselves.⁶¹ By 1872 only eight Indian families had built houses near the Mission, and five of these were from Red River; four families of the more docile Wood Crees lived in tents, tilling small plots.⁶² Six years, indeed, was a short time in which to transform a people.

Outside the vicinity of Prince Albert Mission wandered thousands of heathens, unaware of the word which Nisbet had been sent to bring them. Until 1871 the state of church funds made it impossible to send the second missionary for whom he frequently appealed. John McKay, ill with tuberculosis, spent more than a year on leave at Red River.⁶³ Although he remained nearby and was ordained a catechist in 1875, George Flett took no part in the Mission's affairs after one year.⁶⁴ With none but Adam McBeath to guard the small community of faithful, Nisbet never ventured after 1866 out onto the great plains, and never found time for the difficult job of mastering the Cree language. He continued to believe that his approach was "the proper one

61. Nisbet, Three and Half Years, p.3.

62. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., p.76

63. Moore, Report, p.34.

64. Ibid., pp. 14, 17-18; Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., p.85.

if we seek for permanency to our work - educate the young and do what we can to induce families to settle; hence...I am... building and farming as much as I can, satisfied for the present to dig away at the rough foundation work."⁶⁵ It was a worthy task for a simple, humble man, but one that did not please his more ambitious fellow churchmen. And Nisbet's ideas, even as he formed them, were rendered obsolete by the great changes taking place in the West.

Prince Albert Settlement was only three days old when a man called in who was surveying the Saskatchewan with a view to running a steamboat.⁶⁶ In 1868 there was a minor gold rush to a sandbar two miles from the Mission.⁶⁷ But the greatest event of these years was the transfer of Rupertsland to the Dominion of Canada which, slight as was its immediate effect in the Saskatchewan district, released a wave of apprehension among the Indians.⁶⁸ The accompanying outbreak in Manitoba cut off all shipments for more than two years, at the end of which, remarked Nisbet, "our wardrobes were pretty well cleaned out."⁶⁹ In 1872 came surveyors for the

65. Home and Foreign Record, October, 1869, p.341.

66. Ibid., December, 1866, p.50.

67. Ibid., October, 1868, p.340.

68. Ibid., October, 1869, pp. 340-42; January, 1870, pp. 74-75.

69. Ibid., December, 1871, p.369.

Canadian Pacific Railway; the Hudson's Bay Company was preparing to put steamers on the river (the first reached Fort Carlton in 1874); and Indian commissioners were rumoured to be on the way.⁷⁰ The Prince Albert district was about to be invaded by the full force of civilization. Before that could happen, however, the affairs of the Mission itself were brought unexpectedly to a crisis.

On February 2, 1872, the Western Advertiser of Winnipeg carried an article by a Mr. Bell which professed to reveal a shocking state of nepotism, indolence, money-making, and neglect of duty in the quiet, obscure settlement of Prince Albert.⁷¹ Bell's account, it turned out, was the real scandal, based largely on gossip and casual remarks freely twisted. It was not true, for instance, that Mission employees kept large stocks of horses to trade with the Indians. The danger of trading had been pointed out by Flett in the first season, and Nisbet had stopped it by offering to raise the salaries of his employees from his own pocket.⁷² Certainly no one who knew Nisbet could believe that his men were "taking it easy." But there was an ounce of truth in the charge, "too much farming, too

70. Ibid., May, 1872, pp. 135-36.

71. Ibid., December, 1872, pp. 361-62.

72. Moore, Report, p.10.

little preaching,"⁷³ and in the sarcastic observation, "It seems a little strange that a missionary should be among the heathen 5 or 6 years, and not be able to preach in their language."⁷⁴ The situation, in short, demanded an inquiry and the Foreign Mission Committee chose the Rev. William Moore for that duty. Accompanied by the Rev. Edward Vincent, Nisbet's long-needed helper, Moore arrived in Prince Albert on September 6, 1872.

Disposing easily of the false charges against Nisbet, Moore went on to reveal the unresolved contradiction in purpose, the impossibility of what one ordinary man had been left to do. "The Rev. Mr. [Nisbet]," he found, "regards himself simply as a pioneer, whose duty it was to prepare the way for others by establishing...a base of operation and supply [and]...at the same time to do such evangelistic work as the immediate vicinity of the mission required or offered opportunity for. Whereas it seems to have been the opinion and expectation of the church...that his work was to be chiefly of an evangelistic character, and that the erection of buildings, &c...was...to occupy... a small portion of his time and attention."⁷⁵ By his own standards, thought Moore, Nisbet had achieved "a splendid

73. Ibid., p.8.

74. Home and Foreign Record, December, 1872, p.362.

75. Moore, Report, p.10.

success." No more desirable location for a farm or base of supply could have been chosen,⁷⁶ and his spiritual progress was not inconsiderable. But Moore must regret, inoffensively as he tried to say it, that "more [had] not been done in the way of preaching the Gospel," and in such elementary duties as translating hymns and books into Cree and distributing tracts on the plains.⁷⁷ It was time to abandon a farm no longer essential, with many fine farms nearby, as a source of supply or for use as a training school.⁷⁸

But the better days foreseen by Moore did not come for Prince Albert Mission. Worn out in body and mortally offended, Nisbet spent much of 1873 in Ontario. In the summer of 1874 he took his wife home to Kildonan to die, and himself expired there on September 30, 1874.⁷⁹ Edward Vincent, in his two years at Prince Albert, only began to learn Cree and to preach among the Indians.⁸⁰ By 1873 the Plains Crees had begun to drift westward in pursuit of the buffalo, and to retreat before the influx of settlers drawn by the success of Nisbet's pioneering work. Vincent's successor, the Rev. Hugh McKellar, came in 1874 with great

76. Ibid., p.11.

77. Ibid., pp. 12-14.

78. Ibid., p.15.

79. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., pp. 83-84.

80. Ibid., p.84.

enthusiasm for the Indian mission, only to find the Crees dispersed widely over the plains, and to meet Nisbet's old problem of having none to take charge at Prince Albert in his absence.⁸¹ McKellar stayed one year, and his replacement stayed less than two.⁸² The Mission remained shorthanded until it was transferred to the Home Mission Board in 1878.⁸³ Nisbet's dream of an Indian community of industrious, Christian farmers thus vanished. In the laborious, unrewarding task of converting nomadic savages into farmers, the Presbyterians were soon outstripped by the more enterprising and wealthier Church of England and the farm instructors of the Dominion Government.

By 1874, Prince Albert's mission origins were being slowly lost to sight in its rapid growth as an agricultural settlement. For a time James Nisbet had maintained an ambivalent, uncertain attitude towards the latter development. Although fearful for the fate of his native friends, he longed in the first year for "the society of Christian friends,"⁸⁴ and even, by 1869, expressed pride in the fact that the Mission might prepare the way for thousands of

81. Home and Foreign Record, April, 1875, pp. 92-93; September, 1875, p.229.

82. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan," loc.cit., pp. 85-86.

83. Ibid., p.88.

84. Home and Foreign Record, June, 1867, p.230.

settlers.⁸⁵ But if Nisbet had caught a touch of settlement fever, he was continually surprised at the volume and constancy of immigration to the Saskatchewan after 1871, and he remained unaware to the last of its effect upon the missionary enterprise. By 1871 the flow of Scottish and Scottish half-breed Presbyterians from Kildonan had brought Prince Albert's population to 166, only 20 of whom were European.⁸⁶ By 1874 there were 300 English-speaking settlers whose houses extended 14 miles along the south bank of the North Saskatchewan.⁸⁷

The influx of settlers gave rise to the first of those grievances which were to grow more numerous and acute in the following ten years, and were to drive the inhabitants of the Prince Albert district perilously near to rebellion. In 1866 the Hudson's Bay Company had built a small post named Fort Albert two and one-half miles west of the Mission. Three years later the Company began farming operations on better land one mile east of the Mission, at what became known as Carlton Farm. In 1872 it selected the land around its farm as one of the reserves to which the terms of

85. Nisbet, Three and a Half Years, p.10.

86. Home and Foreign Record, May, 1872, p.134.

87. Archives of Saskatchewan, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file 753, extracts from Nisbet to Lt.-Gov. Alex. Morris, January 25, 1874. (Archives of Saskatchewan cited hereafter as AS.)

transfer entitled it, and had 3,000 acres surveyed there with boundaries running straight north and south. Many settlers had already squatted within this area, and some living along its edges convinced Nisbet that the reserve boundaries cut their farms at so great an angle that every fence in the settlement would have to be moved. In January, 1874, Nisbet appealed to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories. Bitterness persisted, however, even after a surveyor found the settlers' assertion to be false. In the spring of 1874 the settlers held a public meeting and refused to give up their land.⁸⁸ There they remained under the peaceful but potentially hostile eye of the Hudson's Bay Company, nursing grievances against the Company.

Thus, in 1874, the era of the wilderness mission lay clearly behind; that of the frontier town was about to begin.

88. Ibid.; ibid., file 293, Nisbet to Morris, August, 1873; W.S. Gore to J.S. Dennis, August 27, 1873; Report of John McKay, enc. in Morris to the Minister of the Interior, June 9, 1874, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116e, pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER TWO

FASTEST-GROWING SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTH-WEST, 1874-1881

For seven years after 1874, the growth of Prince Albert was continuous and rapid. Drawn to a district whose beauty and fertility became "household words" in Manitoba¹ were people who had raised the Settlement's population to 831 by 1878,² and to nearly four times that number by 1881.³ Many of these settlers were enterprising farmers and businessmen from Manitoba, Ontario, even directly from the Old Country. Most of the farmers came, like one group of 100 from Manitoba in 1879, "comfortably well off, well supplied with implements, and...a large quantity of livestock of all kinds."⁴ An "Old Settler" remarked in 1880 that in his daily walks he now met "a great many strangers—well-dressed, watch-wearing, cigar-smoking men of the East: they have come here to remain and pursue their trades and professions."⁵

One of the earliest settlers was William Miller, who came from Ontario in July, 1873, to take up land on what is

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1. Saskatchewan Herald, August 25, 1878.
 2. Ibid., March 10, 1879.
 3. Ibid., April 1, 1882; Dominion census, 1881.
 4. Herald, August 25, 1879.
 5. Ibid., September 27, 1880.

now Miller's Hill.⁶ By 1880 he had cleared and built an attractive farm of nearly 200 acres.⁷ Thomas McKay, the eldest son of Hudson's Bay Company Factor William McKay, also arrived in 1873 and settled on a farm ten miles from Prince Albert. Perhaps the best-known pioneer was the poet, Charles Mair, whose insults had helped rouse the Manitoba métis to rebellion in 1869, and who arrived in 1877, one cynic said, "after travelling west all his life, in a vain effort to find a settlement...to appreciate his civilizing influences."⁸ By 1880 Mair, too, had a 200 acre farm⁹ and a busy general store, located where a park named in his honour now stands. To Prince Albert in these years came Captain Day Hort Macdowall; Captain Charles F. Young; Captain Henry Stewart Moore, an Irishman who opened the first steam grist and saw mill in 1877;¹⁰ and Thomas Swanston, a cultivated and very rich, but self-effacing man. There were Lt.-Col. Alexander Sproat, who had been a member of Canada's first Parliament; Thomas Osborne Davis and his brother, J.O. Davis; the Reverend

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6. Mrs. A.E. Freeborn, Letter to the Editor, Saskatchewan History, Vol. VII, No. 1 (winter, 1954), p.40.
 7. E.H. Oliver, "The Beginnings of Agriculture in Saskatchewan," TRSC, Third Ser., XXIX (1935), sect. 2, p.24.
 8. Herald, March 29, 1880.
 9. Oliver, op. cit., p.24.
 10. Herald, August 25, 1878.

Arthur Whiteside, founder of the first Methodist church in Goschen (1880); Hayter Reed, the first lawyer to practise in Prince Albert; Miss Lucy Baker, "a lady of culture and refinement," who came in 1879 to teach at the Presbyterian Mission school; Thomas N. Campbell, the first bookseller; Chester Thompson, the town's first blacksmith; and Joseph Hurd, Joseph Coombs, Thomas E. Baker, John Felton Betts, and Thomas J. Agnew, all merchants. In a special class falls Dr. A. Everett Porter, the first registered physician in private practice in the Territories, who came in 1877 on the promise of a \$2,000 bonus from Charles Mair who he thought was mayor. Any town, Porter thought, that had so great a man as mayor must be a good place in which to settle.¹¹

In his first three years at Prince Albert Porter spent more time selling grain than in practising medicine. For the major source of the town's prosperity was a flour trade which supplied the Territorial capital of Battleford till 1882, sent shipments as far west as Edmonton, and provided large quantities on contract to the Indian department at Fort Pitt and other points. In 1880 a second and a third flour mill, run by water and steam power respectively, were built by

11. Prince Albert Daily Herald, April 15, 1935; H. Neatby, "The Medical Profession in the North-West Territories," Saskatchewan History, Vol. II, No.2 (spring, 1949), p.1.

Thomas McKay and the Hudson's Bay Company to fill a demand that Moore and Macdowall's mill could not meet running night and day.¹² With no other means of transport but the slow and irregular Hudson's Bay Company steamboats, Prince Albert flour cost one-third less than the product shipped overland from Winnipeg.¹³ Wheat sold locally at \$1.50 a bushel in 1878,¹⁴ although it then cost at least 30 cents a bushel to grind.¹⁵ The 1881 census furnished clear proof of Prince Albert's agricultural base and its leading position in the North-West. The district's production of 62,000 bushels of wheat formed slightly more than half the total for the Territories.¹⁶

Although stock had been raised since the earliest days of Prince Albert Mission, the ranching potential of the Saskatchewan valley was not fully realized till 1881, when Capt. Moore drove 209 cattle overland from the Bow River country.¹⁷ All but 14 survived the first winter.¹⁸

12. Saskatchewan Herald, January 26, September 27, December 20, 1880.

13. Ibid., October 28, 1882.

14. Ibid., October 7, 1878.

15. Ibid., January 26, 1880.

16. Dominion census, 1881. The figures are for 1880.

17. Herald, September 18, October 31, 1881.

18. Ibid., June 24, 1882.

Lumbering, which for forty years was to be a mainstay of Prince Albert's economy, began in the winter of 1878-79 when 8,000 logs were taken out of Capt. Moore's timber limits on the Saskatchewan and Little Red rivers.¹⁹ And the rich stand of spruce stretching unknown miles northward promised far greater things. That versatile businessman, Moore, planned also to mine the outcrops of coal below the townsite which he believed (mistakenly, it proved) to be of great value.²⁰

By 1882 Prince Albert was the commercial centre of the Saskatchewan valley and the adjoining north country. Stobart, Eden & Co. had opened a post there in 1879 which replaced Duck Lake as headquarters for their trading operations.²¹ The Hudson's Bay Company was slower to make the move but by August, 1882, it had enlarged its store at Goschen, built three large warehouses there, and was ready to transfer its offices from Carlton and begin stocking the northern posts from Prince Albert.²²

The way for civilization was prepared scarcely fast enough, although the Dominion Government's shortcomings aroused no bitterness or alarm before 1881. In 1876 Treaty

19. Ibid., May 17, 1879.

20. Ibid., November 4, 1878, June 30, 1879.

21. Ibid., December 15, 1879.

22. Ibid., September 23, 1882.

Number Six was signed with the Crees, Assiniboines, and Chipewyans inhabiting a region that stretched from Cumberland Lake to the Rocky Mountains.²³ Sufficient reserves were not laid out for at least two years, however, and disputes arose occasionally over supposed trespassing on Indian land.²⁴ More serious was the situation at Prince Albert townsite. A petition of January 15, 1878, complained that disputes were arising daily among settlers over claims to which none, as yet, held any legal right.²⁵ It was complicated by the transfer of many plots first claimed by half-breeds, the "old settlers," whose rights to the land had never been officially recognized.²⁶ The disputes in Prince Albert Settlement were ended in 1878 when a survey was carried out on the river-lot principle established in

23. W.R. Graham, "Indian Treaties and the Settlement of the North-West," Saskatchewan History, Vol. II, No. 1 (winter, 1949), pp. 21-22.

24. Petition to the Minister of the Interior, January 15, 1878, enc. in H.S. Moore to the Minister, n.d., C.S.P. 1885, No. 116e, pp. 23-24.

25. Ibid.; Petition to the Governor-General in Council, February, 1878, acknow. J.S. Dennis to Moore, February 23, 1878, ibid., pp. 29-30.

26. Ibid.; Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review, December 6, 1882; G.F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada (Toronto, 1960), p.246.

Manitoba.²⁷ But for three years after the Dominion Lands Office was opened at Prince Albert in September, 1878, no claims were accepted.

As its inhabitants never ceased to point out, the Prince Albert of 1880 was not a mere boom town but a solid creation, destined "always [to] hold first place amongst the various settlements of the country."²⁸ Although men outnumbered women more than two to one, an 1878 census showed almost as many children as adults.²⁹ By 1879 a brickyard was in operation, and many fine houses were built of the red local brick still to be seen in Prince Albert. One of these, the home of Lawrence Clarke erected in 1880, was forty feet square, two and one-half stories high.³⁰ One citizen remarked the same year, "The old trading-shops of bye-gone days...have given place to handsome, well-stocked, modern-fronted stores...There is a marked solidity about the 'improvements' which suggests permanence, and the tasty residences which occur at intervals do not in the

27. The survey extended from the Third Meridian (the 106th West of Greenwich) to the west boundary of the H.B.C. Reserve, now Sixth Avenue East. The eighty-two river lots were uniformly two miles deep. Their areas ranged from 57 to 314 acres: PAHSA, Accession No.259, D.J. Rose, Story of the Dominion Lands Office and Early Settlement of Prince Albert, pp. 15-16.

28. Herald, September 23, 1878.

29. Ibid., March 10, 1879.

30. Ibid., September 27, 1880.

least savor of the 'mushroomness' of the Far West."³¹

By 1880 the institutions of civilization had multiplied so rapidly, observed the same citizen, that coming to Prince Albert was no longer a matter of pioneering. In the fall of 1878, a post office and mail service via the métis settlement of St. Laurent had been established.³² In January, 1879, Whitlock and Trotter opened the Prince Albert Restaurant and Dining Hall, offering the "best dinner served in the Territories."³³ By November, 1880, Prince Albert had acquired another staple of all frontier towns in the large brick hotel built opposite the Hudson's Bay Company grist mill in Goschen where its owner, Capt. Richard Deacon, dispensed "real North-Western hospitality."³⁴ A circulating library was begun by T.N. Campbell in 1879 with the modest fee of three dollars a year.³⁵ By 1881 there were four churches in the Settlement: a Presbyterian, a Methodist, and two Anglican churches, St. Mary's and St. Catherine's; the Roman Catholics had a small mission. As early as 1879 there were five elementary schools.³⁶ The

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., September 23, 1878.

33. Ibid., January 27, 1879.

34. Ibid., January 10, 1881.

35. Ibid., November 3, 1879.

36. Ibid., November 17, 1879.

normal frontier shortage of professional men and tradesmen had been nearly overcome by 1881, when there were four doctors and two lawyers in the town.³⁷ There was even a tailor whose arrival ensured, one citizen rejoiced, that "the un-artistic cut of our coats need give us no further concern."³⁸

Social activities and organized sports were begun early too. A skating club was launched in the winter of 1878-79;³⁹ a baseball club was formed the next summer.⁴⁰ On October 24, 1879, the first Masonic Lodge in the North-West was opened with twenty members and Capt. Charles F. Young as Worshipful Master.⁴¹

Perhaps the clearest proof of Prince Albert's maturity lay in the plans of the Reverend Dr. John McLean, Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan. On taking charge in 1874 of a diocese that reached from Lake Winnipeg to the Rockies, McLean was ambitious to spread the Gospel over a vast area of the West. Despite support from church societies and individuals, McLean made little headway in the first four years, however. His scheme of using half-breed missionaries

37. Ibid., April 25, November 26, 1881.

38. Ibid., September 27, 1880.

39. Ibid., December 16, 1878.

40. Ibid., August 11, 1879.

41. Ibid., November 3, 1879.

failed for want of trained men, and few clergymen could be found in the East or in England who were willing and able to bear the strains of a wilderness station.⁴² McLean's solution was to train his own missionaries and catechists by founding an associate mission, "an institution combining the giving of higher education, more especially theological, with mission work in...the country around the mission."⁴³ The first step was the opening of Emmanuel College on November 1, 1879, in a temporary classroom in St. Mary's parish school, using books sent from Cambridge University. Five Indians, two half-breeds, and four men of European parentage were enrolled in the first winter. The Indians studied not only English and theology but also the grammar and composition of their own languages (Cree and Sioux)—a unique feature among North American schools at the time.⁴⁴

Shortly after classes began, a boarding house for students and the residence of the Tutor in Cree were completed on the College site, 300 yards south of St. Mary's Church.⁴⁵ In the summer of 1880 the main building containing classrooms,

42. Jean E. Murray, "The Early History of Emmanuel College," Saskatchewan History, Vol. IX, No.3 (autumn, 1956), pp. 82-83.

43. Ibid., p.84.

44. Ibid., p.85.

45. Ibid.; Herald, February 29, 1880.

library, and the Warden's residence was opened. It was judged by McLean to be the largest and finest structure in the North-West.⁴⁶ The second winter term was opened on November 2, 1880, with "a very able and appropriate address" by Lieutenant-Governor David Laird.⁴⁷ By this time Emmanuel College had become the pride of Prince Albert's leading citizens. The Presbyterian minister spoke enthusiastically after Laird, and Lawrence Clarke doubled his subscription to \$200.⁴⁸

McLean's plans had already assumed larger proportions, for on this occasion he announced plans to found a collegiate school modelled on the English public school, and open to all boys "without distinction of religious creed."⁴⁹ This was the first institution in the Territories to offer high school work and the only one in the town till 1885. It was opened in September, 1881, the curriculum comprising classical languages, mathematics, and English. Despite its distance (three miles) from the centre of town and its Anglican atmosphere, the Collegiate School was well attended by boys of all faiths,⁵⁰ who paid

46. Murray, op. cit., p.86.

47. Ibid.; Herald, November 29, 1880.

48. Herald, November 29, 1880.

49. Murray, op. cit., p.86.

50. Ibid., pp. 86-87.

only \$10 a year in tuition and \$4 a week for board.⁵¹

In 1881 a course leading to holy orders was formally established at Emmanuel College and a department was opened to prepare boys for entrance at the University of Manitoba.⁵² But the culmination of the schemes which flowed so freely from the mind of Bishop McLean was the plan to found a university in the Diocese of Saskatchewan.

So clear was the town's destiny that none were surprised in the spring of 1879 to find H. Lestock Reid, D.L.S., surveying the site "for the future city of Prince Albert."⁵³ On April 19, 1879, a meeting was held in Charles Mair's house to discuss the building of a town hall. A witness remarked that "no doubt its erection will be begun at an early day,"⁵⁴ although at that time, and for four years thereafter, no provision for incorporation existed in the North-West.

Oddly enough these first impulses towards urban status gave rise to dissatisfaction with the name, Prince Albert. One person complained that it would be confusing to people at a distance who would not be able to distinguish between

51. Herald, August 15, 1881.

52. Murray, op. cit., p.87.

53. Herald, May 5, 1879. The site lay on River Lots 79 and 80.

54. Ibid.

the settlement and the "city."⁵⁵ A public meeting was actually held in April, 1879, to discuss changing the name,⁵⁶ and the issue was revived briefly in the summer of 1880.⁵⁷ On the latter occasion one citizen suggested the "Queen City of the West" but that name failed to stick.

One reason for lack of interest in both the name and incorporation was that the future site of the town was uncertain as late as 1881. Buildings stretched in a line for five miles along River Street that swelled "to the size of a reasonable village" at Emmanuel College, the Mission, Goschen, and two or three other points.⁵⁸ Not till 1882, when the entire settlement was fused by its rapid growth into one almost continuous strip, was the Mission accepted as the centre of "the great town of the future."⁵⁹

Even while making "giant strides towards the goal of civilization,"⁶⁰ however, Prince Albert was reminded of the thin line which separated it from the savagery of the frontier. Until 1878 the town had never had an "Indian

55. Ibid., July 19, 1880.

56. Ibid., May 5, 1879.

57. Ibid., July 19, 1880.

58. Ibid., December 20, 1880, April 25, 1881.

59. Ibid., April 25, 1881.

60. Ibid., December 16, 1878.

problem." Threatening and obnoxious as they were at times, the Crees had never raised a hand against the settlers and most, by that year, had drifted westward. In the winter of 1878, however, members of a new tribe of Indians appeared at Prince Albert. They were Sioux from Minnesota, some of whom had participated in the great massacre of 1862, and all of whom were refugees from revenge and the relentless advance of the American frontier. The Sioux came in small numbers the first winter but totalled almost 70 lodges by December, 1878.⁶¹ A ten-man detachment of Mounted Police was obtained that fall, although the Indians, well dressed and fed, worked peaceably in the settlers' fields and wood lots throughout the fall and winter.

In the fall of 1879 the Minnesota Sioux were joined by 60 lodges of Sioux from the Teton country of Wyoming, their combined numbers reaching 1,000 persons, or in one estimate, more than 200 lodges.⁶² The Teton Sioux were a bolder lot who came begging at all hours and often broke into the settlers' houses. They were thought to be well armed and stocked with cartridges, and ready to spill blood when the inadequate and understandably reluctant charity of the settlers ran out.⁶³ It promised to need

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., November 3, 1879; Murray, op. cit., p.85.

63. Herald, November 3, 1879.

only a small spark to set off this dangerous situation.

On October 6, 1879, Prince Albert had been visited by Lt.-Col. W. Osborne Smith, sent by the Dominion Government to organize volunteer companies of militia in the leading settlements of the Territories. Smith had found volunteers and ample enthusiasm to form two companies of cavalry under Capts. Moore and Young and one of infantry commanded by Thomas McKay. Only two days later a supply of arms and ammunition had arrived at Fort Carlton.⁶⁴ In theory at least, the settlers were well prepared for any event, although the arms were left temporarily at Carlton. The trouble was, however, that three justices of the peace were required to call out the militia and, at the time, Mair and McKay were the only ones in the settlement. When a rumour went around late in October that Teton Sioux had killed some cattle belonging to the settlers, a hastily-called public meeting could only send Mair and McKay to Battleford to seek aid from Governor Laird.⁶⁵

In the meantime a few of the settlers took matters into their own hands. By the simple expedient of fetching the rifles from Carlton they brought about the rapid exodus of nearly all the Sioux, and their return in humility

64. Ibid., October 20, 1879.

65. Ibid., November 3, 1879.

several days later.⁶⁶ The situation took on a ludicrous air when Inspector James Walker of the Mounted Police arrived to find 88 lodges of peaceable Indians, some labouring once more for the settlers, no cattle killed, and some settlers professing ignorance of "the troubles supposed to be going on."⁶⁷

In reality the danger remained all winter, with at least one company drilling till Christmas.⁶⁸ Only the opening of a Government soup kitchen, continued employment by the settlers, and the efforts of a citizens' committee kept 600 Sioux contented till spring.⁶⁹ In the summer of 1880 the Sioux began to drift away, allowing the police detachment to be withdrawn (September, 1881)⁷⁰ and the volunteer companies to disband till 1885.

If Prince Albert was thus saved from the forces of barbarism, the gap between the settlers and the Indians widened steadily, while the missionary enterprise was all but forgotten by the majority of the townsmen. In 1881 there were ten Indian children among 65 in the Presbyterian Mission

66. Ibid., November 17, 1879.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., December 15, 1879.

69. Ibid., December 15, 1879, January 12, February 9, 1880.

70. Ibid., October 3, 1881.

school and 14 Cree families in the congregation.⁷¹ The Presbyterians never overcame the lack of men and money which had faced Nisbet. Even Emmanuel College had only four Indian students by 1884.⁷² The industrious, pushing businessmen and farmers of Prince Albert had no room in their order for people who would not learn their ways yet who sought, in their opinion, to be parasites on white society. Charles Mair's advice to the half-breeds of Manitoba expressed the attitude which many settlers applied without thought to the Indians. Let them, he said, "fall in with the tide which is surging around them, and in a very short time all antagonisms of race and sentiment will be as completely forgotten as if they had never existed."⁷³ The pseudo-sophisticated merely made jokes at the expense of their illiterate victims. "The sly Sioux Indian is believed, potatocally speaking, to dine sometimes and then to enjoy unbroken siestas...carving phantom moose and elk....[He] gorges himself stealthily in Dreamland, on the buffalo 'humps' which we thought he had finally chased away."⁷⁴

71. Ibid., April 25, 1881; E.H. Oliver, "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan, 1866-1881," TRSC, Third Ser., XXVIII (1934), sect. 2, p.92.

72. Murray, op. cit., p.94.

73. Herald, March 15, 1880.

74. Ibid., January 10, 1881.

The Prince Albert of 1881 had changed profoundly from the prosperous but dull community of seven years before. Indeed, never did the townsmen enjoy so busy a cultural, social, and sporting life as in the ten years preceding the outbreak of 1885. Bishop McLean, Charles Mair, Lawrence Clarke, and Lucy Baker were only a few of the well-educated persons who brought Eastern and Old World refinement and intellectual vigour to the frontier town. There was scarcely a farmer, hardware merchant, or labourer who could not sing, play the piano, or do a tap dance. Most shared the urge for self-improvement which, one winter, led the boarders at the Prince Albert Restaurant to make readings from Shakespeare "the favorite pastime."⁷⁵ Placed in a far corner of the West, the people of Prince Albert strove intensely to create their own world of culture, some straining for an elegance they had never known.

Perhaps the outstanding cultural and social event of the early years was the conversazione held in the Mission house on December 5, 1878, to raise money for a skating club. The program included two solos by Alex. McBeath, played "with his usual elegance and brilliancy of execution" on a Steinway piano, an essay on "Pre-Historic Man," and a recitation of Longfellow's Psalm of Life by T.E. Baker. Joseph Hurd sang part of Mozart's Twelfth Mass and La

75. Ibid., March 10, 1879.

Grande Duchesse. But the best received of all was "an original epigrammatic poem on 'Rats'" by Henry McKenney. "This brought down the house."⁷⁶

This kind of entertainment was made a regular event through the institution of penny readings, so called from the admission fee. A committee was formed in December, 1879, and later a Penny Readings Society, to ensure that such gatherings were always "profitable, interesting, and amusing."⁷⁷

The most popular lectures were on scientific subjects. They might be edifying as well, like the talk which Lawrence Clarke drove 50 miles from Fort Carlton to deliver one night in March, 1880. Its title was The Chemistry of Common Life, but the subject was "liquors—their chemical nature and...their disastrous effects upon man."⁷⁸

Serious subjects, however, could never rival pure entertainment in popular appeal. The first visiting company to put on a minstrel show in Prince Albert appeared in April, 1879. It was reported to be a decided success, the hall being densely crowded. "The local hits were good and kept the audience in roars of laughter."⁷⁹ A short-lived local troupe,

76. Ibid., December 16, 1878.

77. Ibid., December 15, 1879, April 26, 1880.

78. Ibid., April 26, 1880.

79. Ibid., May 5, 1879.

the Prince Albert Christy Minstrels, performed in the Prince Albert Restaurant a year later. Its entire program ranging from songs and choruses to farces, local hits, and the inevitable stump speech was judged quite professional.⁸⁰ But the most frequent and popular amusement was the dance which began early and might go on till four in the morning.⁸¹ Another frontier institution was the surprise party. "But they are misnamed," one citizen observed, "as the person at whose house they are to meet goes around a few days beforehand and lets the people know when to come."⁸²

Sports in frontier Prince Albert were exciting and vigorous, with much betting for high stakes. The most strenuous winter sport was foot-racing, in which two men carried on a rivalry over two seasons, with "considerable money [being] staked by outsiders." The first man won one 440-yard race by 100 yards, taking home a horse and a cow, only to have the loser recoup his losses by putting up a yoke of oxen and a horse for the return match.⁸³ The favourite sport in 1879 was horse-racing, the course one mile east or west on River Street, depending on the direction of the wind. For

80. Ibid., March 15, 1880.

81. Ibid., December 15, 1879.

82. Ibid., March 15, 1880.

83. Ibid., February 24, March 10, 1879.

a time the biggest winner was Andrew Spence's Little Black. But at a grand racing holiday in May, 1879, the "plucky little horse" was badly beaten in a dramatic contest.⁸⁴ Race purses reached nearly \$200, and far larger sums changed hands after some events. One fan remarked after one race that if gambling had not been illegal, "betting to any extent would have been rife, in the way of horses, oxen, cows, pigs, carts and shaganappi."⁸⁵ Two sports which flourished early (and without betting) were baseball and cricket, although curling and shooting soon surpassed them in popularity.

The literary products of Prince Albert pioneers show the same robust, lively qualities as their social and sporting life. Their best prose has the force, clarity, and spice common to the writings of Eastern Canadian and British masters of the time. Some of the petitions prepared locally, most notably the grand memorial of April 6, 1882, on the land question, written by Mair and D.H. Macdowall,⁸⁶ deserve to stand near the best Canadian state papers. Sermons of striking power and warmth were preached, in particular by Bishop McLean, the Rev. James Flett, and the Presbyterian, the Rev. James Sieveright. A lively narrative, full of good humour, was Fitzgerald Cochrane's serialized account of his voyage from

84. Ibid., June 2, 1879.

85. Ibid.

86. Prince Albert Times, December 6, 1882.

"Winnipeg to Prince Albert by land and water," printed in the first six issues of the Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review (November 1 — December 6, 1882). Few could match Lawrence Clarke in strength of invective, or Charles Mair in simple imagery, powers which, in one brief clash over the alleged tyranny of "the Great Monopoly," they turned violently against each other. When Mair portrayed a North-West where "every shopkeeper, manufacturer, miller and mechanic would find himself comfortably seated under the Company's roof-tree, and would eat his bread in patriarchal simplicity and contentment,"⁸⁷ Clarke produced a smashing reply.

[Charles Mair] is a monomaniac upon this subject, and his maunderings are so confined in the mummy-clothes of his own warped imagination that to discuss them would be nauseating...Is it not remarkable how easily men persuade themselves that they are honest citizens, and that they are bright and shining lights, when in reality they are of the earth earthy, and like their prototype the serpent, have the same manner of raising their heads [?]."⁸⁸

Whether it stemmed first from isolation or from frontier exuberance, however, Prince Albert prose was soon afflicted with decadence. Writers with obvious talent sank easily into floridity, affectation, and obscure references.⁸⁹ The half-educated slipped even more quickly into

87. Herald, March 15, 1880.

88. Ibid., March 29, 1880.

89. See ibid., December 20, 1880.

vulgar familiarity with famous lines and tedious or absurd applications of hackneyed sayings. One result of Shakespeare readings was the report of a horse race ending, "'Tis true, 'tis pity; and pity 'tis, 'tis true." The same writer, after noting that "faster horses are being imported, and the slower must give way to them," could not resist adding, "every dog has his day."⁹⁰ But for misused learning none can equal, "the Cree hath folded his tent like an Arab and left behind him, as being stale and profitless, the pomp and glitter of later Prince Albert."⁹¹

A reaction against this affected and ridiculous style began early, and led rapidly to conformity with the rough, ungrammatical, typically frontier style of popular speech. The new standard was exemplified by Prince Albert's first newspaper, soon after it began publication (November 1, 1882). The Times' editorials were sometimes forceful, more often dull and pedantic, its sentiments commonplace. Thus it took little time for the combination of power and fluency which flourished so promisingly in the early Western atmosphere of diversity and challenge to wither under the brutalizing influence of the frontier.

Prince Albert poetry met the same fate earlier, without anything remarkable being turned out by amateurs. Although

90. Ibid., June 2, 1879.

91. Ibid., January 10, 1881.

Charles Mair retained his talents to write his epic poem Tecumseh after leaving Prince Albert, and some local products have an artless charm,⁹² most are cheap imitation or straight doggerel.

Prince Albert of the late 1870's was strait-laced for a frontier town, the product no doubt of its mission origins, the presence of three active churches, and the sternly upright heritage of Protestant Red River and Ontario. The Presbyterian, the Rev. James Duncan, was a fanatic on the subject of liquor or dancing.⁹³ Indications are that his colleague, the Rev. D.C. Johnson, drew the line at more innocent amusements. When a detailed account of the first conversazione appeared in the Saskatchewan Herald (Battleford), Johnson wrote to that paper to declare that the article "from beginning to end is a tissue of falsehood and has not the shadow of truth. No such meeting...has ever been held in the Presbyterian Mission."⁹⁴ The battle against liquor was led by Bishop McLean and Lawrence Clarke. A meeting called by the Bishop in September, 1880, resulted in formation of the Saskatchewan Total Abstinence Association.⁹⁵

92. See To Eva, on Her Twelfth Birthday, Times, November 1, 1882.

93. Herald, May 5, 1879.

94. Ibid., January 27, 1879.

95. Ibid., September 27, 1880.

It would seem, however, that only a year and a half earlier there was little need for a temperance campaign. When a public meeting was called in March, 1879, to discuss the erection of a brewery, "the majority of the people thought they could get along very well without [one], and accordingly voted [it] down."⁹⁶

On the other hand, the Bishop may have known what he was doing, for the town's moral temper changed rapidly. In November, 1881, a brewer arrived from Humboldt uninvited.⁹⁷ When, a year later, Prince Albert had a newspaper, he was not ashamed to insert his advertisement:

"The Gable House — John Wymerskirch
The best beer and cigars."⁹⁸

It was the frequent boast of Prince Albert's pioneers that they had cast aside old party ties and prejudices in coming to their new homes. Liberals, in fact, had slight reason to love a party which had neglected the North-West during its term of office (1873-78), or Conservatives the lethargic administration of Sir John A. Macdonald. When a public meeting was held in February, 1880, to protest against the proposed abolition of Territorial government, one man

96. Ibid., May 5, 1879.

97. Ibid., November 26, 1881.

98. Times, November 1, 1882.

suggested that the question simply be left to the wisdom of Sir John. "But this extreme view of party fidelity did not find an echo in the mind of the meeting, people preferring to trust their own judgment to that of a gentleman who had never seen the country."⁹⁹ The first election to the North-West Council, held on March 23, 1881, in the newly-created District of Lorne occasioned a vigorous but non-partisan contest between Clarke and Moore. It was won by Clarke, 250 to 143. An attempt to introduce "the old time party cries" failed because, as one witness explained, "they had no connection with the situation."¹⁰⁰

This state of affairs was not long in changing, however. The fledgling Times, although professing independence of the great parties, promised to be "moderately conservative" in its views.¹⁰¹ The second election to the North-West Council (June 5, 1883) was fought bitterly on straight party lines, with the Times making no pretence to neutrality.¹⁰²

99. Herald, March 15, 1880.

100. Ibid., April 11, 1881.

101. Times, November 1, 1882.

102. The Times headline reported an "utter rout" of the Liberal party and announced D.H. Macdowall's election as certain. In describing a Liberal meeting the Times commented that "no more piteous spectacle, no more humiliating exhibition, was ever before witnessed in Prince Albert than that presented by Dr. Porter....Even his followers were disgusted at his conduct." See ibid., April 4, 1883.

The most noteworthy event of Prince Albert's first fifteen years of existence was the visit on September 27, 1881, of the Governor-General of Canada, the Marquis of Lorne. It was a chance for all to turn out in their finery, to demonstrate "how heartily proud they were of their new homes." It was an occasion also for horse races and athletic contests, and erection at the steamboat landing in Goschen of "an artistic and most beautifully constructed arch...covered with trophies of the chase, farm produce, and farm implements...and an inscription worked on cloth in the English, Gaelic and Cree languages," with "banners and flags in clusters float [ing] from...the graceful structure." The affair was not spoiled by the party's arrival one day late, although the games and races were held on the 26th and many people went home. At seven a.m. on the 27th, the Governor-General stepped from the Northcote into a pouring rain, greeted by more than 200 persons, and onto a platform covered with scarlet cloth "eliciting the unbounded admiration of the vice-regal party." The reception moved from there to the saloon of the Northcote, "until every inch of room was filled." After Bishop McLean had read a welcoming address, Lord Lorne made his reply and shook every hand. Then "such shouts arose that had never yet been heard in Prince Albert." When the rain subsided the vice-regal party toured the settlement in a two-horse carriage driven by Lawrence Clarke, and ended at Emmanuel College for lunch.

There Clarke announced the creation of a scholarship to honour the Governor-General's consort, H.R.H. Princess Louise, a scholarship still given yearly in the College.¹⁰³ At 2:30 p.m. the party embarked on the Lily, while crowds of people sang God Save the Queen. Some, including Bishop McLean, continued to wave their hats until the Lily passed out of sight, "thus giving a last expression to [their] feeling of loyalty and unbounded satisfaction at the first visit of a Governor-General of Canada to Prince Albert Settlement."¹⁰⁴

The visit marked Prince Albert's coming of age and the beginning of a period of frenzied expansion. It coincided too with the end of that good feeling which hitherto had prevailed in relations with the Ottawa government. More exciting, more disheartening and frustrating events lay ahead.

103. Since 1964 the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad.

104. Herald, October 17, 1881.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE GREAT CITY AND RAILWAY CENTRE OF THE NORTH-WEST"

1881-1883

Throughout 1881 a period of remarkable prosperity seemed to draw steadily closer for Prince Albert Settlement. There was every reason for a land boom in town and country in 1882. Immigrant farmers streamed in all year to one of the most fertile and best-settled districts in the North-West. The early-comers were to share in a 200,000 bushel crop, some of them to reap 50 bushels from each newly-ploughed acre.¹ As early as November, 1880, townsmen were able to say: "Already in imagination we hear the whistle and see the white smoke of the locomotive speeding on its way to the Pacific."² Two years later the railway seemed within months of becoming a reality, if it no longer was to end at tidewater. With unlimited resources of good timber, signs of coal and even of iron, it was easy to envisage paper mills, machine shops, and factories round a town already the commercial centre of a territory as large as Nova Scotia.³

When four provisional districts were blocked out in the Territories in May, 1882, Prince Albert found itself placed centrally in a district of 114,000 square miles

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1. Times, March 1, 1889; Herald, September 23, 1882.
 2. Herald, November 29, 1880.
 3. Times, November 1, 8, and 16, 1882.

stretching from the Fifth Meridian (110 West of Greenwich) to Lake Winnipeg.⁴ Its destiny seemed clear as "the 'Queen City' and capital of the Great Province of the Saskatchewan."⁵ Indeed Prince Albert might already claim supremacy in the eastern half of the Territories. Battleford was a small group of wooden buildings and Saskatoon an obscure village-site. In the fall of 1882, Regina, the newly-chosen capital of the Territories, comprised a scattered collection of frame buildings and tents.⁶ When stories were heard of disreputable characters in Regina, the Prince Albert Times remarked complacently, "We are ahead of the new Capital in morality as we are in natural advantages."⁷

The boom began in February, 1882⁸, and gathered speed throughout the year. The first real estate office was opened in August by Joseph Hanafin who quit the Mounted Police to make his fortune. "Now that the boom is on he is in clover," remarked one resident. "One is liable to meet him in any part of the town 'lying low' for a bargain in lots or claims."⁹ Charles Mair entered the game; so did

4. Debates of the House of Commons, 1882, pp. 1567-68.

5. Times, January 17, 1883.

6. E.G. Drake, Regina, the Queen City, (Toronto, 1955), pp. 22-23.

7. Times, November 1, 1882.

8. Herald, February 25, 1882.

9. Ibid., August 19, September 23, 1882.

many who did not trouble to open offices; and the town swarmed all summer with outside speculators. A company formed by Mair, Dr. Porter, and two others in April, 1882, controlled land with 70 chains (4,620 feet) of river frontage in the business section,¹⁰ and many "estates" which had previously been farms were divided into highly valuable blocks of town lots. In May 33 foot lots on the hill where scarcely any houses yet stood, sold at an average of \$94 apiece, the choice ones at \$140.¹¹ By August it was impossible to purchase a town lot for less than a hundred dollars, and at the Mission much higher prices were being paid.¹² One piece of land which had been worth \$1,000 a year earlier sold that month for \$15,000.¹³ By the end of 1882, real property within the townsite reached a total value of more than \$2 million.¹⁴ The boom reached also beyond the townsite where good farm land sold at \$10 to \$30 an acre.¹⁵

Although the estimates of citizens were mere guesses, perhaps 500 people lived around the Mission by the end of 1882;

10. Ibid., April 29, 1882.

11. Ibid., May 13, 1882.

12. Ibid., August 19, 1882.

13. Ibid., September 23, 1882.

14. Times, December 20, 1882.

15. Herald, August 19, 1882.

an equal number in Goschen; and the total for Prince Albert Settlement might have reached 5,000.¹⁶

More impressive proof of the town's growth lay in the multiplication of professional men, stores, and businesses of all sorts. By the end of 1882 Prince Albert had a dentist, a druggist (Thomas Eastwood Jackson, proprietor of Medical Hall), two watch-makers, six lawyers, and even a sign-painter.¹⁷ Standing along River Street in the case of most were seven general stores, two hardwares, and other stores specializing in novelties, boots and shoes, and furniture. The new businesses included the Goodfellow Brothers' planing mill and sash and door factory, two bakeries, and no fewer than three banks.¹⁸ One enterprise whose coming roused particular interest among the citizens was the Woodbine Billiard Parlor of T.O. Davis, "the Palace Saloon of the North West," which invited all to

Come where the woodbine twineth,
And the Whangdoodle mourneth for her young.¹⁹

It seemed only natural and proper that when Prince Albert obtained a "good live newspaper," the publishers should style it "the only first-class newspaper in the

16. Times, Novemeber 8, 1882.

17. Ibid., November 1, 1882.

18. Ibid., November 1 and 22, 1882.

19. Ibid., December 20, 1882.

Saskatchewan District."²⁰ The Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review was published weekly from the first, while the Battleford Herald after four years of publication remained a bi-weekly. The Times' admittedly too-great bulk of six pages (two more than its rival) was justified by the "great faith" which its founders held in the future of the town and district.²¹ The publishers of the Times were John David Maveety and Thomas Spink, experienced newspapermen from Toronto. The first editor was Fitzgerald Cochrane, a Nova Scotian lawyer of good education, lively style, and erratic ways. Drawn, like Dr. Porter, "by the silver tongue" of Charles Mair to a town they had never seen, Spink and Maveety were supported by public subscriptions totalling \$1,300 in the first two months.²² Indeed the newspaper was so much a community project, complained the editor, that every contributor behaved as if he had a proprietary right in the management of its affairs.²³

In the five months after November 1, 1882, Prince

20. See Herald, December 9, 1882.

21. Times, November 1, 1882.

22. Ibid., January 17, 1883; E.G. Drake, "Pioneer Journalism in Saskatchewan," Saskatchewan History, Vol. V, No.1 (winter, 1952), p.21.

23. Times, March 14, 1883.

Albert acquired two other short-lived newspapers. The Voice of the People was a little sheet of scurrilous tone put out by the ultra-radical, William Henry Jackson, during the conciliar election campaign of March and April, 1883.²⁴ The Parrot, a "comic paper" which was launched by T.O. Davis in December, 1882, met a quicker death, and left no trace but an unsympathetic "obituary" in the Times:

A stranger in a strange land, and of doubtful hatching, she was but a poor fledgling at that, and fluttered her gossip covered wings for a few days in the chilling blast of unappreciation, ...then gathered up her pinions and took flight for a more congenial sphere, where she would be out of the reach of a literary murdering class of correspondents, who endeavoured to feed the poor bird on wind pudding and stale gossip.²⁵

Perhaps the best proof of Prince Albert's sophistication lay in the founding (July 5, 1882) of the Kinistino Club by 24 members of the town's élite.²⁶ Renamed the Prince Albert Club, and finally the Saskatchewan Club,²⁷ it was designed to be not merely a social institution but a place where, as befitted its site in a future capital, "many eminent and influential men" would be entertained.²⁸ By November, 1882, a club house costing \$4,200 was in sight

24. Ibid., March 21 and 28, April 11, 1883; Drake, "Pioneer Journalism," p.22.

25. Times, December 27, 1882.

26. AS, Minute Book of the Saskatchewan Club, July 5, 1882.

27. Herald, August 19, 1882; Times, November 8, 1882.

28. Times, November 22, 1882.

of completion, although its furniture remained 180 miles away at Cumberland House where it had been left with other freight after the Saskatchewan shifted channels that summer.²⁹

If, as 1883 began, the prospect of becoming a provincial capital lay some years ahead, Prince Albert was very near to becoming the educational capital of the North-West. At Emmanuel College on January 25, 1882, a meeting attended by most of Prince Albert's élite heard Bishop McLean outline the advantages of a university modelled on the University of Manitoba which was an examining and degree-conferring body only. Everyone present, including the Rev. James Sieveright and the Presbyterian, Alex. Sproat, approved the principle of an institution in which all denominations would be united in the faculties of arts, law, and medicine, and the denominational colleges would confer degrees in divinity.³⁰

A bill to establish a university in the Diocese of Saskatchewan was introduced in Parliament on February 20, 1883. The measure met sharp criticism, and several of its provisions were altered as a result of fears that a great landed corporation might grow up in the North-West. One

29. Ibid., November 15, 1882.

30. Herald, March 11, 1882; Jean E. Murray, "The Early History of Emmanuel College," Saskatchewan History, Vol. IX, No.3 (autumn, 1956), pp. 87-88.

Senator suggested that in a town without newspapers (here he was five months behind the times), "a university is just a little out of place."³¹ Nevertheless, an act³² was passed on April 12, 1883, incorporating the University of Saskatchewan, and empowering it to grant degrees in all faculties and to affiliate any number of colleges within the Diocese. The University was permitted, however, to apply religious tests only in theology, and was restricted to establishing and incorporating a single college.³³

The requirement of religious tests in theology and the fact that all members of the corporation and senate were Anglicans raised immediate doubts whether the University would be truly non-denominational. The Prince Albert Times, however, recognized the passage of the act as a step likely to stir all supporters of education in the Territories into vigorous activity.³⁴ Although the provision of facilities for teaching would take years, four students had begun by the fall of 1883 to prepare for entrance.³⁵ Bishop McLean was anxious meanwhile to have Emmanuel College so well

31. Debates of the Senate, 1883, p.214.

32. Statutes of Canada, 1883, 46 Vic., c. 47.

33. See Murray, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

34. Ibid., p. 92; Times, March 21, June 20 and 27, 1883.

equipped that it would not only continue to serve as a training school for missionaries but become a centre of higher education in the North-West.³⁶

Thus by 1883 Prince Albert had become the centre of a prosperous district and a leading outpost of civilization in a booming North-West. It had reached that position despite the fact that no settlers in the district had yet obtained title to their lands. The land patent problem, nevertheless, had harmful implications for the town and district and by the beginning of 1883, feelings of impatience and bitterness were starting to break through the prevailing attitude of faith and hope.

When the Prince Albert land office was finally opened in September, 1881, the settlers who began filing claims became "far from happy."³⁷ They found that the agent had been instructed to allow no departure from the homestead provisions of the Dominion Lands Act (1872) which required three years' residence after the filing of claims, although many had improved and lived on their claims for five or more years. By October, 1882, not one settler at Prince Albert had applied for patent under these terms, all protesting that they had come in good faith and had been barred

35. Murray, op. cit., p.92.

36. Ibid., p.91.

37. Herald, October 3, 1881.

from filing claims earlier by the Government's inability or unwillingness to accept them.³⁸ Nearly half the settlers outside Prince Albert Settlement found themselves on odd-numbered sections open to cash purchase only, although in many cases they had taken up residence years before the survey was made (1877-78). These persons were further annoyed when the purchase price was raised from \$1 to \$1.25 an acre on May 25, 1881, while the stipulation of three years' residence was retained.³⁹ Those who had settled after October 9, 1879, found the price again increased to \$2 per acre on January 1, 1882.⁴⁰ Resentment was caused also when the price of the pre-empted quarter-section to which every homesteader was entitled was raised from \$1 to \$2 an acre on May 25, 1881,⁴¹ before persons lacking patents on their homesteads, or the opportunity to file claims could take advantage of the lower price.

One problem peculiar to Prince Albert Settlement was the existence of old settlers' claims comprising a small but important part of the townsite. Until the rights of the original half-breed occupants were liquidated by the issue

38. G.F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p.254.

39. Herald, July 4, 1881; C.S.P. 1882, No.30h, p.6.

40. Herald, February 11, 1882; C.S.P. 1882, No. 30h, p.2.

41. Times, December 6, 1882; C.S.P. 1882, No. 30h, p.6.

of scrip,⁴² residents on these plots could not obtain patents. A petition of April 6, 1882, asserted that three times the value of buildings would have been placed on these claims in 1881 if titles had been secure.⁴³

The lack of patents gave rise at times to serious dispute over the boundaries of claims.⁴⁴ It also constituted a brake on the district's prosperity, since no money could be borrowed on the security of unpatented land.⁴⁵ D.H. Macdowall reported to Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney in March, 1882, that no banks would enter business under these conditions.

42 The Manitoba Act set aside 1,400,000 acres "for the benefit of the families of the half-breed residents" of that province, and in tacit recognition of their right to share in the extinction of the Indian title. Between 1873 and 1878, 240 acres were granted to each qualified half-breed head of family, or the equivalent in money scrip was issued. Although the rights of half-breeds living outside Manitoba were not officially recognized till 1885, it was widely believed in the Territories that they held equal rights to the land. See Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, pp. 243-47. Between 1874 and 1882, several petitions sent from the Prince Albert district requested the issue of scrip. See Report of John McKay, enc. in Morris to the Minister of the Interior, June 9, 1874, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116e, pp. 3-4; Petition to the Governor-General in Council, acknow. J.S. Dennis to H.S. Moore, February 23, 1878, ibid., pp. 29-30; L. Clarke to the Lieutenant-Governor, June 7, 1881, enc. in Laird to the Minister of the Interior, June 14, 1881, ibid., No. 116f, pp. 96-97; Resolutions passed at a meeting representing the District of Lorne, Prince Albert, October 8, 1881, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, March 27, 1882, ibid., No. 116f, pp. 69-70; Times, December 6, 1882.

43. Times, December 6, 1882.

44. Father A. André to the Lieutenant-Governor, enc. in Laird to the Minister of the Interior, June 14, 1881, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116f, p.98.

45. Ibid.; Times, December 6, 1882.

"There is no quantity of money in the settlement in consequence....Farmers live entirely on credit, and...have to pay much higher prices for goods than would be the case if they had cash."⁴⁶ The land regulations, moreover, gave rise to vexing complications. Until patent was obtained, land could not be resided on by a purchaser or by anyone else without risk of forfeiture. Land which fell on even sections could not even be bought by the original occupant who was unwilling to wait three years.⁴⁷ Much annoyance was caused also by the requirement that homestead applicants reside six months of each year on their claims. Many newcomers who began in good faith to improve the land, but left for a winter to replenish their stakes, found on return that their claims had been jumped.⁴⁸ The effect of all these difficulties was considerable, although they did not shorten or significantly curtail the land boom. One resident asserted in the summer of 1882 that because of the land situation several well-to-do persons had recently turned their backs on Prince Albert.⁴⁹ Later it was estimated

46. Extracts from D.H. Macdowall to Dewdney: enc. Dewdney to Macdonald, March 27, 1882, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116f, p.70.

47. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

48. Times, December 13 and 20, 1882.

49. Herald, August 19, 1882.

that Prince Albert Settlement lost sixty settlers that summer, "who went up and expressed themselves pleased with the place, but finding there was no security went away."⁵⁰

If the settlers who found themselves after the survey on ordinary odd and even sections were certain of obtaining patents eventually, a substantial number of others lacked even this consolation. These were persons whose claims fell on the three and three-quarter sections in each township reserved as Hudson's Bay Company and school lands, and the occupants of a number of odd sections which had been reserved in May, 1881, for railway purposes. Their fears persisted despite provision in the Dominion Lands Act for homestead entry on school lands, and the Government's assurance (November 22, 1881) that in all previous cases of bona fide settlement in advance of the survey the Hudson's Bay Company had agreed to take its entitlement elsewhere.⁵¹ Uncertainty arose also over the rights of settlers on the land south of the South Branch which was reserved in 1882 for the Prince Albert Colonization Company.⁵²

50. Times, May 9, 1883.

51. Lindsay Russell, Deputy Minister of the Interior, to L. Clarke, November 22, 1881, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116f, p. 73.

52. Times, December 6, 1882; Debates of the House of Commons, 1885, p.2170.

These grievances make an impressively long list. There were several reasons, however, why they caused little discontent in Prince Albert district before 1883. Perhaps the chief reason was the readiness of the Dominion Government to make minor concessions. Its responsiveness to the protests of the settlers did much to hide the ignorance, slackness, and bumbling of the department headed, at least nominally, by Sir John A. Macdonald till October, 1883. The settlers, in other words, had regular proof of the Government's solicitude for their interests, and thus were assured that the vital line to Ottawa was in good working order. A petition which had been prepared on June 6, 1881, and transmitted to Ottawa through the North-West Council,⁵³ had brought an order within two months to open the Prince Albert land office, although that event led only to further complaints. A longer petition drawn up after a large protest meeting in Prince Albert on October 8, 1881, and carried to Ottawa by Lawrence Clarke, met with a courteous answer from Lindsay Russell, Deputy Minister of the Interior. Russell promised consideration of each case, and recognition of the right of settlers who had taken land on even or odd sections before January, 1881, to homestead 160 acres and pre-empt 160 at \$1 per acre.⁵⁴

53. L. Clarke to the Lieutenant-Governor, June 7, 1881, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116f, pp. 69-70.

54. Ibid., p.73, Russell to Clarke, November 22, 1881.

Although the Government stood firm on the main point, and thus caused "a strong feeling of regret...that the law debarred the pioneer settlers...from obtaining immediate patents," Russell's letter produced "much satisfaction... for the concessions made" when it was read by Clarke to a public meeting on January 19, 1882.⁵⁵ D.H. Macdowall noted in March, 1882, that "Transactions in land have gone on as though there were security, as the people have had every confidence that they could depend on the good faith of the Government."⁵⁶ Macdowall's prediction that no banks would open in Prince Albert was proved false by the establishment of one in August and two others by the end of 1882.⁵⁷ In April, 1882, Clarke was told that the Government was considering a measure to cover the cases of all settlers who had complied with the spirit of the homestead law.⁵⁸ The withdrawal of an amending bill at the last moment (June, 1882) was accompanied by a promise to re-introduce it at the 1883 session.⁵⁹ Thus a solution seemed near as 1882 ended.

55. Ibid., pp. 71-72, Clarke to Russell, January 25, 1882.

56. Extracts from Macdowall to Dewdney, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, March 27, 1882, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116f, p.71.

57. Herald, August 19, 1882; Times, November 1 and 22, 1882.

58. A.M. Burgess to Clarke, April 14, 1882, C.S.P. 1885, No. 116f, pp. 68-69.

59. Ibid., p.69, Burgess to Clarke, June 16, 1882.

Macdonald had already decided to send Lindsay Russell in person to investigate all claims at Prince Albert as well as in the métis settlements along the South Branch.⁶⁰

Bitterness was restrained also by the overwhelmingly Conservative temper of the townspeople (three to one in the election of June 5, 1883⁶¹), and the unshaken loyalty of the town's only newspaper. More effective, however, was the frontier spirit of robust faith that simply banished all obstacles to progress, and refused to believe that the Government could delay much longer in granting justice to so enterprising and patient a people.⁶²

But the continued good will of the settlers, the success of every enterprise in the town, and the very future of the Prince Albert district were seen to rest on the early arrival of railway communications. It caused no apprehensions when the Canadian Pacific Railway built steadily westward towards Moose Jaw in 1881, or when the southern route was definitely fixed upon in May, 1882.⁶³ The Canadian Pacific

60. Stanley, op. cit., pp. 254-55.

61. Times, June 6, 1883. The figures were (1) Prince Albert town: Macdowall 106, Dr. Porter 36; (2) Goschen: Macdowall 26, Porter 7. The totals for the District of Lorne were Macdowall 278, Porter 128.

62. See Times, December 13, 1882, January 3 and 17, 1883.

63. Herald, May 27, 1882. The C.P.R. was authorized to use the southern route by 45 Vic., c. 53 (May 17, 1882).

already had plans for a branch line from the vicinity of Fort Ellice to Edmonton.⁶⁴ If these were likely to await completion of the main line, two other railways had received charters by June, 1882, to build through the Saskatchewan valley. One of these was the Rapid City Central Railway whose branch was to run from Ellice to Fort à la Corne.⁶⁵ The Saskatchewan and Peace River Railway⁶⁶ was to bring to reality the vision of a line of settlement from Prince Albert to the Peace River country, and "stretching without limit into the gloaming of the farther West."⁶⁷ Certainly none believed in 1882 that the heart of the fertile belt, and site of the oldest farming settlements in the North-West, would be left out entirely by the coming rush in construction.

Yet these possibilities were as nothing beside the virtual certainty that Prince Albert would have a railway of its own, reaching more than 200 miles from the C.P.R. near Troy (now Qu'Appelle). By August, 1882, Senator Donald McInnes of Hamilton had secured a charter for the South Saskatchewan Valley Railway and a land grant of 3,840 acres a

64. Ibid., May 13, 1882.

65. The Rapid City Central was chartered by 45 Vic., c. 85. See Statutes of Canada, 1882.

66. The Saskatchewan and Peace River Railway was chartered by 45 Vic., c. 81.

67. Herald, December 20, 1880.

mile,⁶⁸ which was later raised to the standard 6,400.⁶⁹ Officials of his company were already discussing plans to flatboat an engine and rails down the South Branch from Medicine Hat, and to have trains running between the rivers by the next year.⁷⁰ By December, 1882, Clarke and Sproat, acting as agents for most of the large landholders in town, had arranged to convey as a bonus 2,000 acres of townsite land expected to be worth \$500,000 in a few years.⁷¹ A demand by the railway for additional property and an extension in time was readily granted, and negotiations were completed on January 11, 1883. The company then pledged to have steel laid between the rivers by August 1, 1884, and to complete the whole line within five years.⁷² The railway had already chosen some 50 acres on River Lots 65 and 71 for a station and yards.⁷³ By mid-February all the property had been conveyed, and the company had come to terms with the farmers who occupied six sections of land

68. Statutes of Canada, 1882, 45 Vic., c. 82. The South Saskatchewan Valley Railway was originally chartered in 1880 to build southwestward from the C.P.R. See Statutes, 1880, 43 Vic., c. 56.

69. Times, May 16, 1883.

70. Herald, September 23, 1882.

71. Times, December 13, 1882, January 3, 1883.

72. Ibid., January 10 and 17, 1883.

73. Ibid., January 17, 1883.

around the proposed crossing and future townsite at Halcro.⁷⁴ These arrangements nearly complete, the Times remarked: "We consider the future of Prince Albert as now secured, and it may confidently be predicted that [our] already flourishing town will, in a few years, take rank as the great city and railway centre of the North West."⁷⁵ On April 15, 1883, the first contract was let for construction to start at the north end, with 500 men to be on the scene by June 1.⁷⁶

By this time several other companies were hastening to share the coming bonanza. In September, 1882, officials of the Portage, Westbourne and North-Western Railway,⁷⁷ then 40 miles beyond its terminus at Portage la Prairie, were resolved "to push their line on to Prince Albert with all possible dispatch."⁷⁸ Six months later the line was expected to reach the town within a year.⁷⁹ The prospect that the C.P.R. would

74. Ibid., January 17 and 31, February 14, 1883. Halcro is now the hamlet of St. Andrews, 12 miles south-southeast of Prince Albert.

75. Ibid., January 17, 1883.

76. Ibid., May 9 and 16, 1883.

77. The line was originally chartered by the Province of Manitoba as the Westbourne and North-Western. See Statutes of Manitoba, 1880, 43 Vic., c. 41. The name was changed to Portage, Westbourne and North-Western by Dominion statute in 1882. See Statutes of Canada, 1882, 45 Vic., c. 80.

78. Herald, September 30, 1882.

79. Times, March 28, 1883.

build a branch line direct from Regina was raised in March, 1883, when W.B. Scarth, a leading promoter of that town, quoted Sir John A. Macdonald's opinion that the company was bound by its charter to do so.⁸⁰ The Times commented gaily: "We cannot have too many railways in Prince Albert. The more the merrier."⁸¹ It later suggested that all three lines might come over the same bridge and road to a union station in Prince Albert.⁸²

With charters to be had almost for the asking, at least three other big projects were under way early in 1883. The Souris and Rocky Mountain Railway⁸³ had let contracts for 100 miles of a line from the C.P.R. east of Brandon to Battleford and Edmonton.⁸⁴ In May, 1883, the Wood Mountain and Qu'Appelle Railway was authorized to build to Prince Albert from a point near the United States border.⁸⁵ But most exciting was the prospect of communication with a sea port and the shores of Hudson Bay, which were believed locally

80. Ibid., March 7, 1883.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid., May 16, 1883.

83. The Souris and Rocky Mountain was incorporated under 43 Vic., c. 58. It was authorized to build a line north of the 51st Parallel by 45 Vic., c. 79 (May 17, 1882).

84. Herald, October 14, 1882.

85. Statutes of Canada, 1883, 46 Vic., c. 74.

not only to be full of minerals but also to have plenty of good farm land and a temperate climate.⁸⁶ By the end of 1882 the Winnipeg and Hudson's Bay Railway and Steamship Company⁸⁷ had located 20 miles of line northeastward from Norway House and was planning to start construction in 1884.⁸⁸

It seemed only reasonable, therefore, as 1883 began, to believe that a town which occupied a more advantageous position than any other in Manitoba or the North-West must soon become "one of the most important cities in the Dominion of Canada," destined not only to rival but to outstrip even Winnipeg.⁸⁹

86. Times, November 22, 1882.

87. The Winnipeg and Hudson Bay Railway and Steamship Company was formed by the amalgamation of two earlier companies and chartered by 46 Vic., c. 69. In 1884, it obtained a land grant of 6,400 acres a mile for the portion of its road within Manitoba and 12,800 acres for its Territorial mileage. See C. Martin, "Dominion Lands" Policy (Toronto, 1938), pp. 290-91.

88. Times, January 3, 1883.

89. Ibid., January 17, 1883.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROUGHEST TOWN IN THE NORTH WEST, 1883

If 1882 ended on a note of high confidence, the new year opened with a weak yet persistent undertone of uncertainty and fear, and a low but strengthening chorus of bitterness against the Dominion Government. The land boom ended near the turn of the year. Yet it seemed at first to be only a seasonal decline or, at most, a brief set-back. The town's railway prospects remained unshaken in April, 1883, when earlier rumours (based partly on the open scepticism of Frank Oliver's Edmonton Bulletin)¹ were largely refuted by letting of the South Saskatchewan Valley Railway's contract. In March the Portage, Westbourne and North-Western was expected to reach Prince Albert at an early date, if later than was earlier believed.² Lots were still selling at its crossing-point in April,³ and the town of Portage was straining to push the line forward.⁴ The company, known after May 25, 1883, as the Manitoba and North-Western,⁵ completed its line that year to Minnedosa, and it was not till September that Duncan Macarthur, its vice-

1. Times, March 7, May 2, 1883.

2. Ibid., March 7, 1883.

3. Ibid., April 18, 1883.

4. Ibid., March 28, 1883.

5. The name was changed by 46 Vic., c. 68. See Statutes of Canada, 1883.

president, began to speak in Prince Albert of its ultimate completion.⁶ Citizens could point also to the continued activity of other railways and speculate about the greatest of all projects, the Hudson Bay line. In May, 1883, a weekly mail service was instituted from Qu'Appelle to replace the long-inadequate tri-weekly run,⁷ and the provision of telegraph facilities was only a few months away. The spring of 1883 brought an encouraging revival in real estate sales.⁸ By May the Goodfellow Brothers' planing mill was running "in full blast,"⁹ and a mid-summer boom in house-building offered proof of substantial confidence in the town's future.¹⁰

Only as the summer ended and a country-wide depression set in, did all signs begin to point ominously downward. In June only one person ventured to ask what had become of the influx of labourers who were to grade the route of the South Saskatchewan Valley Railway.¹¹ By September the company had undoubtedly drawn back without laying one mile of steel.¹² By early fall the sad list of "stores to let" and "selling

6. Times, September 19, 1883.

7. Ibid., May 9 and 16, October 24, 1883.

8. Ibid., May 2 and 23, 1883.

9. Ibid., May 9, 1883.

10. Ibid., June 27, July 4, August 1, 1883.

11. Ibid., June 6, 1883.

12. Ibid., September 26, 1883.

off for cash" was fast lengthening. Goodfellow Brothers survived only by cutting prices drastically "to suit the times."¹³ Even a surprisingly good crop, in a year when many districts in the North-West suffered heavily from frost, failed to restore prosperity.¹⁴ There was no relief for the despair of men who had seen their young fortunes wiped out in brief months, and a town so near to becoming a great city left 200 miles from the life-giving main line, its hopes of early rescue waning monthly.

Nevertheless, the coming of hard times imposed the first real test of community enterprise and solidarity upon the inhabitants of the three still largely distinct villages which comprised Prince Albert. It also called up the first movement towards incorporation. While the boom lasted ordinary and rich citizens alike gave freely to support not only churches and clubs but schools, delegations, and public projects of all sorts, and a wonderful spirit of unity and benevolence seemed to reign. So effective, moreover, was the system of public meetings, volunteer committees, and individual initiative, even in such complex tasks as arrangements for the Governor-General's visit and negotiations with the S.S.V.R., that the want of municipal institutions was

13. Ibid., October 24, 1883.

14. Ibid., September 16, November 16, 1883; C.S.P. 1884, No.12, Part IV, pp. 8-9.

scarcely felt. All this changed quickly in 1883. The Times editor observed in July:

Public meetings are now at an utter stand still. Subscriptions for general improvements have been the order of the day so long that our citizens have become well-nigh disgusted with the system.... [T]he total burden [rests on the shoulders of a few generous citizens while] the mass of the people contribute little or nothing. Indeed it is impossible to secure a sufficient attendance at any public meeting to make it in any sense representative.¹⁵

A crisis in the town's school system furnished an illustration of this theme and the first strong argument for incorporation. Before 1884 Territorial law made no provision for the creation of school districts outside incorporated areas. In 1883 the Mission school was the only elementary institution in town, and its building was already in ramshackle condition. More serious, the school was in danger of closing by January, 1883, six months after the Presbyterian Church had withdrawn a grant provided originally for the education of Indian children.¹⁶ A volunteer school board struggled through the term only with substantial contributions from parents.¹⁷ In the fall of 1883, an attempt to combine the resources of the town proper and Goschen to build a new central school foundered on inter-sectional

15. Times, July 25, 1883.

16. Ibid., January 17, 1883.

17. Ibid., January 17, July 11, 1883.

rivalry.¹⁸ In noting later that year that the Mission school urgently needed two teachers, the Times remarked: "It is only by the almost super-human efforts of our efficient Board of Trustees that a school can be maintained."¹⁹

Slowly, too, the need for roads and sidewalks, for police and fire protection was beginning to be felt. But the case for incorporation might be put on higher grounds as involving ultimately Prince Albert's survival in these difficult times. One supporter of the movement thus argued:

We require capital, but capital is not being invested blindly as it once was; circumstances have changed and we must change with them or be left behind. We have to show and satisfy capitalists that Prince Albert is a permanently established town, that its inhabitants are united and progressive, and working energetically on good sound business principles and that consequently its future is assured.²⁰

So well, in short, were the arguments presented that the circulation early in August of a petition requesting incorporation under a special ordinance found nearly all the property-owners in the proposed town site favouring the movement.²¹

But promise turned suddenly into fiasco, the product of too great haste and sectional hostility. The first petition proposed boundaries which cut off the east end. No public meeting was held before its dispatch and the people of Goschen

18. Ibid., August 15 and 22, 1883.

19. Ibid., October 31, 1883.

20. Ibid., August 1, 1883.

21. Ibid., August 8, 1883.

promptly drew up a second petition asking inclusion.²² It was no surprise when the North-West Council put aside both documents, leaving Prince Albert to begin again under terms of the Municipal Ordinance passed on October 4. The process, however, was made more difficult the second time by rivalry which in November flared into violent dispute over the location of the telegraph office.

The first failure was closely followed by a demonstration of the danger to which the unincorporated settlement lay exposed by the menace of fire. A blaze at a woodyard in Goschen was a warning, the Times made clear, which ought to be heeded. "Prince Albert is...situated in such a manner as will ensure its speedy destruction in the event of a fire.... [T]he long continuous row of wooden houses on the front street will supply a fire with all needed material whenever it takes place."²³ The formation in Goschen (August, 1883) of the town's first volunteer brigade — Prince Albert Hook and Ladder Company, No. 1 — did little to provide the equipment to make even that section secure.²⁴

Thus the inhabitants of Prince Albert town moved towards municipal status in 1883, confident of an early

22. Ibid., August 15, 1883.

23. Ibid., August 22, 1883.

24. Ibid., August 29, 1883.

upturn. The situation was far different for the farmers of the District of Lorne who bore the full brunt of economic decline and the indifference of a distant government. In 1883 they lapsed into unrelieved gloom and a bitterness that produced the first movement of agrarian protest in the Canadian West. The new mood was revealed as early as April when rumours were heard of a bizarre plot to seize the Dominion Lands office in Prince Albert, arm the Lily, and hold Governor Dewdney as a hostage until every settler got his patent.²⁵ As the year progressed, moreover, enough grievances arose among the townsmen as well to turn the whole district into a hotbed of discontent.

Most exasperating was the failure of the Government throughout the year to take effective steps towards settling the land patent question. The revised Dominion Lands Act passed in May, 1883, offered no relief, the promised amendment being once more omitted. Lindsay Russell broke a leg in February and, after hoping to recover quickly, found himself in September unable to come.²⁶ A substitute arrived only in January, 1884.

During the year new grievances were added by the implementation of Dominion Lands policy, by an alarming inscrutability on the part of some Government officials, and, not

25. Ibid., April 18, 1883.

26. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, pp. 254-55; Times, September 5, 1883.

least, by the consequences of the heavy speculation in farm land in 1882. Even sections for several miles east and south of the town lay blanketed with claims, yet they were so largely unoccupied that the Times exclaimed: "You can ride for miles around Prince Albert without seeing a settler's house."²⁷ The withdrawal from sale of the odd sections in the district (April, 1883),²⁸ the Government's failure before 1883 to survey much good land west and north of the town,²⁹ and the unsalability of unpatented homesteads combined to produce a state of acute "land lock" discouraging to prospective settlers.³⁰ One grievance of particular concern to Prince Albert Settlement was the reservation of three townships opposite the town for the South Saskatchewan Valley Railway. Settlers were thereby forced to go as far as six miles north of the river to obtain wood.³¹ For some time the Government refused to say why these lands were reserved, and the truth became known only after the company had obviously collapsed.³²

27. Times, September 19, 1883.

28. Ibid., May 2, 1883.

29. Ibid., May 9, 1883.

30. See ibid., July 25, 1883.

31. Ibid., May 30, 1883; Debates of the House of Commons, 1885, p.3107. The distance ranged from four to six miles because the townships along the north bank are broken.

32. Times, September 5 and 19, 1883.

But genuine alarm was caused by signs that the Government planned to disregard all squatters' rights and place their lands back on the market.³³ It was this threat which first caused the Times to forget its Tory sympathies and warn that such treatment "will start a feeling of indignation that will be more easily kindled than quenched."³⁴ By late September secession and rebellion were being discussed openly and the district was pervaded by "a feeling of insecurity and general distrust" which was enhanced by the presence of a Government inspector who refused to divulge any details of his mission.³⁵ In early October the Times was speaking for a great many settlers when it declared: "The day of petitioning has passed by."³⁶ "We are bound to exhaust every legitimate means of obtaining a redress of our grievances...but we are bound to have it any way."³⁷

The feelings of resentment and suspicion thus openly fanned and the clear call to "organize or be ejected"³⁸ led to a mass meeting in Prince Albert on October 16, 1883, at which a Settlers' Rights Association was formed. Among the

33. Ibid., July 11, October 3, 1883.

34. Ibid., July 11, 1883.

35. Ibid., October 3, 1883.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., October 10, 1883.

38. Ibid., October 3, 1883.

150 present, representing "the intelligence and bone and sinew of the settlement," were leading farmers and townsmen such as William Miller (the chairman); Fitzgerald Cochrane; the lawyer W.V. Maclise, who was a member of the corporation of the University of Saskatchewan; and J.O. Davis whose radicalism was soon to be strengthened by the failure of his business. The meeting was orderly and the sentiments expressed were moderate. One speaker warned against talk of rebellion, and another set of resolutions was passed and forwarded to Ottawa.³⁹ But the call to organize had been taken up. A committee of seven was formed to hold meetings in outlying districts and to correspond with other settlers' unions in the Territories.⁴⁰ Agitation then subsided in the District of Lorne till January, 1884, although a like movement centered in Manitoba culminated in the formation in Winnipeg on December 20, 1883, of the Manitoba and North-West Farmers' Union, and the drafting of a "Declaration of Rights."⁴¹

The substantial support lent by town residents to these protests was the product not only of natural sympathy with the farmers' plight and the stagnation of business, but also of two specific grievances against the Ottawa Government. In

39. Ibid., October 17, 1883.

40. Ibid., October 24, 1883.

41. Stanley, op. cit., p.263.

1883 the whole North-West was served by two stipendiary magistrates who visited Prince Albert twice yearly. As early as April 6, 1882, a petition complained that the system allowed no appeal in cases involving small sums, and that without a resident judge, court house, and jail, "great hardships and inconvenience will...result to...commercial interests."⁴² The administrative dislocation resulting from transfer of the Territorial capital to Regina caused several postponements in the spring of 1883 and deferral of the second session from August 2 to October 25, when bankruptcy and other cases were piling up rapidly. On the scheduled date, however, the judge unaccountably failed to arrive and, for several days thereafter, not a word was heard from Regina.⁴³ When the judge came finally in December he found more than 200 cases waiting.⁴⁴ It was several more months before any action was obtained on the building of a court house.

But the incident which provoked the sharpest clash with Government authorities and marked a critical stage in the town's evolution towards municipal status, occurred with arrival of the long-needed telegraph service. As early as October, 1882, arrangements had been completed with Hartley

42. Times, December 6, 1882.

43. Ibid., October 10 and 31, 1883.

44. Ibid., December 21, 1883.

Gisborne, the District Superintendent of Telegraphs in the North-West, and \$1,000 had been subscribed by town residents to furnish the poles for a branch line from Humboldt to Prince Albert.⁴⁵ But the work of building a new line from Qu'Appelle to Humboldt and of improving the old line to Battleford went slowly, and the Government agreed only in May, 1883, to construct an 83-mile branch from Clarke's Crossing to serve the métis settlements and Prince Albert.⁴⁶

Tempers were touchy over this delay but there was no sign on June 12, when a large meeting of the town businessmen took place, that a crisis in relations between the town and Goschen was about to develop. Half of the \$2,500 needed to supply poles was subscribed on the spot, \$500 of this by Lawrence Clarke for the Hudson's Bay Company, and \$250 by D.H. Macdowall, who also was a leading landowner of Goschen. None openly dissented when the meeting agreed to advise Gisborne that the office should be placed on River Lot 77 or 78, close by the Mission.⁴⁷

But whether the cause was poverty or suspicion of an

45. Ibid., November 1, 1882. The telegraph line completed to Edmonton in 1876 along the original route of the C.P.R. was abandoned between Selkirk and Humboldt in the summer of 1882. The building of a new line from Qu'Appelle to Humboldt was begun in the fall of that year. See C.S.P. 1885, No.10, p.203.

46. Ibid., p. cxiii; Times, May 16, 1883.

47. Times, June 13, 1883.

east end plot to capture the office, the committee chosen to raise the balance had to admit failure a month later.⁴⁸ If citizens of the Mission site were ignoring the campaign (as the tone of a Times editorial of July 18 suggests), they made a mistake. For on its failure Clarke doubled his subscription to \$1,000,⁴⁹ thus bringing the contribution of the two Goschen residents to half the total, and giving them a potentially strong voice in choosing the site.

The selection of site was an important one, for on it rested the value of large quantities of land, the progress of both sections, perhaps even the emergence of either site as centre of the future town. Certainly the issue was too weighty to be left to the judgment of a young official whose duties allowed him only infrequent trips to Prince Albert, who did not realize how much was at stake, and who proved inexcusably open to private influence. Gisborne was anxious to be fair, however, despite his own belief that the largest contributor was entitled to pick the site.⁵⁰ Although he had already accepted an offer by Lawrence Clarke of two lots and a house in the east end, Gisborne yielded on September 25 to the plea of Dr. Porter to let the citizens decide.⁵¹ On

48. Ibid., July 11, 1883.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., December 7, 1883.

51. Ibid. Porter met Gisborne in Battleford on that day.

October 10, he wrote to Thomas McKay, the chairman of the town committee, offering to place the office wherever the Government was granted a free site, and asking the committee to call a public meeting to settle the question.⁵²

Gisborne's letter, however, took about ten days to reach Prince Albert.⁵³ The committee then delayed several more days before calling a meeting for October 30. Meanwhile it imposed its own temporary compromise by having the poles erected on a route leading to the property of John McDonald on River Lots 81 and 82.⁵⁴ Although this step was intended to avert one conflict, it merely brought on another. Clearly outnumbered, the east end residents boycotted the meeting and refused to pay the remaining portions of their subscriptions. The meeting then approved a site on the property of Hurd and Baker on River Lot 77. On October 31 the Times concluded complacently that the matter was settled and the site was the most convenient and central for the great majority of the townspeople.⁵⁵

For two days after the meeting the poles stood on a route leading to the McDonald property. During this time

52. Ibid., October 24, December 7, 1883.

53. Ibid., December 7, 1883. The arrival of the letter was not mentioned in the Times of October 17. A summary of it appeared on October 24.

54. Ibid., October 31, 1883.

55. Ibid.

Gisborne arrived and took up temporary residence at Clarke's house in the east end. Nothing more was needed to suggest to town residents a conspiracy by one of the Government officials who already had made their lives miserable with their arrogance and procrastination, now leagued with "the Great Monopoly" and the wealthy of Goschen.

The committee had carried out Gisborne's request and the meeting had reached a decision. On November 1 six men, acting on orders of the committee, took down the poles and placed them on a route leading to the Hurd and Baker property.⁵⁶ It was a foolish act and it set off a furious storm.

Gisborne soon gave notice that Government authority might not thus be held in contempt. On November 7 he charged the six men with "unlawfully and maliciously removing and carrying away...the property of the Dominion Government."⁵⁷ When the summonses were served, a mob burned in effigy Gisborne, Clarke, and a third man (probably Macdowall). It then set out for Clarke's house to carry Gisborne out of town on a rail, and was deterred only by the armed defence which Clarke offered to put up.⁵⁸ When the six men appeared the same day before

56. Ibid., November 23, 1883.

57. Ibid., November 16, 1883.

58. Hayter Reed to Dewdney, November 8, 1883, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, November 22, 1883, Dewdney-Macdonald correspondence (hereafter cited as DMC), AS.

J.J. Campbell, J.P., they came escorted by a mob of 300, many of whom, Campbell thought, were armed with revolvers. The handful of Mounted Policemen standing by were on such friendly terms with the people that Campbell quailed at the thought of asking them to keep order. Fearing, he explained later, that considerable loss of life would ensue if the mob were resisted, Campbell adjourned the case for eight days and put in a call for at least 25 more police.⁵⁹

Notably absent from this riotous event was Gisborne who had gone at the scheduled time to Campbell's house and found too late, he said, that the trial was being held elsewhere.⁶⁰ The next day, November 8, Gisborne swore out an affidavit to excuse himself from appearing till December, and left town threatening to return only with 20 or 30 policemen.⁶¹ Thus Gisborne became in the citizens' eyes the most partial, cowardly, and vindictive of all Government officials, although he might more fairly be regarded as a frightened and bewildered young man.

For ten days disorder reigned in Prince Albert. Hayter Reed had reported to Governor Dewdney on November 8 that "any amount of liquor has been coming into the place...[L]iquor is

59. Ibid., J.J. Campbell to Dewdney, November 12, 1883, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, November 22, 1883.

60. Times, November 16, 1883.

61. Times, November 16 and 23, 1883.

...openly (or the next thing to it) sold at \$3 per bottle and any amount of drunkenness is to be seen in the settlement." He also said: "While at Prince Albert I was struck by the rowdyism of the place and one and all tell me it is one of the worst places they have ever been in."⁶² When the case of the six men came up on November 15 neither Gisborne nor the police reinforcements had arrived. Campbell felt obliged, therefore, to dismiss the charges, but he delivered a lecture on rowdiness which further inflamed the citizens.⁶³

Order, but not calm, was restored on November 18 by the arrival of a strong force under Inspector W.D. Antrobus.⁶⁴ Although that officer discreetly advised the telegraph contractor to open a temporary office on the town's edge, and refused at first to say why he had come, charges of tyranny and partiality were soon flying once more.⁶⁵ In February, 1884, another minor storm was provoked by the Inspector's admission that he had come to Prince Albert because ginger and liquor were being sold openly there and drunks were a common sight.⁶⁶

62. Reed to Dewdney, November 8, 1883, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, November 22, 1883, DMC, AS.

63. Times, November 16, 1883.

64. Ibid., November 23, 1883.

65. Ibid., February 15 and 29, March 7 and 14, 1884.

66. Ibid., February 29, 1884. One citizen accused Antrobus of "having his little fling as to the depravity of [the] Settlement": ibid., March 7, 1884.

Yet violent as this outbreak was, and however strong and persistent the anger against the Mounted Police, Clarke, and the Hudson's Bay Company, the telegraph episode left no lasting bitterness against the Ottawa Government. Nor were the townspeople ever close to the rebellion towards which Reed thought, on November 8, they were being fast driven by "merchants and others [with] little to do or think about."⁶⁷ As in 1882, none doubted that the Government would ultimately do justice. An appeal by the town committee to the Minister of Public Works brought a prompt answer, revealing (two months too late!) that the Government had planned all along to have offices at both townsites.⁶⁸ Two offices were actually opened in February, 1884, though on a temporary basis.⁶⁹ When the residents of Goschen tried in June to win a permanent compromise on the McDonald site, the issue was prudently referred to Ottawa.⁷⁰ In August the Minister ordered that the permanent station be placed where the inhabitants of the town thought most convenient. Gisborne then built the office on River Lot 77 without further dispute.⁷¹ Thus the telegraph episode became one step towards the

67. Reed to Dewdney, November 8, 1883, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, November 22, 1883, DMC, AS.

68. Times, December 14, 1883.

69. Ibid., February 15, June 13, 1884.

70. Ibid., June 13, 1884.

71. Ibid., August 15 and 22, 1884.

reconciliation of the townspeople with Ottawa, a process which had begun in January, 1884, on arrival of an official sent to settle the long-standing grievance over land patents.

The permanent effect of the telegraph affair was to confirm and strengthen the ascendancy of Prince Albert town over Goschen, although it did not end the rivalry of the two sections. The outcome was a major step, too, in transferring direction of the community's affairs from an élite already diminishing in numbers to the large class of intelligent but erratic and turbulent, sometimes narrow-minded and perverse, small businessmen of River Street.

Least noticed, perhaps, was that the system of volunteer committee, subscription, and private initiative had once more proved a poor substitute for municipal institutions. Through private influence, a few wealthy men had nearly settled in their own interests a question of major concern to the whole settlement, and they had been blocked only by precipitate, illegal action. The town committee had acted too slowly; its attempt to compromise only alarmed the rival sides; and it abandoned, finally, all pretence to mediate between them. The most important lesson of the telegraph affair was that frontier democracy had reached the end of its tether. Prince Albert was growing up.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOYALTY IN ADVERSITY, 1884

In the history of a year dominated by depression and discontent, no themes seem more unlikely than progress and loyalty. Yet paradoxically 1884 was a year of renewed advance for Prince Albert towards municipal status, and of notable progress in the educational field. For numerous reasons, moreover, the bulk of the townspeople proved remarkably immune to the germ of sedition which drove the Saskatchewan métis into the futile rising of 1885. The year showed, too, that Prince Albert's inhabitants had lost none of their benevolent, gregarious instincts, and little of the energy and initiative which had made it a centre of vigorous, self-confident civilization.

The stormy events of the telegraph episode were scarcely behind when Prince Albert was again moving towards incorporation. Near-unanimity prevailed at a meeting in the Gable House on November 21, 1883, at which a committee was chosen to fix boundaries and prepare the necessary documents in time to hold elections in January, 1884.¹ At a larger gathering on December 6 the committee proposed boundaries extending from the west edge of River Lot 68 (the present Twelfth Avenue West) to Colville Street in Goschen, (now Twelfth Avenue East) thus taking in about 1,830 acres and

1. Times, November 23, 1883.

700 people. They also suggested division of the town into five wards to guard the rights of the east and west ends.

The second meeting, however, did not end without reviving the sectional jealousy which had ruined the first movement, and for two more years was to delay and embitter all efforts towards unity. Although the meeting defeated by 25 to 16 Fitzgerald Cochrane's effort to include the property of Moore and Macdowall, the attempt was enough to alarm those capitalists with the "terrible bugbear" of taxation. More serious, it was too late by December 6 to elect a regular council for 1884, and the committee was forced to suggest that wards be dispensed with for the first year. Although the meeting agreed, one person warned afterwards that "a good deal of care [was] given to the ward divisions, and they were generally well received...The movers of the new position may expect the strongest opposition not only from Goschen but also from the west end."²

But the demon of sectional hostility thereby released was not responsible for the delay of three months which followed completion (February, 1884) of all but the last formality.³ Only after Macdowall as member of the North-West Council had refused to give any information did a

2. Ibid., December 7, 1883.

3. The notice of incorporation was dated January 19, 1884. It was published the necessary four times in the Times between February 1 and February 22.

committee learn directly from Governor Dewdney that the Municipal Ordinance contained an ill-drafted clause (section 133) requiring that the entire town area be surveyed into lots.⁴ The remedy — a revised Ordinance — was not passed till August 6, and two more months elapsed before copies of it reached Prince Albert.⁵

The town, therefore, lay exposed longer to the kind of disaster that in March and June left its two grist mills in ashes.⁶ It was forced also to forgo the improvement in manners and morals which some thought incorporation would effect. Describing one proposed benefit, the Times lashed out at those "gentlemen" who lacked the decency and even the sense to choose more reasonable hours for their daily bath, or "to take some part of the river not so near the road. This is one of the many little things incorporation will stop, and ladies will then be able of an evening to take their usual drive."⁷

By October, unfortunately, so heavy a catalogue of woes had fallen upon the prospective town that enthusiasm for incorporation all but yielded to misgivings and apathy. Heavy rains and severe frost ended a season in which no rain fell

4. Ibid., June 6, 1884.

5. Ibid., October 17, 1884.

6. Ibid., March 21, June 13, 1884.

7. Ibid., June 20, 1884.

till July. The crop failure was total and it left Prince Albert district in more desperate condition than any other part of the Territories, its farmers facing starvation within a year if no seed were obtained.⁸ The few businessmen and farmers who retained stocks of grain found their outside markets wiped out by Prince Albert's remoteness from the railway and the decline in prices brought on by the depression. Even their home market was seriously shrunk when tenders for the supply of flour for the Indians and Mounted Police in Saskatchewan were called privately and awarded to the Hudson's Bay Company.⁹ One citizen observed in December, 1884:

Our mercantile business is in as bad a state as it can be short of complete stagnation, nor is there any immediate prospect of better times.... Money can be had from our local bankers at... 18 per cent... and at this rate for short dates only. To secure a loan a borrower has to convey the whole of his property by deed to the banker.... Real estate is, for the purpose of sale, valueless. [P]roperties that two years ago... were worth thousands of dollars, if put on the market to-day, would not realize hundreds.¹⁰

So bleak indeed were these prospects, so far had community

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8. Ibid., October 17 and 24, 1884; AS, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file 81878, D.H. Macdowall to Dewdney, November 1, 1884, enc. in Dewdney to the Minister of the Interior, November 12, 1884.
 9. Times, November 28, 1884; C.S.P. 1885, No. 100a, pp. 101, 105. O.E. Hughes & Co. was the only Prince Albert firm which tendered for the Indian supplies in 1884. Its offer was made late because it was not notified by the Government, and its bid was 25 cents a cwt. higher than that of the H.B.C.
 10. Times, December 12, 1884.

enterprise declined, that not till December 5, 1884, was any action taken on incorporation. At a meeting on that date James Macarthur, its instigator, and five others refused successively to take the chair. Only when none present found anything to say did Macarthur rise, first to protest that the subject had been exhausted and no obstacles remained, then to deliver a sharp, belligerent harangue on the benefits of town status. Although the meeting agreed to request immediate incorporation, a second gathering called for a different purpose lapsed into long, bitter argument. It was followed by the spectacle of men "wildly careering through the streets offering petitions...for signature."¹¹

Now openly opposed to the movement were a number of the wealthiest, most influential citizens. In a letter to the Times one of them portrayed the town's prospects with chilling pessimism. "Is incorporation," he asked, "that wonderful panacea to cure all our afflictions and conjure us into a prosperous community?" On the contrary, he argued, taxation must drive out the rural trade on which prosperity relied, and the provision of essential services — fire, police, and a town hall alone, would demand the borrowing of \$30,000 at prohibitive rates.

There is no use in hiding the fact, we have grown beyond our strength, and have drawn heavily on the future to maintain expenses not justified by our position....[W]hen

11. Ibid.

there is a prospect of a railway close to our borders... every true friend of Prince Albert will vote for incorporation. [U]ntil then we want to be let alone to overcome the difficulties of our position, by reducing... expenditures and living strictly within our means.¹²

The outlook for incorporation seemed dark when a counter-petition was submitted bearing 101 signatures, only five fewer than those on the petition, and representing that 150 persons, half the minimum required by the Municipal Ordinance, lived within the proposed limits.¹³ A private census by Lawrence Clarke in December showed 246 residents.¹⁴ The opposition, however, went on to secure statements affirming that one signer of the petition was not legally a resident,¹⁵ and declaring that two others had signed on assurance "that it did not ask for incorporation, but merely that the Lieutenant-Governor should order an election to be held."¹⁶

As it happened, events of a different sort were to postpone the test. Time was to show, however, unclearly as the

12. Ibid.

13. PAHSA, Accession No. 481, copy of petition against incorporation signed by 101 persons, n.d. The copies of this and other documents relating to incorporation were made in 1888 by the Territorial Government.

14. Ibid., Copy of declaration of L. Clarke, December, 1884; copies of declarations of four other persons supporting the results of Clarke's census.

15. Ibid., Copy of declaration of S.C. Elliott, February 18, 1885.

16. Ibid., Copies of declarations of G.A. Markley, February 17, 1885, and R.B. Way, February 18, 1885.

lines were drawn, that the small merchants had prevailed once more over Goschen and the remnants of Prince Albert's élite. Time had already made it impossible for one of the oldest, most "civilized" settlements in the Territories to exist much longer without corporate dignity.

In spite of the clash over incorporation and the calamities which befell it, Prince Albert did not cease in 1884 to be a town of fine homes and churches, schools and clubs. Emmanuel College reached the height of prosperity in 1884-85, with 37 students enrolled; and the number included nine who were preparing for entrance to the University.¹⁷ In September, 1884, the first high school in town was opened at St. Anne's Convent.¹⁸ Six months later the Presbyterian Church completed the first non-denominational high school, aided by at least \$3,000 in public subscriptions.¹⁹ Indeed, the new school was so fine a structure that it evoked unseemly pride among some Presbyterians.²⁰ It was a notable advance, too, when the passage of a public school ordinance in 1884 allowed the formation of two districts including the townsite and Colleston.²¹

17. J.E. Murray, "The Early History of Emmanuel College," Saskatchewan History, Vol. IX, No.3 (autumn, 1956), p.94.

18. Times, August 8, 1884.

19. Ibid., July 11, 1884, March 6, 1885.

20. See ibid., June 20, 1884.

21. Ibid., October 31, November 14, December 12, 1884. The boundary between the districts was the western edge of the H.B.C. Reserve.

Nor did hard times make Prince Albert's citizens any less, as Charles Mair liked to say of Canadians, "a club-living and clubable" people.²² The Saskatchewan Club fell steadily towards ruin in April, 1884,²³ but the Prince Albert Cornet Band, a curling club, and the Masonic Lodge survived the crash. New clubs to promote tennis and cricket were launched in 1884.²⁴ In May, 1884, the Lorne Agricultural Society was formed;²⁵ that fall it held its first small exhibition.²⁶

These were the few, undramatic, yet auspicious events of 1884. They were overshadowed, however, by the development of an agitation which moved briefly into the town itself, and offered to make it the centre of a protest movement embracing the whole North-West.

As in 1883, discontent was most acute in the métis settlements from St. Louis to Batoche and in an arc stretching from St. Catherine's to Halcro. Substantial leadership was provided once more by a number of prominent white settlers. Among them were farmers such as William Miller, J.C. Slater, Thomas Scott, and the clever William Henry Jackson, a former student of the

22. Ibid., November 22, 1882.

23. AS, Minute Book of the Saskatchewan Club, April 24, 1884.

24. Times, June 27, 1884.

25. Ibid., May 23, 1884.

26. Ibid., October 31, 1884. The stock show was held on Church Street in front of the present city hall.

University of Toronto. Agitation was resumed in January, 1884, when a series of meetings were held at St. Catherine's, Red Deer Hill, and Halcro.²⁷ At a gathering in Colleston School on February 25 a comprehensive statement of grievances affecting both whites and half-breeds was prepared, and demands were formulated for Territorial representation in Parliament, tariff reduction, and a Hudson Bay railway.²⁸ As in 1883, support was lent by the Prince Albert Times which expressed hope that the agitation would soon end in "a convention of delegates to be held at Prince Albert."²⁹ In March the Times published a violent attack on one particular abuse—Mounted Police officers acting as magistrates.³⁰ In May it upheld the cause of "provincial rights" and declared that the Canadian settlers stood firm behind the half-breeds in the struggle for redress of their grievances.³¹ The Times even ventured to warn that the agitators possessed "the power at any moment to stir into a flame the slumbering embers of discontent [among the] Indians."³²

27. Ibid., February 1, 1884.

28. Ibid., February 29, 1884; Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p.265.

29. Times, February 1, 1884.

30. Ibid., March 21, 1884.

31. Ibid., May 16 and 23, 1884.

32. Ibid., May 23, 1884.

The mood of the settlers was angry and tense throughout the spring and susceptible to easy provocation. One old grievance which gained new strength was the collection of dues on Crown timber used by settlers. A public meeting was held in the Mission school on April 29 to petition the Government on the subject.³³ Enforcement of the law in one case involving logs taken seven years earlier by other persons moved a citizen to remark that "some of the government officials here are fast becoming obnoxious to the people....[T]he wonder is that they have been tolerated so long."³⁵

Less obvious than the persistence of unrest, however, was the gradual decay of close sympathy between the agitators and the bulk of the townsmen. Equally subtle were the causes of this development, factors which, combined with others, were to make the 1885 rebellion almost exclusively the work of French half-breeds. The arrival of William Pearce in January, 1884, to investigate land claims and the subsequent disposal of them removed the most acute grievance affecting the English-speaking settlers.³⁶ The Government proved responsive on

33. Ibid., May 2, 1884.

34. Ibid., March 28, 1884.

35. Ibid., April 11, 1884.

36. The Times welcomed Pearce's arrival as "an indication of the improved policy which we trust will be carried out under the regime of the new Minister of the Interior," D.L. Macpherson. It noted that Pearce and his assistant worked with great courtesy and admitted the large majority of the claims to be honest. See Times, January 18, February 22, 1884.

other points too, and in their actions the officials were far less than the monsters of tyranny portrayed by extremists. After April 29 the Crown timber agent suspended collection of dues till the petition was answered.³⁷ No more cases of obvious injustice arose, and by July the agent was able to report that dues were being paid "freely and without delay."³⁸ By at least the end of May a small gap in interest and sentiment had opened between the townsmen and the rural agitators. After the meeting at Lindsay School on May 6, at which the decision was made to recall Louis Riel from Montana, its chairman, Andrew Spence, assured the citizens that his actions were "all open and above board."³⁹

But this incipient division was obscured after Riel's return by the unexpected mildness of his behaviour. It was also the desire to see and hear so famous a man, and despair over the certainty of a meagre crop, that led eighty-four persons, all but four of whom were whites, to sign a petition inviting him to a meeting in Prince Albert.⁴⁰ Riel's popularity stood so high in mid-July that it was only increased by the frantic efforts of a few ultra-Tories and the diatribes

37. Ibid., May 2, 1884.

38. Ibid., July 4, 1884.

39. Ibid., June 6, 1884.

40. G.F.G. Stanley, Louis Riel (Toronto, Ryerson, 1963), p.278.

of the Times which began to denounce the "ravings" of "small political reformers," to incite hatred against an "alien French half-breed," and to raise the spectre of Indian war.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Riel initially refused to appear before Canadian settlers who would remember the execution of the Ontario Orangeman, Thomas Scott, fourteen years earlier at Red River. His fears were overcome only by an eloquent plea from Father Alexis André, the Roman Catholic priest at Prince Albert.⁴²

Thus, in Treston Hall on July 19, 1884, "there was a mass meeting, such as Prince Albert [had] never seen; people came from the country to meet Mr. Riel, from everywhere, and they went back struck with the quiet and gentle way he spoke to them."⁴³ His appeal was warm, sincere, and wonderfully persuasive, not only to the half-breeds but to all who hated the Hudson's Bay Company, who favoured representation in Parliament, provincial status for the North-West, and amendment of

41. Times, July 18, 1884. One reason for the violence of the Times' attack is suggested by a letter from Dewdney to Sir John A. Macdonald. "I forget whether I told you that I have arranged to secure the Prince Albert paper, so if any little patronage can be sent them from below it will be appreciated": AS, Macdonald Papers, Dewdney to Macdonald, 1884-5, Dewdney to Macdonald, July 23, 1884. All Dewdney correspondence cited in this chapter is in this collection.

42. AS, Records Relating to Louis Riel and the North West Uprising, 1873-1886 (Department of Justice), p.53. Records cited hereafter as Riel Records.

43. André to Dewdney, July 21, 1884, C.S.P. 1886, No. 52c, p.35.

the land laws. Riel assured all that "their object would be gained faster if they acted orderly and peaceably."⁴⁴

The meeting was so successful, and Riel now held so powerful an influence over the half-breeds of both languages and many admirers among the white population,⁴⁵ that it seemed only the first stage in a movement likely to unite the whole North-West in the cause of reform. Under the direction of W.H. Jackson, organizers were dispatched in many directions, and preparation was begun of a giant petition to be carried, if necessary, to the Privy Council in London.⁴⁶ So popular was the cause now led by Riel, Jackson told him on July 23, that "T.J. Agnew proposed to [W.V.] Macclise that the Conservatives should take counsel together, and adopt your platform under their party name."⁴⁷ Even the leading town businessmen were so receptive that Jackson thought himself on good terms with J.F. Betts, Owen E. Hughes, and the banker, Joseph Knowles, and informed Riel, "I think I see our way clear to raising all the funds we want."⁴⁸

44. Times, July 25, 1884.

45. André to Dewdney, July 21, 1884, C.S.P. 1886, No.52c, p.36.

46. Debates of the House of Commons, 1885, p.3086; W.H. Jackson to Riel, July 23, 1884, C.S.P. 1886, No.43h, pp. 3-5; Riel Records, pp. 512-17, Jackson's letter to the people of Saskatoon, July 28, 1884.

47. Jackson to Riel, July 23, 1884, C.S.P. 1886, No.43h, p.4.

48. Ibid., p.5.

Yet beneath a situation that seemed so favourable to Jackson, no really significant change had occurred in the attitude of a great majority of townsmen and white settlers. Father André knew that curiosity was the main motive of many who went to hear Riel.⁴⁹ Even on July 23 Jackson noted that a number of "trimmers," including J.O. Davis, were "waiting to see if the current...[would] last." Jackson also warned that "any bungling will earn for us the contempt of the business men."⁵⁰ There was a great difference, moreover, between signing another petition and aiding a movement that might end in rebellion. If Jackson received the hoped-for donations, he never spoke of it. Even at the beginning Jackson had failed to win over the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. William McWilliam, a confessed Liberal. Nor had he succeeded with the Methodist Mr. Parker who, he explained to Riel, was "too sound on principle to be lost to us."⁵¹

The Tory reaction moved strongly after Riel's visit, led by the virulent assaults of the Times. Directed at landowners and merchants were assertions that the "jawing" of agitators served only to drive out capital, depreciate property, and keep out settlers. "To talk of rebellion now," exclaimed the

49. André to Dewdney, July 21, 1884, ibid., No. 52c, p.35.

50. Jackson to Riel, July 23, 1884, ibid., No. 43h, p.4.

51. Ibid., p.5.

Times, "is simply bosh. The government could bring us to our knees simply by removing the machinery of civilized government."⁵² The prospect of government action was at least good enough, admitted T.E. Jackson on August 2, to "infuse life into the opposition."⁵³ But the most effective argument, despite Riel's avoidance of any incitement, was the growing danger of an Indian rising. By early August some white settlers were planning to remove their families to the East.⁵⁴ Later that month alarm spread even to the townsmen actively supporting Riel.⁵⁵

Thus the movement to unite whites and half-breeds had almost petered out by September, 1884. Outside the métis districts active support of Riel was confined to a handful of white settlers. In the town, although a number of radicals continued to sympathize with them, the Jackson brothers and their father, T. Getting Jackson, were forced to conduct their machinations in secret. A convention was never called. The grand petition was not sent till December 16 from St. Laurent,

52. Times, July 25, 1884.

53. T.E. Jackson to Riel, August 2, 1884, C.S.P. 1886, No. 43h, p.6.

54. AS, Dewdney Correspondence, J. Ansdell Macrae to Dewdney, August 5, 1884, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, August 14, 1884.

55. Ibid., H. Reed to Dewdney, enc. in Dewdney to Macdonald, August 22, 1884.

although it was signed by Dr. Porter and approved verbally by D.H. Macdowall.⁵⁶ The calm that settled over the District of Lorne after July 19 was ended only when the full weight of crop failure began to be felt. The situation seemed so peaceful on October 3 that the Times felt free to renew the struggle for redress of what it distinguished as legitimate grievances.⁵⁷

Not only the threat of savage warfare, the vigorous activity of loyalists, and the hope of peaceful redress had weakened the radical movement. Riel knew that his presence placed the interracial movement in a paralyzing dilemma. If the half-breeds trusted him almost to a man, and the Indians more than he wished to admit, Riel's name remained anathema to the bulk of white Protestant settlers who needed no lurid accounts, like that in the Times of October 24, to recall the murder of Scott. Nor could a man who had defied the authority of the Dominion in Manitoba be trusted to lead a movement with which Territorial Grits like Frank Oliver sought a solution that was no more drastic than provincial rights. The point was made clearly by Oliver in a letter of October 22 to W.H. Jackson. Although Riel, he warned, might be "a man of the greatest influence and the most high-minded patriotism, [he was] political dynamite [and might become] a political

56. Stanley, Louis Riel, p.291.

57. Times, October 3, 1884.

boomerang. In endorsing Riel you will be held up as endorsing his whole course, and your enemies will have thus put in their hands the best possible weapon they can have against you."⁵⁸

Nor, as winter set in, was the radical cause advanced by crop failure, business stagnation, and the Government's negligence and seeming perversity about furnishing long-needed facilities. Until 1886 the Mounted Police occupied a number of "happy-go-lucky frame shells,"⁵⁹ and confined prisoners in "one small cell...which could with ease be kicked to pieces."⁶⁰ When the roof of the police stable collapsed, burying a horse, the event was held up as "a pattern of the efficiency of the police in every detail."⁶¹ Hard feeling arose also over the Government's offer to move the town post office to a site chosen by the citizens on condition that the Government choose the site for a court house. As it happened, however, the Government failed to go even so far as deciding the site of the court house before the summer of 1885, although more than 400 cases of debt alone came before one session of court.⁶²

58. Riel Records, pp. 542-43, Oliver to Jackson, October 22, 1884.

59. Times, April 9, 1886.

60. Ibid., June 6, 1884.

61. Ibid., June 20, 1884.

62. Ibid., December 12, 1884.

Throughout the fall and winter, bitterness festered privately in many townsmen, more openly in the white Protestant farmers who had hitherto been little touched by the efforts of Riel's followers. One farmer, Daniel Cameron, a man till recently of some means, poured out his anger in a letter to the Times so violent that an agent of Governor Dewdney tried (unsuccessfully) to have it suppressed.⁶³ With indiscriminate force he lashed out successively at the monopolistic Hudson's Bay Company, at the "put-off affair called a North-West Council," at the Government for a tendering policy that, in his opinion, formed the root of all other grievances, and at the Government and police together for removing to Carlton for the latter's use the rifles provided for defence by the local militia against savages who were "already mutinous and liable to come down on us at any time." Cameron also flailed the niggardly policy which had forced the militia volunteers, lacking uniforms or pay, "to find their own horses and provender and tramp to the right-about-face in the coldest time in winter, and willingly refund one dollar of the promised amount to pay for their own board."⁶⁴

Yet, powerful as these sentiments were, they could find outlet only in such written assaults and in vain grumbling.

63. Ibid., November 28, 1884.

64. Ibid.

Despite Riel's refusal to serve on the joint executive committee formed by the leaders of the Settlers' Union and the métis, a wide gulf of racial, religious, and political prejudice remained between the bulk of white settlers and the métis.⁶⁵ The same Cameron who spoke out so forcefully against the Government and the police castigated every effort to conciliate the "French ringleaders," and condemned even the investigation of métis land claims (May, 1884) as "putting a premium on disloyalty by peddling a land office through a French settlement."⁶⁶ In November, 1884, Father Fourmond, parish priest at St. Laurent, prepared a petition requesting Government grants to support hospitals and a Catholic school staffed by nuns in every métis settlement. The Times attributed the request to Riel and launched an angry attack on "sectarianism" and the supposed threat to motherhood.⁶⁷ Nor was it possible to find common ground between the whites and the Indians whom an outbreak would call into bloody action, though there was sympathy for their hungry, neglected plight.

The white settlers were not exposed after July 19 to the

65. See Riel Records, pp. 755-62, Albert Monkman to Deal, April 3, 1885. Monkman noted that the Prince Albert Tories had associated Riel with the committee nevertheless. "For a while their efforts were successful, not in turning those who had joined but in deterring others from joining the agitation."

66. Times, November 28, 1884.

67. Ibid., Stanley, Louis Riel, p.293.

hypnotic power of Riel and they remained far short of the desperation which led the métis into revolt. Instead they retained faith in their own enterprise and initiative, in the virtues of British institutions, and in the tardy but never-failing benevolence of Ottawa. Nor were they emptied of frontier confidence in the future. Even while damning the Government, Cameron suggested that by helping the farmers to build their own grist mill the Government might "convert us into the most loyal people in the North West," able and willing to pay timber dues, aid the Indians, and "suppress any professional agitators." Give us a voice in Parliament, he begged, "and enable us to work out our own solution."⁶⁸ In October, 1884, faith in the Government was so strong that the Times took it for granted that seed grain would be supplied to the destitute settlers.⁶⁹ There is no sign of popular doubt as to the Government's intentions. By February 18, 1885, when Governor Dewdney was authorized to contract for

68. Times, November 28, 1884.

69. Ibid., October 17, 1884. No action was actually taken till December, 1884, when a Government agent was sent to Prince Albert to investigate the need for seed grain. See AS, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file 81878, John McTaggart to the Minister, January 28, 1885. Dewdney had recommended on October 29 that assistance be given: AS, Dewdney Correspondence, Dewdney to Macdonald, October 29, 1884.

the supply of 14,000 bushels,⁷⁰ the arrival of the grain was considered a certainty. Although the arrangements were to be badly bungled by Dewdney,⁷¹ a good crop in 1885, the Times thought, would give a wonderfully different complexion to affairs.⁷² There was cause for hope, too, when the Government reverted to the calling of public tenders for flour supplies in the Territories.⁷³

As long as the agitators confined their actions to constitutional means, they enjoyed the passive sympathy of many whites. But loyalty to the Dominion Government was firmly imposed upon the white settlers and townsmen by the hope of better days, by the Government's record of eventual response to their greatest needs, and by their social and religious prejudice against the *métis*. They also possessed an awareness which was denied to the unsophisticated *métis* and their deluded leader that resort to force could bring only greater calamities.

The winter of 1884-85 went peacefully in Prince Albert. Few of the citizens were aware of events in the *métis* settlements until March 15 when Superintendent L.N.F. Crozier,

70. AS, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file 81878, W.J.O. Bouchier to A. Walsh, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, February 17, 1885; ibid., Macpherson to Dewdney, February 18, 1885.

71. Ibid., *passim*.

72. Times, February 27, 1885.

73. Ibid., March 6, 1885.

fearing an imminent outbreak, arranged with Capt. Moore to sound out the possibility of reorganizing the volunteer companies. A meeting was held for this purpose on March 18 but the discussion was turned into an acrimonious squabble by townsmen who doubted that any danger existed.⁷⁴ The 19th passed quietly,⁷⁵ and the events which put their loyalty to the final test came as a shock to citizens who, except for a handful, possessed no bonds of kinship, leadership, or organization with the rebels, and felt little sympathy for them.

74. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p.322; Times, June 19, 1885.

75. Times, June 19, 1885.

CHAPTER SIX

THE REBELLION AND ITS AFTERMATH, 1885

Day had not broken on the 20th of March, 1885, when the news reached Prince Albert that a group of métis under Louis Riel had taken prisoner five white men and had looted a store at Batoche. There was no panic or indecision at the meeting called hastily by Lawrence Clarke in Prince Albert. The same afternoon a few flags fluttered on River Street and the town band blared bravely as 95 volunteers boarded sleighs for Fort Carlton, leaving a town that all knew to be nearly defenceless.¹

Few persons feared on March 20 that Riel's formation of a "Provisional Government of the Saskatchewan" and the seizure of hostages portended more serious trouble. The defence committee formed that morning enrolled all the available men in a home guard.² But they took no steps to fortify the town and allowed men armed with rifles to patrol on foot three miles beyond its boundaries. Three days were spent in drilling the volunteers but with ludicrous results, it was said, because the officers were chosen "on the oyster club principle of putting favorites in command."³ On March 23 the volunteers were disbanded by Inspector Moffatt to save expense, only to

1. Times, June 19, 1885.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., June 26, July 24, 1885.

be quickly reorganized after warnings were received from Crozier. The situation seemed well in hand, however, when Commissioner A.G. Irvine arrived from Regina on the 24th with 90 police, bound for Carlton.⁴

As Prince Albert was thus preparing in leisurely fashion for an attack none expected to come, decisions that proved critical for both the security of the town and the success of the métis' resort to force were being reached in the rural districts. The incident at Batoche raised fears in Prince Albert that, moved by bonds of kinship, respect for Riel, and their own sufferings, the English half-breeds would immediately join the rebels. Father André believed that only "some great influence" would prevent them.⁵ The nature of that influence was revealed as early as March 20. The events at Batoche caused much excitement at the Ridge and further south⁶ over the danger of an Indian rising that was likely to bring slaughter and destruction to the undefended homes of whites and half-breeds alike. A second factor which prevented the English half-breeds from immediately joining Riel was the unfinished state of the system of committees which Riel's followers had tried to build. One of his agents admitted later that the efforts of loyalists and the violence of Riel's

4. Ibid., July 24, 1885.

5. C.S.P. 1886, No.52, p.147.

6. Ibid.

Canadian allies had deterred many from joining the agitation. Some committees were only in the process of formation when the outbreak occurred.⁷ Hence there was no organization for calling the half-breeds into action, and it was possible for the white leaders unconnected with Riel and for the clergy to exert their full influence over them.

The alarm of March 20 gave rise to a meeting that afternoon in Lindsay School at which the English half-breeds began the desperate search for escape from their dilemma. Their problem was clearly revealed in the conduct of Thomas Scott who, although a full-blooded Scotsman, had a métis wife, felt himself one with the half-breeds, and had been among the most active agitators. Although sentiment at the meeting was strongly in favour of Riel, a delegation led by Scott was appointed to ask the métis "what steps might be taken for the settlers...to protect themselves."⁸ On March 21 Scott told Riel to his face that he disapproved of the resort to arms and the raising of the Indians.⁹

Even as Riel dispatched a mild, eloquent appeal to the English half-breeds,¹⁰ the Government and loyalist forces had

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7. Riel Records, pp. 755-62, Albert Monkman to Deal, April 3, 1885.
 8. C.S.P. 1886, No.52, p.88.
 9. Ibid., p.149.
 10. Riel to the English half-breeds of Red Deer Hill, St. Catherine's and St. Paul, March 21, 1885, C.S.P. 1886, No. 43h, p.6.

begun to act. On the afternoon of March 22 a meeting, instigated by Superintendent Crozier, was held at Lindsay School. Its chairman was the Anglican priest at St. Catherine's, the Rev. E.K. Matheson, but Thomas Scott took the lead in advising that the volunteers be recalled from Carlton to protect the women and children. According to Matheson, Scott went on to declare that if an outbreak occurred, "we English half-breeds...will rise to a man and assist the Government to put it down."¹¹

The largest and perhaps the critical meeting was held on the evening of March 22 at St. Catherine's Church. Matheson was again chairman and William Craig, a staunch Tory, served as secretary. Sympathy with Riel's cause remained strong and Craig thought initially that the English half-breeds would never fight a people to whom many were closely related.¹² Scott began by reading Riel's appeal and, according to Craig, asked the settlers and volunteers to lay down their arms, trusting Riel to control the Indians, and to let the métis and police fight it out.¹³ Whether Scott spoke in exactly these terms is not certain (Craig played up every hint of disloyalty at Scott's subsequent trial), but evidently he believed himself to hold some influence over Riel. However,

11. C.S.P. 1886, No.52, pp. 126, 152.

12. Ibid., p.93.

13. Ibid.

realism prevailed over sentiment and over faith in the unknown power of Scott. Craig warned forcefully that the whole power of the Dominion and the British Empire stood behind the police. Craig's speech must have had a powerful effect, for after it, by his own account, "Others spoke, and one man got up and said: 'Well, gentlemen, we want to fight'; and another did so, and it became general talk all over the church."¹⁴ In any case, those present were persuaded, after expressing their sympathy with the métis' efforts "to obtain their legal rights by all constitutional means," to pass a resolution declaring that they did not approve of the resort to arms or the raising of the Indians and wished to remain neutral.¹⁵

Neutrality, in fact, was the only acceptable course for the English half-breeds. Only a fanatical devotion to Riel could have induced them to join in an obviously desperate venture, and thus risk destruction of their own meagre possessions and the lives of their white neighbours in order to preserve a way of life not their own, and to secure redress of grievances (land patents and the river lot survey) which did not affect them. All Riel's appeals, and finally

14. Ibid., pp. 93-94.

15. Riel Records, pp. 652-53, Minutes of a meeting held at St. Catherine's Church, March 22, 1885.

his threats, could not shake their longing for peace.

Three subsequent meetings only brought closer the ultimate break between the English half-breeds and Riel. Those present at St. Andrew's (Halcro) on March 23 affirmed their neutrality, although they vowed to use "all lawful means" to obtain justice. They also complained that "had the influential citizens of Prince Albert joined the movement, instead of ignoring it...the Government would have settled all [grievances] long ere this."¹⁶ On the evening of the same day a meeting at Lindsay School passed resolutions expressing sympathy with the French but refusing to take up arms.

After this meeting Thomas Scott wrote privately to the métis leaders in a last-minute but futile effort to mediate or calm the métis.¹⁷ On March 24 Riel came with two of his lieutenants and twenty armed men to a meeting at Lindsay School. The implied threat had no effect, for Scott made it clear that he could not go along with the French and, according to one witness, "spoke all he could...to stop the English half-breeds from joining Riel."¹⁸ The petition prepared on

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 660-64, Resolutions passed at a meeting held at St. Andrew's, March 23, 1885.

17. Scott to the French Council, March 23, 1885, C.S.P. 1886, No. 52, p.61.

18. C.S.P. 1886, No. 52e, p.149.

the previous evening was circulated by Scott, and none of the one hundred present refused to sign. When the meeting ended the document bore 457 signatures, including those of several former agitators.¹⁹ Thus the métis were forced to go on alone, and their frustration helped to precipitate the clash two days later in which the rebellion began.

The last act in this pitiful drama opened on March 29 after the lives of twelve white men had been taken at Duck Lake. Riel's final appeal to the English-speaking people of Prince Albert called on them to surrender the police and send delegates "to discuss the condition of our entering into confederation as a province." It was a desperate play, based on hatred of the police and the "monstrous monopoly." It ended with the threat of bloody war and an alternative which was strange to the half-breeds, abominable to the Canadians. "If we cannot unite," Riel warned, "the struggle will grow. Indians will come in from all quarters; and many people will cross the line early this spring; and perhaps our difficulties will end in an American fourth of July."²⁰ The failure of this final appeal meant that the rising must be conducted by the minority of militant métis and the numerous but unreliable

19. C.S.P. 1886, No. 43i, p.1; Riel Records, pp. 657-58, Resolutions passed at a meeting held at Lindsay School, March 23, 1885.

20. Riel to the English-speaking people of Prince Albert re uniting in action, March 29, 1885, C.S.P. 1886, No. 43h, p.8.

and uncontrollable savages against an enemy of overwhelming strength.

On March 30 Riel gave the settlers who were still on their farms two days to join him, or be shot.²¹ All fled to the safety of Prince Albert. Thus the English half-breeds were driven by the determined violence of their late leader from their battlefield position to the side opposed to their kinsmen and fellow-sufferers. Their plight was the most difficult and pathetic of all, and the only recognition their situation received was in the acquittal of Thomas Scott when charged with complicity in a rising which he had tried desperately to prevent.

These events moved almost inevitably to their conclusion. But chance played a large part in the opening episode of the North-West Rebellion. On reaching Prince Albert Commissioner Irvine paused for a day to have his horses re-shod; he left for Carlton on the early morning of March 26. Before Irvine reached the fort, however, Crozier, under pressure from the Prince Albert Volunteers and his own men, and anxious to secure some supplies at Duck Lake, had marched out with 98 men. Chance placed the 43 Volunteers on the more exposed right side in the battle fought one and a half miles north-west of Duck Lake. The encounter ended with nine Volunteers and three policemen dead or dying, and Crozier's retreat to

21. Crozier to William Mackay, March 30, 1885, ibid., p.9.

Carlton left the métis in effective command of most of the Saskatchewan valley.²²

Hence on the morning of March 27 when the news arrived, the town of Prince Albert found itself in greater danger than it was to be at any time in the next two months. A determined métis attack might have taken hostages, large quantities of stores, and even the boats docked at Goschen.²³ Irvine believed that only the tracks left by his party discouraged a strong band of Sioux from attempting a raid that undoubtedly would have meant a great massacre.²⁴

In an atmosphere of intense anxiety the town was readied for defence. A high wall of cordwood was thrown up around the Presbyterian church and manse, forming a fort that was to serve as emergency protection for the women and children among the nearly 1,000 persons who streamed in during the following week.²⁵

The worst fears were relieved in the late afternoon of March 28 when the volunteers and police arrived from Carlton.²⁶ Yet their coming served also to create a new problem. Hungry

22. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, pp. 325-29; Louis Riel, pp. 315-18.

23. Times, July 24, 1885.

24. C.S.P. 1886, No. 8a, p.26.

25. Ibid., p.29; Times, July 31, 1885.

26. C.S.P. 1886, No. 8a, p.36; Times, July 31, 1885.

and tired, the police occupied the stockade "rather unceremoniously,"²⁷ and thus revived a bitterness that was to fester malignantly during long weeks of inaction. Cooped up in the town, subjected to all the petty restrictions demanded by a state of war, and seeing the police stand idle while the critical battles were fought by others, the farmers in particular nursed animosity against their recent enemies. The police for their part, remembering that the settlers had helped to foment the agitation which had ended in rebellion, conscious of the hatred and contempt directed at them, and annoyed by incessant grumbling, believed themselves surrounded by potential traitors. Irvine asserted later that he had "clear and unquestionable proof, at times, how nearly equal were the balances" between the loyal and traitorous elements.²⁸ Only the presence and vigilance of the police, he felt, prevented Riel's sympathizers from lending active support to the métis. In Irvine's opinion, an attack on Prince Albert after General Middleton's reverse at Fish Creek on April 24 would have met with "strong aid" from within the town.²⁹

On March 28, however, unity prevailed under the threat of an imminent attack. At dusk pickets at the Ridge saw a party of Indians in paint and feathers. A man galloped into town,

27. Times, August 7, 1885.

28. C.S.P. 1886, No. 8a, p.27.

29. Ibid., p.29.

shouting to all in sight to run for their lives. The cry spread, the church bell was rung, and a panic ensued in which women tottered into the stockade and "fell fainting to the ground," or were carried in, stricken helpless with fear. The attack did not come but young and old, sick and well, spent a stifling, horrible night within the fort. The same evening, a second alarm occurred when some men began chopping at a fence near the stockade. One of the guards let off his rifle — some were charged "up to the very muzzle" — and only the timidity of the defenders saved some of their own men from being riddled.³⁰

It was the last scare. The Indians and métis never came, and life within the besieged town became a test of patience and a round of grumbling against the pass regulations, seizure of buildings, and other "high-handed" actions of the police.³¹ The defence was organized by Irvine who, on Middleton's orders, made only one short foray throughout the siege, and was often left ignorant of the general's movements.³² Over 300 men were enrolled as special constables under volunteer captains. Sproat served as chief staff officer and Thomas McKay commanded a company of scouts. Guarding the town

30. Times, August 7, 1885; A. André, Journal, March 28, 1885, Les Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, Vol. XXIII (1885), pp. 292-94.

31. Times, August 14, 1885.

32. Ibid.; Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p.372.

was a chain of pickets and patrols, armed with rifles and every shotgun that could be rounded up. Rations were distributed to the fighting men and to 1,165 non-combatants by Lawrence Clarke as Government supply officer.³³ The 53-day siege was brought to a welcome end on May 19 by the arrival of the troops who had shattered the métis forces at Batoche a week earlier.³⁴

The rejoicing and good will lasted less than a week, to be followed by a summer of insecurity, recriminations, and despair. Despite the surrender of Riel, the flight of other leaders, and the total demoralization of the métis after Batoche, the people of Prince Albert did not feel safe till June when starvation reduced the French half-breeds to helpless misery.³⁵ The Indian danger persisted in varying degrees till the end of 1885.³⁶ Bands of Crees remained at large, armed, and bold enough in early June to demand food from Middleton in the midst of his camp.³⁷ The more fearsome Sioux moved restlessly throughout the summer, a tribe whose squaws were popularly believed to have bargained with Riel

33. Irvine to Sir John A. Macdonald, May 16, 1885, C.S.P. 1886, No. 8a, pp. 41-42.

34. Times, June 5, 1885.

35. Ibid., June 5, 12, and 26, 1885.

36. Ibid., June 5, 12, and 19, December 4, 1885.

37. Ibid., June 5, 1885.

for the privilege of killing the women of Prince Albert when it should have been captured.³⁸

The siege had scarcely ended when the disgruntled farmers saw the prospect of another lean crop. This was one, however, for which not nature but their perennial enemies, the Government, police, and Hudson's Bay Company, might easily be blamed. During the siege nearly all the available seed grain was sold to the Government and police for rations and horse feed.³⁹ But during the winter, Governor Dewdney had proven incompetent to conclude a simple agreement with a private firm for the supply of grain, and so the promised seed failed to arrive.⁴⁰ The farmers who had retained seed grain or potatoes were prevented from sowing them early in May. Irvine had offered to let them leave town in groups of twenty but the farmers refused unless all two hundred could go in a body. "The result was that none left."⁴¹ After May 19 another week was lost when Lawrence Clarke fell ill and the farmers could not be paid for their services as volunteers.⁴²

It was already clear that Government spending during the

38. Ibid., June 4 and 12, July 24 and 31, 1885.

39. Ibid., June 5, 1885.

40. AS, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file 81878, passim.

41. C.S.P. 1886, No. 8a, p.30.

42. Ibid.; Times, June 5, 1885.

rebellion and the expected payment for losses could sustain only a brief illusion of prosperity. A petition presented to General Middleton on May 18 requested not only a public loan but enough work to employ all the people of the district.⁴³ In July the Times predicted that if such aid were denied "the district will be either entirely abandoned or peopled with destitute settlers, who without exception will cherish undying hostility to the Dominion."⁴⁴ Yet it seemed that not even the promise of help could repair the damage done by loss of the railway, by the rebellion, and by a deepening depression. "It is positively heartrending," lamented the Times, "to any one who has witnessed the...growth of this settlement under the most discouraging circumstances, to hear of the number who feel compelled to abandon it after all — to see the result of years undone in a single day."⁴⁵

Strangely, maddeningly, the Government failed to act until the métis of St. Laurent were starving, and many settlers were kept from the same plight only by their volunteer pay and the proceeds from sale of their stock.⁴⁶ The efforts of Judge Charles Rouleau to obtain public works in addition to the court house were unavailing, and the news came in August

43. Times, June 5, 1885.

44. Ibid., July 3, 1885.

45. Ibid., June 12, 1885.

46. Ibid., June 26, 1885.

that half the sum planned earlier would be spent on that structure.⁴⁷

The last rebellious Indians had not been subdued when old hatreds boiled into the open, fortified by many new causes. The siege lay four days behind when a shoemaker named J.C. Mackenzie began (through a Winnipeg newspaper) a sweeping assault on the settlers' traditional enemies who were now joined in tyrannical wickedness by the "local rulers."⁴⁸ Mackenzie's violence could be blamed on a "clique of malcontents."⁴⁹ But even the Times confessed by August that "a strong feeling of irritation" was spreading among the loyal settlers.⁵⁰

In mid-September the meagre grain crop was destroyed by frost, and this new catastrophe conquered even the frontier spirit of self-help and industry. When the Mounted Police began to receive claims for relief, some farmers refused to work, saying that the Government would have to feed them anyhow.⁵¹

47. Ibid., July 10, August 7, 1885. The court house projected in 1884 was to be 92 by 81 feet and to cost about \$60,000. The building actually erected in 1886-87 was 51 by 33 feet and it cost only \$20,628. See ibid., May 30, 1884; C.S.P. 1887, No.11, p. cvii; C.S.P. 1888, No. 7, p. cxi.

48. Times, June 26, 1885.

49. Ibid., July 3, 1885.

50. Ibid., August 7, 1885.

51. Ibid., September 25, 1885; AS, Dewdney Correspondence, Dewdney to Macdonald, n.d.

It was fortunate that mid-September marked also the beginning of a long-awaited shift in Government policy. On October 20, the newly-appointed Minister of the Interior, Thomas White, visited Prince Albert to receive a petition listing nineteen demands of the town and district. The immediate results of the visit were not striking. A money order office which the Minister said he would "almost absolutely promise" was opened three years later, and the Times explained that "Mr. White...did all a government official could do without committing himself."⁵² But the first visit of a senior official since 1881 signified that the vital line to Ottawa was open once more.

Tangible proofs of a change in policy came even before White's arrival, when the Mounted Police began to call tenders in Prince Albert for supplies for their local garrison.⁵³ The first trickle of Government money was enough to persuade the merchants that the presence of 100 policemen gave the townspeople a greater sense of security.⁵⁴ On November 10 tenders were called for construction of the court house and jail.⁵⁵

Farmers felt the change, too, for White took prompt action

52. Times, October 23, 1885.

53. Ibid., October 9, 23, and 30, 1885.

54. Ibid., November 27, 1885.

55. Ibid., December 4, 1885.

to supply seed grain for 1886. The Lorne Agricultural Society forwarded its request on November 25.⁵⁶ In mid-December an official came to Prince Albert to solicit the settlers' views.⁵⁷ On January 7, 1886, an order-in-council was passed providing for the purchase and transport of 18,000 bushels of grain, repayable two for one, to be freighted from Qu'Appelle by district farmers.⁵⁸

Unfortunately the mild rejoicing which greeted these developments did not extend to the last stage of Prince Albert's progress towards incorporation. The approach of a vote called for August 22 had evoked indifference since the discussion, as the Times remarked, had been "pretty well exhausted."⁵⁹ A majority of the voters approved incorporation. It was no surprise, however, that a large number were against it, and the only comfort to be drawn by the supporters was that the continued strength of the opposition improved the prospects for economy.⁶⁰

On October 8, 1885, Prince Albert was proclaimed the fourth town in the Territories.⁶¹ Its corporate life began

56. AS, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, file 100092, A.H. Clark to White, November 25, 1885.

57. Ibid., William Pearce to White, December 17, 1885.

58. Ibid., White to Clark, January 7, 1886.

59. Times, July 31, 1885.

60. Ibid., August 28, 1885.

61. C.S.P. 1886, No. 8, p.5.

amid sentiments that were to dominate the first fifteen years. "We believe Prince Albert to be capable of great things," the Times began, "but the time has not yet come when we should embark [on] any great enterprise...which at some future time it may be necessary for us to do in order to keep [it] the leading town in the North West."⁶²

In the first municipal election (November 13, 1885), Thomas McKay, drafted by 95 citizens, staved off a late drive by James Macarthur to become the first mayor.⁶³ J.F. Betts was the only one of the first four councillors to gain any subsequent distinction. Within a month of election one of them had joined the continuing exodus.⁶⁴ The attainment of municipal status was small comfort for the bleak future now facing the little town of 600 persons.

62. Times, October 30, 1885.

63. Ibid., October 30, November 27, 1885.

64. Town Council Minutes, December 7, 1885, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, AS. All town council and city council minutes to the end of 1913 are on microfilm in the Archives of Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A RAILWAY AT LAST, 1886-1890

The rebellion over, Prince Albert settled into the dull existence of a frontier town 200 miles from the nearest railway. By 1891 its population had grown only to 1,009,¹ excluding a garrison of mounted police which then numbered 56.² In Prince Albert agency, homestead entries fell in 1887 to an all-time low of eight,³ and the population of the District of Saskatchewan increased by only 4 per cent in the years from 1885 to 1891.⁴ For four years business was discouragingly slow. The volume of merchandise shipped to the town fell by one-third between 1886 and 1888.⁵ Only the presence of the police and the building of a court house and jail (1886), and a police barracks (1887), prevented utter stagnation. Nor did the farmers fare better than the townsmen. Because of drought the 1886 crop was half the normal size.⁶ The good harvests of 1887 and 1888 could scarcely be sold, and farmers complained in the latter year that prices fell below the cost of

1. Dominion census, 1891.

2. C.S.P. 1892, No. 15, p.15.

3. C.S.P. 1888, No. 14, Part I, p.21.

4. C.S.P. 1886, No. 10, p. xliii; Dominion census, 1891.

5. Times, March 1, 1889.

6. Ibid., September 3, 1886.

production.⁷ The decline in Prince Albert's relative importance in the Territories was brought home forcefully in January, 1888, when Saskatchewan was assigned four of twenty-five seats in the newly-created North-West Legislative Assembly.⁸ Although strong protests succeeded in raising the number to five,⁹ all knew that the northern district could fall only further behind until a railway and better times reopened the doors to immigration.

Until 1888 the vital rail connection seemed more remote than ever. When the Manitoba and North-Western Railway applied to Parliament in March of that year for permission to reduce its yearly mileage from 50 to 20, the Times cried, "At that rate of construction it will be fifteen years in reaching Prince Albert."¹⁰ In 1886 the best prospect seemed to be the Regina and Long Lake Railway which had laid about 20 miles of track from Regina and ran trains intermittently that season.¹¹ Few were surprised, however, when three years passed with little further activity from that quarter.

There were few signs of progress in the late eighties, the most notable being the creation of the Roman Catholic

7. Ibid., December 14, 1888.

8. Ibid., January 20, 1888.

9. Ibid., March 30, 1888.

10. Ibid.

11. Drake, Regina, the Queen City, p.64.

Diocese of Prince Albert and the formation of the Board of Trade in 1887.¹² More numerous and conspicuous were the signs of decline.

Soon after the death of Bishop McLean (November, 1886), Prince Albert lost the distinction of being the educational capital of the North-West. McLean's successor, Bishop W.C. Pinkham, moved to the convenient and more cheerful surroundings of Calgary, and let the degree-granting powers of the University of Saskatchewan fall into disuse. In 1887 Emmanuel College became a boarding school for Indians, and it continued in this role till 1905.¹³

The long-discussed educational plans of the Presbyterian Church came to fruition in the late eighties, only to meet an early, spectacular setback. The driving force behind them and one cause of their ruin was the devious, erratic genius of the Rev. Dr. Robert Jardine, minister of St. Paul's Church. The Presbyterian high school had resumed operation after the rebellion. But Jardine conceived a plan to use a portion of the remaining Mission property for a "Nisbet Memorial School"¹⁴ to provide for the education of boys and girls "in the various

12. Times, July 8, 1887.

13. J.E. Murray, "The Early History of Emmanuel College," Saskatchewan History, Vol. IX, No. 3 (autumn, 1956), pp. 97-98.

14. Acts and Proceedings of the Thirteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1887, pp. 45-46.

branches of liberal culture...and scientific knowledge."¹⁵ In a nine-month tour of Eastern Canada Jardine raised \$8,000 for the purpose.¹⁶ The Nisbet Academy was incorporated by an act of Parliament in May, 1888.¹⁷ On June 20, 1888, the corner-stone was laid with impressive ceremony on a fine site just west of Victoria Square. As the town band played, the trustees of the Academy, the professors of Emmanuel College, and a host of other personages stood by in their finery. The Mayor, Dr. Hugh U. Bain, expressed the hope "That before many years Prince Albert will be the capital of the flourishing Province of Saskatchewan with a Provincial University organized and The Nisbet Academy one of its affiliated institutions."¹⁸ Six months later the Academy was opened as a high school for girls and young ladies.¹⁹

From the beginning, however, the Academy was in financial trouble. In June, 1889, Jardine appealed to the General Assembly for aid and warned that the institution was in imminent danger of closing. But the Assembly refused his request, instructed the Synod of Manitoba and the North-West Territories to investigate the affairs of the Academy, and

15. Saskatchewan Herald, January 7, 1888.

16. Times, June 22, 1888.

17. Statutes of Canada, 1888, 51 Vic., c. 108.

18. Times, June 22, 1888.

19. Ibid., December 28, 1888.

granted \$900 as temporary relief only after prolonged debate.²⁰ On New Year's morning of 1890, disaster struck. A crowd of party-goers stoked the furnace of the Academy building so vigorously that a fire was started which destroyed all but part of the walls.²¹

After the fire the Synod instructed the insurance companies to withhold payments for the loss. The trustees were so incensed at this action that they refused to perform their duties. In May, 1890, the Synod set up a second board of trustees and requested the General Assembly to place the insurance money in trust for future educational use. The dispute between the Synod and the Prince Albert trustees was then carried to the General Assembly in June, 1890, with the trustees submitting a petition of scandalous ferocity.²² But the arguments of the Synod prevailed,²³ and the Assembly did not agree to release the insurance money to the original trustees till 1893.²⁴ Meanwhile, Jardine resigned from the ministry in 1890 in a passionate dispute over the reduction

20. Acts and Proceedings of the Fifteenth General Assembly, 1889, pp. 57, 65.

21. Times, January 3, 1890.

22. Acts and Proceedings of the Sixteenth General Assembly, 1890, pp. 68-69.

23. Acts and Proceedings of the Seventeenth General Assembly, 1891, p.59.

24. Acts and Proceedings of the Nineteenth General Assembly, 1893, pp. 18-19, 42.

of his salary,²⁵ and the Academy did not receive the financial aid which it needed to continue.

A quicker fate met Lawrence Clarke's renewed effort in 1888 to found a Young Men's Literary Institute.²⁶ Nor did interest persist long in the debating society begun in January, 1886, by two citizens who were later to become prominent in serious politics. Prime minister in the club's mock parliament was a struggling young lawyer, Arthur L. Sifton, whose future held seven years as Premier of Alberta (1910-1917) and a term as Dominion cabinet minister. The portfolio of finance was taken by a second lawyer, Henry W. Newlands, who was to end a long career in public life as Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan (1921-1931). Unfortunately the society collapsed after one brief flight into fantasy in which the "Government" promised benefits ranging from the immediate construction of a Hudson Bay railway to provincial status for the North-West.²⁷ Two years later Sifton auctioned his furniture and moved to the sunnier land of Alberta.²⁸ His ministerial colleague confined his financial activities for a time to auditing the town's books. The only organizations remotely cultural in purpose which flourished in these years

25. Acts and Proceedings of the Sixteenth General Assembly, 1890, Appendix One, p.1.

26. Times, March 9 and 30, 1888.

27. Ibid., January 22, 1886.

28. Ibid., March 9, 1888.

were the St. Andrew's Society and the Royal Templars of Temperance.

Prince Albert's first town council took up its duties on November 17, 1885, without fanfare and in crippling poverty. After first meeting in the law office of Stephen Brewster,²⁹ the council shifted from one place to another. After a time they settled on a room too small to admit spectators — "No doubt for their own protection," one citizen snorted.³⁰ The first assessment roll (totalling \$423,000) was not completed till August, 1886,³¹ and nearly half the property-owners declined to pay taxes before the year's end.³² The most lucrative levy, a tax on dogs, raised \$54 the first year.³³ The other sources of revenue which the town controlled were mainly licenses which were not likely to be in demand until the population increased substantially.³⁴ In 1886 the salaries of town officials totalled \$200,³⁵ including that of James F.A. Stull, the

29. Town Council Minutes, November 17, 1885, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, AS.

30. Times, March 12, 1886.

31. Council Minutes, August 14, 1886; Times, May 20, 1887.

32. Times, November 5, 1886, March 25, 1887.

33. Ibid., March 25, 1887.

34. Ibid., November 27, 1885.

35. Ibid., March 25, 1887.

first town clerk who served also as treasurer and license inspector, and \$70 for a solicitor expected to be "guide, philosopher and friend of the Council."³⁶ When \$3 was paid to a second lawyer for advice, however, that sum was frugally deducted from the solicitor's salary.³⁷

The council was cautious in assuming its duty of guarding the health, safety, and well-being of the citizens. The first venture into social aid was to provide care for a sick old man; it ended when the town paid for his grave and coffin.³⁸ The first works program comprised two large open drains costing \$588.³⁹ Although the council resolved early to have holes in the streets filled,⁴⁰ it did nothing about this or about complaints of manure and other rubbish in the streets.⁴¹ In spite of their good intentions the council failed also to organize more fire brigades, and they allowed six months to go by before they passed a fire protection by-law.⁴² With no protection but Goschen's assortment of pails, ropes, and

36. Ibid., October 15, 1886.

37. Council Minutes, December 6, 1886.

38. Ibid., September 6, 20, and 29, 1886.

39. Times, March 25, 1887.

40. Council Minutes, May 3, 1886.

41. Ibid., May 10, 1886.

42. Ibid., June 7, 1886.

ladders, the fire insurance rates were prohibitive.⁴³ The Prince Albert of 1886 was harassed by packs of dogs running wild through the streets. But a by-law passed "for Restraining and Running at large of dogs"⁴⁴ [sic] was virtually a dead letter for want of a poundkeeper and an energetic constable. Cows and pigs also roamed the streets unmolested. After seven months of municipal government, moreover, the town fathers had done nothing to curb the activities of transient traders. One citizen then complained that nearly a year's experience of the council's power had convinced the people that little was to be gained from their services. "Our merchants are losing money and the hogs are holding high carnival in the potato patches."⁴⁵ One duty the council simply refused. At their second meeting they resolved to ask the Dominion Government for 200 mounted police to be "evenly quartered between the eastern, centre and western portions of the...Town that they may afford protection to each and...be on hand to prevent any local disturbances."⁴⁶ After the Government refused, the council was slow to see the indignity of relying on the mounted police. It then took several months

43. Times, January 21, 1887.

44. Council Minutes, June 21, 1886.

45. Times, June 25, 1886.

46. Council Minutes, November 24, 1885.

to find a town constable willing to round up untagged dogs and tramp the streets for the pittance offered.⁴⁷

These shortcomings, however, did not prevent the Times from thus reflecting on the first year of municipal government: "[The councillors] have been guilty of sins of omission and commission; but considering the fact that they have indulged in no reckless expenditure...we have...little to complain of."⁴⁸ The town auditor found no shortages in cash and observed that the books were "well and systematically kept."⁴⁹

The choice of Thomas McKay as mayor was an unfortunate one though, since his duties as rebellion claims commissioner allowed him to attend only eight of the forty-one council meetings.⁵⁰ After one term McKay retired from office and in the balloting for his successor, James Macarthur defeated J.F. Betts, 49 to 48.⁵¹

Macarthur began his term with a laudable display of vigour and a "speech from the throne."⁵² In mid-March, 1887,

47. Ibid., May 17, September 20, 1886.

48. Times, December 24, 1886.

49. Ibid., March 25, 1887.

50. Ibid., December 24, 1886.

51. Ibid., January 7, 1887. The election of January 3, 1887, was the first in which ballots were used. The first annual election and a by-election in January, 1886, were held with viva voce voting, as provided by the 1884 Municipal Ordinance.

52. Ibid., January 21, 1887.

a town fire department was created,⁵³ and a public meeting was called to form brigades and approve the expenditure of \$3,500 on a fire engine. But the suggestion that a year's revenue be spent in this way was poorly received, and the council had to be content with the purchase of \$600 worth of buckets, hooks, and ladders.⁵⁴ Enthusiasm at least was cheap: there were plenty of volunteer firemen.⁵⁵ The new appliances on arrival were pulled around town with so much jingling that two horses ran away.⁵⁶ But one brigade soon became disorganized,⁵⁷ and in May, 1887, the council asked the Government to provide fire protection for federal buildings.⁵⁸ The mounted police fire engine was to be the only one of its type in town for several years.

In fact only two items on Macarthur's program were accomplished. The Prince Albert Cornet Band was given \$100 yearly and free use of the council chamber,⁵⁹ and the Lorne Agricultural Society was granted \$200 in aid of its annual

53. Council Minutes, March 21, 1887.

54. Times, April 8, 1887.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., September 16, 1887.

57. Ibid., December 2, 1887; Council Minutes, November 21, 1887.

58. Times, May 13, 1887.

59. Ibid., April 15, 1887.

fair.⁶⁰ Macarthur could not keep his promise to obtain railway services because these were beyond the town's powers to secure. The provision of a town ferry had similarly to await the granting of a Dominion bonus in 1889. The question of a rifle range was bungled when the council applied for the same land as a park.⁶¹

The year 1887, nevertheless, saw the arm of corporate authority reach further into the daily lives of the citizens. Officials began to do their work with annoying thoroughness. The constable, for instance, made forays among the untagged dogs,⁶² and the poundkeeper waged occasional war on wandering cows.⁶³ The health inspector who, for \$50 a year, was also the fire inspector and the street inspector, began ordering people to clean their yards each spring.⁶⁴ Those who ignored his orders and balked at paying for the removal of filth found themselves faced with legal action.⁶⁵ The council showed in 1887 that it meant business in the matter of unpaid taxes. In July it began pressing suits⁶⁶ which ended frequently in transfer of the property concerned to the town, and in December

60. Council Minutes, May 16, 1887.

61. Times, May 20, 1887.

62. Ibid., April 15, 1887.

63. Ibid., October 21, 1887.

64. Council Minutes, May 9, 1887.

65. Ibid., November 21, 1887.

66. Ibid., July 4, 1887.

it passed a by-law to prevent the defaulters from voting.⁶⁷

The council's wrath fell swiftly, too, on a stubborn, incredulous peddler from Regina who parked his wagon on the grounds where the fair was being held and later went from door to door in defiance of the transient traders by-law. The culprit avoided arrest at first by pretending to be someone else, but had to yield to a constable equipped with two summonses, one for each name. Not even "a very pathetic appeal" to the town fathers could avert the penalty of a \$75 fine.⁶⁸

While municipal government also presented problems that no mere bursts of energy could solve, Macarthur's regime did not display in all matters the wisdom and initiative promised on its inception. It failed, for example, to repair sidewalks, and pedestrians complained of a "man-trap" on one street.⁶⁹ By ordering all manure to be placed on the nuisance grounds on King Street (now First Avenue West) not far south of Fourth Street (now Fourteenth), the council created a worse annoyance than the one it sought to end.⁷⁰ Moreover, the council was not yet concerned about the practice of burying garbage, night soil, and carcasses in back yards.⁷¹

67. Ibid., December 5, 1887.

68. Times, October 7, 1887.

69. Ibid., September 9, 1887.

70. Ibid., May 13, 1887.

71. See Council Minutes, May 2, 1888.

One achievement of the 1887 council that proved to be of doubtful value was the division of the town into four wards.⁷² The main result was to strengthen the tendency towards thrift by allowing the representatives of the outer wards, one and four, to block projects in the middle wards such as sidewalks on River Street.⁷³ The councillors for the outer wards, however, voted for the building of water tanks in 1888 and a town hall in 1891, and they did not try to block the location of the railway station at a point convenient to all. The existence of wards forced the council to make equitable provision for public services, but it did not ensure equality.⁷⁴ In fact the council's efforts at fair division provoked more complaints than contentment, and the ward system did not prevent the people of Goschen from calling a meeting in 1890 to secure "some of the benefits of incorporation."⁷⁵ The ward system, however, did not obscure or repress the growing sense of unity. Some townsmen indeed seemed unaware of the ward boundaries and nominated men for

72. Ibid., July 18, December 14, 1887. Prince Albert was the only town to use this provision in the 1884 Municipal Ordinance.

73. See Times, July 20, 1888.

74. See list of expenditures by the board of works in 1889: ibid., December 6, 1889.

75. Ibid., September 19, 1890.

wards for which the nominees were not eligible.⁷⁶ Eventually the growing dominance of the more populous Mission area and the small size of the electorate pointed up the futility, even the ludicrousness, of this needless concession to sectionalism. In 1888 seventeen votes were cast for councillor in ward four (the west end), and on one occasion its member was derided as "the brilliant representative of nine votes."⁷⁷ In four years out of six there was not even a contest in that ward.⁷⁸ It is not surprising therefore that the council abolished the ward system in 1893.

During Macarthur's term as mayor the lingering opposition to municipal government had come virtually to an end. Despite partisan and other differences, the Times had to admit that "a more agreeable and level headed lot of men may never again grace the Civic Board of our town."⁷⁹ Prince Albert was fortunate to have a taste of good government and harmony before encountering the many troubles which an inept council could bring upon it.

More obviously than in the preceding election, the mayor-alty contest of 1887 was fought on party lines. The

76. Ibid., January 6, 1888, January 4, 1889.

77. Ibid., March 2, 1888.

78. Ibid., January 6, 1888, January 11, 1889, January 10, 1890, January 9, 1891, January 6, 1892, January 4, 1893.

79. Ibid., December 2, 1887.

Conservatives' choice, Dr. Hugh U. Bain, went in unopposed, however, when the Liberal candidate withdrew.⁸⁰ Besides having a mayor of dubious capacity, the new council was afflicted with two active obstructionists in J.L. Knowles and T.J. Agnew, and with the stubborn statesmanship of T.O. Davis. Knowles began by challenging the legality of committee meetings held in a store,⁸¹ and he quarrelled often over the appointment of officials. He and Agnew belligerently opposed every effort to spend money on such "frills" as a delegation to Ottawa on the railway and representation questions.⁸² The same spirit of crabbed economy brought ruin to the town band. While the council argued endlessly about a grant, the organization slipped deeper into debt and finally broke up in March, 1889.⁸³ T.O. Davis's plan to buy the crumbling old Presbyterian church for a town hall was rejected in May, 1888, because the price of \$3,500 was thought "altogether too high."⁸⁴ Four weeks later, Davis proposed exactly the same by-law and again met defeat.⁸⁵

None of the councillors won any credit when the town began to build a water tank for fire protection. The contractor

80. Ibid., January 6, 1888.

81. Ibid., February 10, 1888.

82. Ibid., February 24, March 2, May 25, 188.

83. Ibid., March 29, 1889.

84. Ibid., May 11 and 25, 1888.

85. Ibid., June 8, 1888.

was so slow that the council had to finish the job. Worse yet, the completed tank would not hold water and the council's interference allowed the contractor to blame them for the leakage. When the town approached a citizen to act as arbitrator, the man at first declared the matter to be none of his business.⁸⁶ Finally, after much delay, the law suit threatened by the contractor was headed off by the payment of \$100 for the useless structure.⁸⁷

Moreover, this was not the only instance of incompetence. In September, 1888, the works program was halted because the council had not hired anyone qualified to draw plans and supervise the work.⁸⁸ More serious was the haphazard building of drainage ditches. A quick thaw in the spring of 1889 and the tardy clearing of drains left so much water standing throughout the town that the Times called tenders for running a pleasure boat on the lake at its door.⁸⁹ The same paper remarked:

The Town Council are certainly deserving of credit for the manner in which they succeeded in spoiling some of our principal thoroughfares....After their so-called improvements the roads are actually in a worse state than they ever were before, and the town moreover will...

86. Ibid., October 26, November 2, 1888; Council Minutes, October 22, 1888.

87. Times, November 9, December 7, 1888, March 15, May 10, 1889.

88. Ibid., September 14 and 21, 1888.

89. Ibid., March 22, 1889.

have to pay several bills for damages as a consequence of the way in which they squandered our money.⁹⁰

Even the maintenance of law and order presented problems to the Bain regime. Until September, 1888, nobody seemed to know exactly what the town constable was supposed to do and nobody supervised his activities very closely.⁹² When the constable was absent unaccountably on one occasion, "crooks worked the town pretty well...carrying off quite a number of articles."⁹³ Soon after this incident the constable himself was beaten up and thrown into jail by two mounted policemen as he was trying to stop a brawl outside the Queen's Hotel.⁹⁴ It is small wonder that the constable resigned, or that he kept as reward for his pains some of the proceeds from dog tags.⁹⁵

The arrest of the constable, however, served to precipitate a crisis in which, for once, Mayor Bain upheld the dignity of his office. It is perhaps strange that a clash had not been provoked earlier by the presence of a large body of mounted police having little to do but enforce the Territorial liquor laws. In one week in Prince Albert the

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid., January 25, 1889.

92. Ibid., September 14, 1888.

93. Ibid., September 21, 1888.

94. Ibid., September 28, 1888.

95. Council Minutes, December 17, 1888.

saloonkeepers were fined a total of \$500 for failing to secure the required permits.⁹⁶ Even more objectionable than the fines were the methods which the police used to catch offenders. One citizen complained piously:

It is the common practice of the constables, without any grounds of suspicion, to go about private and public houses at night looking through windows, listening at doors, wandering through stable yards and lighting matches in haylofts, and to stop vehicles in the dead of night, without regard to the respectability...of the occupants, and with threats of using weapons, roughly searching the persons driving and their goods.⁹⁷

The worst offender in the townsmen's eyes was Constable A. Leslie who jailed one man having a permit and, so the report ran, treated a half-breed to the liquor seized from another suspect.⁹⁸ The town had its revenge, but briefly, when Leslie was caught loitering around the Queen's Hotel and was fined \$25 for vagrancy.⁹⁹ The conviction was set aside later by the Territorial Supreme Court.¹⁰⁰ A storm was provoked by the 1887 report of Superintendent A. Bowen Perry alleging that even citizens of high standing sympathized with those charged with liquor offences. This insult gave rise to one of the largest meetings ever held in Prince Albert

96. Times, November 9, 1888.

97. Ibid., December 16, 1887.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid., December 9, 1887.

100. Ibid., April 6, 1888.

(December 8, 1887) and the dispatch of a protest to Sir John A. Macdonald.¹⁰¹ The arrest of the town constable in September, 1888, was the last straw, however. The town council threatened to prosecute, and their action brought an apologetic letter from Perry and a promise that henceforth the police would intervene in town affairs only when called on.¹⁰² It was fortunate that the credit for preserving the corporation's authority thus fell on a mayor and council who closed their catalogue of blunders by failing to revise the voters' list.¹⁰³

The election of Joseph Knowles as mayor in 1889 gave no promise of better things. But the election called forth a celebration of a type that was to be held occasionally for twenty-five years.

After the state of the poll had been made known [related the Times] the friends of Knowles in the East End formed themselves into a procession and with brooms soaked in coal oil for torches, marched through the town to the music of cazoos, a circular saw and lots of lung power. After the procession had liquored up at the Queen's Hotel the party reformed and proceeded to the residence of Mr. Charles Mair.... Mr. Mair came forward and in a neat and brilliant speech, prophesied a brilliant career for the candidates elected....The band turned out and serenaded all the councillors elect at their residences where music, speeches and refreshments were indulged in. The excitement was kept up until a late hour.¹⁰⁴

101. Ibid., December 16, 1887.

102. Ibid., October 5, 1888.

103. Ibid., December 7, 1888.

104. Ibid., January 11, 1889.

It was fortunate that Mair had faith in the new council, for people were soon muttering that Prince Albert had elected the poorest council that it was possible to get.¹⁰⁵ Going from one petty squabble and mistake to another, the town fathers earned the ridicule of "shop-counter loafers,"¹⁰⁶ and the criticism of one citizen who declared that in every matter which had engaged their attention, the council had been "doing and undoing, without any other...object than the pleasure of the thing."¹⁰⁷

But dissatisfaction with the council was partly a result of the bitterness in which the whole district was sunk in the spring of 1889. Even the promise made in December, 1888, that the Regina and Long Lake Railway would be extended nearly to Prince Albert within a year did not prevent an ominous fall in local grain prices.¹⁰⁸ Late in January, 1889, came the news that the negotiations between the railway and the Government over bonussing arrangements had been broken off.¹⁰⁹ A pall of gloom settled over the district, for some settlers were "already at the door of starvation."¹¹⁰ Never had the

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., February 22, 1889.

107. Ibid., March 8, 1889.

108. Ibid., December 14, 1888.

109. Ibid., February 1, 1889.

110. Ibid., April 5, 1889.

atmosphere of crisis been heavier. On March 18, 1889, the town council warned the Dominion Government that if immediate aid were denied, the district would "speedily become the theatre of agitation and disturbance, or [would] exhibit to the world the disgraceful spectacle of a large and industrious pioneer community in the heart of one of the richest regions in the North-West...breaking up through bad faith and... neglect."¹¹¹ At a mass meeting on April 4, attended by such unquestionably loyal citizens as Mayor Knowles, William Craig, and J.F. Betts, M.L.A., some of the speakers, the Times reported, "got off on the usual annexation lingo and tried to show how much better the settlers in Minnesota and Dakota were treated."¹¹²

Only gradually did despair yield to confidence. By mid-May, the R. & L.L. had obtained an \$80,000 grant and planned once more to reach Saskatoon by the end of 1889.¹¹³ When the first sod on the line was turned in August, the Times observed: "It has done good already. People have got out of the cloud of despondency which hung over them for so many years back."¹¹⁴ By November three alternative lines had been

111. Ibid., March 22, April 19, 1889.

112. Ibid., April 5, 1889.

113. Ibid., May 24, 1889.

114. Ibid., August 23, 1889.

surveyed into town, and it was even pleasant to see the railway surveyors speculating in land on the possible sites of the station and yards.¹¹⁵ The outlook had so brightened by the end of 1889 that Mayor Knowles was re-elected, despite the strong attack made against him by H.W. Newlands.¹¹⁶

Although an element of good feeling was restored to municipal politics, the return of Knowles to office brought no increase in wisdom or vigour. The council's sole achievement in 1890 was the purchase of the old Presbyterian church and the site on which it stood, as T.O. Davis had proposed two years earlier.¹¹⁷ The building itself was worthless and had to be torn down, but the site was the best possible choice for a town hall. The first issue of debentures, totalling \$3,200 for purchase of the church property and provision for a town market (never, as it happened, to be built), was approved on May 17, 1890.¹¹⁸ In other matters the town fathers were ruled by rigid economy, inertia, and at times by impulse. An attempt to provide electric lights for the town came to nothing when the contractor chosen, Sam McLeod, failed even to make a start.¹¹⁹ Late in the year the council prepared a

115. Ibid., November 29, December 6, 1889.

116. Ibid., January 3 and 10, 1890.

117. The town paid \$3,000 for the building and 1.2 acres of land: ibid., March 7 and 28, 1890.

118. Ibid., May 23, 1890.

119. Ibid., September 12, November 28, 1890.

scheme to spend \$35,000 on improvements, only to drop it in alarm.¹²⁰ The council failed to provide even so inexpensive a benefit as protection from the nuisance of cows running wild inside the town. Complaints continued that "night after night is made hideous by the clang of the big brass bell and the cow, enjoying the fun, refuses to feed more than fifty yards from an open window."¹²¹

Nor did the approach of the railway bring joy alone to the citizens. When two lines were carried to the east end, buying of land near the right-of-way by railway engineers¹²² revived unhappy memories of 1883, and moved one person to rhyme:

Of course the railway's coming — but what a notion!
The terminus is to be down at Goschen.¹²³

The railway officials may have intended as late as May, 1890, to place the station in the east end, but they kept uncertainty alive for two months longer in order, it was said, to squeeze the last dollar from their speculative activities.¹²⁴

But these annoyances were forgotten when the first through

120. Ibid., November 7, December 26, 1890.

121. Ibid., July 25, 1890.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid., January 10, 1890.

124. Ibid., May 23, July 25, 1890.

train arrived from Regina on September 4, 1890,¹²⁵ and a little station was built at the present Third Avenue West. "On what a few weeks ago," the Times exulted, "was a solid grove of poplar may now be seen many buildings, railroad tracks in all directions, numberless cars of all descriptions, with locomotives hooting and tooting and running in and out of the town...The transformation is complete."¹²⁶

It was a colourful occasion, too, on October 22, 1890, when Lieutenant-Governor Joseph Royal drove the last spike and Regina's great orator, Nicholas Flood Davin, delivered a lively speech. The event was not seriously marred when D.H. Macdowall, M.P., took the opportunity to praise Sir John A. Macdonald and "the great political party of which he [was] the head," though Macdowall's remarks provoked a hostile reply from the Liberal Saskatchewan.¹²⁷

Freight rates were extremely high at first, but it seemed likely that the C.P.R. which operated the Prince Albert branch from its completion till 1906, would soon provide a remedy. Looking to that day the Times predicted a new era for Prince Albert in which, "not only will large herds of stock soon be seen travelling southward and eastward from here, but another year will see a tremendous increase in [grain] acreage....,

125. Ibid., September 5, 1890.

126. Ibid., September 12, 1890.

127. Ibid., October 24, November 14, 1890.

while immediate transportation will begin from our crowded lumber yards, and an active trade in cordwood, railway ties, etc., will be speedily developed."¹²⁸ As 1890 closed, indeed, preparations were under way for the rush of immigration which was expected to open the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Before prosperity came, however, Prince Albert felt the less welcome results of its new contact with the outside world. Even before the last spike was driven, three carloads of beer were delivered in one week.¹²⁹ With the railway came also an influx of criminals and evils which one scandalized citizen attributed to the "demoralizing influences of the older settlements." Chief among these evils was a newly-opened house of ill fame, the "hell hole," just beyond the town limits. Its existence moved the Times to hint darkly that "Regina did themselves the honor of burning such a house as this," and to demand whether Prince Albert must lag behind others in its "anxiety to maintain...pure morality."¹³⁰ Although violence was unnecessary to remove this menace the institution had come to stay.

Prince Albert was irrevocably part of the outside world; the days of isolation were behind.

128. Ibid., December 19, 1890.

129. Ibid., September 19, 1890.

130. Ibid., December 19, 1890.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PROSPERITY DEFERRED, 1891 - 1896

The dawn of 1890 unfortunately was a false one. After showing brief signs of passing, the continent-wide depression continued till 1896. Homestead entries in the Canadian West fell from 4,838 in 1892¹ to a low of 1,857 in 1896,² and in Prince Albert agency from the encouraging 210 of 1893³ to 58 in 1896, as immigration became almost negligible.⁴

Prince Albert's lot was especially hard since the town lay at the end of a branch railway which was persistently neglected as one of the C.P.R.'s least profitable lines. Untidy station grounds, poor facilities,⁵ and inconvenient schedules (the twice-weekly train leaving Prince Albert at 3:45 a.m.) were only the least of the town's grievances. In the winter of 1893 Prince Albert was almost isolated for eight weeks when heavy snows blocked a line which the C.P.R. was slow to clear. Most serious was the railway's failure to make substantial reductions in freight rates. The rates were so high in 1891 that T.J. Agnew claimed to have earned a

1. C.S.P. 1893, No.13, i, p.19.

2. Ibid. 1897, No.13, i, p.37.

3. Ibid. 1894, No.13, i, p.25.

4. Ibid. 1897, No.13, i, p.37; iv, p.150.

5. Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review, September 2 and 16, 1891.

profit in running a freight service to Regina by ox-cart.⁶

Although the building of a second railway promised to change this situation, the early nineties brought its completion no closer. By 1893 it was clear that the Manitoba and North-Western Railway was stalled indefinitely at Yorkton, the point it had reached three years earlier. The Hudson Bay railway remained only the dream of optimists.

Hitched, therefore, to the creaky and high-priced wagon of the C.P.R., the district could make small progress in developing its resources. The only product that enjoyed a significant export market was lumber. In 1894 Moore and Macdowall, the largest operators, turned out 2.7 million board feet and made large shipments to points on the C.P.R. between Virden and Moose Jaw.⁷ The production that year of 3.1 million feet at Prince Albert was roughly eight per cent of the total for the Canadian West. The lumber industry, however, was particularly vulnerable in time of depression. Moore and Macdowall went out of business in 1896, and the smaller firms of Sam McLeod and James Sanderson were forced to cut back their output severely in the following season.⁸

The only manufacturing industry to prosper in the mid-

6. Ibid., September 2, 1891.

7. C.S.P. 1895, No.13, i, p.69; Saskatchewan Times, December 22, 1893, (formerly the Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review).

8. C.S.P. 1898, No.13, i, p.77.

nineties was the Wittemann Brothers' brewery built in 1895.⁹ A small creamery, begun the same year, nearly failed because of poor management and the farmers' growing resentment of a town enterprise which absorbed part of their meagre returns.¹⁰

Grain continued to be the staple, although high freight rates, mortgages, and low prices placed a heavy burden on the farmers as well as the townsmen. Even the small home market was not secured to the hard-pressed grain growers. Until Joseph Kidd completed a modern grist mill in October, 1894 (aided by a \$5,000 grant from the town), the district imported flour from Manitoba.¹¹ The weak competitive position of farmers and businessmen in the district was revealed in December, 1895, when the police at Prince Albert bought oats from a Brandon firm at a price 25 per cent below that tendered locally.¹² One reason for this situation was that the town lacked an elevator or any other adequate storage facilities. The Times observed also that even in town most of the liverymen were feeding oats from Brandon because the local supply was "indifferent and too dear."¹³

Prince Albert's poor showing in the vital contest for

9. Times, June 18, 1895; Prince Albert Advocate, August 3, 1897.

10. Times, December 10, 1895.

11. Ibid., June 15, November 30, 1892.

12. Ibid., December 24, 1895.

13. Ibid.

immigrants can be traced to more than its isolation and the effect of its visible poverty on the individuals and delegates who came to admire its brick homes and cultivated fields. The Dominion Government, anxious to fill the lands along the C.P.R. first, did not appoint an immigration agent for Prince Albert or build sheds there for immigrants till the spring of 1892.¹⁴ Since the railways had not chosen land bonuses in the district, their agents worked against Prince Albert's interests. Immigrants arriving in Winnipeg were met by swarms of smooth-talking emissaries from more prosperous districts and from "spoon fed railway towns."¹⁵ Prince Albert thus fought its battle alone. The boosters found it hard even to maintain the solidarity of farmers and townsmen. The economic interests and political loyalties of the two groups were so divergent by 1893 that the Board of Trade angered the farmers by refusing to argue their case on tariffs and freight rates before a visiting minister.¹⁶ The farmers, on the other hand, were indifferent to town projects. Because of their apathy, Prince Albert's display at the Winnipeg exhibition of 1891 was "not one on which the district [could] congratulate itself."¹⁷ The immigration committee formed by the town council

14. Ibid., March 2, 1892.

15. Ibid., June 3, 1891.

16. Ibid., October 27, 1893.

17. Ibid., September 30, 1891.

and the Lorne Agricultural Society found that farmers never failed to send in their bills for transporting delegates.¹⁸ Serious in their effect, too, were the pessimistic reports about Prince Albert that Dr. Jardine published in the Saskatchewan, reports that on one occasion provoked a rebuke from Mayor Sam Donaldson (March, 1892).¹⁹

Yet modest progress was made in transforming Prince Albert into a modern town. The confidence inspired by the railway's arrival led the town council in 1891 to borrow \$7,000 for a program of grading, drainage, and sidewalk-building and \$10,000 for a town hall. The hall was completed in the fall of 1893 at a total cost of \$13,178.²⁰ The Times rejoiced that citizens could now attend a public meeting "without fear of suffocation,"²¹ and go from the railway station to the east end "feeling perfectly contented so far as the mud is concerned."²² In 1891 also, a telephone system was installed by a citizen named R.W. Biggar.²³

Less easily provided was a reliable system of electric

18. Ibid., August 12, 1891.

19. Ibid., March 9, 1892.

20. Ibid., December 22, 1893.

21. Ibid., August 5, 1891.

22. Ibid., October 14, 1891.

23. Ibid., December 9, 1891; Town Council Minutes, June 22, 1891, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, AS.

lights. In addition to the right to install telephones, Biggar was granted a three-year light franchise in June, 1891. By the fall of that year, the Queen's Hotel and the leading saloons had electric lights over their doors,²⁴ but unfortunately the contractor ran out of money. A new firm, incorporated in 1893 as the Prince Albert Light and Power Company, suffered nearly a year of breakdowns before its system was put into steady operation from dusk to midnight. Its difficulties were not then over, however, for in 1895 a break in the shaft of its only dynamo cut off service for five weeks.²⁵ The town was not yet ready to provide street lights, despite the suggestion of one citizen that the councillors must like darkness.²⁶

Several narrow escapes and repeated warnings failed to shake the apathy of the ratepayers over the need for adequate fire equipment. One volunteer brigade complained (February, 1893) that the available fire appliances were useless and served only to amuse the front street merchants who stood at their doors laughing and jeering as the firemen went to practise.²⁷ At a public meeting in May, 1893, all who were

24. Times, October 28, 1891.

25. Ibid., October 7, November 11, 1895.

26. Ibid., September 18, 1894.

27. Ibid., February 8, 1893.

present agreed that the town should have an engine but disagreed sharply over whether to spend \$6,000 on a steamer or \$2,500 on a chemical or hand engine.²⁸ The council then decided on a \$6,000 engine, but it presented the by-law at the same time as a \$3,400 by-law for street improvements, and only six weeks after \$3,000 had been voted to finish the town hall. Both of the proposed by-laws were lost²⁹ and the matter was dropped for the time being. A fire in September, 1897, which did \$25,000 damage in the business section was fought with buckets, one privately-owned hand pump, and the police engine.³⁰

Thus the pace of local government changed little in the early nineties. Nor did the same years bring any profound changes in town manners and morals. In January, 1895, the visit of Lieutenant-Governor Charles Mackintosh provoked a quarrel over the drinking of "wet" or "dry" toasts. The argument was lost by the "drys," although they were better organized and more militant than earlier.³¹ After the Salvation Army moved into Prince Albert in 1892, it was harassed by "a gang of boorish galoots" who loafed in front of the post office each Saturday evening.³² When the Army marked Self-Denial Week in

28. Ibid., May 10, 1893.

29. Council Minutes, August 28, 1893.

30. Times, September 28, 1897.

31. Ibid., January 29, February 5, 1895.

32. Ibid., September 25, 1894.

1894 by staging a program displaying a "mock barroom" with "sham drinking, sham drunkenness, ... and sham fighting," a band of rowdies turned the meeting into a genuine brawl.³³ Not only the tough element but "respectable" businessmen also drank hard and often.³⁴ There was little popular desire for stricter observance of the Sabbath, and there were no attempts to keep young idlers from lounging nightly on street corners.³⁵

The tedium of hard times was broken in 1896, however, by the excitement of two federal elections. These colourful events served also to draw national attention to the remote town on the Saskatchewan.

The "grand old party" which had been in power for twenty-two of Canada's twenty-seven years seemed to be approaching disaster in September, 1894, when the Liberal leader, Wilfrid Laurier, arrived in Prince Albert to sound out the local situation.³⁶ Why Laurier wished to run in the District of Saskatchewan, a constituency which had never elected a Liberal, is not clear. But the local machine moved into action swiftly in preparation for the contest expected in the summer of 1895,

33. Ibid., December 4, 1894.

34. See ibid., January 13, 1896. J.D. Maveety groaned that in the orgy of drinking and cheap entertainment over the holiday season "every finer feeling of humanity [had been] blunted," and that nothing remained afterwards but "a disordered mind and shattered health."

35. Ibid., April 16, 1895.

36. Ibid., October 2, 1895.

and Laurier felt safe in announcing his intention in March.³⁷ The election was then postponed for a year. But the delay did not weaken the Grit cause. Instead, the passage of a year allowed dissension to grow among the Conservatives over the question of remedial legislation for Manitoba schools. At their convention on May 20, 1896, the Conservatives unanimously chose James McKay as their candidate.³⁸ A week later, McKay was confronted with the opposition of William Craig who entered the race as an Independent-Conservative and a champion of provincial rights.³⁹

The Conservative Times tried to conceal the split by reporting strong support for McKay throughout the district. It derided the Liberals by pointing out that Laurier had made only one visit to the West and had admitted that he would sit for Quebec East if also elected there. The Times reminded the voters of Laurier's pronouncement in 1885 that if he had been in Saskatchewan he, too, would have shouldered a musket in the rebel cause.⁴⁰ Moreover, it ridiculed the local Liberals for abandoning their favourite, T.O. Davis. "What a spectacle to the country," scoffed the Times, "and how humiliating to the party must be the painful fact that the

37. Ibid., March 12, 1895.

38. Ibid., May 26, 1896.

39. Ibid., June 2, 1896.

40. Ibid., June 2 and 9, 1896.

Liberals of Saskatchewan cannot find in their ranks a man competent and willing to bear their standard, but must send nearly 3,000 miles for [another]."⁴¹ Two weeks before the election local Tories were said to be offering up to \$500 on McKay and finding no takers.⁴² On election day the Times forecast that McKay would be returned by "a handsome majority."⁴³

The first election returns gave Laurier an edge of 98 votes, but the Conservatives did not despair. "The methods of the party of bribery and corruption," the Times stated confidently, "always ensure the success of the Conservatives when it comes to protests."⁴⁴ In mid-July, however, the final results showed that Laurier had won by 44 votes (988 to 944) and Craig had received 213 Conservative votes.⁴⁵

But the excitement over this election was tame compared with the stormy events set off by the national victory of the Liberals and by Laurier's success in Quebec East. Among the first results of the change in government was the collapse of the local Conservative organization. The election also set off a scramble among the local Liberals for the prizes of

41. Ibid., May 21, 1896.

42. Ibid., June 9, 1896.

43. Ibid., June 23, 1896.

44. Ibid., July 7, 1896.

45. Ibid., July 14, 1896; C.S.P. 1897, No.20, p.317.

victory.⁴⁶ Most important, however, was the effect of Laurier's decision to represent Quebec East since this required the holding of a by-election in Saskatchewan. The prospect of a second contest opened the way for a long and spectacular struggle among Saskatchewan Liberals.

The leading contender for the nomination was T.O. Davis who, as a pioneer and a party stalwart, enjoyed widespread support in the country districts and had made way obediently for Laurier. His main challenger was the talented and influential H.W. Newlands, backed by a number of townsmen who talked boldly of "fixing T.O. Davis."⁴⁷ A third possibility was H.J. Montgomery, the defeated candidate of 1891. James Macarthur was another potential candidate and still others were soon found to be ready and willing. Davis was endorsed promptly by Laurier, and the Times correctly predicted in July that the town Liberals would give way to "a very strongly expressed country opinion."⁴⁸ Yet the fight was prolonged for four months by the ambitious Newlands and his determined supporters.

By late September the quarrel had become so serious that the national organization sent a mediator to make peace. Their agent was Amédée Forget, then Commissioner of Indian Affairs

46. Times, July 21, October 6, 1896.

47. Ibid., September 1, 1896.

48. Ibid., July 21, 1896.

for Manitoba and the Territories, and he came to offer an inspectorship to Newlands. It was Forget's first trip to Prince Albert, however, and he committed a horrible blunder. Instead of approaching T.O. Davis, he revealed the aim of his mission, and other party secrets, to J.O. Davis,⁴⁹ whom N.F. Davin was later to characterize as, "of all the Liberals in Saskatchewan, the most opposed to the nomination of his near relative."⁵⁰

But J.O. Davis refused to "turn his batteries"⁵¹ on Tom and the Newlands faction were unable to profit from this fiasco. They failed also to secure the nomination at a "hole-in-the-corner" meeting held on October 2 when T.O. Davis was supposed to be out of town but had returned earlier than expected.⁵² A stormy meeting five days later also ended in a victory for Davis.⁵³

Party discipline was restored briefly when A.L. Sifton arrived to oversee the convention on October 21. Warned by the Times "to carry his Calgary bowie knife and revolver" at Grit meetings,⁵⁴ Sifton created "much consternation" by

49. Ibid., September 29, 1896.

50. Debates of the House of Commons, 1897, p.951.

51. Times, October 6, 1896.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., October 13, 1896.

54. Ibid., October 20, 1896.

producing the signed resignations of both Davis and Newlands. He left, however, without venturing to stand himself, as rumour had it, or to put forward any other of the half-dozen possible candidates.⁵⁵ Hence his visit won only the gratuitous suggestion from the Times that Laurier should create a new position of "Split healer or heeler to the Saskatchewan Grits' [who would] reside in this town and keep on hand a good supply of brand new senatorships, inspector-ships, and any other kind of 'ships' for use in the 'split heeling' business."⁵⁶

At first it seemed that not even the visit (November 3-5) of J. Israel Tarte, the Public Works Minister, would end the Liberal schism.⁵⁷ Eventually, however, the offer of "a snug public office" removed Newlands from the fray, and the delivery of the district patronage to Davis clinched the nomination for him.⁵⁸

This split had scarcely been closed when another was opened. So incensed were some of the Liberals with the choice of Davis that they proposed to run James McKay as an Independent. When McKay refused they settled on J.R. McPhail, a Liberal of long standing who was disgruntled at his failure

55. Ibid., October 27, 1896.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., November 10, 1896.

58. Ibid., November 17 and 24, December 1, 1896.

to get the nomination earlier.⁵⁹ Backed by the remnants of the Newlands faction and by many of the stranded Conservatives, McPhail won a majority of 25 in Prince Albert East and lost the election by only 175 votes (December 19, 1896).⁶⁰

The division was not ended, however, by the installation of T.O. Davis in the House of Commons. Charges of bribery, intimidation, and impersonation of voters were soon flying against a man who, the Times said, had promised jobs ranging from land agent to senator.⁶¹ According to the Times, a petition taken to unseat Davis was headed off by a few shots from the "patronage gun."⁶² McPhail was said to have boasted in March, 1897, when filing a second protest, that he had enough proof of corruption to "relegate T.O. Davis to political obscurity."⁶³

It seemed that only drastic measures could crush this troublesome rebellion. What measures were actually taken was never established. On March 23 the Times published a detailed report of an agreement among the chief combatants which the federal cabinet had allegedly imposed. The agreement, as thus reported, involved assurances that McPhail would be the Liberal

59. Ibid., December 8 and 15, 1896.

60. Ibid., December 22 and 29, 1896.

61. Ibid., December 15, 1896; January 5, 1897.

62. Ibid., January 12, 1897.

63. Ibid., March 23, 1897.

candidate in the next election, that Macarthur would receive a senatorship, and that both would be members of a five-man advisory committee to approve all government appointments and contracts in Saskatchewan. McPhail was also to receive a cash payment from Davis to cover the cost of the protest.⁶⁴ As the Times observed, the publication of the supposed agreement caused "somewhat of a sensation" in Prince Albert.⁶⁵ It also provoked a denial from the Liberal Advocate. On April 6, however, the Times printed an affidavit sworn by two leading citizens who had ostensibly been shown the agreement by McPhail and who quoted exactly the same terms as the Times had listed.⁶⁶ On April 20, 1897, the terms of the alleged agreement and a detailed history of the election were presented to the House of Commons by N.F. Davin, the Conservative member for Assiniboia West. Davin made his charges under parliamentary immunity and on this, and a later occasion, declined to demand an official inquiry. On April 20 T.O. Davis declared that McPhail's protest had been dismissed simply for lack of evidence. Laurier condemned the whole story as the work of "scurrilous newspapers."⁶⁷ Nevertheless, no specific denial of the agreement was made by Davis; no

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., March 30, 1897.

66. Ibid., April 6, 1897. The two citizens were S.J. Donaldson and W.R. Fish.

67. Ibid., April 27, June 1, 1897; Debates of the House of Commons, 1897, pp. 950-71.

suit for libel was launched against the Times; and the two authors of the affidavit were never charged with perjury.

The local Conservatives found more cause for delight in the subsequent treatment of the dissident Liberals. According to the Times, Sam McLeod, the chief backer of Newlands, had his bill for expenses as returning officer reduced so drastically that he made a special but futile trip to Ottawa. One enumerator's account was said to have been cut by 90 per cent, another's from \$12 to 30 cents, and many waited months for payment.⁶⁸ It was also said that J.R. McPhail was raked over the coals for his indiscretion and that appointments were soon being made by Davis alone.⁶⁹ Macarthur, as well as McPhail was "relegated to political obscurity" after the election, for he never became a member of parliament or a senator. Davis was renominated without opposition in the general election of 1900.

The purge of Conservative office-holders which followed the Liberal victory was less severe than popularly feared. Probably the Times did not exaggerate when it declared after the election: "Our local Grit statesmen are so anxious to serve and be served by their country that some are...sleeping at the front door of our public buildings awaiting the keys to be handed over."⁷⁰ Both the Liberal and Conservative

68. Times, March 30, 1897.

69. Ibid., April 27, June 1, 1897.

70. Ibid., July 21, 1897.

newspapers, however, protested the removal of a faithful and inoffensive postmaster to make way for Mrs. Charles Mair, a former holder of the position. The victim of the patronage system received three weeks' notice of his dismissal in "a curt note from Chas. Mair."⁷¹

Thus the obscure little town of Prince Albert acquired the reputation of being a place where politics were as rough and corrupt as anywhere in Canada. The excitement aroused by the elections of 1896 was also a fitting prelude to the livelier events of the following year.

71. Ibid., August 24, 1897; Advocate, August 10, 1897.

CHAPTER NINE

DISCARDING THE OLD WAYS, 1897 - 1901

In the last few years of the nineteenth century, great things loomed near for the North-West. The life-giving ribbon of steel was soon to bring hordes of industrious immigrants, and transport the natural riches of the region to the hungry markets of Europe and Eastern Canada. This was a time, too, of frenzied search for wealth. A gold rush in March, 1896, sent dozens of Prince Albert citizens scurrying to Birch Hills and Brancepeth and cleaned the hardware stores out of picks and shovels.¹

But the most dramatic event in twelve years for Prince Albert was the beginning of that great gold rush touched off by the arrival in San Francisco (June 16, 1897) of men bearing gold dust from an unknown creek in the Yukon.² Before any townsmen could join the stampede, Prince Albert's merchants were laying plans to capture a share of the new bonanza. "The Prince Albert Route to the Klondyke" became the cry, "the best, safest, and withal the poor man's route to the El Dorado of the north."³ Beginning at the end of steel in Prince

1. Times, March 17 and 31, 1896.

2. Pierre Berton, Klondike: the Life and Death of the last Great Gold Rush (Toronto, 1961), pp. 99-107; Tappan Adney, The Klondyke Stampede (New York, 1900), pp. 1-2.

3. Advocate, December 7, 1897.

Albert, the path led over 140 miles of wagon road to Green Lake and down the winding Beaver River to the Churchill. Proceeding up the Churchill to Methy Portage, it followed a route which had been abandoned only five years earlier by the Hudson's Bay Company. From Methy Portage it descended the turbulent Clearwater to McMurray, followed the broad highway of the Athabaska, Slave, and Mackenzie rivers almost to the Arctic Ocean, and finally climbed the rivers of the Yukon to the heart of the gold-bearing country. How long the Prince Albert route was, few of its boosters dared to say.⁴ But they estimated that it was 287 miles shorter than the route through Edmonton (whose only rail connection was with Calgary), and suggested that with completion of the Manitoba and North-Western Railway it would be 550 miles shorter than the Edmonton route.⁵ There was no lack of witnesses, moreover, to testify that the Churchill was far safer than the Athabaska above McMurray.

The Board of Trade, which a few months earlier had been described as "extinct, or so dormant as to be practically so,"⁶ sprang into life and accepted a grant from the town of \$800 for advertising.⁷ During the winter of 1898, Capt. J.M.

4. One estimate was 2,864 miles: ibid., October 5, 1897.

5. Times, October 5, 1897.

6. Advocate, August 17, 1897.

7. Ibid., January 18, April 5, 1898; Times, February 21, 1899.

Smith began building 28-foot "sturgeon-nosed" boats specially designed for the Prince Albert route.⁸ Another townsman built canoes, and merchants ordered stocks of miners' and prospectors' clothing, and watches for "intending gold seekers." One merchant offered to take Klondike gold at par.⁹

Even the citizens of Regina and the Territorial Government became interested. At the suggestion of T.J. Agnew, the member for Prince Albert West, the Legislative Assembly called on the Dominion Government to include the Prince Albert route on any maps it proposed to publish showing the gold-bearing regions of the Yukon and the highways leading there.¹⁰ The Territorial Commissioner of Public Works inspected the Green Lake trail in June, 1898, and his department spent \$800 that summer in cutting trees and making plans to shore up the rickety bridges.¹¹

It was disappointing, therefore, that the "rush" which got under way three months before the Churchill river broke up¹² did not reach the expected proportions. During the early spring of 1898, prospectors came in a steady stream. To the

8. Times, March 1, April 26, 1898.

9. Ibid., February 8, March 8, 1898; Advocate, February 15, March 29, 1898.

10. Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1897, pp. 102-03.

11. Times, June 7, 1898; February 7, 1899.

12. Ibid., February 15, 1898.

dismay of local merchants, however, most of them came fully equipped because they believed that prices would be high in Prince Albert.¹³ Moreover, the Prince Albert route proved to be far more arduous, and its season shorter, than any of its boosters had imagined. The overland journey to Green Lake was laborious, and Capt. **Smith's** boats proved too heavy for a route traversed formerly by canoes. Only those who left Prince Albert in time to follow the ice down the Clearwater in 1898 reached Dawson before freeze-up.¹⁴ The irony appears to have gone unnoticed when the C.P.R. published sailing dates from west coast ports in the local papers and offered free pamphlets on the sea route to the Klondike.¹⁵ At the end of 1898 there were doubts that Prince Albert had even recouped its expenditure in advertising the land route.¹⁶

But just as the gold rush was reaching its height, the town's prospects seemed to be struck down by an accident for which the C.P.R. could be largely blamed. On the night of April 18, 1898, a sudden break-up of ice in the river carried out two spans of the railway bridge at **Saskatoon**. When the C.P.R. warned cautiously that service might be cut off for

13. Advocate, April 5, 1898.

14. Times, August 16, 1898.

15. See ibid., February 22, 1898.

16. Ibid., February 7, 1899.

eight weeks, the Times protested bitterly that "a rebellion was once raised from a lesser cause."¹⁷ As it happened, the break did not stop the trickle of miners from coming overland from Saskatoon, or deter local residents from setting out,¹⁸ and the C.P.R. took only 25 days to restore service.¹⁹ But the belief formed quickly, and was propagated by the Board of Trade in its report for 1898, that destruction of the bridge had proved fatal to the town's chance of receiving the amount of traffic over the Prince Albert route which it might have expected.²⁰

Thus the gold rush brought only disillusionment to Prince Albert. The moderate prosperity which it helped to foster also ended quickly. The turn of the century found the West again plunged deep in depression. The Hague-Rosthern district was settled rapidly in 1897 and 1898, and the number of homestead entries in Prince Albert agency reached 499 in the latter year.²¹ In one day in 1896, fifty wagon loads of wheat were brought north to Kidd's mill from Rosthern.²² A rise in wheat prices allowed Saskatchewan producers to market one-quarter of their 1896 crop outside the district,²³ and the Hudson's Bay Company

17. Ibid., April 26, 1898.

18. Ibid., May 10 and 31, 1898.

19. Advocate, May 17, 1898.

20. Times, February 7, 1899.

21. C.S.P. 1900, No.13, i, p.12.

22. Advocate, June 1, 1897.

23. Ibid., May 25, 1897.

to ship flour as far as Vancouver.²⁴ It also encouraged both the Hudson's Bay Company and a Winnipeg firm to plan the construction of elevators.²⁵ Cattle became an important commodity for the first time in 1898 when more than 4,000 were shipped through Prince Albert.²⁶ In that year also the town acquired the small pork-packing plant of George R. Russell.²⁷ Nevertheless, the depression had returned by the fall of 1898. The price of wheat fell to about 20 cents below the 70 cents which the Advocate considered to be "a good living wage" for the farmers,²⁸ and reached a low of 42 cents in January, 1902.²⁹ An elevator was not to be built till 1902.³⁰ Moreover, the Rosthern district ceased to depend on Prince Albert for the grinding of its grain in January, 1898.³¹ Henceforth the prosperity of that district brought little direct benefit to the town at the end of the railway. Russell's packing-plant was closed, not to be re-opened till the end of 1902.³²

24. Ibid., March 15, 1898.

25. Ibid., August 3 and 17, September 7, 1897.

26. C.S.P. 1899, No.13, ii, p.253.

27. Advocate, January 17, 1899.

28. Ibid., August 24, 1897, January 31, 1899.

29. Ibid., January 13, 1902.

30. Ibid., November 4, 1901.

31. Ibid., January 4, 1898.

32. Ibid., October 27, 1902; January 5, 1903.

Few immigrants arrived in these years and the town population increased to only 1,785 by 1901. During the 1890's the assessment rose by only 18 per cent to a total of \$855,000 in 1901.³³

Although it was obvious that Prince Albert would remain a backwater without a second railway, relief came with exasperating slowness. The Manitoba and North-Western, which once was denounced by the Advocate for having "fooled and humbugged with our people...beyond the endurance point,"³⁴ finally sold its rights in 1898 to the C.P.R. The latter company, however, showed no signs of building in Prince Albert's direction, despite one attack in the House of Commons by T.O. Davis that provoked an answer from a senior cabinet minister (April 24, 1901).³⁵ By the fall of 1897 local Liberals, at least, were convinced that salvation lay in the bold plans of William Mackenzie and Donald D. Mann who had obtained a charter for a branch from Swan River to Prince Albert, and a bonus for the first 100 miles.³⁶ In August, 1899, indeed, few persons of either party doubted that those bustling promoters would complete their line within two years.³⁷ But rejoicing

33. Ibid., August 26, 1901.

34. Ibid., November 9, 1897.

35. Debates of the House of Commons, 1901, pp. 3687-97; Advocate, May 6, 1901. The Minister was J. Israel Tarte.

36. Statutes of Canada, 1899, 62-63 Vic., c.57; 62-63 Vic., c.7.

37. Advocate, August 7, 1899.

was far from unanimous as the Canadian Northern line approached Prince Albert. The Conservative Times and many businessmen began to complain that it would cut off the richest section of Prince Albert's hinterland and leave the town a mere terminus of two railways.³⁸ Although ridiculed initially by the Liberals, these fears eventually affected even the Advocate, which prophesied at the end of 1900 that practically all of the town's trade east of the South Branch would be lost.³⁹

Political passions, too, were so strong that they interfered with the town's efforts to have the line pushed forward. The Times treated the railway as merely a Grit scheme to catch votes and tried to convince the farmers of Melfort and Kinistino that the Canadian Northern would bypass them by crossing the river east of the Forks.⁴⁰ When a petition was drawn up (February, 1899) to help T.O. Davis obtain subsidies for Mackenzie and Mann, the Prince Albert Board of Trade altered the document to request aid for the Manitoba and North-Western, whose charter Davis had tried a short time earlier to have cancelled.⁴¹ The political quarrel was carried also into the town council (June, 1899). Two Tory councillors fought

38. Times, February 7, 1899.

39. Advocate, December 17, 1900.

40. Times, September 22 and 29, October 27, 1899. The Times reported one supposed interview in which Mackenzie said the line would pass entirely north of the Saskatchewan from some point far below Nipawin. See ibid., October 27, 1899.

41. Advocate, April 25, 1899.

stubbornly to prevent the payment of a grant to Mayor D.C. McLellan for his expenses on a trip to Ottawa to support Davis. The obstructionists triumphed when a citizen had the grant declared illegal.⁴²

Not party squabbling, however, but geography ruined the town's hopes of the Canadian Northern's early completion. Despite the promises made in 1900 and 1901, it became obvious in the latter year that the railway had bogged down in the heavy bush and muskeg west of Red Deer Lake. After laying steel to the Red Deer River, eight miles east of Hudson Bay Junction, the company stopped work there in March, 1901, and moved the bulk of its crews to work on easier, more profitable lines in Manitoba.⁴³ Surveys were continued throughout 1901, and a company engineer gave assurances the same fall that the railway would cross the river on its way to Edmonton.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the town's education in prairie geography and the ways of railroads had only begun.

But the delay in completing the Canadian Northern had caused no alarm in Prince Albert by 1901. There was no apprehension either about the effect on the town of a movement that promised to carry the North-West to provincial status. In 1898 Prince Albert was confident that with a second railway and with

42. Ibid., June 6, August 14 and 21, September 18, 1899.

43. Ibid., March 18, 1901.

44. Ibid., November 4, 1901.

the settlement of its broad farm lands, Saskatchewan would soon overtake and even outstrip the other districts in the Territories.⁴⁵ Such hopes, indeed, were not extravagant in 1901 when Saskatchewan had 25,579 people, and Alberta and Assiniboia had only 65,876 and 67,385 respectively. When Regina, a town of 2,249 in 1901, began to discuss the creation of one province comprising the whole North-West, the Advocate warned its readers airily: "Don't believe all the Regina papers publish. They often think because Mud Town is the capital they are licensed to put on frills. Wait until the new capital is chosen and we have our C.N. Railroad. An oasis in the Sahara desert will be a swell summer resort compared to Regina."⁴⁶

It was a shock to Prince Albert therefore when F.W.G. Haultain, the Territorial Premier, announced his intention in September, 1901, to press for autonomy and one province. "It means," stormed the Advocate, "that Saskatchewan is to be side-tracked; that this magnificent Territory larger by far than Manitoba, is to be a mere appendix, and...administered for the sole benefit and glory of...Regina."⁴⁷

The campaign for separate provincial status was on, led by the Advocate and a small party of militants. The Advocate drew up a twelve-point "Saskatchewan Platform," including the

45. Ibid., October 18, 1898.

46. Ibid., July 15, 1901.

47. Ibid., September 9, 1901.

"nucleus of a Provincial University," the improvement of the Saskatchewan River, and the development of the North.⁴⁸ In November, 1901, the Advocate noted happily that the Saskatchewan Club had been revived as a "patriotic society."⁴⁹ Whatever its concrete results, the agitation called up a bold vision which, in various forms, was to be held by Prince Albert's patriots for thirty years. The dreamer was George Langley, a Rosthern farmer. "We stand at the parting of the ways," Langley declared grandly, and he went on to praise the intelligence and industry of the people of Saskatoon and "the teeming thousands of Osler, Hague and Rosthern":

"What, one may fairly ask, may not be hoped for when a real live railway throbs through the whole length of this district?...If real self government is secured...a spirit of enterprise will soon unfold the latent wealth of our gigantic farm area, our boundless mineral resources, and ...our immense forests, and we will...be made a powerful factor in...making Saskatchewan the most wealthy and prosperous in the Dominion of Canada."⁵⁰

Faith in the future, however, was only one aspect of the Saskatchewan temper in 1901. The patriots went on to reveal an inferiority complex and a resentment which was almost ludicrous when directed against Regina. Bewailing the "colonial" status of Saskatchewan, the Advocate exclaimed: "Here, in Saskatchewan, the people are but hewers of wood and

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., November 11, 1901.

50. Ibid., September 23, 1901.

drawers of water, and the masters of the country are those who sit in cosy offices, hundreds of miles away...and generally assume an attitude of high and mighty superiority."⁵¹

Perhaps the strength of such feelings stemmed from the suspicion that **Saskatchewan's** cause was already desperate. When the campaign began, sectional consciousness scarcely existed, and newcomers felt little loyalty to the district in which they found themselves. A meeting at Colleston on February 21, 1902, which the Advocate headlined as the "First Gun Fired in Saskatchewan," was attended by 40 persons. It revealed a serious divergence of opinion when J.F. Betts spoke in favour of an east-west division of the Territories, arguing that bridges were more expensive in Northern Alberta and that a northern province would be dominated by the foreign immigrants of that region.⁵² A second meeting on March 14, 1902, in the Prince Albert town hall was addressed by **Sam** McLeod and Thomas McKay, the members for Prince Albert, who aired **Saskatchewan's** grievances and criticized Haultain. There was much quibbling, however, about Betts's thoughtless lumping of French-Canadians with foreigners at the previous meeting. The Prince Albert meeting discussed principally the financial terms of provincial status, a subject of little popular interest.⁵³

51. Ibid., September 30, 1901.

52. Ibid., February 24, 1902.

53. Ibid., March 17, 1902.

Even at this point, the patriotic cause faced serious obstacles. The only hope of success lay in strong agitation in Regina and Ottawa. But to appeal directly to the Government at Ottawa was to be disloyal to the principle of responsible government which had been won for the Territories only four years earlier. To resist Regina (and it could only be resisted if Haultain insisted on one province) was to oppose the cause of provincial status. Moreover, a policy of resistance accorded badly with the urgent desire of Saskatchewan to be modern and progressive. Although the patriots may not have misjudged the shrewdness of Premier Haultain, they made no allowance for the loyalty of his Conservative followers. There were murmurs of treason from the Advocate when McLeod and McKay supported a resolution worded cleverly by Haultain which called for inquiry into the terms of provincial status for "the Territories or any part thereof."⁵⁴ Perhaps most serious, though, was the state of the resources on which Saskatchewan's viability as a province depended. In 1901 its agricultural land remained largely unoccupied and the development of whatever mineral wealth it possessed had not yet begun. Finally, no one foresaw in 1902 that Saskatchewan's lifeline of prosperity, the Canadian Northern, would be four more years in coming.

For a time, however, the test was postponed by Haultain's rebuff at Ottawa (April, 1902). In fact Saskatchewan was to

54. Ibid., March 24, 1902.

have three years in which to rally its forces and improve its position.

Meanwhile, the late nineties had brought little progress in municipal government to Prince Albert. There was little desire for the amenities proper to a town which aspired to be a provincial capital. Late in 1896 the town acquired enough street lights to give it "a respectable business air," but the lights were thriftily left off on moonlit nights.⁵⁵

The serious fire of September, 1897, provoked a lively but ineffectual campaign in favour of better fire equipment.⁵⁶ A public meeting was called for October 22, 1897, to discuss the question. But the councillors came with only a few pamphlets on fire engines, and the initiative was taken by two citizens who described the benefits of a waterworks system. Instead of retiring afterwards to look into the matter, the council dropped it.⁵⁷ In July, 1898, interest was revived by the visit of E.L. English, a salesman of the Waterous Engine Works Company who offered a steam engine with tanks, hose, and a fire hall for \$6,000.⁵⁸ But once more the step seemed impossibly large. Even while arguing in favour of the expenditure, the Advocate began to doubt that insurance rates

55. Ibid., February 9 and 16, 1897.

56. Times, September 28, 1897.

57. Ibid., October 26, 1897.

58. Ibid., August 2, 1898; Advocate, July 12, August 2, 1898.

would really be lower, and it warned that an engine would be useless if "carelessness, indifference, false economy and bungling" were to prevail in the future.⁵⁹ It is not surprising that the by-law was lost, only 50 of 200 ratepayers turning out to vote.⁶⁰

The only step taken for fire protection in 1899 was the erection of a water tank and windmill by a local waterman,⁶¹ and even this project failed to secure the council's support. Most businesses relied on Stempel hand extinguishers which were useless in all but small fires.⁶² People continued to build "flimsy 'shells' of the most inflammable substances,"⁶³ and a fire limits by-law passed in 1900 merely required these to be covered with metal.⁶⁴ It was common knowledge that if a fire were to break out on River Street, it would have "undisputed sway until it ran up against a brick wall, or burned itself out after consuming everything within reach."⁶⁵

By 1899 a town water supply was rapidly becoming a necessity, quite apart from its use in fire protection. The North Saskatchewan at all seasons contained enough fine sand

59. Advocate, August 23, 1898.

60. Ibid., September 13, 1898.

61. Ibid., February 21, May 9, 1899.

62. Ibid., November 19, 1900.

63. Advocate, May 31, 1898.

64. Times, July 26, 1906.

65. Advocate, May 31, 1898.

and vegetable matter to give it a muddy appearance, and in times of high water it was considered "simply not fit for use." During the summer many people preferred to scoop water from open ditches.⁶⁶ In 1899 an effort was made by the town to find suitable wells but it was abandoned after three holes, one carried well below 500 feet, revealed only salt water.⁶⁷ A second proposal was to build a large tank and filter run by a windmill between Church and King Streets, but this plan was prudently dropped (May, 1900) when the Advocate warned that the intake lay below several sewer outlets.⁶⁸ The council then decided to build a tank further upstream, but found it would cost \$2,000 and put off the whole scheme till 1901.⁶⁹ By that time, however, another salesman had come to town, and the town fathers were carried away by a far bigger idea.

In August, 1900, E.L. English reappeared to offer a gasoline engine at bargain price or a waterworks installation to cost \$40,000.⁷⁰ The mayor, Dr. T.C. Spence, and the councillors were easily convinced and they had by-laws drawn up for both items. They then decided to submit the waterworks

66. Ibid., November 27, 1899.

67. Ibid., November 20 and 27, 1899.

68. Ibid., May 14, 1900.

69. Ibid., July 9, 1900.

70. Ibid., August 27, 1900.

by-law to the ratepayers first. But the second part of this clumsy plan was upset when a rival company selling steam engines warned them against "a machine...driven by such dangerous explosive materials, like dynamite or gunpowder."⁷¹ For over two months the council procrastinated. Finally, with a forlorn courage, it prepared a by-law for the borrowing of \$30,000. But the council forgot, remarked the Advocate sharply, to state "when, where or how the system is to be placed, what system it is proposed to adopt, and what area is comprised in the waterworks district."⁷² It was then discovered that the sponsor of the by-law, Councillor Henry Lacroix, was up for re-election a few days later. Mayor Spence, its other chief supporter, was already under heavy attack for the administration's numerous mistakes. But Spence turned the episode into farce when he declared at a public meeting that the council wanted only an expression of opinion.⁷³ In the civic election both Spence and Lacroix were defeated.⁷⁴ Nine days later the by-law was snowed under by a vote of 58 to 10.⁷⁵ Thus ended a fiasco so great that it was to be four years before the council again acted on the matter of waterworks.

71. Ibid., September 17, 1900.

72. Ibid., December 3, 1900.

73. Ibid., December 10, 1900.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., December 24, 1900.

The related problems of drainage and sewage removal were also far from solution by 1901. Moreover, the first interest in sewers helped to leave an impression with the public that was later to have tragic consequences. In the winter of 1898 the Dominion Government had proposed to share with the town the cost of a 12-inch combined sanitary and storm sewer down Church Street from the jail and court house. Immediately an alarm was raised by the Times over the danger of pollution.⁷⁶ Its argument wilted, however, before a tremendous blast from the Advocate. "The idea of polluting the Saskatchewan river, a stream 200 yards wide, with the surface water gathered...by a twelve-inch drain is most absurd and preposterous,"⁷⁷ it sneered. A few weeks later, the town council decided that only an 18-inch drain would suffice and, reluctant to spend \$2,000 on it, dropped the scheme.⁷⁸ But the Advocate's victory of words had done much to strengthen, if not to create, the myth of the unpollutable river.

The town councils of the late nineties were unwilling to do anything about sanitation, beyond hiring a scavenger to collect garbage from those willing to pay for the service. Dr. Hugh Bain protested in vain about leaking cesspools, filthy water closets, and casual dumping of garbage and manure. The council regarded a medical health officer as a luxury to be

76. Times, February 22, 1898.

77. Advocate, March 1, 1898.

78. Ibid., April 5, June 21, 1898.

dispensed with when epidemics abated,⁷⁹ and in 1900 allowed Mayor Spence to hold the post without pay. The town itself was responsible for heaps of rubbish left on street corners,⁸⁰ and one councillor dumped manure from his livery stable on the river bank with the board of works' permission!⁸¹ The Council's indifference, however, only reflected the attitude of a vast majority of citizens. One "suffering tenant" complained that it was useless for him to clean up the "awful" amount of garbage which the last occupant had strewn around the yard, since his neighbours might leave their filth "any place that suits."⁸²

Economy, amateurism, and neglect continued to govern the town's works programs. Ditches, culverts, and wooden box-drains which decayed in a few years did little to control the torrents of muddy water that poured down the hill each spring into basements, or formed huge lakes. When a board walk was built up Church Street to the court house in 1898, one traveller remarked that it was "as nearly like the ocean roll as it is

79. On March 6, 1899, Dr. Bain was paid for his services as medical health officer during the recent scarlet fever epidemic, and "the office was abolished for the present": ibid., March 14, 1899.

80. Ibid., June 28, 1898.

81. Ibid., May 14, 1900.

82. Ibid., July 19, 1898.

possible to be when lumber is used."⁸³ By 1901 many sidewalks which had borne ten years of human traffic and the shattering feet of cows and horses were full of dangerous holes where a person might easily break a leg.⁸⁴

Although the citizens bore almost silently the trials of mud, filth, and broken walks, the year 1900 nevertheless brought a revolt against the continuing incompetence of the council. Until November, 1900, the administration of Dr. Thomas Spence had seemed only slightly more incompetent than others. Its ruin, however, was foreshadowed by Spence's defeat in the federal election of November 7, 1900. Spurred by this victory, the Liberal machine and the Advocate of Andrew S. Stewart began to denounce the general and particular sins of Spence's council. The town had run up an overdraft of \$3,000, one-sixth of its annual budget, which was later shown to be costing it \$350 to \$400 yearly.⁸⁵ There was proof too, the Advocate reported, that "the expenditure of town funds was being made in a lax, slipshod, and illegal manner."⁸⁶ The municipal ferry had been abandoned half out of the water and half across the main road, where it was pounded

83. Times, May 17, 1898.

84. Advocate, September 24, 1900.

85. Ibid., December 2, 1901.

86. Ibid., December 3, 1900.

by every wheel and hoof entering town from the north.⁸⁷ Spence also had to bear the blame for allowing Prince Albert to become "decidedly out of date, compared with...other... communities in the North-West."⁸⁸ No longer, declared the Advocate, should municipal offices "fall to...indifferent, careless, or...selfish men."⁸⁹ On December 10, 1900, Spence was defeated and T.J. Agnew was elected the town's first reform mayor.⁹⁰

A new spirit entered the government of Prince Albert when Mayor Agnew, at the first meeting of council, warned the officials to be "diligent in their duty as it was his intention to look sharply after town affairs."⁹¹ Two of the council's first steps were the reappointment of Dr. Spence as medical health officer at \$200 a year, and the hiring of a scavenger at the generous rate of \$50 a month.⁹² A by-law was passed to exclude cattle from the business section, and both it and the by-law prohibiting the wearing of cowbells were strictly enforced.⁹³ After two months' labour, the town's accounts

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid., November 19, 1900.

89. Ibid., November 26, 1900.

90. Ibid., December 10, 1900.

91. Ibid., January 14, 1901.

92. Ibid., February 11, 1901.

93. Ibid., June 10, July 15, 1901.

were restored to order, and by the year's end half the overdraft had been wiped out.⁹⁴ Detailed estimates, including provision for an excellent works program, were presented to the public on the front page of the Advocate.⁹⁵ The year closed with an itemized statement of the council's achievements and a full account of each department's affairs.⁹⁶

The way of reform was not easy, however, and events were to prove that Agnew was not the best of managers. The mayor was reluctant to make ends meet, and by the end of 1901 the town was heading towards another financial crisis.⁹⁷ At the annual ratepayers' meeting, Agnew was caught exaggerating the size of the overdraft left by Spence, and was criticized by J.F. Betts for laxness in preparing the financial statement.⁹⁸ Drained of reforming zeal, Agnew retired after one term.

His work, nevertheless, and the efforts of Andrew Stewart had not been in vain. The next mayor, J.F.A. Stull, was one of the most level-headed and competent men ever to hold office in Prince Albert. Stull's successors in the next ten years

94. Ibid., December 2, 1901.

95. Ibid., August 26, 1901.

96. Ibid., December 2, 1901.

97. In September, 1902, Mayor J.F.A. Stull revealed that Agnew had inserted under revenue an item of \$3,000 from a tax sale which the council had not planned to hold. Agnew's concern with keeping the mill rate low produced a situation in 1902 in which only a sharp rise in the mill rate could reverse a continued increase in the overdraft: ibid., September 8, 1902.

98. Ibid., December 2, 1901.

also administered the town's affairs with honesty, caution, and moderate efficiency. Under this new leadership and rising prosperity, the citizens took a wholesome interest in municipal affairs and thus helped to create a golden age of local democracy.

The new era had already been heralded in 1899 by evidence that community spirit had not died. After nine years of effort, the Victoria Hospital Ladies' Aid Society had collected only \$1,200.⁹⁹ But a town grant of \$500 and the money received from a drive led by prominent citizens enabled a small hospital to be opened on November 7, 1899, in a rented building on Twelfth Street West.¹⁰⁰ The hospital was incorporated in the following year,¹⁰¹ and in 1904 it completed a larger building on the former site of Nisbet Academy.¹⁰² For the first seven years Victoria Hospital was a true community project. It was furnished by well-wishers,¹⁰³ and for many months the local newspapers printed full lists of the food donated by ladies of the town.

99. Ibid., May 2, 1899.

100. Times, July 28, August 18, September 8 and 22, 1899; Advocate, November 13, 1899, February 25, 1901; PAHSA, Accession No. 267, H. Bassett, History of the Victoria Hospital Prince Albert.

101. Ordinances of the North-West Territories, 1900, 63 Vic., c. 44.

102. PAHSA, Bassett, op. cit.

103. Advocate, November 13, 1899.

In 1899 another step was taken on the road to urban sophistication. In mid-July came the news that the three-ring circus of Walter L. Main would visit Prince Albert. Although impressed by the promise of a grand parade, two shows, and "the greatest exhibition of novelties of the age,"¹⁰⁴ the townspeople were worried about its coming. Solemn warnings were issued by the Advocate against those "lawless characters who follow...all such shows, and...are 'out for business'";¹⁰⁵ a list of rules was laid down to protect the gullible; and the citizens were exhorted to lock their doors and windows on the big day (July 31).¹⁰⁶ However, the event passed calmly with the circus employees, it was said, behaving like perfect gentlemen.¹⁰⁷ "There was nothing shabby or vulgar in the entire performance," declared the Times.¹⁰⁸ One thing at least had been settled: Prince Albert was thenceforth to be as circus-minded as any western town.

There was evidence in 1900 that long isolation had not weakened the loyalty of Prince Albert's citizens to Queen and Empire. The departure of twenty volunteers for South Africa

104. Times, July 28, 1899.

105. Advocate, July 24, 1899.

106. Ibid.

107. Times, August 4, 1899.

108. Ibid.

(February 8, 1900) called forth an enthusiastic display of patriotism. In a townhall packed to the doors, Judge T.H. McGuire delivered a spirited oration, and a quickly-formed "Outlander Military Band" blared out patriotic tunes. This event was followed by a supper and smoking concert at the police barracks where songs, stories, and speeches lasted till train time the next morning.¹⁰⁹ The course of the Boer War was followed closely in Prince Albert. At the news of General Cronje's surrender (February 27, 1900), "all the flags in town were run up, and a pleasant smile appeared on the faces of all citizens."¹¹⁰ The same evening, at a huge bonfire on the river bank, Oom Paul Kruger was burned in effigy, "flowing whiskers and all."¹¹¹ A year later, the day of the Queen's death (February 2, 1901) was declared a day of mourning and a public service was attended by hundreds in "this loyal and royally named town."¹¹²

Although it was still struggling against frontier conditions, Prince Albert gave promise of becoming a modern city.

109. Advocate, February 12, 1900.

110. Ibid., March 5, 1900.

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid., February 4, 1901.

CHAPTER TEN

THE HARD HAND OF DESTINY, 1902-1906

By the spring of 1902, prosperity was unmistakably upon the town of Prince Albert. The first wave of a rush which in four years carried 273,000 immigrants to the Prairie Provinces,¹ raised homestead entries in the agency from 303 in 1900² to an all-time high in 1903 of 2,894.³ Most of the newcomers streamed into the Carrot River valley from Kinistino to Tisdale, or settled along the railway between Duck Lake and **S**askatoon. A few spilled over the North Branch into land soon, they thought, to be served by the main line of the Canadian Northern. As the boom year of 1903 began, boosters could rejoice that "in a couple of years Prince Albert [had] jumped from obscurity to a foremost place in the Territories" as a centre of settlement.⁴

All this, of course, was made possible by a return of world prosperity that carried local wheat prices in three years to 85 cents (December, 1904),⁵ the highest since 1885. Rapid settlement brought also a period of expansion for the

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1. Canada Year Book, 1915, p.116.
 2. C.S.P. 1901, No.25, i, p.16.
 3. C.S.P. 1904, No.25, i, p.26. In 1903 the Prince Albert agency extended as far east as Tisdale, as far west as the present Blaine Lake, and as far south as **S**askatoon.
 4. Advocate, May 4, 1903.
 5. Ibid., December 12, 1904.

lumber industry. With the entry of the Telford brothers in 1902, production rose from 3.6 million feet in 1900⁶ to 15.4 million in four years — 16 per cent of the Western total.⁷

Among the brightest signs of the new day was the intense activity of the Board of Trade, and especially the keen interest it showed in getting industries for the future city. As president of the Board, J.H. Wilson offered vigorous leadership and a feast of visions embracing pulp mills and factories of numerous types.⁸ The chief event of the Board's enthusiastic campaign was Wilson's month-long tour of eastern Canada in the spring of 1902. Besides meeting persons as eminent as J. Israel Tarte, Donald Mann, and the C.P.R. president, Thomas Shaughnessy, Wilson attracted more than twenty inquiries on possible industries, a forecast of "wonderful developments" ahead.⁹

Although never at boom proportions, building and land sales moved after 1901 with a "natural briskness"¹⁰ that had been unknown for twenty years. By 1906 the population had more than doubled to about 4,500, although a Dominion census

6. C.S.P. 1901, No.25, i, p.94.

7. C.S.P. 1901, No.25, i, pp. 70, 32.

8. Advocate, March 17, 1902. Wilson was manager of the local branch of the Imperial Bank.

9. Ibid., April 21, 1902.

10. Ibid., May 4, 1903.

which omitted the east end and the largest lumber mill showed only 3,005.¹¹

On October 8, 1904, Prince Albert was incorporated as a city, despite the council's neglect to give the required two months' notice, and a Legislative session so short that the printers had to work on the bill till 3.30 a.m. on the last day.¹² None cheered this event, but November 30, 1904, was declared a public holiday, with a large industrial parade, a promenade concert, and a banquet attended by Premier Haultain. The celebrations were ended with three hours of speech-making on the brilliant prospects before the new city.¹³

Unfortunately, however, growth and prosperity were but one side of the picture; 1904 did not pass without a serious dimming of those prospects. By now it was amply clear that the bulk of immigration to the Saskatchewan valley was not filling the rough, wooded fields of its lower end; it was flooding into a wide arc of spacious, almost untouched land from Davidson to Battleford. The prospect of a hundred acres of rich soil, wood and water, and a steady income from a few cows and pigs had less attraction for the newcomer than the sight of vast fields of wheat, where fortunes were made by the enterprising. Inaccurate as it was, more than one immigrant

11. Times, August 23, 1906.

12. Advocate, October 3 and 10, 1904.

13. Ibid., December 5, 1904.

seems to have shared the impression of James A. Calder who drove fifteen miles out of Prince Albert and found the lands there of "little or no value."¹⁴

By 1903 Prince Albert had gained a serious rival in the burgeoning village of **Saskatoon**. When **Saskatoon's** fledgling Phoenix made rude comments that winter, the Advocate laughed them off with the hope that **Saskatoon** might "grow and 'boom' and never 'bust,'" and become a...metropolis."¹⁵ Yet two months later the Prince Albert Board of Trade was sending agents to Winnipeg to compete with **Saskatoon's** boosters,¹⁶ and friendly remarks about that village went out of style rapidly. By early summer of 1903, a Prince Albert editor was warning the citizens to "keep pace with an onward moving world," or be left "hopelessly in the rear," as younger communities reaped "the reward that would have been ours."¹⁷

The disadvantage of Prince Albert's position and its lesser attraction for immigrants were best shown by the leisurely pace at which the railways were extended in its direction. Until January, 1902, it seemed likely that the Canadian Northern would be completed to Prince Albert that

14. Times, December 7, 1905. Calder was provincial treasurer in the cabinet of Walter Scott in 1905.

15. Advocate, February 2, 1903.

16. Ibid., March 23, 1903.

17. Ibid., June 1, 1903.

year and continued to Battleford and Edmonton in 1903.¹⁸ The line was actually surveyed into the town in June, 1902,¹⁹ but summer and fall passed without a rail being laid past the Red Deer River. The C.P.R. took no action on the Manitoba and North-Western in 1902 beyond making a new survey, although J.H. Wilson was told in the spring that Prince Albert could hope to see the railway within two years.²⁰

A trend in policy was discernible as early as February, 1902, although its import was initially concealed by the promises of railway officials. In his interview with Mann, Wilson was told that the Canadian Northern had decided to build its transcontinental line through Humboldt and Battleford. The Canadian Northern had additional plans, however, to build branches from Battleford and Dana which would bring Prince Albert closer to the main line.²¹ In November, 1902, the Grand Trunk Pacific announced construction of a third transcontinental which was certain to pass well south of Prince Albert. But the prospect of a connection with this

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18. According to a report in the Advocate of January 20, 1902, a railway official had said recently that the road would reach Prince Albert that summer and "be pushed through to the coast without delay." The Board of Trade was then busy with preparations for the construction of a railway bridge. See ibid., January 6, February 10, 1902.
19. Ibid., June 16, 1902.
20. Ibid., April 21, 1902.
21. Ibid.

line again suppressed any apprehensions.²² Even the C.P.R.'s plan to build to Wetaskiwin from a point on the Manitoba and North Western caused little concern in Prince Albert.²³ Only gradually did the citizens realize that for the railways the biggest stakes lay in spanning the continent in order to open vast tracts to settlement, and tap the growing traffic between eastern Canada and the West Coast.

By the spring of 1903 Prince Albert was well aware that it had been "sidetracked." When they learned of the C.P.R.'s application (March 23) to build the Wetaskiwin branch, the citizens held a protest meeting to object that the three companies "should be compelled to build where people have lived in hope and expectation for twenty years before they construct lines where nobody lives."²⁴ In a joint meeting of the town council and Board of Trade (May 20, 1903), William Gillmor made the obvious comment in declaring that if the roads were to run south of Prince Albert, the town would be greatly handicapped.²⁵ Backed by a party of delegates, several North-West members of parliament, and by no less than A.G. Blair, the Minister of Railways, T.O. Davis fought so stubbornly

22. Ibid., December 1, 1902; February 9, 1903.

23. Ibid., December 22, 1902.

24. Ibid., May 18, 1903.

25. Ibid., May 25, 1903.

that the C.P.R. withdrew its application on June 16, 1903.²⁶ Unfortunately, however, Blair fought a lone battle within the Laurier cabinet in defence of the interests of the older settlements in the North-West. His opposition to the building of the third transcontinental led to his resignation on July 16, 1903.²⁷ During the session of 1904, a bill authorizing the C.P.R. to build 100 miles westward from Sheho was passed by the House of Commons.²⁸

Meanwhile the Canadian Northern had resumed construction. After a halt of twenty-two months, track was laid past the Red Deer in January, 1903.²⁹ In June plans were announced for a combined railway and traffic bridge over the North Saskatchewan.³⁰ On July 2 a bill which included a guarantee of bonds for the final 100 miles of the Prince Albert line, passed the Commons after a hard fight by Davis and Blair.³¹ Soon, however, there were signs that the Canadian Northern was again bogging down. In September, 1903, T.O. Davis spoke bluntly to restrain the town merchants from granting \$25,000 towards the cost of the bridge. So anxious had they been to pull in the

26. Ibid., June 8, 15, and 22, 1903; Journals of the House of Commons, 1903, p.284.

27. Debates of the House of Commons, 1903, pp. 6736-48.

28. Ibid., 1904, p.1586.

29. Advocate, January 26, 1903.

30. Ibid., June 8, 1903.

31. Debates of the House of Commons, 1903, pp. 4363-4404, 4961-5002, 5089-93, 5100-22, 5589-5653, 5786-5824.

line and open the land north of the river that the businessmen had offered to put up the money themselves if a by-law should fail.³² By February, 1904, the Canadian Northern had built only to Melfort³³ and was on the verge of another slow-down. The concern of the merchants was understandable. In the year ending June 30, 1904, homestead entries in Prince Albert agency fell by 43 per cent to 1,636, only partly reflecting a one-tenth drop in western immigration. In 1904 the Dominion lands agent reported that "great and unusual difficulties" affecting the branch line had made the season much less favourable to immigration than had been expected.³⁴

In the spring of 1904, impatience almost carried the town a second time into offering a bonus too soon. This time Prince Albert was in a crisis more serious and more prolonged than six years earlier. As in 1898, the winter snow blockade had barely ended when the C.P.R. bridge at Saskatoon was swept out by the ice. On this occasion, however, the accident cut service for 49 days, while more than 1,000 men stood idle in Prince Albert, and business, construction, even farming nearly reached a standstill. As Judge McGuire said, it was absurd for a town the size of Prince Albert to be tied "to one rotten railway."³⁵ Hence it is not surprising that a

32. Advocate, September 7, 1903.

33. Ibid., February 29, 1904.

34. C.S.P. 1905, No.25, i, p.24.

35. Advocate, May 2, 1904.

public meeting held on April 27, 1904, agreed unanimously to offer \$25,000 for a bridge to induce the Canadian Northern to make Prince Albert "an immediate objective." The sole objection raised at this meeting was that of J.H. Lamont, who argued that the town had no guarantee that a bridge would bring the railway in a day sooner than it would come without it.³⁶ But the realization that Prince Albert was powerless to speed the Canadian Northern's pace caused the proponents of a bonus to drop the plan soon afterwards.

As a year passed, it became unlikely that the line would be completed even in 1905. But the progress of the work led the city to make its first direct offer of a cash bonus to the Canadian Northern. On May 22, 1905, the city council recommended that \$25,000 be raised for use by the railway in buying its station and yards.³⁷ In return the company was to locate at Prince Albert the workshops and divisional point which had been promised earlier by J.I. Tarte³⁸ and Mann.³⁹ Mayor William Cowan made this offer to William Mackenzie in a letter⁴⁰ which was to cause embarrassing results a year later. Obviously Prince Albert was in no mood or position for bargaining. Disillusionment with the Canadian Northern was

36. Ibid.

37. Times, May 25, 1905.

38. Advocate, April 21, 1902.

39. Ibid., June 24, 1901.

immediately apparent when the petition circulated by the council found little support. At a public meeting in August, Cowan, Lamont, and McGuire supported the proposal of a bonus and a draft contract was thoroughly discussed.⁴¹ The matter was not yet settled, however, when the Canadian Northern rolled into Prince Albert in January, 1906.⁴²

At least two facts were clear at this point. Prince Albert had been shamefully treated by a railway which now held little right to its generosity. More serious was the effect on the city's future of a Dominion policy which put rapid settlement of the whole West before justice to its oldest, most isolated districts. By 1905 Prince Albert lay in a state of disadvantage that was ultimately to call for drastic measures.

Although geography was Prince Albert's greatest enemy in the contest for railways and immigrants, it played no part in the battle for Saskatchewan autonomy. This question was a political one to be settled in the meeting halls of Saskatchewan and in the Legislative Assembly.

It was in the local meetings, however, that the most patent and decisive failure took place. The causes of that failure went deeper than the small numbers and general indolence of Saskatchewan's patriots, and the shortness of time

40. Times, September 6, 1906.

41. Ibid., August 10, 1905.

42. Ibid., January 18 and 25, 1906.

left them to rouse a sense of sectional loyalty. However attractive seemed a province stretching from wheat land to forest, Saskatchewan was not united by either geography or sentiment in 1902. In the next three years it became even more divided. Saskatoon, for instance, saw the source of its wealth split by a district boundary that seemed to grow steadily less real. The Melfort district's main bond with Prince Albert was cut by the completion of the Canadian Northern branch.⁴³ Battleford naturally did not support a project aimed mainly at achieving another's glory.⁴⁴ Moreover, Saskatchewan autonomy was the hobby-horse of only a few militants, and it failed even to dent the party loyalty of Prince Albert citizens. So it did not matter in 1905 that Saskatchewan had not outstripped the other districts in population or resources.

As a political issue, the autonomy question was so complex and tortuous it baffled even the participants in the campaign. Prince Albert's patriots not only found themselves alone in Saskatchewan but leagued with potential enemies of their own cause. They were never in a position to alter the

43. In June, 1904, the Advocate became involved in minor but symptomatic squabbles with the Melfort Moon and an "Old-Timer" of that district. See Advocate, June 20, 1904.

44. In the Territorial election of May 21, 1902, there was not a flicker of interest in Battleford in autonomy for Saskatchewan. See Saskatchewan Herald, May 20 and 28, June 4, 1902.

course of the events which marched to their all but inevitable defeat.

Even in the first round that ended with Haultain's rebuff by Ottawa, the weakness of Prince Albert's position was apparent. In the Legislative Assembly, Haultain introduced a motion on April 8, 1902, regretting the postponement of action on the granting of provincial status. T.A. Patrick sponsored an amendment condemning the one-province policy, but his motion was defeated on April 9 by 22 votes to 7.⁴⁵ Four of Saskatchewan's six members from the district opposed him on this first test of separatist strength. Moreover, Dr. Patrick favoured a north-south division into two provinces by which he hoped to discourage Manitoba's designs on his own district of Yorkton. R.B. Bennett of Calgary, another supporter of the Patrick amendment, was a strong advocate of provincehood for Alberta, and this solution was certain to push Saskatchewan towards union with Assiniboia.⁴⁶

Only seventeen days after this vote, Haultain called a snap election in which 26 of 35 Government candidates were returned (May 21, 1902), five from Saskatchewan.⁴⁷ Preceding the election, there had been a redistribution of seats which raised the total membership of the Assembly by four, left the number of Saskatchewan members unchanged, and gave one of

45. Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1902, pp. 18-22.

46. The members for Battleford, Kinistino, Batoche, and Mitchell (the Rosthern - Duck Lake District).

47. Regina Leader, May 29, 1902.

Prince Albert's two seats to Saskatchewan.⁴⁸ It was small consolation to Saskatchewan patriots when William Knox, the Liberal candidate for Prince Albert, endorsed a platform including "A Province of Saskatchewan" and came out openly against Haultain.⁴⁹ Knox advocated a larger share of public works for the constituency and district and made the Haultain Government's alleged neglect the prime issue in the campaign. But the same platform was best utilized by Opposition member Thomas McKay, a Tory, who defeated Knox by 359 votes to 263.⁵⁰ Further proof of the feebleness of the Saskatchewan campaign lay in the total of 149 votes cast for the Government candidate, J.F. Betts. In part, Betts's total was a reflection of popular fears that even an Opposition victory would cut off grants to the district.⁵¹ The main result of this important election was that Saskatchewan was not represented in the Assembly in these critical years by a member who had paid even lip service to district autonomy.

One other observation underlines the role of the 1902

48. The Advocate (April 28, 1902) denounced the changes as a gerrymander and wrongly asserted that Saskatchewan's representation had been reduced from seven.

49. Advocate, May 12, 1902.

50. Ibid., June 2, 1902.

51. "Now that Mr. McKay is...returned by a larger majority and the government candidate has even lost his deposit, we hear the expression, freely voiced, 'God help the district for the next four years, it will get nothing at all,'" in ibid., May 26, 1902.

election as preparation for the events of 1905. Only in Alberta did the proponents of separate provincehood do well, a total of four winning seats.⁵² As the sole district with a nascent but healthy spirit of sectional consciousness, Alberta seemed in 1902 to have a chance of reaching its goal.

Saskatchewan's boosters also failed to inject the issue of district autonomy into the Dominion election of November 3, 1904. Their effort revealed serious confusion in the patriots' aims as the final settlement lay only months ahead. The Advocate, for instance, first tried to secure support for an east-west division into two provinces,⁵³ a scheme which was never quite out of favour. Next it catered to Prince Albert's fear of domination by Edmonton,⁵⁴ and proposed three provinces as the best solution. The Advocate also made political hay from the annexationist ambitions of Manitoba by linking its Premier, R.P. Roblin, with "the Conservative leader in the Territories,"⁵⁵ Haultain. It forgot, however, that Saskatchewan had a reason to encourage Manitoba's westward ambitions. Only in this way could Saskatchewan divert attention from its

52. The four were Opposition candidate, R.B. Bennett, in Calgary West and Independents from Calgary East, Edmonton, and Victoria. See Leader, May 29, 1902.

53. Advocate, October 10, 1904.

54. "Do you want Saskatchewan included in one province with Assiniboia and Alberta? Then support the tories and Premier Haultain," in ibid., October 24, 1904.

55. Ibid., October 24 and 31, 1904.

own designs on a broad strip of land north of the Nelson river which was needed to make it "a province with an ocean port."⁵⁶ But all this was hypothetical and too complex to be effective rallying cries. Besides, the confusion of the autonomy campaign was only surpassed by its blatantly partisan tone. Saskatchewan Tories may have been baffled but they were hardly convinced by the Advocate's warning that a vote against the Liberal would place them "in the fag end of Manitoba, and make Edmonton the capital of the Territories."⁵⁷

No one ever discovered how J.H. Lamont, the Liberal candidate, really felt on the issue, although initially he announced that he was for "two or more provinces, particularly a province for Saskatchewan."⁵⁸ Lamont campaigned entirely on national issues and his easy win over Thomas McKay⁵⁹ was proof only that Liberal strength was intact in the West. In Ottawa Lamont had no influence on the drawing of provincial boundaries.

The clearest proof of Saskatchewan's failure lay in the fact that on a platform in which there was no reference to the number of provinces, the Conservative candidate won almost as large a proportion of votes as the Conservative won four years

56. Ibid., October 31, 1904.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., October 10, 1904.

59. The margin was 2,183 to 1,347. See ibid., November 28, 1904; C.S.P. 1905, No.37, viii, p.374.

earlier in Prince Albert city,⁶⁰ the heart of sectional sentiment.

As the last round in the battle for autonomy began, the ideas of Prince Albert's patriots became both grandiose and unrealistic. Seizing the Advocate's biggest scheme, they demanded the extension of Saskatchewan to include wide strips of Athabaska and Keewatin, thus forming an empire reaching to Hudson Bay. Judge McGuire went east to promote this idea,⁶¹ and a large public meeting was held in Prince Albert on January 24, 1905, in support of it.⁶²

But the effort was too little and too late. On February 21, 1905, the announcement of boundaries for the new provinces⁶³ showed that autonomy for the district of Saskatchewan was a lost cause. In the year-long turmoil which followed Laurier's attempt to guarantee the preservation of the North-West school system, sectional sentiments were buried.

One issue remained for 1906. There was an opportunity now to reverse a decision which twenty-three years earlier had placed Prince Albert in subordination to Regina, for the latter had been designated as the "provisional" capital.

60. In 1900, 19.9 per cent of the votes cast for Conservative Dr. T.C. Spence were in Prince Albert town; in 1904 McKay won 17.4 per cent of his total in the city. The Conservative share of the urban vote declined only from 47.0 to 41.9 per cent as its percentage of the constituency total rose from 35.3 to 38.1. See C.S.P. 1901, No.36, viii, pp. 12, 14; C.S.P. 1905, No.37, viii, pp. 374, 376.

61. Times, January 12, 1905.

62. Ibid., January 26, 1905.

63. Ibid., March 2, 1905.

Unfortunately, however, this contest was to prove even less promising than the one for Saskatchewan autonomy, and to end in final rejection of one of Prince Albert's most venerable ambitions.

Happily, the disappointments of these years did not prevent progress in the long march towards urban maturity. By the beginning of 1903, the financial stringency of the town's first seventeen years had been ended almost miraculously. A tax sale yielding more than \$5,000 allowed Prince Albert to begin that year "without a dollar of floating indebtedness"⁶⁴ and with a modest bonded debt of \$28,200.

Under the new conditions of prosperity the town's first major project became an electric light plant to replace a small, worn-out private plant, and thus to furnish cheaper, improved service and, if possible, earn a profit.⁶⁵ The construction and management of this first municipal utility, however, was to be only the first of a series of disillusioning experiences. Many of the difficulties stemmed from the dilatoriness and parsimony of the Stuart-Arbuthnot Machinery Company which supplied the equipment. There was no town engineer to supervise construction and the plant was finished nearly a year later than planned (October, 1904).⁶⁶ By that time the numerous delays and the increase in costs had brought the

64. Advocate, December 29, 1902.

65. Ibid., August 11, 1902.

66. Ibid., October 24, 1904.

expenditure to \$28,000, nearly twice the amount (\$15,000) initially voted.⁶⁷ After deciding against suing the Stuart company for its delays, the city was itself threatened with suit and forced to pay nearly the full sum demanded under the terms of the contract.⁶⁸ Moreover, the old plant for which the corporation had paid \$5,000 turned out to be worth one-tenth of that amount.⁶⁹ By 1906 the growth of the city required additions costing a further \$25,000. In the same year it became necessary to move the plant from Sixth Avenue East to the pump house of the new waterworks system on River West at a further cost of \$10,000.⁷⁰ There were other delays, and the city borrowed a total of \$77,000 for the plant by 1906.⁷¹ By the fall of that year the plant was already so near capacity that the Times suggested: "Next winter...the citizens may get orders to turn out their lights between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. while the street lights are on, or...a compromise might be effected whereby the street lights would not be turned on until the happy citizens had retired."⁷²

67. Ibid., December 12, 1904.

68. Times, January 12, 1905; AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, Fire, Water, Light, and Police Committee Minutes, February 7, March 1, 1905.

69. Times, December 12, 1904.

70. Ibid., June 21, 1906.

71. The total included the original sum of \$15,000 voted in August, 1902, and \$62,000 borrowed in July, 1906, to cover a deficit of \$25,000 and the cost of additions and moving of the plant.

72. Times, October 25, 1906.

Prosperity also permitted action on the old problem of fire protection. Spurred by the knowledge that even Saskatoon had ordered equipment, the citizens voted \$7,000 in 1903 for a large gasoline engine and a chemical engine, with hose, tanks, and an engine house.⁷³ On its first test, the gasoline engine worked even better than the salesman had promised.⁷⁴

Unfortunately this burst of energy was followed by a lapse into inaction. The fire hall was not built; a chemical engine was not bought; and too little hose was obtained.⁷⁵ In November, 1904, when a house burned down only a few blocks from where the engine was stored, no alarm was given and no effort was made to bring out the equipment. It was then discovered that the volunteer brigade had ceased to exist.⁷⁶ Businessmen complained, too, that insurance rates had remained almost prohibitive.

A city without a fire brigade was an absurdity of course, and one was organized again in January, 1905.⁷⁷ Four days after its first practice, the new brigade passed its first test with high honours. Summoned by the brewery whistle and the clang of the fire bell, it hurried to the office of the

73. Advocate, September 21 and 28, October 12, 1903.

74. Ibid., July 4, 1904.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., November 21, 1904.

77. Times, January 26, 1905.

Golden Lion Brewery at River and Sixth Avenue East. After the building had been "somewhat wrecked...to get at the fire," as the Times put it, the flames were doused easily with two powerful streams from the engine and the help of a bucket brigade.⁷⁸

The trouble now was that swarms of spectators got in the firemen's way. Fire police in white armbands were expected to hold back the crowd at the next fire but they failed to turn up for duty. The firemen took their revenge, however, by prosecuting the most obstinate spectators, and this action was effective.⁷⁹

The city's equipment was too primitive to cope with the kind of fire that destroyed Telford's saw mill in April, 1905,⁸⁰ and the volunteer brigade was not a model of discipline and efficiency. In the fire of August, 1905, that wiped out Kidd's Roller Mill, the firemen tried to drag the engine to the river bank by a "totally unapproachable" path, while the wiser ones argued fruitlessly. On this occasion there were so many delays that the engine did not begin throwing water until the fire had been put out by a bucket brigade and the pumps of the Windsor Hotel.⁸¹ A fire hall was completed in the fall of 1905, but there was no caretaker or fireman on regular duty

78. Ibid., February 2, 1905.

79. Ibid., February 2 and 9, April 27, May 4, 1905.

80. Ibid., April 20, 1905.

81. Ibid., August 24, 1905.

and the brigade had to oil the engine before going to a fire.⁸² Even the "magnificent" performance in which the brigade's horses galloped three miles to Telford's saw mill in the east end showed a need for improvement. The engine stopped before the fire was out, and by the time it was started again the blaze had gained considerable headway (December, 1905).⁸³

No less a necessity than fire protection was a water-works and sewerage system. In September, 1904, the council received a full report from a Toronto engineer named Willis Chipman.⁸⁴ The report suggested that a waterworks system costing \$105,000 would be self-sustaining in five years, and that the savings on insurance, and on water which then cost each family \$30 a year, would more than offset an increase in taxes. Chipman estimated also that the sewerage cost of \$30,000 would be almost covered by a moderate frontage tax of \$1.50 per foot. In March, 1905, both projects were approved almost unanimously by the ratepayers.⁸⁵ Eight months later Mayor Cowan turned the first sod⁸⁶ on a project which was to cause the city more grief than the light plant.

82. Ibid., December 7, 1905.

83. Ibid., December 28, 1905.

84. Ibid., September 15, 1904; Advocate, September 12, 1904.

85. Times, March 30, 1905.

86. Ibid., November 16, 1905.

No alarm was felt about the likelihood that sanitary as well as storm sewers would discharge their contents within the town before all its downstream areas were served by water mains. One reason for complacency was that in 1903 a second major contribution had been made to the miseducation of the citizens. When the Dominion Government renewed its offer to build a combined sewer on Church Street, the Advocate again had defended the cause of "progress" in stubborn ignorance of the difference between the two types of sewage, and with more than a little sophistry. "The opponents of the measure," it asserted scornfully, "are fearful that their already anything but pure source of water...shall become slightly more impure; overlooking the fact that if the sewer...is put down it will...hasten the town...to supply pure drinking water."⁸⁷ With this and other blasts, the apostle of ignorance won another victory of words when the enlightened few failed to argue their case with equal volume, although the sewer project was delayed by a petition and eventually stopped by the medical health officer.⁸⁸ It was no wonder, however, that error prevailed after 1904. The citizens were assured by Chipman, "the eminent engineer from Toronto," that "the volume of the river is so immense...that it cannot become polluted by sewage."⁸⁹

87. Advocate, March 30, 1903.

88. Ibid., March 30, April 20, 1903.

89. Ibid., September 12, 1904.

Two years before the waterworks system was started, Prince Albert displayed one less expensive symbol of urban status in a granolithic sidewalk on King Street.⁹⁰ Although believed to last fifty years⁹¹ (some on River and Central are serviceable after close to sixty), the new walks were not readily accepted because of doubts that they were resistant to cold weather and because of a thrifty conservatism verging on apathy.

But even if the Prince Albert of 1906 presented a muddy, dirty, and backwoods appearance, few citizens doubted that it would grow rapidly into a bustling, modern city. Already ascheme far bigger than light plants and waterworks was in the air, lent substance by the building of three steamboats at Prince Albert in 1904.⁹² In 1903 one optimist predicted that with the restoration of water transportation on the Saskatchewan, Prince Albert "could land freight...from Winnipeg for...one half [the rail rates, and] have the railways tumbling over one another to get in."⁹³ In March, 1905, the Board of Trade inquired about removal of the greatest obstacle to navigation between Edmonton and Grand Rapids: the chain of boulder-strewn rapids 23 miles east of the city known as La

90. Ibid., June 29, August 31, 1903.

91. Ibid., October 12, 1903.

92. Ibid., January 18, June 20, 1904.

93. Ibid., June 1, 1903.

Colle Falls.⁹⁴

In the same year Prince Albert eyes were first turned on the hydro-electric potential of the North Saskatchewan. During the summer Willis Chipman was taken to La Colle Falls on the suggestion of Alfred E. Doak, a young lawyer who was to be one of the scheme's most active promoters.⁹⁵ Chipman admitted afterwards that he was "very favorably impressed." His words were enough to evoke the jubilant prediction of the Times that "Prince Albert's Water Power Will Light [the] Saskatchewan Valley."⁹⁶ Urged by the same journal to obtain a franchise for development of the site before "some politician capitalist peddles it to the highest bidder,"⁹⁷ the city council decided on January 15, 1906, to do so. The state of mind prevailing among the citizens at this point is illustrated by the declaration of one alderman that there was enough power at La Colle Falls to turn the city upside down.⁹⁸

Under the surface of frivolous adventurism, however, three significant ideas were already implanted in the public mind.

94. Prince Albert City Clerk's Papers, file 914-8, J.H. Lamont, M.P. to the Department of the Interior, March 28, 1905. City Clerk's Papers cited hereafter as P.A.C.C.P.

95. Times, May 25, November 30, 1905; January 11, 1906.

96. Ibid., November 30, 1905.

97. Ibid., January 11, 1906.

98. Ibid., January 18, 1906.

One was that only a lack of capital⁹⁹ prevented the recovery of huge quantities of the cheapest kind of power; another was that the power utility must be developed and owned by the municipality;¹⁰⁰ and a third was that no obstacle was to discourage a city which was lagging noticeably in the race for wealth and civic distinction. The scheme also fitted well into the future of a city surrounded by supposedly unlimited resources of timber and minerals, a city that already was calling itself "the recognized manufacturing centre of Saskatchewan," and with cheap power might become the "Hull and Ottawa of the Northwest."¹⁰¹

This large and momentous project was to be carried out by a city in which the decision to buy a municipal bell made headlines.¹⁰² It was to be managed by a council who argued hotly about whether the door of the fire hall stable should have springs,¹⁰³ and who, as recently as March, 1904, had earned the contempt of bankers by suddenly shifting the corporation's account from one bank to another, and then trying

99. See the opinion of Chipman, quoted in the Times of January 18, 1906, that the work would be easily accomplished if the required capital were available.

100. Mayor J.E. Bradshaw said in January, 1906, that he certainly favoured the scheme as he was "a firm believer in municipal ownership and the control of all public utilities by and for the people." See ibid., January 11, 1906.

101. Ibid., February 22, 1906.

102. Ibid., February 8, 1906.

103. Ibid.

as suddenly to move it back.¹⁰⁴ But ready or not, Prince Albert was entering the busiest, most prosperous, and most important eight years of its history.

104. Advocate, March 14, 1904.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SLIPPING BEHIND, 1906 - 1910

In the five years after 1905 the settlement boom gathered speed. As in the early years of the century, northern Saskatchewan won a sizable number of the 408,000 immigrants who entered the Prairie Provinces.¹ An average of 1,700 homesteads were claimed yearly in Prince Albert agency,² and this number was little reduced by the North American depression in 1907 which coincided with a crop season described as "the most unfavourable in the history of the country."³ One of the most popular new districts was the Shell valley, especially after completion of the Prince Albert bridge and beginning of the Canadian Northern line to Battleford in 1909.

Prince Albert remained above all a farming centre. The years following 1905, however, saw the first intensive investigation and exploitation of the natural wealth of its northern hinterland. Under the impetus of the settlement boom, lumber output at Prince Albert reached a peak in 1909 of some

1. Canada Year Book, 1915, p.116.

2. C.S.P. 1907, No.25, i, p.22; C.S.P. 1908, No.25, i, p.22; C.S.P. 1909, No.25, i, p.24; C.S.P. 1910, No.25, i, p.35; C.S.P. 1911, No.25, i, p.30.

3. C.S.P. 1909, No.25, i, p.24.

50 million feet,⁴ worth close to one million dollars.⁵ By 1910 the lumbering industry which employed 2,000 men in the winter months was almost monopolized by the Prince Albert Lumber Company, which operated "the largest and most complete mill" in the Prairie Provinces.⁶ Of less visible but substantial benefit to Prince Albert was a northern fur industry with a production worth \$117,535 in 1910,⁷ the bulk of which was shipped through the city. Much was expected, too, of a fishing enterprise centered at Montreal and Red Deer (now Waskesiu) lakes which employed 250 men in the winter of 1906.⁸

In five years of continuous expansion, the city doubled in population to about 9,000, although the 1911 census showed

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4. Local production in the year ending March 31, 1908, was 43.4 million feet. Statistics for individual companies are not given for 1909, but the total for Prince Albert agency shows an increase over the previous year of 10.8 million feet. See C.S.P. 1909, No.25, i, p.63; C.S.P. 1910, No.25, i, p.90.
 5. The average price of manufactured lumber in Prince Albert agency in 1909 was \$17.54 a thousand board feet. See C.S.P. 1910, No.25, i, p.90.
 6. C.S.P. 1906-7, No.25, i, p.70. See a description of the company's property and operations in the Prince Albert Herald, May 23, 1912. (A copy of this issue is held by the Prince Albert Historical Society).
 7. 1911 Dominion census.
 8. C.S.P. 1906-7, No.22, pp. xlii, 55.

only 6,254.⁹ There was attractive proof of its growth and solidity in the building of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church (1906) and Prince Albert Collegiate (1909), a sprinkling of office blocks, and many fine homes, particularly in the district surrounding the collegiate. Other signs of the city's new urban status were the first labour meeting (August, 1906),¹⁰ the first serious unemployment in 1907, and the first strike in its history by the labourers on the waterworks system (July, 1908).¹¹ There was also a fore-taste of dizzier times ahead in the minor land boom of 1907, when local agents sold lots which were under water or on land as far as two miles beyond the city limits to outside speculators.¹²

The expansion and prosperity of these years were as

9. In 1906 the census-takers were said to have missed the east end and many persons in other parts of the city. They also omitted the mill of the Prince Albert Lumber Company which then lay outside the city limits. See Times, August 23, 1906. Similar omissions were probably made in 1911, although the property of the lumber company was then inside the city.

The Dominion census of 1911 placed the population of Saskatoon at 12,004, 5,000 less than the local Board of Trade believed it to be. A private census taken a few months after the official one counted 18,096 persons. See Bruce Peel and Eric Knowles, The Saskatoon Story, 1882-1952 (Saskatoon, 1952), p.73.

10. Times, August 23, 1906.

11. Ibid., July 8, 1908.

12. Ibid., July 18, 1907.

nothing beside the visions of future grandeur projected by bold citizens. Their hopes rested not only on the continuance of rapid settlement, but on the prospect that Prince Albert might still become a great railway centre. They had faith, too, that the development of northern resources would proceed as rapidly as the simultaneous movement in which the Canadian Prairies were turned into one of the world's great agricultural regions. Such thoughts produced the not unreasonable prophecy in 1906 that Prince Albert and Regina would become the two largest cities of Saskatchewan.¹³ These hopes also led to the more extravagant prediction that, within a decade or two, Prince Albert would lie south of the bulk of Saskatchewan's population.¹⁴

At first there were encouraging signs that the next stage of railway building would go far towards undoing the calamitous results of the earlier period. The completion of the Canadian Northern was of considerable benefit to the city, providing direct communication with Winnipeg and bringing an immediate drop in freight rates corresponding to four cents a bushel.¹⁵ The effects of competition were felt only till December, 1906, when the C.P.R. transferred the Prince Albert

13. Ibid., May 31, 1906.

14. Regina Leader, January 17, 1906, quoted in J.E. Murray, "The Provincial Capital Controversy in Saskatchewan," Saskatchewan History, Vol.V, No.3 (autumn, 1952), p.93.

15. Times, January 25, April 26, 1906.

branch to the Canadian Northern. In July, 1906, however, the Grand Trunk Pacific had secured a charter to build to Prince Albert from Young on its main line,¹⁶ and Senator T.O. Davis then believed that the C.P.R. would proceed immediately with the Manitoba and North-Western.¹⁷ Although Davis was proved wrong, the C.P.R. had reached Lanigan from the south by 1908,¹⁸ and had obtained authority for a branch to Prince Albert that promised to give direct connection with Regina.¹⁹ Most exciting to local boosters was the prospect of a line joining the first section of the long-awaited Hudson Bay Railway which the Canadian Northern had built as far as The Pas in 1906. A local company, formed in 1906 to build a line to The Pas,²⁰ reached the point of announcing plans to lay 60 miles of steel in the following year.²¹ This company collapsed, but it was followed by three others, including the

16. Statutes of Canada, 1906, 6 Edw. VII, c.99.

17. Times, July 26, 1906.

18. C.S.P. 1910, No.20b, p.53.

19. Statutes of Canada, 1906-7, 6-7 Edw. VII, c.74. The C.P.R. reached Bulyea from the east in 1906 and built northward to Lanigan in the following two years. The 19-mile line from Bulyea to Valeport, which gave direct connection between Regina and Lanigan, was not built till 1912. See C.S.P. 1913, No.20b, p.5.

20. The Prince Albert and North Saskatchewan Railway was chartered by 6 Edw. VII, c.144 (Statutes of Canada, 1906). Its president was Judge T.H. McGuire.

21. Times, January 17, 1907.

Hudson Bay and Pacific which secured charters to build all the way to the Bay.²² If railways had worked miracles for other towns, it seemed possible that Prince Albert might even become an important station on a busy road between Europe and the Pacific Coast.²³

It was unfortunate, however, that by 1910 these expectations had been largely belied, and Prince Albert seemed far from becoming a great city even in Saskatchewan. The 1911 census revealed that, in ten years, Prince Albert had fallen from second to the fourth place in Saskatchewan,²⁴ a place it has held since then.

The reasons for Prince Albert's relative decline are not far to seek. By 1910 the uncertainty of a growth and prosperity based on northern resources was evident. The natural wealth of the north was neither unlimited nor awaiting only the taking, and Prince Albert lay in an unfavourable position to benefit from even a rising demand for the products of the north. As the centre of a comparatively small area of less fertile farmland, it remained till 1914 an object of only secondary importance to railway builders.

22. The Saskatchewan Valley and Hudson Bay Railway was chartered by 6-7 Edw. VII, c.132 (Statutes, 1906-7), the Prince Albert and Hudson Bay Railway by 8-9 Edw. VII, c.122 (Statutes, 1908-9). The Hudson Bay and Pacific Railway was chartered originally by 60 Vic., c.7 (Statutes, 1896).

23. Times, August 8, 1907.

24. The census figures were: Regina—30, 213, Moose Jaw—13,823, Saskatoon—12,004, Prince Albert—6,254.

Perhaps most ominous for the city's future in 1910 was the state of its timber resource. A method of cutting which left no usable tree standing and the ravages of fires in the cut-over wilderness had ruined the richest timber lands for years to come. Already lumber men had moved far up the Sturgeon, Shell, and Little Red to stands of timber which, because of their distance from the mills, were steadily more costly to bring out. By 1911 three of the major operators, William Cowan, J.H. Sanderson, and the Sturgeon Lake Lumber Company, had stopped work, and local production had dropped to 25.7 million feet.²⁵ The urban boom then beginning was to restore this total almost to its earlier height, and large-scale operations which brought substantial benefit to the city were started that season at Big River. But many other districts of the West and many in the East possessed heavy forests, and were nearer than Prince Albert to the principal markets in the central United States. William Cowan once remarked that "on the long hauls the railway companies get more out of the lumber business than the owners do."²⁶ So high were the freight rates that before 1910 no company showed serious interest in building a wood products factory

25. C.S.P. 1912, No.25, i, p.112.

26. Times, September 27, 1906.

in the Prince Albert district.²⁷

For different reasons, the picture was no brighter in the development of other resources. The fishing industry was subject to overproduction and unexpected falls in demand. It was hampered also by bad roads, severe weather, and licensing regulations which prevented the development of a steady export trade. During the five seasons ending in 1910, fishing provided an uncertain livelihood for an average of only 125 men.²⁸ District production fell steadily from a value of \$55,600 in 1907²⁹ to \$12,705 in 1914.³⁰ Though fairly prosperous during this period, the fur industry also was subject to shrinking markets and falling prices. One industry which failed to develop at all before 1910 was mining. The first period of active prospecting in Saskatchewan which produced a gold rush to Lac la Ronge in 1909 had brought no significant finds.

27. The sole company which showed interest was one identified in the Times as a large American firm. It was supposed to have offered in the fall of 1907 to build a \$100,000 match factory. There is a hint in a later report that the company was angling for a bonus but nothing further was heard of it. Times, December 24, 1907, February 12, 1908.

28. The problems of the northern fishing industry are discussed in the annual reports of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the years 1906 to 1914. See C.S.P. 1906-7, No.22, pp. 52, 53, Paper No.22 in each of C.S.P. 1907-8 to 1914, and C.S.P. 1915, No.39, p.231.

29. C.S.P. 1907-8, No.22, p.206.

30. C.S.P. 1915, No.39, p.242.

If these facts were almost hidden by Prince Albert's growth, and if better returns from the Northland might still be hoped for, nothing was plainer by 1910 than that the railways were not "tumbling over one another" to reach the city. Although William Mackenzie had once said that the Canadian Northern would not stop twenty-four hours in Prince Albert,³¹ more than three years passed after its arrival there before the railway completed a bridge and began building towards Battleford. Even then the Canadian Northern paused at Shellbrook to build a line to Big River, and closed the Battleford gap only in January, 1914.³² By 1910 the Grand Trunk Pacific had obtained two extensions of time³³ and had built only 25 miles of its Young branch.³⁴ By the same year the C.P.R. had postponed indefinitely the construction of its Lanigan line, and the Manitoba and North-Western was no closer to completion than twenty years earlier. Whatever the intentions of the Hudson Bay and Pacific, the plans of this and other companies to build towards the Bay faced serious

31. Advocate, September 7, 1903.

32. Saskatoon Phoenix, January 20, 1914.

33. Statutes of Canada, 1908-9, 8-9 Edw. VII, c.86; Statutes, 1909-10, 9-10 Edw. VII, c.103.

34. Report of the Railway, Telegraph and Telephone Department of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1912, p.19.

obstacles in the size of the task and the likelihood by 1910 that the road would be finished by the Dominion Government. The first decade of intensive railway-building on the Prairies ended with Prince Albert merely a terminus of three branch lines and an uncompleted fourth. In the same period, however, had been built the three main lines and the second major branch which established Saskatoon as the "Hub City" of northern and central Saskatchewan.

The poor position of Prince Albert in the contest for railways was brought home most clearly in the negotiations of 1906-7 over the construction of a bridge and continuation of a branch to Battleford.

For seven months after the arrival of the Canadian Northern (January, 1906), it seemed likely that the railway would be promptly extended. In April, 1906, the Government announced its willingness to share the cost of a combined rail and traffic bridge.³⁵ In August the city responded promptly to an apparent hint of a railway representative that the Canadian Northern would start work within a month if \$25,000 were given by the city towards the cost of a bridge.³⁶ A by-law to authorize such a bonus was immediately prepared, and the offer was transmitted to the railway. The answer was embarrassing

35. Attorney General J.H. Lamont so assured a Board of Trade executive meeting on April 20, 1906. See Times, April 26, 1906.

36. Ibid., August 23, 1906.

to the city fathers. Referring to Mayor Cowan's forgotten letter of 1905, William Mackenzie asked that the "agreement" made then be carried out, and assured the city that a second bonus had not been asked for (September 3).³⁷ But the council were anxious to do all possible to further the progress of the railway. Consequently they simply changed the by-law already prepared to authorize the bridge bonus, and had it approved by the ratepayers (October 26, 1906).³⁸ According to the Times, the popular understanding was that "in consideration of this \$25,000 expression of good will, the C.N.R. will hasten the construction of a bridge."³⁹

Nevertheless, uneasiness soon arose over the degree of "haste" which the city had actually secured. It was also difficult to answer the criticism of J.F. Betts (October 24) that "the city had nothing to assure them that the structure would be a traffic bridge."⁴⁰ In February, 1907, fears on both points were borne out when J.E. Bradshaw professed to have learned from Donald Mann that the railway preferred not to build a combined bridge after all.⁴¹

37. Ibid., September 6, 1906.

38. Ibid., November 8, 1906.

39. Ibid., October 11, 1906.

40. Ibid., October 25, 1906.

41. Ibid., February 28, 1907.

Yet there was no bitterness against the Canadian Northern, partly because it was feared that any attempt to interfere with the railway's plans might bring about the loss of the bridge.⁴² Instead, interest arose in the building of a bridge designed for traffic alone, like those under construction by the Province at Saskatoon and Battleford.⁴³ A traffic bridge was favoured also by the Government engineer, A.J. McPherson, who inspected the possible sites in March, 1907, and estimated the cost at \$150,000.⁴⁴ In January, Mackenzie had offered to build a bridge with a single traffic lane between the rails for a provincial grant of \$100,000.⁴⁵ The addition of traffic wings would have cost \$39,000. Thus the building of a traffic bridge would have cost the Province only \$11,000 more than MacKenzie's demand. As McPherson pointed out to his superior, the city bonus not yet paid to

42. This opinion was expressed by S.J. Donaldson in ibid. It was also realized that the district along the proposed line to Battleford might be served from Saskatoon. Judge McGuire made this point at a public meeting on April 29, 1907, called to discuss the bridge question. "It would be dangerous to interfere with arrangements in progress. There was the...danger of having another railroad cut us off." See ibid., May 2, 1907.

43. Ibid., February 28, 1907. The city councillors were so eager to secure a traffic bridge that they wired the absent Mayor R.S. Cook for permission to sell enough land to pay the city's share of the cost.

44. AS, Turgeon Papers, 9(c), McPherson to the Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, March 20, 1907. The combined bridge was to be built near Second Avenue West. McPherson noted that a traffic bridge at First Avenue West would be far more convenient to the city.

45. Ibid. Mackenzie to Premier Walter Scott, January 25, 1907, copy.

the railway could also be diverted to this purpose.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the Government showed no interest in building a traffic bridge. It also refused to make any commitment while negotiations with the railway were in progress, and the city was powerless to influence the Government's position. Moreover, it soon became clear that the city was unable to affect the railway's plans either. "The C.N.R. may build or may not," concluded the Times in April, 1907. "The bridge will depend entirely on the requirements of their system and not on the wishes of...Prince Albert."⁴⁷

Negotiations dragged on till July, 1907. Finally, the Government offered \$100,000 for a bridge to be built entirely by the railway and furnished with ten-foot traffic wings. In presenting this offer to Mackenzie, Premier Scott protested that the size of the bonus to be paid for a combined bridge could be justified only as an incentive for the extension of the railway. The Government would have really preferred to build a traffic bridge.⁴⁸ The terms thus offered were accepted by the railway.⁴⁹ The agreement was later amended to

46. Ibid., McPherson to the Deputy Commissioner, March 20, 1907.

47. Times, April 25, 1907.

48. AS, Scott Papers, pp. 52609-10, Scott to Mackenzie, July 29, 1907.

49. Ibid., p.52611, Mackenzie to J.H. Lamont (telegram). August 3, 1907; Times, August 8, 1907.

provide for twelve-foot wings, and the Province paid a total of \$110,000.⁵⁰

The structure thus fixed on was far superior to the one initially suggested by Mackenzie. Nevertheless, the city had obviously emerged from these negotiations third best. With an additional contribution of \$40,000 from the Province, or of only \$15,000 if the city bonus had been used for this purpose, Prince Albert might have had a traffic bridge. Instead, the city paid \$25,000 for a second-class bridge which was to remain its only direct link with the north bank for fifty-one years; a divisional point and workshops which the railway had promised years earlier and could hardly have placed elsewhere; and the promise of an immediate start on the Battleford branch. Yet not even bonuses totalling \$135,000 increased the Canadian Northern's eagerness to continue the line. The bridge was opened in April, 1909, five months after the promised date.⁵¹ No steel was laid beyond the river till 1909, and, as noted, the Battleford line took almost five years to complete.

Another reason for the decline of Prince Albert's position after 1905 was its failure to become the site of either the provincial capital or the provincial university. The designation of Regina as provisional capital of the new province

50. Public Accounts, 1909, p.112; ibid., 1910, p.93; Annual Report of the Department of Public Works, 1907-8, p.86.

51. Saskatoon Phoenix, April 19, 1909.

prepared the way, in theory at least, for an open struggle for the honour among the four leading towns. The contest, however, lacked reality in Prince Albert long before it became known that Premier Scott would make it a party issue. Prince Albert's battle was waged with a mixture of sincerity, naiveté, and frivolousness. Typical of the short campaign was the city council's decision (January 15, 1906) to offer a free site for the government buildings, a decision that prompted Alderman Andrew Holmes to suggest that, while Regina and Saskatoon "were quarrelling about it, Prince Albert could slip in and secure the prize."⁵² Predicting that Prince Albert would be a great railway and manufacturing centre, the city's spokesmen praised especially its central location and its incomparable climate and scenery. "People would come from far and near to see the Provincial Parliament Buildings on Prince Albert Hill," boasted the Times, "While they wouldn't go two miles to see them...on Regina prairie or Saskatoon's knoll."⁵³ In describing a climate where "sunshiny days [were] the rule about seven days a week throughout the year," the same journal added: "This is urged in all earnestness because the sunshine will make the legislators more cheerful and they will make better laws."⁵⁴ The campaign

52. Times, January 18, 1906.

53. Ibid., February 1, 1906.

54. Ibid.

also contained an element of spite. When the members of the Legislature toured the city before going on to **S**askatoon on May 5, 1906, Prince Albert citizens took the opportunity to heap scorn on "Boom Town."⁵⁵

Prince Albert had no chance, however, of winning the prize. When T.O. Davis ventured to put in a word with Premier **S**cott, he was warned to keep out of "a losing fight" (May 3). Prince Albert could not muster more than five votes in the Legislature.⁵⁶ Civic jealousy also made the premier's way easier. As he later told Davis, **S**cott learned "very conclusively" on the excursion that "unless Prince Albert could get the capital, they would far rather have it at Regina than at **S**askatoon."⁵⁷ Party loyalty and prudence were strong enough to ensure the acceptance by Attorney General J.H. Lamont of **S**cott's decision to leave the capital at Regina. Immediately after the vote was taken in the Legislature (May 23, 1906), Mayor J.E. Bradshaw wired congratulations to the mayor of Regina.⁵⁸

In contrast to the weakness of its position in the capital controversy, Prince Albert had some chance of winning

55. Ibid., May 10, 1906.

56. AS, Scott Papers, p.7130, **S**cott to T.O. Davis, May 3, 1906.

57. Ibid., p.7135, **S**cott to Davis, May 30, 1906.

58. Ibid., Times, May 31, 1906.

the provincial university. As Saskatchewan's oldest city and its earliest educational centre, Prince Albert was the site of an institution whose powers, theoretically, were unimpaired by twenty years of disuse.

The initiative in preparing the city's case was taken by the Anglican Church. Since 1887 Emmanuel College had functioned merely as an Indian school. In 1905, however, Archdeacon G.E. Lloyd began to press for the restoration of the College to its original status as a training school for clergy.⁵⁹ In June, 1906, the Synod of the Diocese of Saskatchewan decided to revive the charter of the original University of Saskatchewan, and with it Bishop McLean's scheme under which the divinity school was to serve as its first college.⁶⁰ Some popular interest was aroused also at this stage. In October, 1906, the city council joined with the Board of Trade in petitioning the Scott Government to consider Prince Albert as a site for the new institution.⁶¹

But little could be done to prevent the introduction of a bill on March 1, 1907, to establish a provincial university bearing the same name as the original institution, and having exclusive powers to grant degrees in all faculties but theology.

59. Journal of the Preceedings of the Tenth Meeting of the Synod of the Diocese of Saskatchewan, 1905, p.56.

60. Journal...of the Eleventh Meeting of the Synod..., 1906, pp. 22-23; Times, June 28, 1906.

61. See Scott's reply in AS, Scott Papers, pp. 36214-15.

The plea of Bishop J.A. Newnham that "at least the proposed university should be established in Prince Albert," or some means be found of merging the old idea in the new⁶² was met only by the suggestion that Emmanuel College affiliate with the provincial university.⁶³ On April 3, 1907, the bill became law,⁶⁴ despite a stronger protest from the senate of the old University, which met in Prince Albert on March 25 and served notice that the rights granted it by Dominion charter would be defended.⁶⁵

The Bishop, at least, seemed undiscouraged by the Government's obvious determination and by its obvious confidence that provincial control of education put the question entirely within its own jurisdiction. Although he probably feared to drag the Church into costly litigation, Newnham told the Synod on June 10, 1907, that Emmanuel College would continue to perfect its statutes and organization as a theological college, and "if we see fit, as an Arts Faculty, or any other, enroll students,...grant degrees...and leave on the Provincial

62. AS, Calder Papers, Schools, No.1, pp. 448-49, Newnham to J.A. Calder, March 5, 1907.

63. J.E. Murray, "The Contest for the University of Saskatchewan," Saskatchewan History, Vol. XII, No.1 (winter, 1959), p.4.

64. Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1907, 7 Edw. VII, c.24.

65. Regina Morning Leader, March 28, 1907; Times, April 4, 1907.

Legislature the onus of disproving our rights."⁶⁶ He called for unity in the diocese "in the maintenance of our rights and in seeing that the original intention of the founder and the original terms of the charter be honestly carried out in the way best for the diocese and country at large."⁶⁷ The first step on this path was taken in the fall of 1907, when the Saskatchewan Theological College was opened in the vacant land titles building in downtown Prince Albert, to become "the first faculty of the University in active work."⁶⁸ Sixty students, including the fifty-five catechists whom Archdeacon Lloyd had brought from England, were enrolled in the first term, and in 1908 the Bishop looked forward to greater numbers and a better building.⁶⁹

Strong as its claim might appear to be, the Church's defiance did not deter the Province from proceeding with the organization of the state institution. Nor had the Church begun or called for a powerful campaign to win the new University for Prince Albert. In leaving the choice of site to the university board of governors, the Scott Government sought to avert a political struggle. In Prince Albert the implications

66. Journal...of the Twelfth Meeting of the Synod..., 1907, p.25.

67. Ibid.

68. Journal...of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Synod..., 1908, p.17.

69. Ibid., pp. 17, 28.

of this decision were little appreciated. Prince Albert men who became members of the university convocation would have a voice in electing the university senate, which in turn chose five of the nine governors. Only thirteen university graduates, however, about one-third of the possible total in the city, became members of the first convocation. In a body of more than 400 persons, they were unable to elect their own candidates, Bishop Newnham and James McKay, to the senate. A single representative of the city, Andrew McDonald, was elected to the board of governors. It was only partially a victory for Prince Albert when the Government shrewdly chose McKay as one of its three appointees to the board.⁷⁰

The subsequent efforts of Prince Albert to win the University also lacked the strength and effectiveness of its southern rivals. The campaign consisted mainly of a petition to the board of governors signed locally by 812 men and by 743 other residents of northern Saskatchewan.⁷¹ The location of the university became an issue in the provincial election of August, 1908, when Archdeacon Lloyd asked the people of his diocese to vote for candidates who promised to work for

70. W.C. Murray, "The University of Saskatchewan," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Third Series, Vol. XXXV (1941), sect. 2, p.105; Times, September 19, 1907; J.E. Murray, "The Contest for the University of Saskatchewan," loc.cit pp. 5-7.

71. Ibid., p.10.

establishment of the provincial university in the diocese.⁷² There was a flourish of editorials on the natural advantages and the educational history of Prince Albert, and more on the same themes in the speeches of Lloyd, Mayor R.S. Cook, and Judge McGuire on the occasion of the visit of the board of governors (September 2, 1908).⁷³ Like the agitation over the capital, the campaign was not free from jealousy and absurdity. On the board's visit, McGuire decried the claims of "bleak, dreary, windswept towns," and special contempt was poured out on "Pile o' Bones."⁷⁴ One of Cook's pronouncements on this occasion was that the wheat belt ended at Stanley, 280 miles north of Prince Albert (actually 160 miles), where a prize-winning sample had recently been grown.

Probably one reason for the weakness of Prince Albert's efforts was a lingering resentment of the old University's denominational character, a legacy of the suspicion which had arisen soon after its birth in 1883. A public meeting called on July 14, 1907, "to devise a common policy for the establishment of a University at Prince Albert" was attended by eleven persons, of whom four were Anglican clergymen and at least

72. Regina Daily Standard, August 8, 1908.

73. Times, September 9, 1908.

74. W.C. Murray's reminiscences in The Sheaf, November 24, 1921.

two others were of that faith.⁷⁵ A plan was formed at this meeting to call representatives of all school boards in northern Saskatchewan to a conference on the question, but it came to nothing.

No less damaging to Prince Albert's chances was a sectional loyalty at odds with the city's own interests. Regina's victory in the capital controversy had belatedly roused bitter sentiments in Prince Albert, and jealousy of Saskatoon almost vanished before the danger that northern Saskatchewan might lose the university as well.⁷⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that after early ballots had eliminated all but Regina and Saskatoon, Prince Albert's two representatives on the board of governors should have used their votes to win the University for Saskatoon (April 7, 1909),⁷⁷ or that satisfaction over this should be shown in Prince Albert.⁷⁸

The citizens were not merely driven by sectional interest and jealousy to embrace the lesser of two evils. There prevailed also among them a kind of vague public-spiritedness, an anxiety to do nothing that might obstruct or rouse

75. Times, July 18, 1907.

76. One sign of such sentiments was the reprinting by the Times of an editorial from the Saskatoon Phoenix supporting that city's case. Inappropriately the article was headed "Saskatchewan University for Prince Albert." See The Saturday Times, April 25, 1908.

77. Murray, "The Contest for the University of Saskatchewan," loc.cit. p.20.

78. Morning Leader, April 14, 1909.

bitterness over the foundation of the university, and a faith that Prince Albert's case would be justly considered.⁷⁹

Certainly there were higher aims than the furtherance of one city's ambitions, and it was these, in part, which persuaded the Anglican Church to accept a compromise. The Church's course was foreshadowed at the Synod of May, 1908, when, minutes after describing the restoration of the divinity college, Bishop Newnham expressed "a strong hope that before another Synod meets the Provincial University will be located ...somewhere in the Diocese, either here [at Saskatoon] or at Prince Albert, and that we shall no longer have to maintain a small unaided Church University in opposition to that of the Province." He hoped, instead, "that on honorable terms we shall be able to merge ours in theirs, and thus to establish our Theological College more firmly as a Faculty of the Provincial University."⁸⁰ The Synod went on to appoint a committee of equal numbers from Prince Albert and Saskatoon "to pull the University into some city in the diocese, it is immaterial which."⁸¹ When Archdeacon Lloyd intervened in the provincial

79. See the reaction of the Times, October 21, 1908, to a report from Winnipeg that the board of governors considered Regina the most likely choice.

80. Journal...of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Synod..., 1909, p.21.

81. Times, May 20, 1908.

election campaign, it was in favour of candidates who would support either amendment of the University Act (to protect the rights of the old institution) or location of the university within the Diocese of Saskatchewan.⁸²

It might, finally, have been judged obedience to the wishes of the first University's founder when Emmanuel College at last became part of a large, well-endowed institution, offering the variety of courses and the academic surroundings which a tiny denominational college could not hope to provide in Prince Albert. At any rate, Emmanuel College moved willingly to Saskatoon in the fall of 1909.

The Church's acceptance of the decision drew attention to the fact that, in 1909, Prince Albert ceased to be the chief educational centre of the province. It was another proof that the first decade of the struggle for supremacy in northern Saskatchewan had ended in favour of Saskatoon.

As the decade ended, no citizens paused to take stock of Prince Albert's position. None added up its comparatively poor showing in the race for immigrants and railways, the disappointing returns from its natural resources, the failure to attract any of the large operations needed to make it a manufacturing centre, and the failure to secure the capital and university. Instead, in an atmosphere then verging on the giddiness of the West's greatest boom, city boosters recited, with renewed conviction, the old slogans about a civic

82. Daily Standard, August 8, 1908.

greatness based on the bounty of nature. If a wide gap existed between myth and reality, however, it was not unreasonable to believe that capital, railways, and the continued growth of Western and other markets would soon turn the Northland into a teeming industrial empire. The reality, in other words, might still be created by the bold action which seemed to be yielding such striking results to Prince Albert's rivals. Great things might still be wrought in its part of the spacious West, if the opportunity were seized.

II

Whatever doubts arose over Prince Albert's future, they failed to prevent solid progress in its conversion into a comfortable, urban community. The virtual closing of the money markets to Western cities throughout 1906 and 1907 merely slowed a number of projects, and intensified the desire for many improvements.

Despite an eight-month delay in calling tenders, a new electric light plant was completed in January, 1908.⁸³ A year later, in February, 1909, all-day service was begun to serve, principally at first, the newly-opened penitentiary.⁸⁴ In 1910 the light utility began to earn healthy profits, despite

83. Times, December 4, 1907.

84. Ibid., December 23, 1908, February 3, 1909.

a debenture debt exceeding \$100,000.⁸⁵

The building of the waterworks and sewerage systems, however, gave rise to more vexing delays and bungling. Mechanical troubles and minor accidents were frequent, perhaps unavoidably. But the company which supplied the pipe and pumping machinery was persistently late in meeting its contracts.⁸⁶ The installation was supervised by Alderman Charles McDonald, who interfered with the workmen and quarrelled so often with the contractor that Willis Chipman had to be called in to mediate.⁸⁷ The engineer hired on Chipman's advice was an incompetent fuss-budget, responsible for the poor quality of much of the pipe used, despite his protest that he had inspected the pipe "as good as he could."⁸⁸

These difficulties were forgotten in June, 1907, when the system was completed at (surprisingly) no more than its estimated cost.⁸⁹ "The water that flows from the faucets is

85. The annual surpluses were: 1909—\$2,531, 1910—\$7,564, 1911—\$11,000. See AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, La Colle Falls Hydro-Electric Project, file 66, part i, Report on Prince Albert Hydro-Electric Development, The J.G. White Engineering Corp., January 30, 1914. La Colle Falls records cited hereafter as L.C.F.

86. Times, December 6, 1906. One reason for the delays was that the city solicitor was not responsible for enforcing contracts.

87. Ibid., June 6, 1907. McDonald was a druggist by profession.

88. Ibid., November 8, October 4, 1906.

89. Ibid., June 20, December 4, 1907.

clear, sparkling and refreshing," wrote the Times, and businessmen noted gratefully that insurance rates were cut nearly in half.⁹⁰

But the waterworks had been in operation for only a year when the consequences of one other blunder had to be faced. That was the experiment recommended by Chipman of using wooden water mains. In September, 1908, Alderman McDonald reported that despite every effort to repair it, there were seven breaks in the line to Goschen and 22,000 gallons a day were leaking out.⁹¹ The main was replaced at a cost of \$22,575,⁹² but not before the water pressure had been found dangerously low in a fire which destroyed three buildings in Goschen.⁹³ In July, 1909, a second mistake by "the eminent engineer from Toronto" was exposed. An alarming gap was found under the foundations of the large pump at the powerhouse which had been built on quicksand.⁹⁴

Far more serious, though, was the situation created when raw sewage began to trickle into the river from the newly-built outlets. The hazards of pollution were a least familiar to the citizens, and typhoid fever had already caused a minor

90. Ibid., November 27, 1907.

91. Ibid., July 22, September 16, 1908.

92. Ibid., September 16, 1908.

93. Ibid., December 30, 1908.

94. Saskatoon Phoenix, July 24, 1909.

epidemic on the flat in September, 1906.⁹⁵ The public took a dangerously long time, nevertheless, to realize the cause of an outbreak which began in the fall of 1908 and raged throughout 1909. Ninety per cent of the early cases were found to be from the east end⁹⁶ where at low water the Prince Albert Lumber Company drew its drinking water from the river. The typhoid epidemic revealed a blind stupidity verging on criminality among the council of Mayor Charles McDonald. Ignoring the warning of the medical health officer and repeated pleas from the company, it acted to furnish pure water to the saw mill only when threatened with an injunction and the departure of the city's largest industry.⁹⁷ How many persons lost their lives as a result of this ignorance and apathy was never revealed, although 204 persons were ill with typhoid near the height of the plague.⁹⁸

The outbreaks of typhoid and of other diseases were signs that, with the growth in population, Prince Albert was becoming a dirtier, less healthy place to live. Only slowly was public opinion awakening to demand an end to this situation. Much

95. Times, September 20 and 27, 1906.

96. Ibid., January 20, 1909.

97. Ibid., December 30, 1908, January 6, 20, and 27, 1909.

98. Phoenix, May 2, 1910.

remained to be done when the health and relief committee could complain that "considerable annoyance had been caused [it] by people leaving dead dogs and horses around."⁹⁹ In 1907 one advocate of sanitary improvement gave a harrowing description of the city nuisance ground on the hill, and warned that "if nature attends to its own sewerage the lower part of the city must receive the seepage from this revolting accumulation of...filth."¹⁰⁰ The medical health officer remarked, however, that cleaning up the ground would take a year.¹⁰¹ Nor was anything immediately done about "the nauseating condition of affairs" at the slaughter house, where sewage from the plant seeped into wells on the premises, to be "used again and again."¹⁰²

The city slowly assumed leadership in the fight for sanitary improvement, particularly under the pressure and guidance of medical health officer, Dr. H.A. Lestock Reid. The nuisance ground was cleaned up in 1907.¹⁰³ A 1909 by-law forced all house-owners on streets served by sewers to make connection with that facility.¹⁰⁴ By 1910 the city employed

99. Times, June 7, 1906.

100. Ibid., April 18, 1907.

101. Ibid., May 9, 1907.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid., December 4, 1907.

104. Phoenix, May 21, 1909.

seven men in sanitation, including a sanitary inspector and four scavengers who toured the city by night and day.¹⁰⁵ The city was also vigilant in prosecuting a butcher, who instead of abandoning a slab of meat condemned by the health inspector, was found to be trimming off part of the outside and selling the inside portions.¹⁰⁶ It still balked, however, at free removal of all garbage, and allowed garbage and manure to be regularly dumped across the river.¹⁰⁷

Neither the city's relative affluence nor completion of the waterworks did much initially to make Prince Albert safe from fire. In 1906 economy and bungling seemed again entrenched when the city council rejected a steamer in favour of a chemical engine which, it found too late, ran on two wheels, weighed 3,120 pounds, and could be pulled by no horse alive.¹⁰⁸ The complaints of the firemen about their inadequate and unreliable equipment went unheeded by the council, one fireman grumbling that "they might as well talk to...wooden stumps."¹⁰⁹ On one occasion the whole brigade threatened to resign, but with no greater effect than their pleas had had.¹¹⁰

Until at least 1908, the work of the firemen was

105. AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, City Council Minutes, May 2, 1910.

106. Ibid., April 4, 1910.

107. Ibid., July 5, 1909.

108. Times, November 29, 1906.

109. Ibid., October 2, 1907.

110. Ibid., July 11, 1907.

amateurish. At one fire in July, 1907, the owner of a burning warehouse had to prevent them from opening a door that would have let in a draught.¹¹¹ A year and a half later, three buildings burned down in Goschen mainly because the firemen spent thirty minutes looking for a valve.¹¹²

Nevertheless, the worst days were over when the water-works were completed and a modest sum was paid for equipment. "The day for reviling our fire protection is past," announced the Times after a quick turnout at the hospital in November, 1907. "For years the brigade has been prompt in responding to calls, but the boys were handicapped and disheartened by having no suitable equipment. Now, with a constant pressure at the hydrants of over 85 pounds to the square inch...and an excellent supply of...paraphernalia, the brigade has encouragement in its work."¹¹³ In March, 1909, five permanent firemen were hired, and a total of seventeen men were placed on call at the main and east end fire halls, who earned a minimum of one dollar each time they were called from bed.¹¹⁴

111. Ibid., July 25, 1907. It was this occasion on which veteran brigade member Sam Donaldson leaped out of bed, threw on the trousers of one suit and the coat of another, and came home with both ruined.

112. Ibid., December 30, 1908.

113. Ibid., November 27, 1907.

114. Ibid., February 24, 1909; Council Minutes, March 1, 1909.

If modernity had finally come to Prince Albert's fire department, it was hardly the case with its works division. Until July, 1907, programs were supervised by the board of works and a series of cut-rate engineers. The hiring of Frank A. Creighton as city engineer was not a great step forward. One citizen observed in August, 1906, that because of a curious lack of planning, the city was making great headway upon sidewalks where few people would require them for some time, while in the centre of the city there were streets without any walks.¹¹⁵ Complaints were frequent also about crossings, which seemed to be sunk as deep as possible. As a result, the Times remarked, on wet days it was "almost impossible to get around even the business section...without waders."¹¹⁶ After an eight-foot cement walk was laid on Central Avenue in 1906, the same newspaper suggested that it "must have been built in the interest of temperance reform. No man with half a jag on can go home on it without coming to grief."¹¹⁷ Not till 1910 were the first real improvements made in the curbing and macadamizing of Central Avenue from River to the railway tracks and the purchase of machinery for an extensive building program.

Meanwhile, one lesser improvement had become urgently needed. By 1908 many of the old street names had given way

115. Times, August 2, 1906.

116. Ibid., November 1, 1906.

117. Ibid., October 18, 1906.

to those now in use; in a few cases two streets bore the same name; and some streets had no names at all. Nor did a system of numbering houses yet exist in the city. Early that year the Times complained that the old method of locating houses "next to the brewery" or "back of the land office" was rapidly breaking down, and with people constantly on the move, the city had become a "huge living puzzle box."¹¹⁸ Action was delayed, however, by the expense involved in changing every street name in the files of the land office. The task was not completed until 1910, when the uninteresting but convenient system of numbering avenues from Central, and streets from River in the east end, came into exclusive use.¹¹⁹

One need which received too little attention was that of accommodation for the civic government. Only fifteen years old in 1908, the city hall had a crack in its rear wall so large that in winter it was popularly called "the city's cold storage plant."¹²⁰ The police court in the basement was a dark, damp, unsanitary pit, and the cells were stuffy holes in the ground. Already the building was too small for the city's needs, since the second floor was occupied by an auditorium that remained the only room in town suitable for

118. Ibid., January 29, 1908.

119. Council Minutes, April 10, December 20, 1909.

120. Times, November 25, December 2, 1908.

stage plays.¹²¹ The hall was merely patched up in 1910, however, in the apparent belief that the period of rapid growth then beginning would make its replacement an easy matter.

The many signs of progress did not conceal the fact that, till 1910, local government moved at a sluggish pace in Prince Albert, its officials wrapped mostly in a complacency undisturbed by the occasional assaults of critical newcomers¹²² or the visible effects of their own blunders. At the same time, however, city business had increased so enormously by 1907 that aldermen were spending three nights a week on it.¹²³ At the end of 1908 the number of aldermen was increased to eight, and payment for attendance at council meetings was begun under the 1908 City Act.¹²⁴ In 1909 there were eight standing committees.¹²⁵

Public opinion was slow to accept the commission form of municipal government as a remedy for the inexperience and chronic ineptitude of aldermen and the rising pressure of city business. There was the natural fear that a commissioner

121. The Wheat Belt Review, November 15, 1907, in files of the Prince Albert Historical Society.

122. See the attack by an "On Looker in the Gallery" in Times, July 8, 1908.

123. Ibid., July 4, 1907.

124. Ibid., November 4, 1908.

125. Ibid., January 6, 1909.

would encroach on the powers of the elected officials. The technical qualifications of a commissioner also seemed to pose baffling problems.¹²⁶ When the step was finally taken in January, 1911, its main aim was to relieve the aldermen of routine technical and administrative work. The appointment of the mayor, city clerk, and city engineer as commissioners served, unfortunately, to devolve a mass of technical matters upon an engineer ill qualified to bear them. It was only by good fortune, too, that City Clerk Charles Oscar Davidson was found competent to bear the burden of the complex administrative and financial duties placed on him.

One thing at least could be said of a body so indolent, slipshod, and precipitate¹²⁷ in its methods, but jealous at the same time of its own powers. With minor lapses, the tradition of thrift and caution prevailed till 1910. Faced for two years with a tight market which left it with \$320,000 in unsold debentures and, on one occasion, pressed by the Times to raise the interest to 7 per cent,¹²⁸ the council merely cut back its projects to await the recovery of 1908. In 1909 the mill rate was a moderate 15.¹²⁹ The city ended

126. See a letter by Oluf Albrechtsen in ibid., December 16, 1908.

127. In December, 1906, the council stunned local bankers by suddenly demanding a large loan. See ibid., December 6, 1906.

128. Ibid., December 4, 1907.

129. Phoenix, August 4, 1909.

1910 with a net debt of \$836,700,¹³⁰ barely 50 per cent of its borrowing powers. Nearly half this sum represented utilities already or soon to become revenue-producing.

A final feature of local government in these years was the strengthening of faith in public ownership. In October, 1906, the city council resolved in a fit of anger to take over the system owned by the Bell Telephone Company, although it failed to do so.¹³¹ The hatred of private monopolies also caused the rejection in 1906 of an offer by an Edmonton firm to install two and one-half miles of street railway and pay a share of the profits in exchange for an exclusive twenty-year franchise.¹³²

III

The development which ultimately proved of most importance to Prince Albert was the gradual realization of an idea planted in 1905. For two years after 1906, however, the idea did not centre on the North Saskatchewan. Instead it focussed on a stream which in spring joins the North Saskatchewan with impressive force four miles west of the city. At the time, this

130. Prince Albert City Commissioner's office, C.J. Yorath, City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan: Special Report upon City's Finances and Administration, May 29, 1918, p.24.

131. Times, October 4, 1906. The Prince Albert system was bought by the newly-formed Saskatchewan Government Telephones in May, 1909.

132. Ibid., October 4 and 11, November 8, 1906.

stream was known to its mouth as the **Shell** River.

In the summer of 1906, the Prince Albert Board of Trade hired Charles H. Mitchell, a Toronto engineer, to report on the power potential of the rivers of the district. Despite his prim, studious appearance and mild ways, Mitchell was a man with boundless faith in the future and unusual gifts of persuasion. At thirty-four, he had already achieved some distinction in his profession. A graduate of the University of Toronto, Mitchell had been city engineer of Niagara Falls, Ontario, and had worked for four years on the project of the Ontario Power Company at Niagara Falls. More recently, he had published a book on European power developments.¹³³

Earlier in 1906 Mitchell had inspected the **South Saskatchewan** River near **Saskatoon**, and pronounced it fit for hydro development.¹³⁴

When Mitchell completed his report of December 5, 1906,¹³⁵ for the Prince Albert Board of Trade, only his figures on the **Shell** won much attention. For an expenditure ranging from \$100,000 to \$150,000, he estimated, the city might recover between 1,000 and 1,500 horsepower.¹³⁶ These figures were

133. Who's Who in Canada, 1922, pp. 1577-78.

134. Peel and Knowles, op. cit., p.69.

135. No copy exists in city records.

136. Times, **March 28, 1907**.

soon to seem trifling, and Captain Richard Deacon cast some doubt upon them when he estimated that the **S**turgeon, the larger branch of the **S**hell, would produce only ten horsepower in mid-winter.¹³⁷ But the prospect of cheap power drew from Mayor R. S. Cook a joyful prediction that Prince Albert might become the leading manufacturing centre of the West.¹³⁸ Obviously Mitchell had an eager audience.

One other feature of Mitchell's first report is of interest. It suggested that, for the round sum of \$1,000,000, a year-round minimum of 10,000 h.p. could be generated at La Colle Falls. This estimate, based ostensibly on Mitchell's personal examination of the site, was to be recalled later with results embarrassing to its author.

Probably the market situation prevented the city from beginning a development on the **S**hell in 1907, for Cook hurried to Ottawa to obtain a franchise,¹³⁹ and no one in Prince Albert spoke openly against it. The growth of the city, however, caused the plan to be gradually replaced over a period of two years by a far bigger project.

This bigger project came to life in April, 1909, with a suddenness which surprised even its instigator. On April 10, 1909, the city council decided to apply for a franchise to develop La Colle Falls.¹⁴⁰ When the Toronto newspapers of April 11 reported that, on Mitchell's advice, the city had

137. Ibid., February 7, 1907.

138. Ibid., February 14, 1907.

139. Ibid., December 4, 1907.

140. Council Minutes, April 10, 1909.

decided to begin a million-dollar hydro-electric plant, Mitchell himself wrote to ask what was going on, and to venture the opinion that one million dollars seemed a large amount.¹⁴¹ For the next six weeks, matters went forward at full speed. Mayor Charles McDonald went East early in May;¹⁴² Mitchell completed his preliminary memorandum on the project by May 12;¹⁴³ and the city applied for a franchise on May 21.¹⁴⁴

At this point was encountered the first major obstacle. As secretary of the Board of Trade and editor of the newly-founded Prince Albert Herald, H.C. Beatty had earned a reputation as an exceptionally shrewd, energetic, and thorough man. Among his other activities Beatty had taken a keen interest in power developments. He had already taken the initiative in investigating the qualifications of five leading American engineers. He had also written to seven universities and a financial house to ask the name of an industrial engineer competent to make "a thorough...survey of [the] resources, markets and transportation facilities, and [to prepare] a

141. P.A.C.C.P., file 914-8, Mitchell to C.O. Davidson, April 14, 1909.

142. Council Minutes, May 3, 1909.

143. P.A.C.C.P., file 914-7, Preliminary Memo re Power Development [sic] at La Colles [sic] Falls, North Saskatchewan River, May 12, 1909, copy.

144. AS, PAUM, L.C.F., file 2, Mayor and Secretary-Treasurer to the Minister of the Interior, May 21, 1909, copy.

comprehensive report on the actual and potential industrial factors of [the] district."¹⁴⁵ On May 25, 1909, Beatty wrote to Mitchell in Toronto to point out two major discrepancies between the 1906 report and the preliminary memorandum, both of which were based on the same inspection of the site. Instead of a minimum of 10,000 h.p., the latter document offered 8,000 to 10,000 h.p. "at normal stages of the river," and the estimated working head had dropped inexplicably from 30 feet to between 16 and 20 feet.¹⁴⁶

Soon after the dispatch of Beatty's letter, the city council got wind of his action, and on June 2 instructed Mitchell by mail to ignore it.¹⁴⁷ To the council's annoyance, however, Mitchell had replied to Beatty before receiving their letter. Mitchell had offered Beatty the unlikely explanation that the figures in the memorandum had been kept deliberately low on the hint of the Deputy Minister of Public Works, who thought the franchise more likely therefore to be granted.¹⁴⁸

But Beatty did not wait for this answer which, in any case, could hardly have satisfied him. On June 5 he pointed

145. The replies, one of which includes the above quotation from Beatty's letter, are in P.A.C.C.P., file 914-7.

146. Ibid., Beatty to Mitchell, May 25, 1909, copy.

147. Ibid., Davidson to Mitchell, June 2, 1909.

148. Ibid., Mitchell to Beatty, June 2, 1909, copy.

out to the council that Mitchell's second estimate offered only half as much power as the first at the same cost. He warned that until Mitchell answered the questions previously put to him "to the entire satisfaction of those familiar with the matter your council should not consider employing such a vacillating estimator."¹⁴⁹ Since the answers to his inquiries were beginning to come in, Beatty went on to suggest J.T. Fanning of Minneapolis, an engineer with thirty-five years' experience in water power, much of this in the American North West. Two days later Beatty informed the council that he had located four qualified industrial engineers but no expert on pulp and paper, and promised to continue his efforts.¹⁵⁰

This was strong criticism. But Beatty offered it in sincerity and, except in its letter of June 2, the council did not seem to resent it. Beatty had the full trust of the Board of Trade and, although he received no answer to his letters of June 5 and 7, he believed that he was in the good graces of the council.

Meanwhile, the city received answers to its own inquiries into Mitchell's qualifications. Opinions were obtained from three leading financial firms,¹⁵¹ from Mitchell's employer for

149. Ibid., Beatty to the Mayor and Council, June 5, 1909.

150. Ibid., Beatty to the Mayor and Council, June 7, 1909.

151. Aemilius Jarvis, W.A. Mackenzie, and Wood, Gundy.

eight years, the Ontario Power Company, and from a Provincial Government engineer.¹⁵² The Ontario Power Company stated that Mitchell's work for it had "always been highly satisfactory," and added that he had "reported on and constructed a number of plants throughout Canada."¹⁵³ Two of the bond houses gave favourable hearsay opinions, one going so far as to call Mitchell "a very capable and conscientious engineer" having "considerable experience in Hydro-Electric propositions."¹⁵⁴ The third company had no knowledge of his qualifications, other than that he was "well spoken of."¹⁵⁵

While a special committee composed of Mayor McDonald and Aldermen Andrew McDonald and O.B. Manville was considering these opinions, Beatty was pursuing his own inquiries into Mitchell's background and the qualifications of alternative engineers. On June 21, 1909, he wrote to the council to advise that "it would hardly be deemed prudent to entrust so

152. The opinion of a Mr. Murray, consulting engineer to the Provincial Government, is among the recommendations in the report of the special committee adopted on July 19, 1909, by the city council. See Council Minutes, July 19, 1909.

153. P.A.C.C.P., file 914-7, O.B. Suhr [Ontario Power Company] to Davidson, June 30, 1909.

154. Ibid., Aemilius Jarvis and Company to Davidson, June 25, 1909; Wood, Gundy and Company to Davidson, June 28, 1909. The remarks quoted are from the first letter.

155. Ibid., W.A. Mackenzie and Company to Davidson, July 2, 1909.

important a project to a man whose experience in actual charge of important developments is...confined to that of special mechanical engineer under the assistant engineer in charge [at Niagara Falls]." Beatty suggested that by hiring Fanning and a second American engineer only slightly less qualified, the city would obtain "two of the best hydro-electric heads on the continent," whose reputations would more than pay for their services when the time came to sell bonds.¹⁵⁶

Unfortunately, the impression that this advice may have made on the council was erased by the arrival of two letters from Mitchell. For a fee of \$750, Mitchell offered to undertake an extensive investigation and examination of the dam site, to prepare detailed reports on the cost, "feasibility and general arrangement of the development," and to make a study of the power market. For an additional \$350, or half that sum if he were also hired to report on the dam, he would prepare a report on industrial development at Prince Albert. Even before starting his inquiry, Mitchell confidently presented a long list of industries which he had "especially in mind," and in connection with which he possessed "more or less experience."¹⁵⁷

In the meantime, Beatty had turned his attention to some of the technical aspects of power development. On July 15,

156. Ibid., Beatty to the Mayor and Council, June 21, 1909.

157. Ibid., Mitchell to the Mayor and Council, June 30, 1909, two letters.

1909, he wrote to the city council to point out the necessity of knowing both the minimum and maximum flow of a river and, quoting statements from three textbooks on water power, he noted that only by measurement on the spot over a series of years could the flow be accurately determined. As there were no gauging records for the North Saskatchewan, it would be expedient to begin this important work as soon as possible.¹⁵⁸

Prophetic as his words might later seem, they then only fostered irritation against their author, although Beatty thus far had refused to raise a public alarm. It was partly an act of defiance, and partly a declaration of faith in their own judgment, when, on July 19, 1909, the council accepted the report of the special committee recommending the hiring of Mitchell, on the strength of the five opinions it had received.¹⁵⁹ Thus it was settled that Prince Albert's municipal hydro development and the first power dam on the Canadian Prairies were to be planned and built by an engineer who had never managed a major project.

The council's decision meant also that no independent and expert study was to be made of the city's industrial potential. In voting their confidence in an engineer with "more or less experience" in industrial development, but with an unlimited faith in the attractive capacity of cheap, abundant power, the

158. Ibid., Beatty to the Mayor and Council, July 15, 1909.

159. Council Minutes, July 19, 1909.

city fathers had themselves committed a momentous act of faith.

In the following three months Beatty made a brave but clumsy attempt to reverse the trend of events, and to unseat a mayor who, in his opinion, was unfit to hold office.¹⁶⁰ Because of his outstanding energy and experience, Beatty continued to be secretary of the Board of Trade till October 11, but he was nearly pushed out early in August¹⁶¹ and in mid-September he resigned.¹⁶² Finally, excluded from city counsels and persecuted from all sides, he began to suspect plots and to lapse into wild and irrelevant charges. In the end he discredited both himself and the cause which earlier he had so ably defended.

So strongly did popular opinion favour municipal ownership of a power development that no city official or citizen now publicly proposed the alternative. The project at La Colle Falls, however, promised to be so large that the **Saskatoon Phoenix** thought it "not improbable" that a private firm

160. The Phoenix correspondent reported that he had heard "over a month ago that Mr. Beatty had announced his intention of 'putting the mayor out of business.'" See Phoenix, October 8, 1909.

161. The Phoenix correspondent was "not much" surprised at a rumour on August 2 that Beatty had resigned, and reported that "other members of the board gave weight to the idea." See Phoenix, August 4, 1909.

162. Ibid., September 13 and 21, 1909.

would be allowed to acquire the franchise.¹⁶³ A group of Saskatoon capitalists had obtained a charter in 1908 to develop that city's hydro resource, although as yet they had gone no further.¹⁶⁴ It was a scheme like this, at any rate, which Beatty sniffed and boldly attacked in the Prince Albert Daily News of October 7, 1909, adding charges of graft against Mayor McDonald and a number of aldermen.¹⁶⁵ Probably both the scheme and the corruption were non-existent, and Beatty never offered his supposed proof. At the council meeting of October 18, the mayor, city clerk, and Alderman McDonald presented affidavits denying knowledge of any company formed to acquire the franchise.¹⁶⁶ The council then abandoned the

163. Ibid., May 28, 1909 (editorial).

164. Peel and Knowles, op. cit., p.69. The Saskatchewan Power Company was incorporated by 7-8 Edw. VII, c.154 (June 16, 1908). See Statutes of Canada, 1908.

165. Phoenix, October 8, 1909; Council Minutes, October 7, 1909. These are identified in the Phoenix reports and the minutes only as "certain aldermen." The Daily News was a short-lived journal. No copies of it seem to have survived.

166. Phoenix, October 19, 1909. There is some uncertainty over the exact purpose of the three affidavits. According to the council minutes (October 18), they were declarations "denying that any documents had been concealed," a new charge apparently made by Beatty at this meeting. City Clerk Davidson could not have been ignorant of the contents of the affidavits, and he had no apparent reason to falsify the minutes on this point. On the other hand, the report of the Phoenix correspondent, who witnessed the meeting, asserted that the affidavits denied "all knowledge of any private company formed to develop power at the falls or touch upon the franchise in any way." "Further," it added, "all three unequivocally denied all

half-hearted inquiry it had started eleven days earlier.¹⁶⁷

Unfortunately, Beatty left one false scent only to bay off on another. On October 18 he stood up in the council chamber to ask insistently if all the aldermen had seen Mitchell's preliminary memorandum and a telegram phrased in enigmatic language which he himself had sent from Saskatoon some time earlier.¹⁶⁸ Beatty charged Mayor McDonald with hiding these documents, demanded that he resign, and left only when the mayor called a policeman. Two days later, after C.O. Davidson and Mayor McDonald had sworn statements refuting the new accusation,¹⁶⁹ Beatty made the

knowledge of any suppression of documents." If the second charge was made only at the meeting in question (although its omission from the reports in the Phoenix of October 8 and 12 is slim proof that documents were not mentioned earlier), affidavits denying it could not have been offered on the spot. There is another hint, moreover, that the minutes of this meeting may not have been kept with perfect care. The only resolution recorded is that rescinding the motion of October 7 launching an investigation. The Phoenix report says, however, that a resolution was passed expressing complete confidence in the mayor, followed by a second resolution to end the inquiry.

167. Council Minutes, October 18, 1909.

168. Phoenix, October 19, 1909. According to the copy read by Beatty at this meeting, the message was: "Re La Colle Falls proposition. Be sure to use report of three years ago, second report [i.e. Mitchell's preliminary memorandum] disastrous to municipal enterprise." The wording was the same in a copy of the telegram obtained from the telegraph office for the subsequent perjury trial of Davidson and Mayor McDonald. The date of the telegram is not given in the Phoenix reports, but it was apparently sent a short time after submission of the preliminary memorandum.

169. A second set of affidavits must have been sworn on October 19, although there is no indication in the Phoenix of October 21 that more than one is involved.

gross blunder of having both of them charged with perjury.¹⁷⁰ When the case was heard on October 26, the episode turned into farce. The simple truth was that Mitchell's preliminary memorandum had not been read in council but had lain till that time in the city files (although it took some time to find), and that Mayor McDonald had thrown away Beatty's telegram as the work of a crank.¹⁷¹ Thus ended the first and last effort to halt a movement which, instead, gained momentum from the fiasco produced by the fanaticism¹⁷² of perhaps its only intelligent critic. Beatty left town soon

170. Phoenix, October 21, 1909.

171. Ibid., October 26, 1909.

172. The puzzling telegram on which Beatty put so much importance is not the only sign of mental unbalance. After publishing his charges in the Daily News, Beatty refused to give any more details to members of the Board of Trade. ("I will say what I have to say at the investigation.") (Phoenix, October 12, 1909). Instead of demanding a judicial investigation, however, he came to the council meeting of October 18 and started a squabble which could only have turned popular opinion more strongly against him. After the council had abandoned its inquiry, Beatty delivered the following as a statement: "Sticking its head in the sand, feeling secure from publicity, the... council...rescinded their resolution.... It was the ostrich act which is practised only where the press is controlled or muzzled, but is presumed to be a fair sample of Prince Albert aldermanic justice. There the courtesy of a fair trial before a judge after hanging is denied by city council investigations." (Phoenix, October 19, 1909).

afterwards and never returned.¹⁷³

Meanwhile, C.H. Mitchell had inspected the dam site late in the summer and had returned to Toronto to draft his report. The finished document,¹⁷⁴ dated December 20, 1909, displayed a fluency and an optimism in tone rarely seen in the writing of engineers. Printed in 500 copies by the city,¹⁷⁵ the Mitchell report filled only 35 pages in a book which slid easily into a back pocket, and offered a classically simple course in water power to the willing readers.

The scheme, according to Mitchell, was divided into three stages. For the modest sum of \$429,000, including \$71,000 for a low, solid dam 750 feet long with a built-in navigation lock 120 by 25 feet, and \$90,000 for a 5,700-foot power canal, the city might own an asset producing 3,400 h.p. at the power house. The intermediate stage, costing \$225,000, involved enlarging the power station and raising the dam to its full height. The ultimate development, of which the total cost was \$1,009,000, would generate 9,200 h.p. as "the

173. This account is necessarily constructed from meagre information. Two 1912 issues of the Herald are the only complete Prince Albert newspapers between February 24, 1909, and the end of 1915 which have been preserved. There exist also a number of clippings on La Colle Falls and the Great West industry in a scrapbook donated to the Prince Albert Historical Society by Arnold Agnew (a former president of that body), but these begin at March 26, 1913. J.S. Woodward, who testified at the trial of McDonald and Davidson and succeeded Beatty as Herald editor and secretary of the Board of Trade, cannot remember the trial or even the cause of the Beatty affair.

174. L.C.F., file 59, Report, City of Prince Albert Hydro-Electric Power Development, La Colle Falls, Saskatchewan Rive

175. Council Minutes, February 23, 1910.

minimum quantity of power continuously available for use in the City."

Mitchell's estimates were a brilliant vindication of the cheapness of water power. While the city's new steam plant could generate power for not less than \$50 a horsepower, the initial development alone would provide 2,700 h.p. for sale at \$20. The final stage at which yearly debt charges plus the costs of maintenance and operation would be only doubled to \$111,000, would furnish power at the dazzling cost of \$12.20 a horsepower.

The problem of markets for these large quantities of power was less amenable to simple arithmetic. Its consideration, however, called up a vision of the near future not to be expressed in mere figures. Although the local market consumed only 600 h.p. in 1909, Mitchell estimated that the growth of the city alone would raise this total to 1,000 h.p. in two or three years, and a street railway, essential to any progressive city, would take an additional 200 to 300 h.p.

Furthermore [he wrote] once a power plant is established, or even announced as being established, by which cheap electric power in large quantities may become available for manufacturers, it is always the experience that industries are immediately attracted and will readily locate in the [district]. This should be particularly true of Prince Albert, situate as it is...at the edge of the grain growing country and the southern edge of the timber and mineral producing regions. It is to be expected that various industrial plants will be therefore induced to locate, engaging in such classes of industry as pulp and paper and their subsidiary products, ore smelting and refining, machine shops, foundries and metal works, elevators, flour and cereals, textile

products, clay products, etc. All of them not only use power in large quantities but bring in large numbers of skilled workmen to help build up the industrial community.

One point at least was obvious from this passage. The citizens of Prince Albert had found the prophet of their salvation, who now called them to climb the easy steps to a heaven of civic greatness and private wealth.

Little attention was paid to Mitchell's admission that he had made no allowance for interest during construction. No one, apparently, noted the unconfessed possibility that the necessary debentures would decline in value in the boom then beginning. Nor did anyone question his word that investigation had proven the suitability of the river bed at the chosen site, or doubt his assumption that the road east from Prince Albert was "in excellent condition throughout the year."

The important question of minimum flow in the winter months also was disposed of with confidence by Mitchell. On the basis, he wrote, of a gauging carried out on September 2, 1909, which revealed a discharge of 11,200 cubic feet per second, from "other data" obtained on the river and the evidence of settlers, and "from our experience upon other western rivers and in Canadian rivers generally," the normal low-water flow might be estimated at 5,600 second-feet. It was possible, he added, "that for a few days in the winter... the discharge might drop to 4,600 cubic feet." Mitchell

never explained the nature of this "other data," or revealed how settlers could know the discharge of a river under several feet of ice in the coldest months, when its measurement was a tricky problem for engineers with the most modern equipment. Nor did he point out that his experience on "other western rivers" was on the Bow River above Calgary, in a region with a winter climate twenty-five degrees warmer than Prince Albert's. It may be no accident that the "normal" low-water flow of 5,600 second-feet was put at exactly half the measured discharge.

But Mitchell thought his figures to be "reasonable and conservative," and he took no action to obtain measurements in the winter of 1909-10 or in the following season. It was not till October 2, 1911, that a gauging station was established at Prince Albert by the Irrigation Branch of the Department of the Interior.¹⁷⁶

Despite a transparency verging on naiveté in his writings and actions, Mitchell made one statement in his report which he should have known to be false. He reported that the Department of Public Works had already begun construction of storage dams on the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan, which he implied would obviate any problem with low winter flows. The Government actually did no work on the river in

176. C.S.P. 1913, No.25d, p.31.

the year ending March 31, 1910.¹⁷⁷ While completing his report (it was not finished till mid-February, 1910), Mitchell may have learned of the Government's plant to build wing dams above Edmonton.¹⁷⁸ In the following year (1910-11), \$24,674 was spent on this project,¹⁷⁹ but its sole purpose was summer flood control.¹⁸⁰ Not till 1911 were discharge measurements made on the North Saskatchewan, and a survey of potential storage reservoirs was begun only in 1913.¹⁸¹

Mitchell's mistake, though, was partly a reflection of the reasonable faith with which the Government's intentions were viewed at this time. By 1909 a vision of the Saskatchewan as a great inland waterway had begun to inspire not only Westerners but a group of normally sedate bureaucrats in Ottawa.¹⁸² One tenet of the new faith was a belief held commonly in the West since the 1880's, that it needed only a modest expenditure to make the river fully navigable for shallow-draught vessels. The idea gained strength in the

177. Ibid., 1911, No.19.

178. Mayor Andrew Holmes learned of it on a trip to Ottawa at the end of January, 1910, and so reported to the council on February 8. See Phoenix, February 11, 1910.

179. C.S.P. 1912, No.19, ii, p.31.

180. Holmes explained to the council on February 8 that wing dams would be built "to control the water in the Saskatchewan and prevent the June floods." See Phoenix, February 11, 1910.

181. C.S.P. 1915, No.19, iv, p.318.

182. See the Annual Report of the Department of Public Works for the year ending March 31, 1910, in C.S.P. 1911, No.19, i, pp. 10-12.

settlement boom from the heavy burden of Western freight rates. By 1911 the Department of Public Works was confident that improvement in particular of the section from Prince Albert to The Pas would develop "an extensive traffic" in products ranging from grain to coal and lumber.¹⁸³ In 1912 the Deputy Minister suggested that the mere existence of a waterway would be "amply justified" as a regulator of railway rates.¹⁸⁴

In 1909, however, the keenest supporter of improvement was not a civil servant but the Minister of Public Works, William Pugsley. In Prince Albert on August 8, 1909, Pugsley professed himself "a great believer in water transportation," and promised immediate construction of a wharf and break-water there.¹⁸⁵ As proof of its interest, Pugsley's department had installed two dredges at Prince Albert to remove boulders from the channel, and in October, 1909, it was to make a preliminary survey of the river below The Pas.¹⁸⁶

Nor surprisingly, Pugsley's words made a deep impression in Prince Albert, although exactly what he said on the subject of aid for the proposed dam is not clear. In any case,

183. C.S.P. 1912, No.19, i, p.14.

184. Ibid., 1913, No.19, i, p.19.

185. Phoenix, August 9, 1909.

186. C.S.P. 1911, No.19, iv, pp. 167-69.

the correspondent of the Saskatoon Phoenix interpreted his words as "a promise to look very closely at [it]..., especially [at] the big improvement it will make in the navigability of the stream." According to the same reporter, Pugsley left "no doubt in the city's mind that his statements amounted to a promise to help...in...building a lock."¹⁸⁷ The faith thus planted in the minds of citizens and officials was strengthened on July 17, 1910, when Pugsley spoke "quite enthusiastically" in Saskatoon of opening the Saskatchewan and moving grain by water from central Saskatchewan to Lake Winnipeg.¹⁸⁸

Hence, till late 1910, the project lay in hopeful suspense, awaiting the time when the city had means to begin it. Spurred in June, 1910, by a petition signed by 300 citizens,¹⁸⁹ the council began to press for the franchise for which it had earlier applied.¹⁹⁰ On October 3, 1910, the council instructed Mitchell to prepare plans for the initial development.¹⁹¹

Thus the first steps were taken on a path which seemed to lead to limitless prosperity for the hitherto unfortunate and neglected community. Prince Albert was soon to become "the White Coal City."

187. Phoenix, August 9, 1909.

188. Ibid., July 18, 1910.

189. Ibid., June 25, 1910; L.C.F., file 2, undated petition.

190. L.C.F., file 2, Davidson to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, September 1, 1910.

191. Council Minutes, October 3, 1910; Phoenix, October 3 and 4, 1910.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE WHITE COAL CITY, 1910-1913

With the earliest spring in memory began the greatest boom in the history of the Canadian West. Driven upward by the coming of 393,000 immigrants¹ and by a rapid rise in world trade and investment, every index of prosperity rose steadily for three years. The most active phase of the boom belonged to the cities. No longer content to be farming and distributing centres, the cities strove to turn themselves into industrial metropolises commanding large portions of an expanding empire.

In Prince Albert the boom began with dramatic force. In a single week in March, 1910, more land changed hands than in the previous two years, and this evoked one prediction that very soon the city would equal Winnipeg in size.² The chief cause of this first frenzy of activity was the presence of the Hudson Bay and Pacific Railway. True to one of its promises, the company surveyed 150 miles in a direct line from Prince Albert towards Churchill in 1910. By the end of that year, it had obtained approval of 60 miles of its route by the Dominion Government³ and some prospect of Government

1. Canada Year Book, 1915, p.116.

2. Phoenix, March 18, 1910.

3. Daily Phoenix, March 21, 1911.

aid,⁴ and had begun to stake its right-of-way.⁵ Even J.S. Woodward, who as secretary of the Board of Trade knew more of the Hudson Bay and Pacific's affairs than any other citizen,⁶ believed in its intention to build at least to the vicinity of the present Flin Flon.⁷ There was feverish excitement on April 29, 1911, when news arrived that the company had let contracts for placing the first 50 miles of steel. The same evening, real estate deals totalling one and a half million dollars were made.⁸

Although the Hudson Bay and Pacific passed slowly from sight in 1911 the city's prospects did not fade. Instead, the continuance of heavy construction throughout the West gave a new lease to Prince Albert's hope of becoming a railway centre. Despite all the previous delays, the beginning and completion (January, 1914) of the Battleford line were important events. The building of the Big River branch revived a dream of the 1880's that there would be an extension eventually to the Peace River country.⁹ More

4. On the visit of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to Prince Albert (July 26-27, 1910), G.P. Graham, the Minister of Railways, promised Government aid to a railway building to the Bay. See Phoenix, August 2, 1910.

5. Evening Capital (Saskatoon), December 14, 1910.

6. On a trip to England in the winter of 1911, J.S. Woodward investigated the standing and financial position of the company. See Daily Phoenix, March 21, 1911.

7. Interview, April 3, 1964.

8. Daily Phoenix, May 1, 1911.

9. Herald, May 23, 1912. The issue cited and that of December 10, 1912, are in the files of the Prince Albert Historical Society.

immediate benefits were expected of the Grand Trunk Pacific branch, which was in operation from Young to Wakaw and was graded to the city's edge by the end of 1912.¹⁰ This seemed likely to move the C.P.R. to an early start on its Lanigan branch. A less tangible but exciting prospect was raised by the Canadian Northern's plans for a line to join the Hudson Bay railroad, begun by the Government in 1911, at a point 250 miles northeast of The Pas. In the winter of 1912 the Canadian Northern promised to grade 50 miles of this line in the coming season.¹¹

During the boom period, the city's growth and prosperity were solidly underlain by farming and a thriving lumber industry. A great future seemed assured through continuation of the settlement and railway boom and the approaching development of the Northland. In the minds of city boosters, however, these realities and reasonable hopes were bound up with, and nearly eclipsed by, the magnificence of its future as the "White Coal City." As the potential source of cheap electrical energy for myriad industries, La Colle Falls was the most powerful and constant ingredient in the land boom.

To city boosters (and few citizens were not boosters in those days), the boom was most remarkable for its tendency

10. Annual Report of the Department of Railways of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1913, p.26.

11. Herald, May 23, 1912; Daily Phoenix, January 19, March 28, 1912.

to climb ever more steeply. Estimates of the peak population were as high as 15,000, an increase of 65 per cent in less than two years.¹² A better indicator of the surge in population, business activity, and confidence in the city's future was the value of building permits. From \$922,000 in 1911, it reached a high of \$2,601,000 in 1912.¹³ As 1913 began, the total promised to reach four million.¹⁴

In considerable part, these figures represented the stores, shops, and trim blocks by which Central Avenue was turned into a bustling, modern main street. In 1912 three elementary schools were built,¹⁵ and the following year saw construction of the new Sacred Heart Cathedral and of Wesley Methodist Church. In every year many handsome homes were erected, particularly on the west hill which became the choice district it has since remained. The east flat and the east and west ends also acquired attractive homes and a sprinkling of apartment blocks.

In February, 1910, the first effort was begun to enlarge the municipal boundaries which had been more than adequate

12. This assumes a population of 9,000 in 1911.

13. Annual Report of the Bureau of Labour of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1914, p.8.

14. Saskatoon Phoenix, February 15, 1913.

15. King George, Queen Mary, and Connaught.

for twenty-five years.¹⁶ By March, 1911, this effort had ended in failure, after various delays and an unsuccessful attempt to obtain an act exempting the property of the Prince Albert Lumber Company from taxation.¹⁷ By this time, however, the apparent need for extension had grown even greater. The initial plan, therefore, was dropped for one which quadrupled the area to 7,500 acres by taking in the remaining land south of the river which now lies within the city and approximately two square miles on the north bank (April 20, 1911).¹⁸ But even this seemed inadequate to contain the future city, or the speculative activities of its citizens. On March 1, 1912, two full sections lying astride and east of the Little Red River and all the remaining land (except the section around the airport) which lies within the present limits were added.¹⁹ Including 846 acres of river surface, Prince Albert in 1912 had an area of 10,559 acres,²⁰ only 200 acres less than Toronto in the previous year

16. AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, City Council Minutes, February 7, 1910.

17. Ibid., June 20, October 17, December 19, 1910, March 8 and 13, 1911. The bill was withdrawn on March 20, 1911. See Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1910-11, p.136.

18. Saskatchewan Gazette, Vol.VII, No.9 (May 15, 1911), pp. 8-11

19. Ibid., Vol.VIII, No.6 (March 30, 1912), pp. 5-7.

20. Office of the Prince Albert City Commissioner, C.J. Yorath, City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan: Special Report upon City's Finances and Administration (May 29, 1918), p.2.

with a population of 328,000.

In the further interests of progress and speculation, the proclamations granting both extensions provided that the land annexed should bear no share of the civic debt previously incurred. As a result, the tax rate in the new area was an average of two mills below the regular levy in the years 1911 to 1913.²¹ The effects of this concession were almost nullified, however, by the assessment of land at close to the market price.²² This placed a heavy burden on all landowners during the boom, and was partly responsible for an increase in the gross assessment from \$5.7 million in 1909 to a peak of \$31.7 million in 1913.

Land had been subdivided up to and beyond the edges of this vast area by 1913. The two sections along and east of the Little Red River were intended to become Prince Albert's plush residential district. A total of six subdivisions, including Windsor Park, Industrial Heights, Crescentwood, and Princeton, lay east of the Hudson Bay Reserve. On the south, beyond the ends of the river lots, were three smaller subdivisions. West of the penitentiary and fully one mile outside the city was a narrow strip named Kensington Heights,

21. Council Minutes, August 7, 1911.

22. Herald, June 23, 1913. All 1913 and 1914 issues of the Herald and Prince Albert Times cited hereafter are in a scrapbook held by the Prince Albert Historical Society.

which its owners billed as the "choicest of the choice" in subdivision property.²³

By the spring of 1912, many landowners had made profits of 50 to 100 per cent within a year.²⁴ At the height of the boom, the best lots on Central Avenue sold at \$1,000 a foot.²⁵ At that point, a few citizens had put away fortunes in cash. Many more, and not the gullible or extravagant alone, held all their wealth in whole blocks of lots whose value seemed certain to increase.

To most citizens, however, the boom meant far more than business and an orgy of speculation. It also revived the spirit of community enterprise and the enthusiasm which, in earlier times, had made every social and sporting event a great success. In barely two weeks, an idea conceived by Walter E. Gunn, the \$5,000-a-year publicity commissioner of the Board of Trade, came to reality. After \$15,000 had been subscribed in half an hour, the Prince Albert Land Show Building took rapid shape on the southeast corner of Central and Twelfth Street. Complete with miniature turrets, the building was finished in time for a grand opening on May 24, 1912.²⁶ On the same day, falling happily on a Friday, began

23. Herald, May 23, 1912.

24. Ibid.

25. Interview with J.S. Woodward, April 3, 1964.

26. Daily Phoenix, May 14 and 25, 1912.

the grandest weekend celebration ever seen in Prince Albert. Over 6,000 people, including 1,000 from Saskatoon, thronged the fair grounds for a program ranging from football and baseball through auto racing and moving pictures to a baby show. It was appropriate that the winner of the last contest should have received a lot worth \$500 donated by Mayor N.W. Morton.²⁷

One other sign of the times was the formation of the Prince Albert Club by the new élite of rich businessmen. Before its opening in what is now a library on Twelfth Street West, the club sent an order for wines "that made even the largest liquor house in Canada...stagger." One member boasted later that, during its brief life, the club became "one of the social glories of the Canadian West."²⁸

The same spirit of bold extravagance entered Prince Albert's municipal government. An immense program was launched to make the city a model of civilized modernity. From 1910 to 1913, a total of \$362,000 was borrowed for water mains and improvement of waterworks equipment, \$584,000 for a huge network of sewers, designed to bring these services

27. Ibid., May 25, 1912; Herald, May 23, 1912.

28. Herald, February 14, 1918.

to every home.²⁹ An additional \$76,000 was provided for an ultra-modern sewage disposal plant.³⁰ In the same years, a total of \$90,000 was borrowed for extension of electric light services, and \$19,000 for street lighting. The city also made rapid progress on the grading and boulevarding of streets after purchasing road machinery, a gravel pit, three barges, and a 110-foot steamboat (the King George V). In 1912, \$106,500 was borrowed for cement sidewalks. A beginning was made, finally, in creating a system of parks, and in restoring trees to those streets where the need was greatest. Most of these improvements were of substantial and lasting value. The sidewalks and nearly all the mains and sewers remain in use more than fifty years later.³¹

An expenditure of \$78,000 provided a fire hall and police station which have served equally long. A new service was undertaken in 1910, when Victoria Hospital was turned into a

29. These figures represent the total face value of debentures issued for these purposes. There is no easy way of computing the actual amount spent on various programs, since most of the bonds sold at large discounts, the proceeds of some were diverted into La Colle Falls, and additional expenditures may have been made from current funds. The purpose, amount, date of sale, and yield of all debentures issued from 1905 to 1914 are given in Appendix 1 to the Yorath report, pp. 67-68.

30. The plans are still kept in the office of the city engineer.

31. The present city engineer, Wayne Kyle, estimates that 95 per cent of the water mains and all the sewers laid during the boom period are still serviceable.

municipal institution.³²

The boom also brought the first venture in town planning. Among the recommendations of Toronto consultants E.A. James and T. Aird Murray in 1912 were a traffic bridge at Sixth Avenue East and a system of 86-foot highways "radiating from the business centre to the suburban peripheries."³³ The town planners also suggested that the city continue to widen and open streets so that, on completion of the hydro development, it might immediately install a street railway system.

Indeed, as 1913 began, far more than the acquisition of street cars depended on a project which then lay in sight of completion. La Colle Falls had been launched with difficulties sufficient to cast a small shadow over the bright vision. At that moment, moreover, it lay on the verge of an unforeseen and ultimately disastrous crisis.

To a large extent, the success of the city development rested on the aid and co-operation of the Dominion Government, both as sponsor of a river improvement project and as controlling agency of Western natural resources. Till 1914 there was little doubt of the Government's benevolence and progressive attitude. In 1911 the Department of Public Works opened a

32. The city paid \$22,500 for the hospital.

33. Office of the Prince Albert City Commissioner, E.A. James and T. Aird Murray, City of Prince Albert: Report with Reference to Civic Administration and City Development (Toronto, December 31, 1912).

permanent office in Prince Albert³⁴ and built a wharf worth \$11,400.³⁵ In the next year, the Department began building a 2,300-foot breakwater on which \$55,000 was spent in four years.³⁶ Dredging was continued intermittently till 1915. Most promising for the future, however, was the detailed survey begun in 1910 which in four seasons covered 775 miles of river between The Pas and Edmonton.³⁷ Additional surveys of the main rapids were made in 1911, 1913, and 1914.³⁸ In 1911 gauging was inaugurated at three points on the North Saskatchewan,³⁹ and in 1913 the investigations promised two years earlier were begun to find sites for storage reservoirs.⁴⁰ The reports of the Department of Public Works for 1910, 1911, and 1912 spoke enthusiastically of the development of water transportation on the Saskatchewan.⁴¹ In the latter year, \$7,185,000 was estimated as the total cost of creating

34. Daily Phoenix, March 31, 1911.

35. C.S.P. 1913, No.19, iv, p.244.

36. Ibid., 1914, No.19, iv, pp.262-63; ibid., 1915, No.19, iv, p.318; ibid., 1916, No.19, iv, p.317; ibid., 1917, No.19, pp. 316-17.

37. Ibid., 1915, No.19, iv, p.317.

38. Ibid., 1913, No.19, i, p.18; ibid., 1915, No.19, ii, p.38; ibid., 1916, No.19, iv, pp. 314-16.

39. Ibid., 1913, No.25d, p.31.

40. Ibid., 1915, No.19, iv, p.318.

41. Ibid., 1911, No.19, i, pp.10-12; ibid., 1912, No.19, i, pp. 13-14; ibid., 1913, No.19, i, pp. 18-19.

a navigable waterway from Edmonton to Lake Winnipeg. The Deputy Minister went on to declare that, even should the cost exceed this figure by several million dollars, the project would be "more than amply justified."

At no time did the city doubt the value of its dam as an aid to navigation. From the beginning, however, convincing the Government on this point proved difficult. On its first formal request for aid (November 16, 1910),⁴² the city learned that L.R. Voligny, engineer in charge of the Saskatchewan survey, believed that wing dams costing \$50,000 would make La Colle Falls fully navigable.⁴³ Voligny's superior, the chief engineer of the Public Works Department, recommended accordingly that aid to the city should not exceed this sum. Three city delegates who visited Ottawa in January, 1911, induced Voligny to admit that wing dams would be a temporary improvement.⁴⁴ The city took hope, too, from the unfixed

42. Mayor Holmes suggested to Voligny on November 16, 1910, that the Government pay the full cost of the lock, one-half of the dam, and two-thirds the cost of the canal. See AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, La Colle Falls Hydro-Electric Project, file 2, Holmes to Voligny, November 16, 1910. La Colle Falls material hereafter cited as L.C.F.

43. Ibid., Report of the Delegates to the Mayor and Council, February 20, 1911.

44. Ibid.

state of Department policy at this point.⁴⁵ The delegates received a warm welcome from Pugsley, who told them that "the Government was committed to make the Saskatchewan...navigable," although it needed the complete plans of the dam project before deciding its contribution.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the delegates were forced to report (February 20, 1911) that "the Government has not given any definite promise as to what assistance it will give the City," since the cost of making La Colle Falls permanently navigable had not yet been determined.⁴⁷ More serious, the delegates won only a partial and temporary victory against Voligny, whose views had outweighed those of the Minister, and who remained at his post after the Liberal defeat of September, 1911. Through inclusion in the Department's 1912 report, the opinion of Voligny gained the status of provisional policy. "Locks and dams will not be required below Edmonton," the report announced. "All that is needed to render the rapids navigable is the removal of boulders... and the building of wing dams."⁴⁸ In later years Voligny found no reason to change his mind.

45. Before the delegates met Pugsley, W.W. Rutan, M.P. told Holmes that, although nothing was yet known, the Minister expected the Government to pay half the cost of both the dam and the lock. See ibid., file 35, Rutan to Holmes, February 6, 1911.

46. Ibid., file 35, Report of the Delegates, February 20, 1911.

47. Ibid.

48. C.S.P. 1913, No.19, i, p.18.

It was typical of the manner in which the dam project was managed, however, that from the delegates' return till March, 1913, the question of aid caused little concern to the city officials. On at least one occasion, the Conservative Government was approached on the subject. In May, 1912, Mayor Morton discussed aid with F.D. Monk, the new Minister of Public Works, in Ottawa. On May 27, 1912, Monk announced that the Government was "quite prepared to consider any request...that some share should be borne by [it] in the cost of...the lock."⁴⁹ There is no record of a reply to Monk's letter. When the time came to demand that the Government honour its supposed commitment, no record of a promise could be found in the city files.⁵⁰ There was only a strong impression among officials and citizens that a promise of substantial aid had been given, an impression which persists to this day in Prince Albert.

It was perhaps too much to expect the city officials to detect a shift in a policy which the Government never formulated. Nevertheless, Government enthusiasm for improvement of the Saskatchewan had so waned by the summer of 1913 that it was not even mentioned in the Public Works report of that year.⁵¹ A

49. L.C.F., file 35, Monk to Morton, May 27, 1912.

50. "No definite promise has been obtained." See L.C.F., file 58, Commissioner H.E.M. Kensit to the Finance and Assessment Committee, July 28, 1913.

51. C.S.P. 1914, No.19.

hint of change was offered by the fact that only small sums were spent on the river. From 1910 to 1913, the Public Works Department devoted \$182,000 to surveys and improvement works; only \$76,000 of this total was for improvements.⁵² The prospects for water transportation were sufficiently doubtful to deter any Conservative minister before August, 1913, from renewing Pugsley's commitment.⁵³

Hence, instead of a joint project forming part of a huge improvement scheme, La Colle Falls became a hydro development financed entirely by the city.⁵⁴ It was begun, however, at a time when the Government was unsure of its own course, and was determined that the dam should not conflict with its own future plans. To make sure of this point, the Government provided under the agreement of September 1, 1912, with the Interior Department that the city was to pay the cost of maintaining a Government inspector at the site during construction.⁵⁵

The city's situation bore one potentially alarming aspect.

52. Totals compiled from Public Works annual reports, 1910 to 1913. See C.S.P. 1912, No.19, ii, pp. 31, 33; ibid., 1913, No.19, ii, pp. 33, 35; ibid., 1914, No.19, ii, pp. 34-36; ibid., 1915, No.19, ii, p.38.

53. From 1910 to 1913, improvement of the Saskatchewan was mentioned only once in Parliament. The sole occasion was a speech by Senator T.O. Davis on February 10, 1910. See Debates of the Senate, 1909-10, pp. 212-14.

54. The agreement of September 1, 1912, with the Department of the Interior described it as merely "for the purpose of developing water power." See L.C.F., file 2, Agreement.

55. Ibid.

This was revealed in the Government's warning of August, 1911, that any lock built by the city was to be adequate to pass the largest boats navigating the river. Initially the lock was to be at least 130 by 40 feet. These dimensions were to be increased if it was found before the dam was begun that a larger lock would be required.⁵⁶ In binding the city to comply with the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the 1912 agreement left the city fully exposed to changes in policy, or to the mere whims, of the Department of Public Works.

In small things, too, the Ottawa bureaucrats departed from the spirit of Pugsley's opinion that the project should be facilitated as much as possible.⁵⁷ The Liberal Minister of the Interior, Frank Oliver, also seemed to favour the scheme, but the officials of his department subjected the city to a lengthy course of delays and technicalities. The Department was cooperative in removing three homesteaders and the owner of a large gold-washing machine from the land to be flooded, and in leasing the 559 acres required.⁵⁸ But it took four months of inquiries and appeals before the city

56. Ibid., file 35, Memorandum, A. St. Laurent, Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Works, to the Minister, August 1, 1911, approved by Pugsley.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., file 30, Agreement, September 1, 1912; undated list of lands acquired; W.S. McKechnie, Mining Recorder, to T.H. Brooks, info. Davidson, August 27, 1912; passim.

obtained action on the power franchise.⁵⁹ When urged to reduce the trifling rent of \$100 for the franchise and 25 cents an acre for the land, the Government denied even this token of good will.⁶⁰ For unexplained reasons, the Interior Department refused to let more than 12,000 horsepower be generated, although at one point (February, 1911) Oliver agreed to the city's request for 15,000.⁶¹ At the same time, the Government reserved the right in the 1912 agreement to force the city to raise its capacity to the maximum on two-years' notice.⁶² In August, 1911, moreover, it had warned that no claim would be accepted for any loss in power potential from future improvements downstream.⁶³

But these restrictions and minor rebuffs placed no serious obstacles before the city. The franchise was secured in time for passage of a provincial act (1 Geo. V, c.56, March 14, 1911) authorizing the city to sell power within 100 miles of Prince Albert, and to raise \$500,000 for power purposes without

59. The first letter from the city asking for an assurance was dated September 1, 1910. A draft agreement on the franchise was not forwarded till January 4, 1911. See ibid., file 2, Davidson to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, September 1, 1910; L. Pereira to Holmes, January 4, 1911.

60. Ibid., file 2, Report of the Delegates, February 20, 1911; Agreement, September 1, 1912.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., file 35, St. Laurent to the Minister, August 1, 1911.

impairment of its borrowing powers. From this point events moved quickly. At an informal council meeting on April 27, 1911,⁶⁴ C.H. Mitchell was authorized to call tenders for the initial development. On May 15 a by-law for the borrowing of \$500,000 was approved by the council.⁶⁵ So smoothly were things going by June 29 that no alarm was caused by Mitchell's revision of the initial cost to \$605,000, even with allowance for Government construction of the lock and the \$100,000 grant which Mitchell thought fair.⁶⁶

The reasons for the increase deserved attention, however. Instead of a small, simple lock through the dam, Mitchell had been forced by the Department of Public Works to allow for a larger structure on the power canal, for deepening of the canal, and for a ship inlet costing \$60,000. The effects of inflation were clearly illustrated when Mitchell reported that cement alone would cost \$20,000 more than planned. Mitchell estimated, however, that certain design changes would provide an additional 800 salable horsepower at the initial stage, which would actually lower the unit cost to \$19.

Only on July 11, after the opening of tenders had shown the cost, without allowance for aid, to be \$775,000,⁶⁷ did the

64. Council Minutes, May 15, 1911.

65. Ibid.

66. L.C.F., file 17, Mitchell to the Commissioners, June 29, 1911.

67. Ibid., file 27, F.A. Creighton, "Memorandum of History of Development," August 29, 1913.

council decide to consult another engineer.⁶⁸ While awaiting an answer, it drew up a second by-law to borrow \$275,000 against the general credit of the city.⁶⁹ On August 26, 1911, both by-laws were approved by the ratepayers 411 to 4.⁷⁰

The firm chosen to inspect Mitchell's plans was Smith, Kerry & Chace of Toronto, designer of the city of Winnipeg's development on the Winnipeg River. On July 15 a set of questions was submitted to the consultants on the general design, the security of the dam, canal, and power house against floods, the cost of the initial development, and the amount and cost of power to be generated in the first and final stages. Still hoping to begin work in 1911, the city instructed Smith to accept Mitchell's figures on the river flow as correct.⁷¹

C.B. Smith brought a critical, businesslike approach previously absent from the history of La Colle Falls. His first step was to begin a rough survey of the power market.⁷² On August 7 Smith advised that another of Mitchell's omissions should be rectified in the taking of borings to at least 40 feet below the river bed. He pointed out also that if

68. Council Minutes, July 11, 1911.

69. Ibid., July 21, 1911.

70. Daily Phoenix, August 28, 1911.

71. L.C.F., file 64, Creighton to Smith, Kerry & Chace, July 15, 1911.

72. Ibid., C.B. Smith to Creighton, August 1, 1911.

the bed consisted only of hard clay, as Mitchell had reported, the most suitable type of dam was the hollow design built only by the Ambursen Hydraulic Construction Company of Montreal, and that it must be built below the site chosen by Mitchell. Noting two large mistakes in the latest estimate, Smith raised the cost to \$815,000, but suggested that "substantial reduction" would result from adoption of a hollow dam and elimination of the power canal by combining the dam and power house in one installation.⁷³

Three important results followed the acceptance of this advice by the city council and, less cheerfully, by Mitchell and Commissioner Creighton.⁷⁴ By pointing out that an Ambursen dam could be built immediately to its full height, Smith strengthened an already growing propensity to abandon the three-stage plan,⁷⁵ which at least offered an early return on the city's investment and a lower initial cost. In engaging a firm which worked only on a cost-plus-fee basis, the city made its own vigilance the only safeguard against extravagance. It also

73. Ibid., Smith to Creighton, August 7, 1911.

74. Their annoyance shows in Creighton's letter of September 22, 1911, to Mitchell. "Like yourself I cannot see where Smith found the extra \$40,000 though as you suggest he may be able to explain it to you." See ibid., file 25.

75. According to the Phoenix of October 4, 1910, the city council believed even at this date that it would be wise to begin with the second stage, which would supposedly produce 7,000 h.p. Mitchell himself may have been partly responsible for an apparent misunderstanding of the three-stage plan set out in his report of December 20, 1909. He appears to have told Mayor Holmes that the scheme would offer 3,000 h.p. for \$375,000, 8,000 h.p. for \$500,000 to \$600,000, and 10,000 h.p. for "upwards of" \$1,000,000. See Phoenix, February 11, 1910.

made it easier to lose sight of the ultimate cost as the work progressed.

It was unfortunate, too, that the project was to be managed by a city engineer, Creighton, who, partly because of other duties, was to neglect some portions of an operation far beyond his experience and capacity. Equally serious was the fact that Creighton was already on such friendly terms with Mitchell that he resented every reflection on Mitchell's competence and, as he told Mitchell on September 22, was doing his best to see that his interests were not prejudiced.⁷⁶

By September 8, Smith had completed his survey of the power market. He cautiously refused to count the large industries which were still out of sight, and he estimated a population of only 10,400 by 1914. He pointed out that Mitchell had made no allowance for an investment of \$100,000 in the steam plant or for additional distribution facilities costing \$75,000. If completed by 1914, the initial development would run a deficit of \$23,000 that year and break even only in 1916, unless special inducements were offered to industries.⁷⁷

But Smith merely outlined the alternatives. In the same letter he expressed pleasure that the by-laws had passed and the Ambursen company had been approached. On September 18 borings were begun under the supervision of his company.⁷⁸

76. L.C.F., file 25, Creighton to Mitchell, September 22, 1911.

77. Ibid., file 17, Smith to the Commissioners, attn. Creighton, September 8, 1911.

78. Ibid., file 27, Creighton, "History of Development."

Nevertheless, the delay had already been troublesome and costly, and more than five months were now spent in boring fifty holes in the river bed. The first two proved the complete unsuitability of the site chosen by Mitchell.⁷⁹ Not till February 1, 1912, was an acceptable location found half a mile below it. Mitchell approved the new site only on February 28.⁸⁰

Anxious as he was to conduct further borings and obtain more advice on certain points, Mitchell saw the urgent need to begin work before the summer flood. He still believed the project would supply power to the city by January, 1914, at a cost within the \$775,000 provided. There was not time, therefore, to await answers to the seven specific questions addressed to Smith, Kerry & Chace on March 2.⁸¹ On March 7 and 8, consultations were held in Toronto among Mitchell, Smith, and Mayor Morton.⁸² At their conclusion, Mitchell reported to the city commissioners that Smith "appeared to be in accord with the general designs," was anxious only to inspect certain details when the plans were complete, and intended to

79. Ibid., file 6, H.C. Lott to Smith, Kerry & Chace, night letter, September 30, 1911: "Second hole Mitchell dam shows sand and gravel to fifty feet."

80. Ibid., file 46, Mitchell to the Mayor and Commissioners, February 28, 1912; Daily Phoenix, March 2, 1912.

81. L.C.F., file 64, Creighton to Smith, Kerry & Chace, March 2, 1912.

82. Ibid., file 27, Creighton, "History."

write to them so that they might "proceed with confidence with the further preliminaries."⁸³ Smith's subsequent account of these events was that he had answered only two of the seven questions, had advised further borings, and had retired to his office in the belief that construction would await his full report.⁸⁴ There is little doubt which was the truer version. Smith's letter of approval never arrived.

On April 24 the city proceeded to sign a contract with the Ambursen company for construction of a dam, lock and intake works to cost \$578,000.⁸⁵ Equipment, materials, and men were then rushed to the site, and preparations were pushed forward.

The city did not take alarm when Mitchell revised the estimated cost on April 22 to \$945,000. He included in this estimate a 2,000-foot power canal and a 40-foot lock in the dam costing \$130,000.⁸⁶ Late in April, the danger of still greater cost was raised when the Minister of Public Works demanded a 50-foot lock. He withdrew this demand only after Mayor Morton and James McKay had made strong objections to it

83. Ibid., file 46, Mitchell to the Mayor and Commissioners, March 8, 1912.

84. Ibid., file 64, Chace to the Commissioners, July 30, 1912.

85. Ibid., file 27, Creighton, "History."

86. Ibid., file 25, Mitchell to the Commissioners, April 22, 1912.

in a special meeting in Ottawa.⁸⁷

But many more difficulties lay ahead. The work at La Colle Falls had barely got under way when, on June 13, 1912, a telegram and a letter⁸⁸ from W.G. Chace brought it to a jarring halt. Still dissatisfied with the borings and with certain features of Mitchell's method, Chace expressed surprise that the contract had been let, and warned that the dam as designed would not pass the flood of 182,000 feet per second which had occurred in 1899 at Edmonton.⁸⁹ In a letter of July 30, Chace recommended a radical alteration of the design to pass a flood of 250,000 second-feet and a thorough study of both the design and the cost.⁹⁰

Thus the city was placed in a dilemma. Although the Ambursen company agreed to stand by, Mitchell was unable to convince Government engineers that minor design changes would pass even 182,000 second-feet. As Creighton explained

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87. Daily Phoenix, May 27 and 28, 1912; L.C.F., file 36, Morton to Hon. Robert Rogers, November 21, 1912; file 36, passim. McKay was the Conservative M.P. for Prince Albert.
88. L.C.F., file 41, Smith, Kerry & Chace to Creighton, night letter, June 12, 1912. The letter to the city and a letter to Mitchell of June 12 are not preserved in city records. See reference to them in ibid., file 64, Synopsis of Correspondence with and Reports from Messrs. Smith, Kerry & Chace.
89. On the basis of a single gauging and inspection of the high water marks in 1909, Mitchell had assumed a maximum flow at Prince Albert of 80,000 feet per second. See ibid., file 59, Report.
90. Ibid., file 64, Chace to the Commissioners, July 30, 1912.

to the city council after a conference in Toronto on July 27, the only alternative was to "call in an independent man whose opinion is heavy enough to outweigh that of Smith, Kerry & Chace." Should the man "happen to agree with Mr. Chace," Creighton noted, "it will probably be impossible to proceed with the work at all."⁹¹ On August 1, the Irrigation Branch of the Department of the Interior decided that the 1899 flood at Prince Albert could have been only 158,000 second-feet.⁹² It was agreed, however, by Ambursen and city officials on August 7 to spend another month in consulting a third engineer.⁹³

The real significance of this step did not lie in the further delay. It allowed the city council, at least temporarily, to put aside some weighty advice contained in Chace's July 30 report.⁹⁴ Although he had been told by Creighton that the city's 1,000-horsepower steam plant would scarcely be adequate by 1914, Chace was convinced that postponement of the dam project would save the city, in interest alone, enough to build "a very considerable steam station." The Interior Department had not yet made public the measurements

91. Ibid., Creighton to Davidson, August 2, 1912; ibid., file 27, Creighton, "History."

92. Ibid., file 21, P.M. Sauder, Acting Commissioner of Irrigation, to Creighton, August 1, 1912.

93. Ibid., file 27, Creighton, "History."

94. Ibid., file 64, Chace to the Commissioners, July 30, 1912.

taken at Prince Albert in the previous winter, but Chace guessed that the minimum flow would yield only 6,000 horsepower under the ultimate development. Since the minimum flow occurred in the season of greatest demand, the city ought first to put its steam plant "on a permanent and extensible basis." It was already clear, Chace warned, that water power would be three times as costly for Prince Albert as for Winnipeg, whose source was well furnished with natural storage reservoirs.

Unfortunately, there was little doubt that Smith, Kerry & Chace had been excessively cautious on the question of flood discharge. The third consultant, Isham Randolph of Chicago, reported on September 5 that the site was "suitable, safe and sufficient," and advised that a long list of minor (but expensive) changes would provide amply for the greatest foreseeable flow.⁹⁵ Four days earlier, the driving of piles had been resumed⁹⁶ on the strength of Randolph's preliminary report.⁹⁷

Not till thirteen months later was it disclosed that the city council had agreed to publish Chace's letter of July 30 if Randolph's report were adverse. Instead of publishing it,

95. Ibid., file 63, Randolph to the Commissioners, September 5, 1912.

96. Ibid., file 56, undated summary of work under Ambursen contract.

97. Ibid., file 63, Randolph to the Commissioners, August 19, 1912.

the council avoided what Mayor Morton called "undesirable publicity" by suppressing the document. Until October, 1913, no hint of Chace's opinion appears to have reached the public.⁹⁸

Randolph's report also enabled the city officials to dispense with the thorough study of costs and the power market recommended by Chace and Smith. In his ingenuous way, Mitchell actually suggested that Randolph be asked to inspect "the financial side,"⁹⁹ on which his unfamiliarity with Canadian prices had previously barred him from offering advice. But there was no desire to lose more time after the last engineering obstacle had been removed. The delay of three months had already cost substantial amounts in plant rental, interest, and inflation, and had left much of the excavation and concrete work to be done under difficult and costly winter conditions. Moreover, delays now totalling a full year threatened to prove a heavy penalty in the competition for industries.

A final result of Randolph's approval and of the death, late in June, of C.B. Smith was that the firm of Smith, Kerry & Chace played no further part in the history of La Colle Falls. Charles Mitchell was thus restored to power as sole ruler of the project, the loyalty of his Prince Albert

98. Herald, October 16, 1913.

99. L.C.F., file 63, Mitchell to Morton, October 1, 1912.

subjects unshaken.

If sound reasons for urgency may be given, there remains in the events of 1912 an element which defies logical analysis. Mitchell had done far more than design and start building a dam. Scarcely realizing the effect of his guileless yet persuasive manner, his undistinguished but easy prose, he had founded a powerful new secular religion. Short and simple as it was, the doctrine included every element of the city-boosters' world, from "great manufacturing enterprises" to use the unlimited resources of "our great north country," to opening of the Saskatchewan, savings in domestic lighting, and "streets a perfect blaze of illumination." Benefits verging on the miraculous were set forth in a Board of Trade booklet published late in the summer of 1912, and entitled Prince Albert, the White Coal City.¹⁰⁰ The articles of belief were few but inspiring. "Have faith in Electric Prince Albert...and that faith will coin itself into gold." Whatever sceptics like Chace might say, believers were assured that "'White Coal' always has been and ever shall be better than black." "This marvellous prevision," it seemed, had gripped even the plodding bureaucrats and myopic engineers of the Dominion Government. It was the Government's "avowed intention," declared the booklet, "to provide a through channel six feet deep," and "to gather all available information

100. [Walter E. Gunn], Prince Albert, the White Coal City (Prince Albert, 1912). Copy in PAHSA.

concerning the head-waters of the Saskatchewan, with the idea of imprisoning the waters so that floods may be checked and low levels raised at convenience." The faith was all-embracing, and faith, it is said, surmounts all obstacles.

Thus, late in September, 1912, Prince Albert became headquarters for the largest building operation ever seen in the district. Daily for ten months, an army of wagons dragged loads of coal, cement, structural steel, and many other items over 25 miles of road that often became an impassable bog or a wilderness of deep snow. One visitor to the Falls at the height of activity described a busy scene where over 300 men worked on both sides of the river. There were "tons of concrete being dumped by huge swift running machinery, ...walls under construction, teams and wagons... everywhere, aerial carriages on cable wires across the river, taking...eight tons of material at one time, engines away in the flat excavating earth by the ton, and huge steam diggers...placing it in...wagons."¹⁰¹ And the prosperity it brought was wonderful.

Urged to make all possible speed, the Ambursen company worked quickly and skilfully on the dam and the lock at its south end. In January, 1913, steps were taken to order machinery for the powerhouse. In April and early July, contracts were let for excavation of the tailrace and powerhouse

101. Herald, July 3, 1913.

foundations and excavation of the canal.¹⁰² On June 4, gates were ordered for a lock then rapidly nearing completion.¹⁰³ By early July, Ambursen officials were confident that the dam would be completed in four months, and that enough material lay at the site to finish the job.¹⁰⁴ The Board of Trade booklet, it then seemed, had erred by only a year in predicting that the end of 1913 would see "'White Coal' available for use all over the city."

By July, 1913, moreover, there was tangible proof that cheap power could attract industries. Although a \$250,000 pulp and paper mill for which the city had granted a site had dropped almost out of view,¹⁰⁵ three huge plants were under construction. One of these was to begin as a "twenty inch bar mill and horse shoe factory," and develop in four years into a huge steel complex employing 5,000 men and using 4,200 horsepower of "white coal."¹⁰⁶ A second company was to mill 100 tons of steel a day.¹⁰⁷ But the most impressive

102. L.C.F., file 27, Creighton, "History."

103. Ibid., file 34, P.H. Mitchell to the Mayor and Council, May 6, 1915.

104. Herald, July 5, 1913.

105. Saskatoon Phoenix, October 8, 22, and 24, 1912.

106. Plant of the National Iron and Steel Corporation. See Regina Evening Leader, July 5, 1913.

107. The Imperial Iron and Steel Company. See ibid., March 7, July 9, 1913. According to press reports, construction of both factories had begun, the first in the west end and the second on a 30-acre site donated by a real estate firm.

scheme, and the only one to reach completion, was that of the Great West Iron, Wood & Chemical Works Limited.

The Great West company was conceived by a German citizen named Felix Frank, who impressed all he met with his energy, thoroughness, and wide knowledge of industrial operations.¹⁰⁸ In 1912 Frank was an employee of the Dominion Iron and Steel Company at Sydney, Nova Scotia. He was introduced in the summer of 1912 by M.C. Grant, the German consul at Halifax, to Hector McInnes of that city, and subsequently to D.B. Hanna and F.H. Phippen of the Canadian Northern Railway. To these four Frank revealed an opportunity to buy some foundry, woodworking, and paint-manufacturing machinery worth \$80,000 for one-quarter of that sum.¹⁰⁹ Frank also said he had the Canadian patents for a wonderful new paint, which was not only cheaper, glossier, and more durable than ordinary paint, but could be applied by any amateur in dry or wet weather.¹¹⁰

The most attractive feature of Frank's proposition was

108. AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, Great West Iron, Wood and Chemical Works, Ltd., 1912-1919, file 5, Examination of F.H. Phippen, M.C. Grant, Hector McInnes, and D.B. Hanna before W.D. Gwynne, Examiner of the Supreme Court of Ontario, Toronto, December 20, 1916, passim. Great West company material hereafter cited as G.W.C.

109. According to Phippen, Frank did not mention his own resources. He wanted, however, to "associate some men of standing with him" and needed "assistance in financing... to put the company on its feet." See ibid., p.12.

110. Ibid., p.17.

that the way had already been prepared in Prince Albert, which he considered to be "an exceedingly suitable place" for a factory.¹¹¹ He believed there was a ready market there for almost unlimited quantities of foundry and wood products, and the new company would be "practically without competition." Lumber and fuel were cheap; scrap iron and ore were plentiful; and there was even a bed of red ochre on the North Saskatchewan.¹¹² In August, 1912, Frank persuaded the Prince Albert council to offer a free site of 15 acres and power at half its lowest regular rate, and to guarantee the principal and interest of \$125,000 in company bonds.¹¹³ A month later the land grant and guarantee were approved by the ratepayers, 364 to 13.¹¹⁴

In September the Great West Iron, Wood and Chemical Works Limited was incorporated with a capital of \$500,000.¹¹⁵ At their first official meeting in Toronto, the shareholders adopted a plan which, Phippen said later, Frank "apparently had put a good deal of time [into]...and worked out rather

111. Ibid., file 1, Minutes of Meeting of the Directors, October 1, 1912.

112. Ibid., file 5, Examination, pp. 16-24.

113. Council Minutes, August 20, 1912.

114. Daily Phoenix, September 17, 1912.

115. Saskatchewan Gazette, Vol. VIII, No.19 (October 15, 1912), p.27.

closely."¹¹⁶ Each of the five was to pay cash for one share.¹¹⁷ Frank then subscribed the remaining 4,995 shares and received these from the company in exchange for his paint patents, a toothpick patent, the city land grant, and the bond guarantee. In the final step Frank gave 999 shares to each of the others.¹¹⁸ It was a kind of transaction which the Saskatchewan Companies Act of 1909 had forbidden.¹¹⁹ The revised statute of 1911, however, had repealed the prohibiting section, and retained only a fine against the directors for failure to register such an agreement among the shareholders.¹²⁰ Thus, with an investment totalling some \$20,000 (the cost of the second-hand machinery), five men had become owners of a \$500,000 corporation. Only with a loan of \$70,000 from the Bank of Nova Scotia was the company enabled to start operations.¹²¹

116. G.W.C., file 1, Minutes of Meeting of the Directors, October 1, 1912; ibid., file 5, Examination, p.14.

117. The entire \$500 was actually provided by Phippen. Grant and McInnes were represented by proxy at the first meeting. See ibid., file 5, Examination, p.40.

118. Ibid., file 1, Minutes of Meeting of the Directors, October 1, 1912. See also ibid., file 2, Agreement between the Great West company and Felix Frank, October 1, 1912.

119. See Revised Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1909, c.72, sect.43: "Every share...shall...be held subject to the payment of the whole amount thereof in cash unless...otherwise determined by a contract duly made in writing and filed with the registrar at or before the issue of such share."

120. Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1910-11, 1 Geo.V, c.16, sect.4; Revised Statutes, 1909, c.72, sect.111; G.W.C., file 6, part ii, F.L. Brown to Macdonell & Boland, October 26, 1914.

121. G.W.C., file 5, Examination, p.28.

As the four Canadians later insisted, however, this was not a "stock-jobbing proposition." On the company's formation, the four had greater expectations than Frank himself, who promised a 6 per cent dividend in the first year and 20 per cent in the second.¹²² Several months later, they turned down Frank's suggestion that outsiders be allowed to share in this bonanza by purchasing a portion of the stock.¹²³ Besides lending their personal guarantees to a bank loan which reached over \$200,000 at one point, the four men chipped in an average of \$20,000 each¹²⁴ to finance an operation which grew rapidly beyond even their own visions.

To Prince Albert, the successful birth of its first great enterprise was announced on October 21, 1912, when Frank telegraphed Mayor Morton: "Advise your council that I shall make application...for 10,000 horse power for a giant industry."¹²⁵ Six weeks later, construction was started on a paint mill, foundry, and general and specialty wood-working plants.¹²⁶ The site, a plot of cut-over timber land now crossed by the Canadian National Paddockwood branch and partly occupied by a drive-in theatre, was to become the heart of Prince Albert's industrial district.

122. Ibid., pp. 19, 28.

123. Ibid., p.27. The date of this incident is not given in the testimony.

124. Ibid., pp. 28, 29, 35, 53, 59-60.

125. Saskatoon Phoenix, October 22, 1912.

126. Ibid., February 22, 1913.

The initial scheme was less than half finished when Frank announced on February 20, 1913, that the operation would be on three times its scale, employ 1,000 men by August, 1914, and require 60 more acres of land.¹²⁷ At a banquet in March, 1913, Frank and Hanna outlined plans for a car shop where the complete manufacture of box cars, flat cars, veneered Pullmans, and car wheels would be undertaken, and told of a contract for 600 cars already secured from the Canadian Northern. The wood-working plant was projected to turn out 1,000 windows, six prefabricated six-room houses, and a carload of toothpicks daily. Already three million labels had been ordered for a paint shop to produce 1,000 gallons a day, and to ship large quantities as far as Vancouver.¹²⁸ After hearing these details, ex-Mayor Andrew Holmes remarked that "no one...could doubt for a moment the important place...those factories were likely to take in the city.... Even the members of the board of trade could hardly realize it."¹²⁹ At a public meeting in April, Mayor Morton pointed out that the paint and wood-working shops alone would use 667 horsepower.¹³⁰ Although the council

127. Ibid.

128. Times, March 26, 1913.

129. Ibid.

130. Saskatoon Phoenix, April 15, 1913.

refused to give more land, the ratepayers approved the sale of 60 acres to the company at \$10 an acre.¹³¹

The city had already gone to much trouble in clearing title to the company's first plot of land.¹³² It also helped to ward off the anger of the Saskatchewan Rifle Association, after the Canadian Northern, without permission, built a spur track across its range to the plant.¹³³ Moreover, city officials did not protest when Frank failed to pay for three boilers worth \$1,000 which he carried off from the city steam plant.¹³⁴

These labours and trials seemed trivial as the Great West complex took rapid shape. By September, 1913, there were seven buildings and eight workers' cottages worth a total of \$275,000.¹³⁵ Among the buildings were a four-storey paint shop with the latest in automatic equipment, a wood-working plant, a machine shop, and a foundry.¹³⁶ One visitor

131. Council Minutes, April 14, 1913.

132. Times, July 16, August 13, 1913; Evening Leader, July 25, 1913; Herald, July 24, 1913; G.W.C., file 4, passim.

133. Herald, July 19, 1913; Times, October 22, 1913.

134. G.W.C., file 4, R. Wright, Electrical Superintendent, to the Commissioner, June 26, 1913; ibid., file 6, part i, Davidson to Kensit, November 20, 1913.

135. Valuation of the Bank of Nova Scotia. The insurance underwriters estimated \$260,000. See ibid., file 5, Examination, p.30.

136. Ibid., file 6, part iv, Board of Appraisers to the Mayor and Council, November 23, 1914; Evening Leader, August 4, 1913.

compared the operation to "a great industrial monster ready to...disgorge immense quantities of merchandise.... When each factory is working to its full capacity, a mighty stream of Great West paints,...houses, stoves and many other... articles [will] sweep over [the West]."137

Unfortunately, by September, 1913, the project on which not only the Great West and other prospective industries but the whole future of Prince Albert seemed to depend had reached a crisis. The financial difficulties of the city had at last proven insuperable.

In 1911 Prince Albert could have been scarcely less prepared for entry into the world of high finance. Although they were familiar with tight markets, the city officials recalled that the stringency of 1906-08 had passed with small loss to the city. Legal difficulties and administrative blunders in the past had not caused crucial delays in marketing debentures. The city had sold bonds with widely varying terms and different conditions of payment, and, in one case,¹³⁸ bearing three different rates of interest.

Throughout 1910 and most of 1911, the market for Western municipal debentures was strong. In August, 1911, Prince Albert received a price of 100.05 for a bundle of bonds with an average rate of 4.8 per cent.¹³⁹ The appointment

137. Times, September 26, 1913.

138. See Yorath, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

139. See ibid.

of Wood, Gundy and Company of Toronto as the city's sole fiscal agent in September, 1911, promised to place its bonds on the London exchange, where few issues of less than £100,000 were handled, and the appetite for Canadian municipal bonds was ravenous.¹⁴⁰

No alarm was caused by the slight decline which unrest in Europe, poor crops, and heavy municipal borrowing had caused by the end of 1911. In January, 1912, Wood, Gundy advised that the delay in beginning the power project had proven "quite fortunate" in allowing the city to avoid an apparently brief period of tightness.¹⁴¹ The city then accepted Wood, Gundy's offer of 94 cents for a quantity of 4½ per cent bonds.¹⁴² After much delay in preparing these for market, a still satisfactory 93 cents was offered on April 15 for \$500,000 worth, including \$125,000 of the larger power issue.¹⁴³ Although five separate mistakes on the city's part and the slow pace of its administrative machine¹⁴⁴ caused a five-month delay in delivering the bonds,

140. Council Minutes, September 19, 1911; P.A.C.C.P., Wood, Gundy Co. Correspondence, 1911-1913, Wood Gundy to Mayor Holmes, August 17, 1911.

141. P.A.C.C.P., Wood, Gundy Correspondence, Wood, Gundy to Davidson, January 16, 1912.

142. Ibid., Davidson to Wood, Gundy, January 23, 1912.

143. Ibid., Davidson to G.H. Wood, April 11 and April 16, 1912; Daily Phoenix, April 18, 1912.

144. See P.A.C.C.P., Wood, Gundy Correspondence, passim.

\$133,000 worth were safely disposed of by September.¹⁴⁵

At the same time, however, Wood, Gundy pointed out that the European situation, extravagant municipal borrowing, and a worldwide shortage of capital had caused a decline in municipal bond prices "far more severe than the most far-seeing financier ever anticipated."¹⁴⁶ The city tried to resist the trend, only to yield in November to Wood, Gundy's offer of 88.50 for \$249,900 in 4½ per cent bonds.¹⁴⁷

But the loss taken on these issues was as nothing beside the difficulties met in financing the dam project. On acceptance of its offer for \$125,000 in power bonds, Wood, Gundy referred the authorizing by-laws to its solicitor, Alexander Bruce. The number and nature of the objections which Bruce initially raised are obscure, although one was based on the fact that the by-laws were passed before 1 Geo. V , c.56 was brought into force (January 22, 1912). At any rate, they appeared trivial to city officials, who were confident in May that no difficulties could arise from the latter point.¹⁴⁸ As it happened, the intervention of Smith, Kerry & Chace and the consequent delay in signing the agreement with the Interior Department made it impossible for Bruce to complete his

145. Ibid., W.N. McIlwraith to Davidson, September 9, 1912.

146. Ibid.

147. Yorath, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

148. P.A.C.P., Wood, Gundy Correspondence, Davidson to Wood, Gundy, May 21, 1912.

investigations till October.¹⁴⁹ But it was only about November 1, 1912, that the city was told that the by-laws were invalid because of their passage after the proclamation of the act.¹⁵⁰ Hastily the by-laws were repassed (December 9, 1912),¹⁵¹ as the city's overdraft climbed steadily. Yet its problems had only begun. About November 1, Bruce had also decided that a literal interpretation of 1 Geo. V, c.56, section 23 limited borrowing for power purposes to \$500,000. He went on to rule that the issue of a second power debenture made the first invalid as well.¹⁵² On the second point, Bruce proved to be on weak ground.¹⁵³ City Solicitor A.E. Doak argued to the apparent satisfaction of all but Bruce that section 23 merely declared the city's borrowing powers to be unimpaired by the \$500,000 issue. No case, however, could be made against the second contention. Moreover, this fact became obvious¹⁵⁴ too late for submission

149. Ibid., Davidson to Wood, Gundy, October 9, 1912.

150. Ibid., Davidson to Wood, Gundy, November 5 and December 13, 1912.

151. Council Minutes, December 9, 1912.

152. P.A.C.C.P., Wood, Gundy Correspondence, Bruce to Wood, Gundy, February 1, 1913, enc. in McIlwraith to Davidson, February 24, 1913.

153. Bruce remained firm on the invalidity of both bonds as late as February 4, however, and blamed Doak for failing to provide information which he had requested months earlier.

154. The letter cited in note 152 refers to a letter of December 24, 1912, from Bruce to Wood, Gundy, in which the writer rejected the arguments of Doak.

of a validating bill. The Legislature prorogued on January 11, 1913, leaving \$275,000 in bonds unsalable.

Meanwhile, after November, 1912, the market had continued to fall. In Prince Albert the atmosphere changed gradually from dismay to near-panic, as nearly \$300,000 in local improvement issues, as well as the power bonds, remained unsold. By the end of January, the city owed \$728,000 to the Imperial Bank, which then refused further advances for capital expenditures.¹⁵⁵ Among the city officials resentment grew steadily against Wood, Gundy.¹⁵⁶ The city began to think that it had erred seriously in entrusting its most vital affairs to a firm 2,000 miles away, which had treated it as a careless, prodigal, and impatient minor client, and had shown little understanding of its plight. The final blow fell on February 7, 1913, when the city learned that a London exchange glutted with municipal bonds had refused all new listings.¹⁵⁷

But steps had already been taken to escape an intolerable situation. In mid-January, 1913, Mayor Morton had gone to England in hope of selling privately the large power bond. At about the same time, secret negotiations were opened with

155. P.A.C.C.P., Miscellaneous Financial Communications and bids on Debentures 1910-1911-1912, H.T. Jaffray to Davidson, January 29, 1913.

156. P.A.C.C.P., Wood, Gundy Correspondence, passim.

157. Ibid., Davidson to Wood, Gundy, February 8, 1913.

W.A. Mackenzie and Company of Toronto. On February 7, the city council rejected an offer from Wood, Gundy that would have placed its bonds on a 6 per cent basis, and cancelled an arrangement likely to bring only further losses. Thus it was free to accept an offer of 87.00 from Mackenzie for the entire lot (\$281,900) of improvement debentures.¹⁵⁸ The crisis passed finally after March 4, when Morton disposed of the power bond to Fielding, Son and McLeod of London.¹⁵⁹

The last sale, however, was made only at the crushingly low price of 79.60 for an issue bearing 4½ per cent. The direct loss of \$102,000 thus suffered was a heavy price for mismanagement of the dam project and careless drafting of a bill.

Moreover, the relief gained was short. By the end of March, the entire proceeds of \$398,000 had been consumed by long-due bills,¹⁶⁰ and La Colle Falls continued to absorb some \$2,000 a day. Spring found the city council again embarked on a massive works program, for which debenture by-laws totalling \$709,000 were introduced at a single meeting.¹⁶¹ The council used every expedient to complete a dam project

158. Council Minutes, February 7, 1913; Saskatoon Phoenix, February 15, 1913.

159. Yorath, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

160. L.C.F., file 27, Creighton, "History."

161. Council Minutes, March 17, 1913.

which, as late as March 3, Creighton assured them would cost little more than the \$945,000 of Mitchell's last estimate.¹⁶² On March 11, the first issue of treasury notes bearing 8 per cent interest was made.¹⁶³ By July, \$750,000 had been raised by this means from English investors,¹⁶⁴ Early in July, however, an attempt to place an additional \$500,000 in treasury bills in the United States failed.¹⁶⁵ The city was enabled to continue work at the Falls only by leaving bills unpaid and making temporary arrangements with its creditors.¹⁶⁶ On July 11, the works program was brought nearly to a halt.¹⁶⁷ By July 28, the overdraft had been allowed to reach \$200,000,¹⁶⁸ despite a world-wide recession of six months' duration which had placed a heavy brake on commercial lending.

Only with another crisis imminent did the city officials pause to take stock of a project which, technically, had gone

162. L.C.F., file 48, Creighton to the Mayor and Council, March 3, 1913.

163. Council Minutes, March 11, 1913; Herald, October 23, 1913.

164. P.A.C.C.P., unmarked folder of correspondence, Morton to C. Leveson-Gower, Fielding, Son & McLeod, July 29, 1913.

165. Ibid.

166. L.C.F., file 27, Creighton, "History."

167. Council Minutes, July 11, 1913.

168. P.A.C.C.P., unmarked folder of correspondence, Morton to Leveson-Gower, July 29, 1913.

with rare smoothness. On July 21, the first complete estimate¹⁶⁹ was drawn up by Creighton, who had been appointed general manager of the power development six months earlier.¹⁷⁰ Creighton's figures revealed that a further expenditure of \$929,000 would be needed to make up a total cost of \$1,700,000. Included in the \$771,000 spent to June 30 was \$280,000 on a lock for which no aid had yet been received. Among the estimates were a total for the dam, lock, and headworks of \$203,000, or 35 per cent over the contract price; another for the cofferdam, 78 per cent above Mitchell's estimate; and for transport and assembly of the Ambursen plant a cost three and one half times the sum allowed. There could have been no clearer revelation of the inexperience and incompetence of Mitchell. One result of the virtually free hand given the Ambursen company in the interests of speed was also revealed. Creighton noted that "a large portion of the work in connection with the ultimate development...will have been completed when the work...under construction is finished."

In the same complacent tone in which he viewed the huge increase in cost, Creighton revealed that measurements made at Prince Albert in the winter of 1912 had found a minimum flow of 1,500 feet per second,¹⁷¹ sufficient to produce only 3,360 horsepower. Enlargement of the steam plant would be necessary to provide a continuous minimum of even 6,000 h.p.

169. L.C.F., file 24, Creighton to Morton, July 23 [21], 1913.

170. Council Minutes, January 13, 1913; Saskatoon Phoenix, January 16, 1913. Creighton resigned simultaneously as city engineer.

But Creighton offered no estimate of the cost of expansion, its effect on the price of power, or the possibility of selling even the initial quantity of 4,000 h.p. Instead his words expressed only the delusive belief that safety lay in business. They hinted also that La Colle Falls had become less a commercial venture than an end in itself, a monument to the vision, enterprise, and determination of the city officials. "If there is any justification," he wrote, "for undertaking the development...it must be assumed that the City will very soon outgrow the plant and that within 10 years 20,000 H.P. will represent [its] requirements... more nearly than 10,000."¹⁷²

Even H.E.M. Kensit, who had begun work as city commissioner two weeks earlier, was cautiously hopeful that the dam could be made a commercial success. As a former engineer with the Water Power Branch of the Department of the Interior, Kensit was well versed in both the financial and technical sides of hydro developments. In an analysis of July 28, he placed the cost of power at \$40.50 a horsepower and predicted an initial loss of \$79,300 a year,

171. An engineer of the Irrigation Branch took readings during the winter at intervals ranging from two to four weeks. The results obtained in 1911-12 were: November 24-25, 2,757 second-feet; December 14-15, 2,651; January 12-15, 1,465; February 8-9, 1,430; February 24-25, 1,600. See C.S.P. 1913, No.25d, p.31.

172. L.C.F., file 24, Creighton to Morton, July 23 [21], 1913.

assuming sale of the entire initial output at prices attractive to industries. He had learned, moreover, from the chief engineer of the Water Power Branch that no projects were under way or planned to provide storage for power purposes. On the other hand, the prospective cost of power was far short of prohibitive. In addition, Kensit believed that the development of adequate storage "might give the city all they originally expected and probably more." A good case, he felt, could be made for demanding such aid, and a grant towards the cost of the lock, from the Dominion Government, although little or no navigation had yet developed at La Colle Falls.¹⁷³

Thus matters stood on the morning of July 29, when the Imperial Bank refused an additional loan of \$200,000. The bank's decision, probably imminent, had been hastened by the secret request of Alderman F.W. Armitage, head of the finance committee, who alone, apparently among the city officials, realized that the dam would never be finished.¹⁷⁴ In emergency session the same afternoon, the council had no choice but to accept a motion by Armitage that, except for the tailrace and canal excavations, "all work be discontinued

173. Ibid., file 58, Kensit to the Finance and Assessment Committee, July 28, 1913.

174. Interview with J.S. Woodward, April 3, 1964. H.T. Jaffray, manager of the Prince Albert branch in 1913, told Woodward many years later of being approached by Armitage.

at La Colle Falls."¹⁷⁵

None realized that July 29, 1913, marked the end of the most momentous era in the history of Prince Albert. As early as May, money stringency had sharply reduced building,¹⁷⁶ and the real estate market had broken. Yet, as July ended, the city looked forward to an upturn which few thought would be long in coming.

175. Council Minutes, July 29, 1913.

176. Saskatoon Phoenix, May 19, 1913.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DISASTER UNIMAGINED, 1913-1914

In the last days of July, 1913, there was no atmosphere of crisis or impending disaster in Prince Albert. As the Times pointed out, Prince Albert was "only following the example set by other cities throughout the West" in suspending its civic projects.¹ Mayor Morton said he believed that construction of the dam could be resumed in six months.² In the meantime, the city council tried to lessen the effects of delay by preparing a by-law to borrow \$275,000 for the new powerhouse to be needed on completion of the dam.³ Although the Imperial Bank refused any further advances for the project, the two contractors at work on the canal and tailrace excavations agreed to continue for payment in treasury notes.⁴

There was even "a feeling of considerable satisfaction" among officials and citizens after the visit on August 14 of Robert Rogers, the Dominion Minister of Public Works.⁵ Besides expressing the widespread belief that market conditions

1. Times, July 30, 1913.

2. Ibid.

3. AS, Prince Albert Urban Municipality, City Council Minutes, August 4, September 10, 1913.

4. Ibid., August 4, 1913; L.C.F., file 27, Creighton, "History."

5. Times, August 15, 1913.

would improve "on [the] eve of the best harvest in Canada's history," Rogers promised to recommend financial aid to the city.⁶ A day later in Edmonton, Rogers said that the Government was going ahead with improvement of the Saskatchewan.⁷ On requesting a grant of \$300,000, Morton was "very hopeful" of success.⁸

On August 18 the citizens first showed apprehension. Two hundred persons crowded into the council chamber that evening⁹ to hear Mitchell explain why, in the preceding spring, he had ignored the "provisional" measurements of the previous two winters showing flows as low as 1,370 second-feet.¹⁰ On August 20, the Times began to grumble about "unpardonable negligence."¹¹ More generously and justly, the Herald observed that the citizens had been in a state of mind to accept "the most fantastic theories" on the achievement of civic greatness.¹²

6. Ibid., August 14, 1913.

7. Herald, August 16, 1913.

8. Times, August 15, 1913.

9. Herald, August 19, 1913.

10. See C.S.P. 1914, No.25c, pp. 37-39. The figures were: January 4, 1913—2,382 second-feet, January 31—1,370, March 1—1,650.

11. Times, August 20, 1913 (editorial).

12. Herald, August 20, 1913.

There was hope, nevertheless, that initiative might still save the day. The Herald reflected grimly that "the scheme has got to be gone on with now."¹³ On August 18, the council decided to petition the Dominion Government to survey the possibilities of water storage, to provide the results of previous surveys and information on any projected improvements, and to take semi-weekly gaugings at Prince Albert in the winter of 1914.¹⁴ The second request brought only a confirmation that no work having appreciable effect on the minimum flow was planned, and the news that a brief survey of storage sites in the previous winter had been inconclusive.¹⁵ Promises were secured on the other points, however. In August the council instructed Mitchell to report on the reasons for the increase in cost, on the minimum flow and its effect on the cost of power, and on the storage possibilities.¹⁶ In September a joint committee of council and citizens was set up to inquire into the whole development after receipt of Mitchell's report.¹⁷ Contracts were let in

13. Ibid., August 23, 1913.

14. Council Minutes, August 18, 1913.

15. L.C.F., file 35, Voligny to Eugene D. La Fleur, Chief Engineer, Department of Public Works, September 27, 1913, enc. in J.H. Colman to Davidson, October 9, 1913.

16. Council Minutes, August 18, 1913.

17. Ibid., September 2, 1913.

mid-September for the power house machinery to prevent a long delay in case work were resumed.¹⁸ Early in October, the city decided to petition the Legislature for amendment of 1 Geo.V, c.56 to validate the \$275,000 power bond and to authorize the further borrowing of \$2,500,000.¹⁹

By October 10, however, the city's future course was far from clear, and little light was thrown on it by Mitchell's report.²⁰ For the most part the document was an apologia and an outline of the costly sequence of events brought about by his own incompetence. On the question of minimum flow, Mitchell pointed to the known difficulty of cold-weather measurements and the earlier refusal of the Irrigation Branch to publish its results. He asserted also that gaugings at La Colle Falls in the previous two winters had indicated a flow "considerably in excess" of that found at Prince Albert. But these arguments could hardly be taken seriously. The comments of the Irrigation Branch on the accuracy of gauging²¹ gave no reason to suppose an error greater than perhaps 20 per cent under mid-winter conditions. Nor was there sound reason to believe, as Mitchell suggested, that more frequent

18. Ibid., September 22, 1913; Times, September 26, 1913; Herald, October 28, 1913.

19. Herald, October 6, 1913; L.C.F., file 1, Petition to the Lieutenant-Governor and the Legislative Assembly, October 25, 1913.

20. L.C.F., file 60, Mitchell to the Mayor and Council, September 24, 1913.

21. See C.S.P. 1913, No.25d, pp. 21-26.

and more accurate measurements would indicate a greater flow, or that periods of low water were quite short. Mitchell himself assumed a minimum of 1,500 second-feet for three months in his calculations, and he never presented the results of his own measurements.

Still less helpful to the city were his remarks on the cost of power. Under what he considered the most unfavourable conditions — a total expenditure of \$1,800,000 on the hydro development and \$300,000 on a steam plant and distribution system — Mitchell worked out a schedule of rates at which, through a "vigorous campaign," 4,000 h.p. could be sold in the city by September, 1915. That he still looked to the distant future, however, became evident when he repeated his theme of 1909, untouched by the failure of more than one industry to pass the projected stage in Prince Albert. "The great value...of the hydro plant," he wrote, "lies in its possibilities for ultimately providing a large quantity of power throughout the year...at a price...attractive to the manufacturer."²²

On October 13, the joint committee created a sub-committee of six citizens to consider Mitchell's report, determine what had gone wrong, and, hopefully, to point a way out of the bog.²³

22. L.C.F., file 60, Mitchell to the Mayor and Council, September 24, 1913.

23. Times, October 14, 1913.

Under the chairmanship of Judge T.H. McGuire, the sub-committee turned up several examples of mismanagement and extravagance, and in a few cases, of petty corruption.²⁴ It made incisive criticisms of Mitchell and Creighton and of an arrangement which had denied the city effective control over expenditures. The inquiry lasted only six weeks, however, and its report admittedly was incomplete. Unable to compel witnesses, the sub-committee heard mainly ex-workmen with grievances and tales to tell. Half convinced by the denials and explanations of Ambursen officials, and mindful of the libel laws, it decided (November 20, 1913) against publishing its report.²⁵ The only constructive

24. L.C.F., file 53, Report of the Sub-Committee on La Colle Falls. Some examples of mismanagement were (1) the idleness of the city steamboat for want of fuel at a time when the city owned a large pile of wood on the river bank; (2) the hauling of cement by team for at least three weeks after the river had risen sufficiently to allow use of the boat; and (3) underemployment of workmen at the Falls. The latter two faults, however, may be largely explained by the concern of the Ambursen company and the city for making the best possible speed. An Ambursen official also argued convincingly that, in the case mentioned by the sub-committee, shipment by water would have resulted in no saving. See L.C.F., file 53, Stenographic Report of Meeting of the Joint Committee, November 20, 1913.

There are no clear proofs of corruption involving any persons, and no charges or even suspicions were raised against city officials. The sub-committee believed, however, that the city paid freight on substantially more material than was actually hauled (transport cost \$7 a ton). Since inadequate scales were kept at the Falls, weights were often guessed at, and weigh stubs issued in Prince Albert were destroyed by the hauling contractor. The Ambursen company caught one attempt to charge twice for eight loads.

25. Ibid., Stenographic Report of Meeting of the General [Joint] Committee, November 20, 1913.

suggestion to emerge from the inquiry was that of hiring an expert to analyze the financial consequences if the dam were completed or, as was now possible, left unfinished indefinitely.

Only in late fall was this last course suggested more strongly by the continuing financial weakness of the city. In a market which again had turned worse, the city was able in December to sell \$976,940 worth of 5 per cent bonds at only 84.61.²⁶ Included in this total was the \$275,000 debenture issued for a new power house. The entire proceeds of the sale were used to cancel the \$750,000 in outstanding treasury bills, and an overdraft of \$250,000 remained.²⁷ In January, 1914, a further issue of \$120,260 netted 84 cents.²⁸ By mid-March, the city's floating debt had climbed once more to \$470,000.²⁹

Meanwhile, the Legislature had passed an act validating the unsold power bond and authorizing the further borrowing of \$2,500,000 at 6 per cent.³⁰ Its operation was suspended, however, pending an inquiry by the Local Government Board

26. Yorath, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

27. P.A.C.C.P., Correspondence re Sale of \$976,940 issue of Debentures, Davidson to Wood, Gundy, November 19, 1913.

28. Yorath, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

29. Herald, March 21, 1914.

30. Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1913, 4 Geo.V, c.93 (December 19, 1913).

formed during the same session.³¹

It is perhaps not surprising that so young a body as the Local Government Board should have conducted a hasty and shallow investigation, and produced a report³² which can be described most charitably as unrealistic. The Board accepted Mitchell's estimate of \$1.8 million as the total cost, although the sub-committee, mindful of the city's experience, had refused to put any trust in it. The board also accepted the city's suggestion that "there need be no anxiety as to the market for...power."³³ The board thought it possible that 3,000 to 4,000 h.p. could be sold to the city of Saskatoon at \$40 a horsepower. As Kensit was to show on March 4,³⁴ however, the Board underestimated the cost of transmitting power to Saskatoon by \$20 a horsepower. The Board might have guessed, moreover, that Saskatoon would demand compensation for the obsolescence of its own new steam plant. A Prince Albert deputation had already met Saskatoon officials and Kensit was later to put this sum at \$28.60 a horsepower.³⁵

31. By 4 Geo.V, c.41 (December 19, 1913).

32. L.C.F., file 32, A.J. McPherson, Chairman, Local Government Board, to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, February 21, 1914.

33. Ibid., file 31, Stenographic Notes of Local Government Board Inquiry, February 5 and 6, 1914, Submission of D.W. Adam, City Solicitor.

34. Ibid., file 58, Kensit to the Joint Committee, March 4, 1914.

35. Ibid., See also ibid., Memo of interview, January 30, 1914, and file 31, Stenographic Notes of Inquiry.

Although an engineer of the Water Power Branch told it that no promises could be made,³⁶ the Board adopted the city's faith in storage development. But it seems incredible that, omitting the cost of the power project from the city debt, and on the basis of an assessment which the most casual inquiry would have shown to be grossly inflated, the Board should have found Prince Albert to be "in excellent financial position." Even less realistic was the Board's suggestion that \$1,350,000 might readily be borrowed to finish the dam and retire the floating debt. Here it revealed gross ignorance of the serious decline in the confidence of investors from which Western cities were already suffering. Moreover, in noting that the city debt remained \$3.4 million below its borrowing powers, the Board betrayed a serious misconception of the purpose of the limit, and an apparent belief that the city might squander those powers on what, at some uncertain date, would be "an exceedingly valuable asset." It was unfortunate, too, that the Board sat only one week before the long-needed report by an outside engineer became available.

The document prepared by the J.G. White Engineering Corporation of New York³⁷ was clear in its recommendations.

36. Ibid., file 31, Stenographic Notes of Inquiry.

37. Ibid., file 66, part i, Report of the J.G. White Engineering Corporation, New York, January 30, 1914.

Using the results of daily gaugings begun on December 8, 1913, it assumed a low-water flow of only 1,000 feet per second.³⁸ It estimated that an additional \$545,000 must be borrowed to cover the amount already spent on construction.³⁹ To raise the \$1,136,000 needed to complete the project and produce 4,000 horsepower would demand a further issue of \$1,671,000 in debentures, assuming interest during two years of construction and a discount of approximately 20 per cent. Thus the total cost was brought to \$2,716,000, including \$791,000 in interest and loss on debentures. The report went on to note that high freight rates, labour costs, and the expense of heating factories in severe weather made the city's chances of securing industries "quite doubtful." The uncertainty, moreover, would increase the difficulty of borrowing the additional \$2,216,000. Since completion of the dam would result in an initial deficit of \$86,000, it would be wise to leave the dam unfinished until a market for 4,000 horsepower existed, and accept a loss of \$34,000 yearly.

At the same time, the White report painted a bright

38. The White company engineer was in Prince Albert from December 14 to 20, 1913. Daily gaugings in the city subsequently showed a minimum of 850 second-feet on January 19, 1914. The monthly averages for January, February, and March were 1,221, 1,191, and 1,295 second-feet,. See C.S.P. 1915, No.25c, pp. 89-92.

39. The \$545,000 included the \$275,000 power bond, which was not sold till April 30, 1914.

side to this picture which partially refuted its own arguments, and made the document curiously ambiguous. In discussing the power market, it suggested that an "energetic campaign" might lure enough factories to use more than 2,000 h.p. and produce a surplus of \$13,000 by 1919. The White company succumbed also to the Mitchellian reflection that enlargements costing \$210,000 would yield 2,000 more salable horsepower. On several points, too, the report was misleading. In comparing two alternatives involving abandonment of the dam, it omitted fixed charges of \$17,000 on the existing steam plant and an extra cost of \$26,000 for operation of the steam plant in low-water years. Although the first sum was added to the deficit under both alternatives, it was not made clear that these amounts must also be taken from the profits to be earned by a finished dam. In other words, the city would lose \$4,000 yearly after 1918 even if all 4,000 h.p. were sold, and \$30,000 in low-water years. This last sum was only \$30,000 less than the fixed charges on an abandoned dam. Whatever the prospect of future gains, that small advantage would be destroyed for many years by deficits which, with proper allowance for depreciation and maintenance, might begin in low-water years at \$118,000,⁴⁰ \$73,000 more than if the dam were left unfinished and the steam plant earned a profit of \$15,000.

40. L.C.F., file 58, Analysis of the Report of the J.G. White Co., Kensit to the Joint Committee, March 4, 1914.

Hence the White report failed to exert the effect upon the city council which the weight of its arguments deserved. Only to Commissioner Kensit, apparently, was the situation clear by March 1, 1914. In his analysis of the White report,⁴¹ Kensit clearly showed that additional heavy expenditures and large deficits were in prospect if the dam were completed. Under the conditions of 1914, La Colle Falls could not give cheap power or be considered a commercial proposition. "The overwhelming burdens to be assumed in return for small and uncertain returns will...be fatal to the progress of the City unless very substantial outside assistance can...be obtained [To] spend this additional \$2,000,000 [on] real necessities such as paving,...fire protection, [and] viaducts...would result in far more material and substantial benefit to the City." Kensit went on to strike a blow at the greatest delusion on which the undertaking was based. "There appears to be a general opinion in this City," he wrote, "that cheap power is necessary to its progress. As a matter of fact there are but a few industries...in which the cost of power is a serious consideration. In most...industries the cost of power is only from 2 to 10% of the total cost of production and the questions of distribution facilities, raw material, labor, etc., are those of dominating importance in deciding location." For the time, however, these criticisms

41. Ibid.

served only to strengthen official and popular resentment against their outspoken author.

The council and the citizens were more impressed by the recommendation of the Local Government Board that the dam be completed to develop 4,000 h.p., and by the proclamation of the act passed earlier to permit this (March 3).⁴² By this time, moreover, a Government grant of \$250,000 was viewed as a certainty.⁴³ Even Kensit allowed \$300,000 for this item in his analysis of the White report, although no reason for such confidence beyond Rogers's promise of August, 1913, is evident. In March Mayor G.W. Baker went to Ottawa to ask the Government to complete the dam as an aid to navigation, reimburse the city for the full amount spent, and allow it to complete the hydro development.⁴⁴ Another cause for hope was the return of relative calm to Europe with the promise of an improvement in market conditions. Faith in storage development also persisted, although a preliminary report on the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan showed that Prince Albert's distance from the foothills made the benefits

42. Saskatchewan Gazette, Vol. X, No.5 (March 14, 1914), p.3. The Herald headline on March 3 was "Local Government Board Sees No Unsurmountable Handicaps to La Colle Falls."

43. As late as October, 1914, Alderman T.J. Agnew suggested making a demand on the Government for the \$250,000 it "is going to give us." See P.A.C.C.P., Stenographer's Reports of Council Meetings, October 5, 1914.

44. Herald, March 21, 1914.

too slight to justify the cost.⁴⁵

After the end of March, it gradually became clear that financial aid must come from private investors. The Government did not show any interest in finishing the project, although in June, 1914, it offered to pay \$250,000 when the dam should be completed.⁴⁶ It may be doubted whether the Government would have honoured even this promise. In reply to the city's inquiry on projected improvements, L.R. Voligny had repeated in September, 1913, that permanent dams formed no part of the scheme he envisaged.⁴⁷

In March ex-Mayor Morton presented a proposition to the council on behalf of a London syndicate called the Anglo-Dutch Finance Corporation. He offered to purchase enough new bonds to complete the hydro development and pay off the city's floating debt. In exchange, the company was to be granted a 40-year lease on the development and the steam plant, and a

45. L.C.F., file 65, M.C. Hendry, "Preliminary Report: Storage on the North Saskatchewan River," enc. in J.B. Challies to Davidson, June 20, 1914. The Water Power Branch also began an investigation of the lakes north of Prince Albert in July, 1914. Among the ideas then discussed locally was the diversion of Lac Ile à la Crosse or of Lac la Ronge into the North Saskatchewan. The Phoenix correspondent suggested that such a scheme would nearly double the volume of water at Prince Albert and assure the complete success of La Colle Falls. See Saskatoon Phoenix, July 27, 1914.

46. Saskatoon Phoenix, June 23, 1914.

47. L.C.F., file 35, Voligny to La Fleur, September 27, 1914.

40-year street railway franchise.⁴⁸

These terms were of such doubtful benefit to the city that the offer may have been only a trial balloon.⁴⁹ In May, however, Morton presented a much more attractive offer. The company offered itself to complete all but the dam and the lock and to pay at least \$10,000 yearly to the city for water rights. Morton also made several concessions which the city had suggested earlier, and offered to accept a 20-year street railway franchise.⁵⁰ Kensit felt that the new terms were the best that any company could offer. The investment of more than \$1,000,000 in outside capital would restore a measure of prosperity to the city. There was no danger that the hydro project would revert to the city if the company found it unprofitable. In Kensit's opinion, the transfer of the project to a private firm was the best means of minimizing a certain loss.⁵¹ At a meeting of the joint committee on May 20, Morton gave the impression that such a scheme would be supported by Fielding, Son and McLeod and other bondholders, and that sale of the necessary bonds could be easily arranged.

48. Ibid., file 4, Morton to the Mayor and Council, March 14 and April 2, 1914.

49. See Kensit's detailed criticism of the proposition in ibid., Kensit to the Finance and Light and Power Committees, March 28, 1914.

50. Ibid., Morton to the Mayor and Council, May 4 and May 12, 1914.

51. Ibid., file 26, Kensit's Memorandum, May 14, 1914. The first page is missing.

The most serious objections raised by Kensit and the joint committee were the mystery which surrounded the scheme's backers, the risk of delay in resuming construction, and the consequent loss of an attractive offer from an Ottawa syndicate to build a street railway. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Dutch proposal was given general approval by the joint committee.⁵²

In the next six weeks, apparently, the only official or citizen to offer strong opposition was City Solicitor David W. Adam, who drew up a scorching indictment of an "entirely onesided and unbusinesslike" proposition that was only "to be peddled on the market." Adam also submitted a long list of specific objections to the draft agreement with the company.⁵³ Yet nearly all of these objections were met in the draft agreement with Kittel and Company, parent of Anglo-Dutch, completed on June 29.⁵⁴ There was still some uncertainty about the company's intentions and some belief that what was commercially impossible for the city must be equally so for

52. Ibid., file 4, [Kensit's] notes of a Meeting of the La Colle Falls Joint Committee, May 20, 1914. According to Kensit's notes, all but Mayor Baker and J.E. Bradshaw "appeared more or less in favor of the proposal." Resolutions were passed authorizing the city council to proceed with negotiations and submit the proposal to the press.

53. Ibid., Adam to Baker, May 27, 1914.

54. Ibid., Memorandum of proposed agreement between Messrs. Kittel & Company and the City, June 29, 1914.

a private firm. The first was, in part, a reaction against the citizens' earlier credulity. The second made no allowance for the greater resources and managerial experience of a commercial syndicate, although the profit potential of the project rested obviously on the early resumption of the settlement boom.

On June 29, 1914, a ninety-day option was approved by the council on a proposal by which the hydro development was to be finished by the end of 1916, and six miles of street railway were to be operating in nine months.⁵⁵ It was unfortunate that the outbreak of war a month later halted a scheme which might have made La Colle Falls into a modest success in combination with the Prince Albert steam plant.

Instead, the early years of the war brought the destruction of two more delusions on which the "White Coal City" had been built. In April, 1915, the Water Power Branch completed an investigation of storage possibilities in the lakes north of Prince Albert. It found the Little Red, the only prospective channel, to be incapable of carrying an increased flow without major improvements.⁵⁶ The last act

55. The ninety-day option was renewed till December 31, 1914, on August 17. See *ibid.*, file 42, Morton to the Mayor and Council, August 17, 1914; Saskatoon Phoenix, August 22, 1914.

56. L.C.F., file 53, C.H. Attwood, "Report on the Storage Possibilities of Red Deer [Waskesiu], Big Trout, Little Trout and Montreal Lakes," April 14, 1915.

in another play of misunderstanding also took place in April, 1915, when the Government set the standard size for locks on the North Saskatchewan at 225 by 50 feet. In a letter to S.J. Donaldson, the Prince Albert member, the city complained that the regulation would force it to spend \$100,000 in enlarging its lock. If the lock were not enlarged, any number of persons might build boats to the maximum size, demand passage, and force the city to buy the boats and cargoes.⁵⁷ But these fears were based on the greater delusion that steamboats could compete with railroads on the Prairies. By 1914 only five steamboats were in service in Saskatchewan.⁵⁸ Five years later, the last steamboat left Prince Albert.⁵⁹

Prince Albert's municipal hydro development stands today much as it did in 1914. The dam extends 293 feet from the south bank, leaving a 462-foot gap,⁶⁰ and is little damaged by fifty years of floods and breakups. Although the south wall is bulged inward by sliding of the river bank, the fair condition of the cement work is proof that this one of the city's assets was built to last forever. On the north bank, the

57. Ibid., file 23, H.E. Pawson, General Manager, to Donaldson, April 6, 1915.

58. C.S.P. 1915, No.22, p.xi.

59. The last boat to operate locally was the City of Prince Albert owned by the Prince Albert Lumber Company. It was moved to The Pas when the company suspended local operations in 1919. See ibid., 1920, No.22, p.21.

60. L.C.F., file 66, part i, White Report.

concrete foundations of the canal intake were abandoned three-quarters complete. Little trace remains of the half-finished canal excavation, or of the powerhouse and tailrace excavations which were left one-third complete.

When all accounts had been settled, the direct cost reached \$1,042,000.⁶¹ Including losses on debentures, the total was approximately \$1,250,000.

The loss was the harder to bear because it left many pressing needs unmet. In the last stages La Colle Falls had become a great sponge, soaking up \$277,000 borrowed for sewer and water mains and a sewage disposal plant, \$30,000 for fire equipment, and \$8,500 for an isolation hospital.⁶² At the end of 1914, the hospital was yet unbuilt; the sewage plant was unfinished; and the fire department was left with old equipment and aging horses.⁶³ Although it had 19 miles of cement sidewalks,⁶⁴ the city had no pavement, and its only macadam surface (on Central Avenue) was already dusty and pitted.⁶⁵

61. P.A.C.C.P., file 107-2, Audit of Accounts, 1917.

62. L.C.F., file 32, Report of the Local Government Board, February 21, 1914.

63. P.A.C.C.P., Stenographer's Reports of Council Meetings, December 8, 1914.

64. Yorath, op. cit., p.5.

65. Prince Albert City Commissioner's Office, E.A. James and T. Aird Murray, City of Prince Albert: Report with Reference to Civic Administration and City Development, p.13.

Despite lavish expenditures during the boom, works programs had been ill planned⁶⁶ and carried out in so slipshod a manner⁶⁷ that most streets were in slovenly condition.⁶⁸

More serious than these wants was the position of Prince Albert itself at the close of five years of intense striving for civic greatness. The city had failed to become an industrial centre. In 1914 there were no iron works, pulp mills, or factories of any kind beyond the brewery, bottling works, two flour mills, small packing plant, and foundry with which, except for the last,⁶⁹ it had begun.

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66. On July 21, 1913, the city council resolved "that in future all lengthy and important reports...be put in some time before the meeting at which they are discussed." Alderman Gus Wagner declared that it was useless for the councillors to receive a long list of estimates, discuss them for a few minutes, and vote on them. "It has been proved again and again that we have voted for improvements on streets that had no right to them at all." See Herald, July 22, 1913. The draft works program for 1913 included the extension of sidewalks on Central Avenue from Twenty-Third to Fortieth Street, more than a mile past the last house. This item was struck out, however. See Council Minutes, March 17, 1913.
67. See the remark of one alderman in November, 1913: "A year ago this summer...it was quite common to find people laughing about the way money was wasted." See P.A.C.C.P., Stenographer's Reports of Council Meetings, November 17, 1913.
68. In November, 1913, Alderman T.J. Agnew declared that "for the last two years, the streets...have not been...fit...to travel on, even...down town." See ibid.
69. The city paid a \$10,000 bonus to the Prince Albert Foundry in 1912. See Yorath, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

The Great West company did not get into full operation before it was carried relentlessly towards bankruptcy by high freight rates and collapse of the boom market. It was particularly unfortunate for the city that the guaranteed bond was sold only 38 days before the company assigned its assets (February 26, 1914).⁷⁰ The city was powerless to prevent the sale, since it learned only in March that the shareholders had paid a total of \$500 for their interests.⁷¹ There was little chance of compelling the owners to pay up their shares, however clearly the enterprise might seem what Adam called "a big hoax, — in fact practically a swindle."⁷² Felix Frank returned to Germany before the war.⁷³ By 1917, at least two of the Canadian shareholders were penniless, and no case for fraud could be made against men who together had lost more than the city.⁷⁴ A suit begun with little hope ended unsuccessfully in the Saskatchewan Supreme Court in June, 1917.⁷⁵ As holder of the first mortgage on the plant

70. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

71. The agreement of October 1, 1912, among the shareholders was filed after liquidation proceedings had begun. See G.W.C., file 6, part ii, MacKenzie, Brown and Company to Macdonell and Boland, October 26, 1914.

72. Ibid., Adam to Northern Electric Company, Winnipeg, October 21, 1914.

73. Ibid., file 5, Examination, p.9.

74. The two were Phippen and Hanna. See ibid., file 6, part ii, fragment of letter to P.P. O'Neill, February 23, 1917. Each lost about \$40,000. See ibid., file 5, Examination, p.53

75. Herald, June 6, 1917; Western Weekly Reports, 1917, Vol.3, July-December, 1917, pp. 43-48. The suit was conducted by the National Trust Company as trustee for the Great West bondholders.

and machinery, the city recovered little from materials and equipment rendered almost unsalable by the wartime depression and high freight rates. From 1914 to 1917, the city paid \$7,500 a year in interest on the Great West bond. In 1919 it added \$134,029 to its consolidated debt as the final cost of that enterprise.⁷⁶ After 1919 the Great West buildings remained as an unwelcome monument to the delusion that money, ambition, and the visible abundance of nature could alone create an industrial centre in a far corner of the half-settled West.

As terminus of four branch lines in 1914, Prince Albert was far less than a great railway centre. Not a foot of steel had been laid by the Hudson Bay and Pacific or the Canadian Northern towards the Bay from Prince Albert. Completion of the Government railroad to within 90 miles of Port Nelson by 1917⁷⁷ put an effective end to all such plans. The Grand Trunk Pacific branch, built to St. Louis in 1913, was completed only four years later,⁷⁸ and no start was made on the Lanigan branch before the war.

Prince Albert had not yet won fame and wealth as gateway to the North. To 1914, the only important mineral discovery

76. The interest fell due on April 28 and October 28. The sum of \$134,029 represents the principal plus approximately fourteen months' interest to December 31, 1918.

77. C.S.P. 1919, No.20, p.66.

78. Herald, May 18, 1917.

in Northern Saskatchewan was at Beaver Lake, 160 miles to the north-east of Prince Albert.⁷⁹ Local lumber production fell from a peak of 46.2 million feet in 1913 to 31.2 million two years later,⁸⁰ although the last two years of war were to bring another boom in the industry. The city's only permanent and sure source of prosperity was a long but narrow strip of farm land which was still unsettled at its western end. "Mixed farming centre of northern Saskatchewan" was an unromantic but fitting title for the Prince Albert of 1914. Yet the lumberman was to remain a few more years, along with the fisherman and trapper; and the prospector still promised a more glorious future.

The magnitude of the tragedy which had befallen them sank only slowly upon the citizens of Prince Albert. When the war began, none guessed that it would bring business to a virtual standstill for more than a year and drag on for four years. The city's net assessment declined only to \$23.1 million by 1915, although the abandonment for taxes of more than 3,000 acres in two years⁸¹ warned of worse to come, and the taxpayers already felt the weight of an inflated assessment.

79. See Times, March 6, 1914, clipping in L.C.F., file 31. Saskatchewan produced no metallic minerals in 1920. See Canada Year Book, 1921, p.341.

80. C.S.P. 1914, No.25, part i, p.126; ibid., 1916, No.25, part i, p.122.

81. Yorath, op. cit., p.16 (map).

By 1916, the city's plight was entirely clear. With a population of 6,436, its net debenture debt stood at \$3,328,000, and an overdraft at \$401,000.⁸² A net assessment then fallen to \$16.8 million promised to go far lower. Thus it was shown that the course on which Prince Albert had set out for unlimited glory had ended in unimagined disaster. The boom era had given way to a period in which the first concern would be the sheer struggle for civic survival.

In 1913 there entered into civic political life an element of anger, bitterness, and petty striving which was not entirely to leave it in the next fifty years. In November, 1913, an outburst of regret and resentment forced three of the four aldermen with half their terms left to resign.⁸³ One of the three was defeated as alderman and a second lost heavily to G.W. Baker for mayor in what was described as "the hottest municipal election...campaign ever waged" in Prince Albert.⁸⁴ In May, 1914, was formed the first ratepayers' league which, like most of its successors, soon decayed into a clique of cranks and malcontents.⁸⁵ At the end of June, H.E.M. Kensit was abruptly fired. There was said to have been popular satisfaction that an official who had "considered himself

82. Ibid., pp. 17, 24.

83. J.S. Woodward refused.

84. Saskatoon Phoenix, December 9, 1913.

85. Ibid., June 8, July 27, 1914.

to be the whole push" had been shown his place.⁸⁶ Soon, however, there were regrets that such rough treatment had been given a man who had been dropped into a mess of others' making and left to do the work of three men.⁸⁷

Reaction and retrenchment proceeded with a vengeance which wiped out commission government on March 9, 1914.⁸⁸ To it were imputed the weaknesses of individuals and the extravagant follies of a whole community. Yet there was no assurance that the return to "democratic" government would bring the wisdom so sadly lacking in the first thirty years of Prince Albert's corporate life.

86. Ibid., July 4, 1914.

87. Ibid., July 16, 1914.

88. P.A.C.C.P., Stenographer's Reports of Council Meetings, March 9, 1914.

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