

James G. Gardiner, Land Policy, and Dominion-Provincial
Relations

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Abstract

This thesis examines the principles which guided James G. Gardiner's approach to dominion-provincial relations, specifically those which underlay the Canadian politician's land policies. Gardiner's political career lasted forty-four years (1914-1957) and encompassed terms as premier of Saskatchewan and dominion minister of agriculture. The prolonged work on Gardiner's official biography made his valuable personal papers unavailable until recently. Their availability has allowed one of Canada's most influential and intriguing twentieth-century political figures to be studied.

The standard interpretation, common to contemporary literature, is that Gardiner was primarily a provincial and regional politician. This reputation is now under examination. His leading role in gaining control of the province's natural resources as Saskatchewan premier in the 1920s created the lasting impression of Gardiner as the defender of provincial rights. This impression seems to be inconsistent with Gardiner's work as dominion minister of agriculture. In 1937 Gardiner implemented an amendment to the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act which saw the return of the lands received in the resources transfer to dominion control. This study examines Gardiner's views of the dominion-provincial relationship within the context of his land policies. The thesis concludes that an inconsistency

in Gardiner's dominion-provincial approach did not actually exist but rather that the politician's policies remained in accord with his previously established beliefs. The principal sources for this work were the personal papers of James G. Gardiner and of William Lyon Mackenzie King held by the Saskatchewan Archives Board and the National Archives of Canada, respectively.

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Introduction

James Garfield Gardiner is remembered today as an influential, practical Liberal politician whose forty-four year career embraced the national development of Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. Gardiner's public life included two careers of almost equal length, at the provincial level from 1914 to 1935 and at the federal level from 1935 to 1958. He was Saskatchewan premier from 1926 to 1929 and 1934 to 1935 and the federal minister of agriculture from 1935 to 1957. His western-based political positions and work within these fields permanently marked Gardiner "as the West's indomitable champion."¹ The public perceived him as the defender of the western region, and more specifically, as the defender of Saskatchewan interests. In 1948 his incredibly strong attachment to a distinct region destroyed any chance that he had of replacing Mackenzie King as leader of the federal Liberal party and prime minister. Gardiner's bid for the leadership of the federal Liberal party was undoubtedly undermined, in part, by his all too obvious reknown "as exclusively and dominantly the champion and favorite native son of the Prairie Provinces."²

Despite Gardiner's reputation as a western regionalist, a study of his land policies demonstrates the existence of

apparent inconsistencies in his approach to dominion-provincial relations. As premier of Saskatchewan from 1926 to 1929, Gardiner led the province in the battle against the dominion to gain control of the provincial public lands. In 1935, as the new federal minister of agriculture, Gardiner held the leading role in the rehabilitation of the Prairie region from the ravages of several years of prolonged drought. This work involved reclaiming for the dominion provincial lands that he had obtained for Saskatchewan only a few years earlier as premier. These land policies at both political levels appear to demonstrate a direct inconsistency in Gardiner's approach to the dominion-provincial relationship. A study of Gardiner's dominion-provincial relations within the context of his land policy sheds light on the politician's thinking and serves to explain this apparent inconsistency.

James Garfield Gardiner was born on November 30, 1883, in the Ontario township of Hubbert. He grew up on the family dairy farm, and his youth was firmly based in agriculture. Gardiner spent his teenage years employed on numerous Ontario farms in the district before moving West in 1901 to work on his uncle's farm at Clearwater Manitoba. Gardiner headed further West to teach school in Saskatchewan in 1905, and his experience in the field of education gave him the impetus to return to Manitoba and attend university. Upon graduation in 1911, Gardiner travelled to Lemburg

Saskatchewan to take the position as principal of the local school.

Gardiner's early years were influential in shaping the political beliefs and attitudes that would guide him throughout his career. He moved West at an important and influential period in the history of the region. Gardiner arrived in 1905, on the eve of the Autonomy Bills which created the new provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. The twenty-two-year-old man witnessed the formation of the province and was impressed with the emotion that surrounded the event. Gardiner became involved with the Liberal party that was rapidly gaining strength and popularity. His association with the party occurred at the onset of the Liberal ascendancy that would go unchecked in the province until 1929. The period was marked by partisan competition along traditional Liberal-Conservative party lines.

Another aspect of provincial politics that left a permanent mark on Gardiner during his early years was the lack of distinction drawn between the dominion and provincial Liberal party organizations. David Smith, a renowned authority on Prairie Liberalism, demonstrates the strong tie between the two political levels in his book, Prairie Liberalism:

Electoral organization was distinctly provincial since the provincial electorate laws could be, and were, changed in an attempt to seek partisan advantage. However, party programmes frequently

appeared more federal than provincial in orientation.³

People were active in both party organizations, and Gardiner was no exception. Upon entering the Liberal party he ardently worked at both political levels.

When Gardiner entered politics he joined a Liberal party whose unity was soon to be wracked by the Conscription issue of the Great War. The great division that occurred within the Liberal party over the formation of the 1917 Union Government joined with other politically divisive issues such as the tariff to cause friction in the previously harmonious relationship between Ottawa and Regina.⁴ Premier Martin of Saskatchewan reacted to the Liberal division by detaching the provincial party from Ottawa and riding the waves of regional discontent. In 1922, the new premier, Charles Dunning, continued Martin's lead by recognizing the separation of the provincial from the national party in order to guarantee continued electoral support. To maintain agrarian support, Dunning disavowed any association with Prime Minister Mackenzie King and the dominion Liberals.⁵ Once the threat was removed, Dunning moved to re-establish the old link with the Liberals in Ottawa and in doing so, gained a post in King's 1926 cabinet and a lasting, influential federal career.⁶

Gardiner observed the break with the national party but never acknowledged its legitimacy. His early formative

years in the province created a lasting impression, and he never hesitated in stating his unequivocal support for the national party. By working for the provincial party, he was also working for the national party. As far as Gardiner was concerned, there was one single Liberal organization for provincial and federal politics; victory at both levels was the goal of all party strategists.

A keen interest in politics, a strong Liberal family background, and an impressive oratory skill led to Gardiner's nomination as the Liberal candidate for the North Qu'Appelle provincial by-election of 1914. With the resulting victory, Gardiner's political career was launched. When the new Saskatchewan premier, Charles Dunning, formed his cabinet in the spring of 1922, Gardiner was named the minister of highways and minister in charge of the bureau of labour and industries. In February 1926, Dunning left the province for a position in Mackenzie King's dominion cabinet, and Gardiner was chosen as the new provincial Liberal leader.

During his early years in politics, Gardiner had displayed an ambitious and determined resolution to work for the party. He was a relentless worker whose sedulous nature and keen sense of organization aided in establishing what would later become known as "the Gardiner Machine." Gardiner saw no problem in manipulating the political system to the advantage of the party, and his tactics included a

skilled use of patronage to gain the necessary party financing. Gardiner's political abilities eventually led to his selection as provincial Liberal leader and Saskatchewan premier in 1926.

The impact of the years from 1905 to 1926 permanently cemented Gardiner's views on what the proper dominion-provincial relationship should entail. He was a man who unflinchingly adhered to his convictions. This aspect of his personality dominated his ideological beliefs and guided his political decisions. For Gardiner there were four political principles to which he swore an unflinching loyalty. These involved a loyalty to the Liberal cause, a united Liberal party, the dominion Liberal leader, and his own political fortunes. These four aspects of his political philosophy dominated and shaped his policies and are essential in understanding his attitude to dominion-provincial relations.

Gardiner was dedicated to the nineteenth-century brand of Liberalism that had been formulated by Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier and was based on British Gladstonian Liberalism. He never lost faith in the steadfast principle that placed the emphasis on the individual in society. Liberalism was not an ideology that possessed provincial and federal varieties. Gardiner could see no reason why Liberals at the national and local level would not have the same goals and ambitions. It was one universal cause that

had to be embraced at both political levels. This cause could best be achieved through the united effort of all Liberals working together.

The vehicle of the Liberal cause was the Canadian Liberal party. The task of both political levels was to work together, abiding by the division of powers as established by the constitution, but always viewing their political goals and objectives as the same. As far as Gardiner was concerned, the provincial wing of the Liberal party was an extension of its dominion counterpart and was governed by the same overriding principles. The same people were active in the organization of both bodies, and it was essential that they maintain one united Liberal front. On March 13, 1926, Gardiner stated:

There is no such thing in this province as a provincial and federal Liberal party. We stand for the same principles federally and provincially.⁷

The message was obvious. National and local Liberal politics were to be indivisible, and the only possible route for Gardiner upon assuming the premiership was to return to the harmonious relationship which had existed between Regina and Ottawa Liberals prior to 1917. He saw the national party as the only possible vehicle that could successfully voice the concerns of the diverse Canadian regions such as the Maritimes and the Prairies. Gardiner had faith in the

ability of the Canadian federal system to solve the problems which faced the nation.⁸

The federal and provincial parties were expected to work together in the effort to achieve the common goals of Liberalism, and Gardiner made no apologies for a provincial politician who participated in a federal election. His skills of political organization were never withheld from the employ of the federal party. After 1925 Gardiner remained in charge of organizing the federal Liberal campaigns in the province. In his acceptance speech for the premiership, Gardiner referred to the Prince Albert federal by-election in which Prime Minister King had recently been elected through the efforts of the Saskatchewan Liberal Association and Gardiner's own personal intervention.⁹ The campaign was eminently successful with King receiving 7920 votes to the Conservative's 2299. A majority of 5621 votes in the sparsely populated Prairies displayed the potential power that existed in the Gardiner-King relationship.¹⁰ Gardiner believed that the fundamental Liberal principles were inoperable at the provincial level without a close relationship with the national party. The only solution was strong dominion-provincial relations:

I have always held that a leader, who stands for the policies of his party, should be prepared to expound them on a platform. That is why I participate in federal campaigns. Cooperation is necessary between men who think alike.¹¹

Gardiner displayed his brand of loyalty to the Liberal party during the threat to the united Liberal front that was being posed by the Progressive party during the 1920s. The Progressives had shattered the two-party confinements of the Canadian political system by giving political expression to agrarian discontent. Prime Minister Mackenzie King reacted to the Progressive emergence by attempting to envelop them into the Liberal ranks. The idea of opening the doors of Liberalism to allow the entrance of an alternative and dissenting ideology was, for Gardiner, unacceptable. Despite King's justifications, Gardiner never surrendered to the notion that the Progressives could not be soundly defeated as the western opposition. If Liberalism was to remain a united ideology and party, there could be no room for negotiation or conciliation with other parties. Canada was a nation founded on the two-party system, and the only method of maintaining this system was by resisting the encroachment of a third party. Gardiner's system of political loyalties was hierarchical. His loyalty to the united Liberal party was above his loyalty to the federal party leader. Although he would not allow his opposition to King to cause any division in party ranks, he was not willing to sacrifice this principle.

Second only to his intense loyalty to the principles of Liberalism and the party organization was Gardiner's loyalty to the party leader. When he accepted the position as

provincial Liberal leader in 1926, Gardiner went out of his way to praise the Liberal platform that Prime Minister Mackenzie King had expounded at the federal leadership convention of 1919. Strong ties of loyalty between Liberal leaders, whether of the dominion or provincial scene, were essential to Gardiner's desire for the united Liberal front. Gardiner refused to acknowledge the western break with the national party after the First World War. Despite the political gains that could be won from the break, Gardiner maintained his conviction that any division within the Liberal ideology would only be destructive to the Canadian Liberal cause. In 1920 Mackenzie King made a speaking tour of the West but the provincial Liberals, including Martin and Dunning, refused to greet him publically at Regina. Gardiner denounced this behaviour as widening the split within the party and welcomed King regardless.

Gardiner's political philosophy included a necessary loyalty to the dominion Liberal leader, but this was not the only reason that he remained constantly at King's side during the length of his career. Gardiner genuinely admired the convictions and methods of the prime minister and believed that King was as faithful to the cause of Liberalism as himself. In 1925 Gardiner wrote:

We all realize that the party has been most ably led during the last four years, and that no other man could have made a better showing in the last election...than...King.¹²

King's masterful handling of the so-called "Constitutional Crisis" of 1926 and the King-Byng affair were reason enough for Gardiner to have total confidence in the prime minister's leadership. He saw no other Liberal at the time as able to bring the party through such potentially divisive crises as the regional protest movements of the period. In the ghost-written autobiography of Gardiner, Nathaniel Benson described the relationship between the two men as one in which "for nearly thirty years (1919-1948) these two unusually tenacious and boundlessly ambitious men worked in close harness and never seriously disagreed on any major issue."¹³

A loyalty to his own political fortunes rounded out Gardiner's political thinking. Political opportunism was never put aside as Gardiner remained a practical, pragmatic, politician throughout his career. While this aspect of his politics was by no means his dominant motivation, it was always present in Gardiner's policy decisions.

By the time Gardiner was elected premier in 1926, then, his political convictions were securely established. The proper dominion-provincial relationship consisted of both political levels striving together to achieve common Liberal goals. The party structure was one that consisted of a dominant national organization and subordinate provincial branches. Despite this division, the provincial parties were still very much part of the overall national system and

were to remain under the auspices of the federal party leader.

Gardiner's term as Saskatchewan premier also coincided with a critical point in the history of dominion-provincial relations. During the 1920s and 1930s the Canadian federal system became severely strained. Tension between the dominion and the provinces had always been an inherent aspect of Canadian federalism since the inception of Confederation in 1867. Disputes focussed mainly on financial matters because both levels of government had to operate within the same constitutional framework. With the dominion and provinces taxing the same base, there was endless friction and rivalry.

The situation became even worse during the 1920s and 1930s. The advent of industrialization and urbanization made the constitutional distribution of dominion-provincial responsibilities unrealistic. The age placed new demands on the provincial governments that their revenues could not meet. The only possible source of financial aid was the dominion government. As the era progressed it became increasingly obvious that the traditional dominion-provincial distribution of powers was unworkable in the changing conditions.

Regionalism was exacerbated by the increased industrialization and urbanization in Canada. The ensuing economic changes that were occurring across the nation were

by no means balanced, and as a result certain regions were affected differently than others. Regionalism became more pronounced in the 1920s and resulted in the formation of protest movements in both the Maritime and the Prairie regions. These regions responded to the new demands being placed on their revenues by directly challenging the dominion government. Provincial rights movements gained strength as the provincial governments became the obvious protest vehicles.

Jimmy Gardiner's political career coincided with this troubled period in dominion-provincial relations. In fact, he was directly involved in two of the most important developments in Saskatchewan-Ottawa relations. He was the provincial premier during the negotiations which resulted in the land transfer, and he was the dominion minister of agriculture during the Depression which resulted in the worst land disaster the province had ever seen.

How Gardiner handled these issues poses questions about the politician's attitudes on the dominion-provincial relationship. At first glance, his approach to dominion-provincial relations, which seem to be best expressed through his land policies, appears to be a bundle of inconsistencies. Gardiner entered Saskatchewan during the period when the dominion-provincial relationship was very strong. The influence was a lasting one, and he stayed loyal to the national party even through the 1917 division.

Yet when Gardiner became premier of Saskatchewan in 1926 he created the lasting impression that he was an advocate of provincial rights. The refusal of Ottawa to turn over the province's public lands at the time of the 1905 Autonomy Bills became an important political event in the history of western alienation. In the 1920s the Prairie provinces became increasingly convinced that they were not on an equal footing with the original provinces of the nation which controlled their natural resources. Westerners felt that their role was that of a Canadian colony, a hinterland that produced resources for the nation as a whole.¹⁴ Gardiner stepped into the leadership role in the struggle to gain control of the province's public lands. This meant the possibility of a direct conflict between the province and dominion. The premier's belief in a strong federal system seems to have been directly contradicted by his willingness to defend the province's rights and face the power of the Liberal dominion government.

The years in opposition from 1929 to 1934 occurred during the most difficult period of the Depression and served to strengthen the perception of Gardiner as an advocate of provincial rights. His insistent opposition to the dominion administration of Prime Minister Bennett left little doubt as to Gardiner's loyalties. Once back in office in 1934, Gardiner continued his vociferous attacks on the prime minister and the dominion government. His

opposition to Bennett culminated in the 1935 On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot. By the time of the 1935 federal election and Mackenzie King's return to power, the premier's image as a champion of provincial rights was unquestioned.

The apparent inconsistencies in Gardiner's dominion-provincial thinking were compounded by his move from the provincial to the national realm of politics in 1935. Gardiner appeared to demonstrate a reversal in his dominion-provincial views when he introduced amendments to the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act which necessitated that the Prairie provinces transfer control of agricultural lands that had been damaged by the Depression back to the dominion for the process of rehabilitation. After the long drawn-out struggle to win provincial control of public lands, the minister of agriculture was now demanding that the provinces return some of them to the dominion. After taking the role of spokesman for the interests of Saskatchewan during the land transfer negotiations, Gardiner was using his position as dominion minister of agriculture to pursue an agricultural recovery policy that was strongly national in thrust. These two land policies seem to directly contradict one another and bring Gardiner's views of the dominion-provincial relationship into question. In studying James Gardiner's position on dominion-provincial relations, an understanding is formed about his philosophy, his practical policies, and his political goals.

ENDNOTES

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12. Ibid., p.23.

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Chapter One
TRANSFER OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES

In March 1926, at the age of forty-two, James Gardiner was elected Saskatchewan's premier with fifty of the sixty-three seats in the provincial legislature. The Progressives won six seats, the Conservatives three, two went to Independents, and two remained vacant.¹ Gardiner's first term as premier of Saskatchewan from 1926 to 1929 created the lasting impression that he was an ardent advocate for provincial rights. His leading role in the successful struggle to gain provincial control of the natural resources that were being held by the dominion created this public perception. The struggle was lengthy --beginning as early as 1911-- and had become a dominant factor in augmenting western alienation and regionalism. On the surface, Gardiner's support for the provincial position and his opposition to Mackenzie King's federal administration appear to contradict his approach to dominion-provincial relations and the fundamental political philosophy that he had formed in his early career. A closer look into Gardiner's first premiership and the negotiations over the natural resources question reveal this inconsistency to be illusory. Gardiner's provincial land policy was totally consistent with his previously formulated view of the dominion-provincial relationship.

The principles and goals of Gardiner's Liberalism translated into a close dominion-provincial relationship when he became premier and King remained prime minister. This loyalty to King guided Gardiner's first term as premier. He maintained a continuous correspondence with King and never acted on the provincial scene without considering the national consequences. He was always quick to avoid taking any action which could have embarrassed the federal Liberal party. "I never did anything in Saskatchewan" Gardiner once wrote, "without discussing it with King-and he never did anything in Saskatchewan without discussing it with me."² His trust in King's leadership was unquestioned and at no time did his confidence in the prime minister waiver:

Your judgement in all matters of first importance has been so magnificently justified by time on every occasion that it has been put to the test, that those of us who have been following your leadership would hesitate at any time, even in the face of opposite views which we might hold, to take any course other than that which you have decided on.³

Gardiner's loyalty to King dominated his first term as premier and set the boundaries for his provincial policies. The prime minister's masterful handling of the division created by Borden's Union government and his manoeuvrings to stay in power during the 1921 and 1926 elections were reason enough for Gardiner to have total confidence in King's leadership. The premier believed that King was the

only Liberal who had the political merits to bring the party through the crises of the 1920s.

Gardiner accepted the leadership of the provincial party with every intention of maintaining his nationalist thinking. The position was not one which offered as much power as a dominion cabinet position, but it was nevertheless a Liberal post that encompassed considerable influence. The role was perhaps the best possible vehicle to aid in creating the united Liberal front. The interests of the province could be united with the interests of the region and the dominion.

Immediately after winning the provincial election in 1926 Gardiner wrote to King and clearly outlined his perceptions and intentions of the premiership:

While as you know, the position which I now hold is not one which I would have sought, I know it does offer opportunities to be of much greater service to the Dominion, the province and the party than I possibly could have been anywhere else...References made by myself (at the Provincial Liberal Leadership Convention) to the desire on the part of the provincial Liberals for the success of the Federal party and government were greeted with stronger expressions of consent than anything else which was said during the gathering.⁴

He made it apparent that he intended to use the position of premier to further the interests of Liberalism and the national Liberal party. King understood and appreciated that Gardiner's influence in the province would practically eliminate provincial opposition to proposed federal

initiatives. The prime minister perceived Gardiner's publically known allegiance to the national party as also being beneficial to both political leaders when it came to election time. King said:

I am sure that, whatever comes to pass, the fact that it is now generally known that I have been anxious for you to come to Ottawa, will be all to the good, and having at heart a like purpose in our public effort, I am sure we can trust the future for the developments that will be best in the long run.⁵

The first public address that Gardiner gave after becoming premier in 1926 clearly illustrated his view of the ideal dominion-provincial relationship. With King controlling the national field and himself in control of the provincial sphere, Gardiner saw the time as opportune for Saskatchewan to increase its influence in the affairs of the dominion. He recognized that "the Liberal party in Saskatchewan is in a position to have a greater influence on the administration of affairs in the Dominion than at any other period in its history."⁶ With the prime minister holding a seat in Saskatchewan, the federal system would not only become better balanced but eastern Canada would also become more aware of the national matters that were of concern in the West. Once this balance was founded it would aid in creating a more united Liberal party that perhaps would not be so subject to the divisions that had occurred during the reign of the Union Government. The position of premier for Gardiner was not one which gained its influence

only from the provincial scene. It was a position of power that combined both political fields.

A detailed correspondence was established between King and Gardiner that covered an extensive range of political and personal affairs. Gardiner kept King fully informed on government matters being discussed between the provincial and dominion administrations, and the prime minister responded by frankly and honestly informing the premier as to his objectives and probable policies. The strength of the King-Gardiner relationship did not necessarily mean that the province and dominion were unhampered by those inevitable issues that caused disagreement. It did, however, mean that Gardiner was content to limit the controversy to personal correspondence. To maintain the united Liberal front, Gardiner carefully avoided publicizing any situation which put the two levels of government at odds.

Relations between King and Gardiner during the premier's first administration from 1926 to 1929 were harmonious and cooperative. Disagreements between the two men were, for the most part, kept from the public and almost always ended with Gardiner presenting his case, and then succumbing to King. Gardiner spoke up only if King left room for debate. If the prime minister felt strongly about an issue, it was Gardiner who would voice his opinion in private and then submit to King. One of King's merits that

made him such a successful politician was his ability to compromise and create a conciliatory atmosphere for his colleagues. This atmosphere was produced by paying close attention to what they were saying and, if possible, responding to their wishes. Gardiner had an impact on King's policy decisions, but the prime minister was always aware that if he so decided, the Saskatchewan premier would accept his leader's stance as final. Whenever Gardiner had a dissenting opinion from King, the premier maintained his views in such a way that no possible breach could occur in the dominion-provincial relationship.

Gardiner's position when it came to disagreements with the dominion government was to avoid conflicts that had the potential of becoming dominion-provincial disputes. If it was impossible to avoid the disagreement, Gardiner would attempt to keep the conflict quiet and, in the meantime, continue to search for a compromise that would make it appear that he was not sacrificing the rights of the province to the dominion. If the issue became public, Gardiner made certain that he was perceived to be fulfilling the obligations of his position and defending the interests of the province. This is not to suggest that he ignored the responsibilities that were attached to the position of premier in order to support the dominion. He believed that the provinces had a jurisdiction of power that had clearly been outlined by the British North America Act of 1867. At

the same time, Gardiner also believed that it would be more profitable if the relationship between the province and the dominion government was strong. His place was not to oppose the policies of the dominion but rather to use his position as premier to inform the prime minister of provincial and western concerns. In April of 1929 he wrote to King:

I can quite understand that on many occasions it would be much better from your point of view not to be definitely associated with opinions which some of us (in the West) may hold, but I feel it most important that we should place those opinions before you from time to time.⁷

King acknowledged Gardiner's right to present the issues that were of concern to western Liberals. He obviously preferred to hear them in his personal correspondence than in the form of public debate. In fact, the correspondence between the two men reflected Gardiner's increasing role as the western spokesman. King wrote:

I agree with all you say as to the vital importance of yourself and other of the Liberals leaders in the West being kept in the closest possible touch with those of us who are seeking to direct affairs in the Federal field.⁸

The fact that Gardiner's political ideology was similar to that of King allowed the premier, for the most part, to avoid the frequent causes of dominion-provincial conflict. Gardiner found it easy to justify his federally-oriented stance toward dominion-provincial relations by always reminding people, both publically and privately, that he was

merely adhering to his previously established political loyalties. He had been elected on these principles and was intent on remaining true to them.

Gardiner's loyalties left no room for provincial rights movements, and he always remained distinctly detached from any such movements that were developing throughout the nation. When Premier Ferguson of Ontario suggested a conference of the provincial premiers in 1927, separate from the forthcoming conference with the federal government, Gardiner refused.⁹ He opposed the idea because he viewed it as a rebellious gathering of provincial rightist premiers. The reaction of Gardiner was to inform King immediately of Ferguson's intention and to send him the actual correspondence. For Gardiner, any such organization of premiers would produce an undesirable opposition to the dominion government, a strengthening of the provincial rightist sentiment, and a breaking of the necessary unity of Canadian Liberals into national and provincial camps.

The main issue of apparent dominion-provincial disagreement during James Gardiner's first term as premier was the natural resources question. This long standing quarrel over the transfer of Saskatchewan's natural resources from dominion to provincial control built the foundation of Gardiner's reputation as a defender of provincial rights. Gardiner's leading role in the question over who should control the province's lands caused the

public to equate the premier with the struggle for provincial rights. His perception in the eyes of the public was that of the champion of provincial autonomy as one who was not afraid to stand up to the powerful dominion government in order to gain control over lands which had been unjustly and unconstitutionally usurped by Ottawa. While Gardiner did not resist these provincial rightist laurels that were being placed upon him, the issue does not demonstrate an inconsistency in his attitudes toward dominion-provincial relations. At no point during the transfer debate did he take a position or action which conflicted with his established political convictions and loyalties.

In the Confederation Act of 1867, the dominion was constituted by the federation of Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Each member of the Confederation owned its own lands and was allowed to dispose of them as it saw necessary. The dominion was landless except for that which was specifically allotted to her control under Section 108 of the British North America Act. According to the constitution, the dominion was without capacity to hold or own land, or to legislate for its control, except as specifically stated.

On July 15, 1870 the government of Canada acquired Rupert's Land and the Northwestern Territory from Great Britain for a price of 300 000 pounds sterling. The dominion

took control of the duties and obligations of the new lands in consideration of its lack of people, political institutions, and the machinery of responsible government. Manitoba entered Confederation as a province in May of 1870, but unlike the other constituent members, its lands and resources were retained by the dominion government to be used for the benefit of all Canada in the promotion of an immigration policy. To make up for this 'unequal' footing, the new province was provided an allowance that would subsidize the temporary loss of its land control. One year later, when British Columbia became a province the dominion government allowed it to retain its lands because of the larger population and existence of a more sophisticated political framework. When Prince Edward Island entered Confederation in 1873, its lands had already been disposed through the colonial system of absentee landlords, and as a result, the province was given an allowance in compensation.

Saskatchewan and Alberta became provinces in 1905, but like Manitoba, the dominion government retained control of the natural resources including all Crown lands, mines, and minerals. The provinces were created from a portion of the North-West Territories under the authority of the Saskatchewan and Alberta Acts of 1905. Section 21 of the Acts provided that the natural resources would continue to be vested in the Crown and administered by the dominion government for the purposes of the nation as a whole.

Section 20 of the Acts provided that because the provinces would not have the public lands as a source of revenue, compensation would be made in the form of money payments by the dominion.

The dominion government gave the two provinces a grant which provided for financial increases based upon the growth of population and the amount of lands used for immigration purposes. At first the government of Canada utilized the resources of the region mainly to subsidize railway construction by means of grants of western lands to private railway companies. Later, it used the lands to foster settlement by promoting free homestead land grants. In 1905, the settlement of homesteads was essential enough that the dominion government made certain that it retained control of the lands in the Alberta and Saskatchewan Autonomy Acts. Immigration and railway expansion were matters of national concern, and the control of the public lands was a key to the successful implementation of these national policies. The national government asserted that generous financial terms in lieu of lands would assure the new provinces a large income which could not be guaranteed if they themselves controlled the public domain, and that this would enable them to pursue vigorous development policies.¹⁰ Inherent in the dominion's retention of the natural resources was the knowledge that once the public lands had served their purpose and the population of the

provinces had substantially increased, the lands would resort to provincial control.¹¹

Compensation payments were to be made to Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan in the form of a direct source of revenue. On February 21, 1905, Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier stated the basis for the Saskatchewan compensation:

As the public lands in the said Provinces are to remain the property of Canada, there shall be paid by Canada to the said Provinces annually by way of compensation therefor a sum based upon the estimated value of such lands, namely, \$37, 500 000, the same being assumed to be an area of 25,000,000 acres and to be of the value of \$1.50 per acre, and upon the population of the said Provinces as from time to time as ascertained by the quinquennial census thereof...

Laurier made allowance for an annual rate of interest which would eventually take the estimate of the subsidy to \$1 125 000. This estimate assumed that by the time the provinces had a population of 800 000 about two thirds of the land would be used and hence, \$750 000 would be the subsidy. It was further estimated that by the time the entire land area available of 25 000 000 acres had been homesteaded the province would have a population of 1 200 000 and that the entitled subsidy of \$1 125 000 would remain for perpetuity.¹²

Laurier's proposal for compensation contained a flaw that would eventually become the basis for the claim that the provinces were being treated unfairly. The proposed scheme assumed that the population of the provinces as

dictated by the federal homestead policy would increase at a similar or faster rate than the dominion's use of the lands. If this did not occur, as was the case, the provinces would be receiving a subsidy that was valued at far less than the actual worth of the lands. If the dominion used the lands and the population failed to increase at the expected rates, the subsidy would not increase.

The continued federal control of the natural resources of the new provinces was not widely opposed at first. A few figures, such as Sir Frederick Haultain, the leader of the Territorial Legislature and acclaimed champion of provincial rights, opposed the federal usurpation of provincial public lands. Otherwise, the citizens of the two new Prairie provinces accepted the dominion's intentions to maintain control of the region. Western Canadian historian, Doug Owram, explains this attitude as the consequence of two conditions:

First the development of the West was seen as part of a national economic necessity, too important to be left to the haphazard agencies that might spring from the local communities. Secondly, Canadians had a strong desire to avoid what they perceived to be the rather lawless and anarchic social behaviour of the American frontier.

Owram notes an overriding philosophy that seemed to be inherent in the people of the new provinces:

They accepted the importance of their region to the nation as a whole and felt that the nation as

a whole should have a say in developing that region.

These sentiments, for most people, were closely associated with the period immediately following the Autonomy Bills.

That is [the dominion] should have a say until the region was populous enough and developed enough to assume control of local matters for itself. In legal matters, as in other matters, it was expected that the West would be treated as a hinterland only for a fairly short and transitory period.¹³

Once this period of development was perceived to be over, complaints began surfacing throughout the West over the central authority's handling of the region. The conflict over the constitutional principle of control was complimented by the inefficient methods by which the dominion administered the public domain. The disillusionment over the dominion government's policies toward the West initiated a distinct feeling of regional alienation that heralded the view that the Prairie region was being refused its proper place in the federal system. The growing discontent with the dominion's development of the region reinforced the drive for greater provincial autonomy.

From 1906 to 1911, the Prairie provinces displayed no common front on the question of control of their natural resources. Opposition reappeared in 1912 when Sir Robert Borden questioned the constitutional right of the dominion lands policy. It was established by Borden that any new

lands to be added to the provinces were to be henceforth transferred to provincial control. As a result in 1912 Ontario and Quebec were given control of the resources when their northern boundaries were extended. Borden was not able to offer the same conditions to Manitoba when that province's boundary was extended, until the entire question of resource ownership in the Prairie provinces was resolved. Gradually the Prairie provinces became united in their demand for the transfer of all unalienated resources to their control and for increased compensation for alleged losses resulting from dominion stewardship. Saskatchewan had endorsed the Liberal party which had created the resources agreement of 1905 in two consecutive general elections, but with the election of Borden's administration in 1911 and the increasing sentiments of western alienation, the provincial movement for the transfer of the public domain began to form. In 1911 Premier Scott reacted to the growing western resentment over dominion control of the province's lands by altering his view which he had been advocating since 1905 and taking a provincial rights stance that pressed for provincial control of at least a portion of the resources.¹⁴ The Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly passed a resolution in 1911 favoring negotiations with the dominion authorities for the purpose of having the natural resources, not required for colonization and immigration, transferred to the province. In 1912 another resolution was

passed in the Assembly that urged the provincial government to negotiate with the federal government to bring about the transfer, as well as secure compensation for those resources already disposed of by Ottawa for dominion purposes. After 1912, resolutions were passed in the provincial legislature almost annually.

The belief in the western provinces' right to control their natural resources was not restricted to the federal Conservative party. Saskatchewan Liberals, for example, had long professed the desire to see the province gain control of its lands, but had always found the proposed terms of the dominion unacceptable.¹⁵ When Mackenzie King became prime minister in 1921, he accepted Borden's position that the resources had only temporarily been placed in federal control. The Prairie provinces had constitutional justification for requesting the return of their public domain, and it would only be a matter of time before the requests turned into politically damaging and embarrassing demands. King recognized this problem:

The desire of the Provincial authorities to have the control of these resources is natural, and we are anxious, as far as possible, to meet their wishes.¹⁶

The possibility of the provinces gaining control of their lands was increased when King came to the conclusion that he could free himself from eastern opposition to the transfer, and more specifically, the continuance of the

subsidy. Eastern Canada did not want the federal government to increase financial disbursements to the western provinces unless they too had something to gain. Future Saskatchewan premier Charles Dunning recognized the influence of the eastern opposition early in 1922 in a letter to King:

If I understand you aright, the Government has adopted as its policy the transfer of the resources which remain unalienated with the object in view of placing the Provinces of Canada, as nearly as possible, on the same constitutional basis. In this respect, in order to bring about the desired result, you admit that the subject is one that must be settled by the Dominion Government and the interested Provinces without reference to claims which may be made by the other Provinces. This conclusion marks a distinct advance inasmuch as when the subject has been approached before, the Prairie Provinces have been placed in the position of, in reality negotiating with the other provinces of Canada.¹⁷

King was politically astute enough to know that the time for the resource transfer was inevitably approaching, and he desired to gain the political benefits from having it occur while he was in power.

In February 1922, King attempted to resolve the long standing issue by offering two proposals to Saskatchewan and the other two Prairie provinces. The first offer involved an immediate transfer of the natural resources and a simultaneous ending of the national subsidy. The second proposal entailed the immediate transfer of the resources along with a subsequent accounting to adjust any claims arising out of the administration of western lands and resources by the dominion government. King explained his

policy to the Conservative Member of Parliament, R.B. Bennett:

We think...that any claim on the part of the Eastern Provinces will probably be removed if it be clearly understood that in receiving the lands from the Dominion the Prairie Provinces will surrender the subsidy now paid in lieu of lands...We do not see how the Prairie Provinces seriously expect to receive the lands and at the same time continue to receive the land subsidy. We are persuaded that upon full consideration of the matter such a claim would not be pressed.¹⁸

Premier Martin of Saskatchewan refused the first offer as totally unacceptable. The province was not prepared to relinquish the subsidy without ample compensation. An accounting would not be satisfactory if it dealt only with money received from natural resources and money paid out in the administration of those resources by Ottawa since Confederation. A compromise would also have to deal with the question of compensation to the Prairie provinces for resources which had been alienated for the benefit of the whole country.¹⁹ This proposal would mean the continuance of the subsidy even after the resources were transferred.

A conference on the natural resource question was held in Ottawa on November 14, 1922, between the three Prairie provinces and the dominion. It was decided that the dominion government representatives would meet the representatives of the different provinces separately due to the unique and varying resource conditions that existed in each province. The representatives of each province were to

be informed of the basis of any proposed settlement that had been reached with any individual province before any final agreements were established.²⁰

Saskatchewan's new premier, Charles Dunning, entered the conference negotiations from a position similar to Martin, as is demonstrated by a letter to King, on April 10, 1922:

Your intimation that the Prairie Provinces can scarcely expect to obtain the resources which remain and at the same time retain the subsidy which at the present time is paid in lieu of lands, would be fair if these provinces could to-day be given all the resources within their respective boundaries. This however cannot be done and the contention of the Government of Saskatchewan is that this Province should be put in possession and control of the unalienated resources and in addition should be paid compensation for the resources which have been alienated for the general advantage of Canada.²¹

Dunning approached the dominion representatives with figures that showed that the cost of resource administration to the dominion was far in excess of any revenue received from the lands. It would therefore be beneficial for Ottawa to transfer the resources. Prime Minister King, in turn, informed the Saskatchewan delegation that he had made an offer for the transfer of the resources to Alberta and that he would make a similar offer to Saskatchewan. The proposal entailed the transfer of the public domain with a continuing subsidy in lieu of lands for a period of three years, after which time the subsidy would be discontinued. Premier Dunning, on behalf of the province, refused the proposal as

inadequate.²² He argued that it would be impossible to accept the transfer of resources in lieu of the subsidy because this would not give the province compensation for the unalienated resources that had been used in the past for the general advantage of the rest of the country. These alienated resources, according to Dunning, consisted of 14 564 823 acres of land given as railway grants, of which 7 598 370 were granted to the Canadian Pacific Railway.²³

Dunning saw the meeting as producing very little, beyond making the positions of the dominion and provincial representatives clear.²⁴ The conference did, however, have a significant impact on Dunning's stance on the issue. While Alberta would continue to press for the transfer of its lands and resources, the government at Regina ceased to show any real interest in the subject. With the subsidy in lieu of lands scheduled to increase to \$750 000 when Saskatchewan's population reached 800 000 and then to \$1 125 000 in perpetuity when it reached 1 200 000, Dunning took the view that the province would derive greater financial benefit from the subsidy than from the development of its natural resources and decided not to pursue the question of the transfer with any persistence.²⁵

Conditions changed during the late 1920s and allowed the negotiations for the Saskatchewan resource transfer to continue. The election of 1926 brought James Gardiner into office and relations between Saskatchewan and Ottawa

immediately improved. The transfer issue epitomized the harmonious relations that developed between Gardiner and King during these years. They adhered to the same brand of Liberalism and maintained similar notions of the role of the province and dominion in the federal system. Gardiner's political astuteness allowed him to recognize the fact that Mackenzie King's political situation allowed for the successful transfer of the resources. The new premier realized that King was in a position to handle any potential eastern opposition. With this knowledge, Gardiner knew that he could improve his own political situation by becoming the advocate of provincial ownership of the resources while causing no problems for the dominion government. In this manner, both King and Gardiner could work together, as the premier believed Liberal governments should, to bring about the politically profitable transfer of the natural resources.

Gardiner entered office in 1926 with no previously well-stated stand on the resource question. On January 28, 1926, the legislative assembly passed a resolution unanimously stating that the provincial government should take immediate steps to initiate negotiations for the transfer. While this action reflected Gardiner's stand on the issue, similar negotiations had been passed for the previous fifteen years.²⁶ The difference lay in the fact that governments at both Regina and Ottawa were now prepared

to negotiate the transfer. A positive nation-wide reaction in support of the provincial resource case seemed to increase Gardiner's conviction that the natural resource question would be a beneficial cause to uphold. When King gained control of the eastern opposition to the transfer and seemed willing to negotiate, Gardiner used the opportunity to attach himself to the movement. In a letter marked 'confidential', King demonstrated his willingness to negotiate with Gardiner. The correspondence displayed the extreme partisanship of their relationship and highlighted their common desire to avoid any semblance of a dominion-provincial conflict over the issue:

...if the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were both represented by counsel at the hearing of the Supreme Court and that if counsel for Saskatchewan and Alberta were to ask the Court to appoint counsel to argue the case from the opposite side of that being taken by counsel for the Federal Government, we the Federal Government would not oppose that course but would upon request of the Court be agreeable to having such appointment made, and meeting the expenses incidental thereto. This would enable the whole question to be argued without even the semblance of an appearance of the question at issue being one on which the Dominion and Provinces were taking opposite sides...If you can see your way to support this proposal it would, I think be most helpful to all concerned.²⁷

The highly contentious issue of the resource transfer rarely entered the correspondence between King and Gardiner, unless it had direct bearing on their political situation both provincially and federally.

Gardiner's interest in the natural resources question and his sense of political opportunism were sparked by two unrelated developments in Saskatchewan. Mining discoveries at Flin Flon Manitoba caught the popular imagination and encouraged the belief that Saskatchewan might also possess great mineral wealth. The resource would probably remain unfound until the province was able to take control of its public domain and develop it to the fullest potential. At the same time, Bram Thompson, eminent Regina lawyer and the former editor of the Canada Law Times, began to formulate his well-based contention that the western lands had never legally belonged to the dominion and, as a result, an actual 'transfer' of the resources was unnecessary. Thompson argued that the lands of the Hudson's Bay Company had been surrendered to the Imperial Crown by the Rupert's Land Act of 1868. This Imperial piece of legislation vested control of the lands in Queen Victoria and not the dominion of Canada. Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories were separately admitted and made a part of the dominion of Canada by an Imperial Order-in-Council dated June 3, 1870. The surrender to the Crown was subject to the Constitution of 1867. As a result, a debate over the ownership of the resources would be more likely to occur between the British Crown and the provinces. According to Thompson, control of the lands had been given to the provinces when the new territories were created on the foundation of the 1867

B.N.A. Act which constitutionally vested control of the public domain in provincial jurisdiction. The dominion, therefore, had been illegally withholding the natural resources since 1870 and had been unconstitutionally depriving the provinces of their deserved revenue. The Manitoba Act of 1870 and the Autonomy Bills of 1905 usurped control of the public domain which had already been passed to the new territories in 1870 and was grounded in the Constitution of 1867.²⁸

Throughout the 1920s Thompson published an extensive number of articles and pamphlets on his position but only gradually did his arguments receive their proper attention. He continually petitioned the government of Saskatchewan to realize the constitutional validity of his case, but was for the most part ignored until Dunning left the premiership. Thompson vigorously petitioned the premier's office to accept his case after Gardiner won the election in 1926. Gradually, between 1926 and 1927, Premier Gardiner came to realize the political potential in Thompson's case and to appreciate his arguments. Since King had demonstrated that the time was at hand for the transfer, there was no danger of opposing the wishes of the dominion government. In June 1927, Thompson was hired as an advisor to the provincial government.²⁹ When Gardiner decided that the time was politically opportune to push the dominion for the transfer of the natural resources, he fully advocated Thompson's

position which quickly became identified as his own. Thompson had developed the Saskatchewan position but Gardiner was championing it. This stance began to create the public reputation of Gardiner as a provincial rightist.

Initially Thompson was enthusiastic to have at last found a vehicle to voice his case. His enthusiasm aided Gardiner politically because the vocal Regina lawyer was willing to use the media to inform the public that Saskatchewan had found a premier who would stand up for the province's rights:

The province is happy now in having a Premier who has declared himself in favor of the heritage, rather than the pottage; and no one can doubt but that he will at the coming conference, assert without falter and without equivocation, the right of the province to its natural resources...Our Premier, Mr. Gardiner has the greatest task before him that any Canadian statesman has faced since the days of the Federal Union and I am convinced he is the man whose mind is commensurate with the task and whose heart is true alike to his Province and the Federal Union of Canada. Trust him.³⁰

Gardiner remained in constant correspondence with Thompson when preparing for the Premiers' Conference to be held November 3, 1927. Gardiner maintained control of the speed at which the position was set before the dominion government, although it was Thompson who had authored the case for the resource transfer. The premier naturally had no objection to being publically viewed as the defender of the province's constitutional rights, but he also had no intention of forcing the issue with King. Thompson, on the

other hand, could see no reason for delaying the transfer and became increasingly frustrated with Gardiner. Despite Thompson's concerns, Gardiner was intent on controlling the pace of the negotiations. He informed Thompson:

I rather expect that during the conference we shall be satisfied with stating our position rather than setting out details to prove that position. I think that you can rest assured that our position will be stated strong enough to leave no doubt as to where we stand.³¹

Privately, however, Thompson feared that Gardiner would not be resilient enough to continue pushing the issue to its conclusion. He quickly recognized that Gardiner was not so concerned with asserting the autonomy of the province, as he was in making political gains. In their correspondence, Thompson began to resort to other means by which to convince the premier that it was necessary to push for the transfer. Thompson was furious when Gardiner suggested that the natural resource issue was not to receive a great emphasis at the Dominion-Provincial Conference of 1927. Thompson realized that any public exposure would reveal Gardiner's true federalist sentiments and possibly impede the progress of the negotiations. The transfer was not guaranteed to be completed by the next election, and if Gardiner lost, the entire negotiation process would possibly have to be recommenced under a new provincial government. A Conservative provincial administration would not receive the same chances of success when it came to dealing with King's

Liberal government. While avoiding public exposure, the lawyer made it clear to Gardiner that the province's position on the resource transfer was solely his own and that it was his pressure on the dominion government which had produced a movement forward in the negotiations. He wrote to the premier:

I do not see how the Natural Resources question can be avoided at the Provincial Conference. It was my last pamphlet which forced Premier Mackenzie King to call the Provincial Conference. Mr. H.H. Stevens in the House early in January wanted a time fixed for discussing the momentous subjects dealt with by my pamphlet; and then the Premier said that he would call a Conference of the Provinces in the course of the Summer; and until it had deliberated, it would not be proper for Parliament to interfere or intervene.³²

Thompson came to recognize that Gardiner was advocating the transfer because King was prepared to negotiate and because it was politically opportune. The premier was not leading the cause because he felt that the province was being treated unfairly by the dominion. He was a political opportunist, not a provincial rightist.

When Thompson realized Gardiner's federal sway and his ulterior political motives, the lawyer changed his strategy in dealing with the premier. Instead of appealing to ideological arguments as to why the province had to stand up to the dominion, the lawyer began to offer Gardiner political arguments for advocating the cause:

If the question is evaded at the Provincial Conference, Mr. Stevens will renew his application in Parliament and the Conservative party will take

all the glory of rectifying the Constitution of this Country...I say this to you personally. The eyes of the Progressive Party are upon you. They feel that you are handicapped but in spite of that they look to you to pursue a course quite different from that pursued by your predecessors, who candour they now place upon a very low level—a level of cajoling the people and manipulating the right of the Province to its Natural Resources.³³

The methods that Thompson used in coercing Gardiner to promote his case became more and more politically-oriented. This is amply displayed in the correspondence between the two men, where Thompson argued less and less from a constitutionalist or provincial rightist base and more often from the position of how the resource question would affect the premier politically. On October 8, 1927, Thompson wrote Gardiner:

The Provincial Conference is approaching; and the Conservatives are certain to make the Natural Resources the main plank of their platform for next Election...You might easily be the man of the hour.³⁴

On February 8, 1927, he attempted to entice Gardiner:

If you continue to tread the path indicated...you will certainly surpass all your predecessors; and so captivate the Farming people that there will be no power in the organizers of a "class or group control" to do anything really hurtful to you.³⁵

Thompson played on Gardiner's political concerns in an attempt to coerce him into pushing for the transfer before the provincial election of 1929:

I hope that no party will try to rob you of the crown of glory that should attach to any man who eventually wins this great triumph for the recertification of Canada's Constitution and the restoration of the rights of the West.³⁶

As time dragged on and little could be seen in the way of progress with the transfer, Thompson became increasingly frustrated. Although he wished the speed of the transfer negotiations to increase, Thompson realized that he could not publically quarrel or break from Gardiner without putting the negotiations in jeopardy. As a result, Thompson confined his frustration and criticism to his increasingly antagonistic correspondence with Gardiner.

When the provincial Throne Speech of 1928 was delivered, it appeared that the province was prepared to accept control of her resources without the perpetual subsidy. This new stand, in Thompson's view, represented a weakening of the provincial position. He immediately wrote Gardiner, describing the statements as "not only stultifying but subversive of the province's position." In his anger, Thompson made it perfectly clear that it was he who understood the nature of the problem because it was his case. He informed the premier that he would not "sit still and see my work of ten years blighted."³⁷ On January 28, 1929, Thompson wrote a critical letter to the premier accusing him of "departing from the principle of the Province's Right to its Resources ab initio." The lawyer accused Gardiner of basing his "claim on 25,000,000 acres instead of the total acreage."³⁸

After 1928, Thompson found more and more occasion to assert the fact that the western provinces' case for the

resource transfer was solely of his authorship and that Gardiner had merely adopted it for his own purposes. Thompson's influence in the resource question was increasing, and this fact deepened his own feelings of importance in the issue. In December 1928, for example, Thompson was invited to expound the legal rights of Saskatchewan and Alberta before a special convention of leading members of parliament at Ottawa.³⁹ When suggesting to Gardiner methods to be used in the negotiations, Thompson frequently described the province's position as one of which, "I am the author and was sole exponent till you adopted it yourself."⁴⁰ Thompson often highlighted his own achievement and value to Gardiner, inferring that his services were of the utmost necessity:

...for my Opinion was not only a correctant of past misconceptions which had obsessed or deluded the Governments of the past but it provided a new and straight highway to the achievement of the avowed object of Provincial Ownership...Even in the amicable adjustment which Mr. Gardiner told me is imminent...the Government would need the services which I above all men in the Province, could render to its framing and approving of the necessary complementary Legislation-Provincial, Federal and Imperial.⁴¹

In May and June of 1928 relations between Thompson and Gardiner reached their lowest point. The Regina lawyer made it clear that he felt his services were obviously not being appreciated and that his fee was "wholly inadequate." He informed Gardiner that "this matter of postponing my Fee has gone far enough. I have earned it." Thompson inferred that

the premier's motives for adopting his resource position were entirely political:

...in my views you have your next election victory...I want my cheque which is not one tenth of what I should get or what I have lost through advocating the views now dominant all over the West.⁴²

Thompson's anger and frustration finally came down to a threat, which he levelled at Gardiner in a letter dated May 18, 1928:

If the Government does not appreciate the value of this Opinion and what it means to have the exclusive right to use it, perhaps the best thing to do is to cut the lines and return the Opinion to me as my property.⁴³

Gardiner's response to Thompson's anger and frustration was one of conciliation. The premier apparently recognized that he was reliant on Thompson's position but he was in no way inclined to bend to Thompson's pressure to increase the speed of the negotiations. Relations with King and the federal government were of primary importance to the premier who was intent on moving only as quickly as the prime minister was, in the end, willing to move. Gardiner answered Thompson's complaints by assuring him that the province was doing all it could to secure the transfer in the most satisfactory terms.

Thompson ironically aided in enhancing Gardiner's reputation as a champion of provincial rights. The fear of Gardiner losing the next provincial election and the consequences that this might have on the transfer

negotiations led Thompson to do what he could to foster the growing image of Gardiner as a defender of provincial rights, a premier who was not afraid to stand up against the power of the dominion to repair the constitutional wrongs that had been done to the province. Thompson wrote in the Leader that

Mr. Gardiner and the present Government have parted company with the past, and made the first and only solid advance to the goal of Provincial Ownership...In writing the history of the culmination, as I propose to do in book form, I hope nothing will remain to dim or blur the coloring after Mr. Gardiner's accession to the Premiership.⁴⁴

In a later letter to the same newspaper, Thompson continued to build upon the image of Gardiner as a provincial rightist:

...the panorama completely changed when Mr. Gardiner boldly stepped forward and informed the Provincial Conference that he was there not begging for any Dominion favour or concession, but solely as the asserter of the right of the Province to its Land and to an account for the parts of which had been wrongly used and alienated by the Dominion...I have practically relinquished the fight to Mr. Gardiner who has become the real champion of the Province's right.⁴⁵

Thompson was willing to step out of his role as barrister and give the credit for progress in the transfer negotiations to Gardiner because he believed that Gardiner's federal connections could assure the success of the transfer and because he feared the consequences if Gardiner was to lose the next election. In the pamphlet, An Address and

Appeal to the Electors of Saskatchewan, Thompson highlighted Gardiner as the first politician

who had the courage to lift the problem out of the mire, and face the Dominion with the Province's Constitutional Right to its Natural Resources under the B.N.A. Act, 1867- a right which no enactment of the Parliament of Canada could destroy or impair.

Thompson went on to assert that at the Provincial Conference of 1927, Gardiner threatened to test the constitutional validity of the issue before the Privy Council if the province's rights were not conceded: "Then for the first time Premier King found himself confronted with the fact that Saskatchewan knew its own rights."⁴⁶

Saskatchewan Conservatives realized that the co-operation between Thompson and Gardiner was producing the image of the provincial and federal Liberals as the defenders of provincial rights and that the King-Gardiner brand of national politics was being introduced into the provincial scene to produce beneficial results for the local and national Liberal parties. A Conservative supporter from Saskatchewan wrote to R.B. Bennett in 1929 that Thompson was condemning the Tories as "despoilers of the West" and eulogizing

both King and Gardner[sic] who are the champions now of Provincial Rights...It is now recognized by Liberals that they must have an issue so as the constant plugging for quarter of a century by Tories here for Equal Provincial autonomy with rest of Canada has at last wrought a change in the attitude of the electorate upon our Resources situation, to the end that the Grits are now about

to blossom forth as the one & only simon pure Knights to be entrusted with Saskatchewan's favor...The fact that he[Gardiner] is introducing King as the sympathetic adjudicator in the matter of West's Rights while arming against Tory leader as the arch enemy of the West should call forth some comment & it introduces Federal politics by & large when the issue is Provincial Autonomy in the form of restitution for alienated[sic] lands & it is here that they figure to put one over by placating King for purposes of election in Sask, as the one & only friend at Ottawa of the West.⁴⁷

At the Dominion-Provincial Conference of 1927 Gardiner had Thompson accompany his delegation as the provincial advisor on the resource question. The premier used the conference to advocate Thompson's case which he presented as the general position of the government of Saskatchewan. Gardiner argued that as a result of the dominion retaining control of the province's resources, over 27 616 100 acres of land had been used for the provision of homesteads to promote an immigration policy in the interests of all of Canada. 3 566 000 acres were sold as pre-emptions at \$3.00 an acre thereby producing \$10 698 000 for the federal treasury. This was worth five per cent to the treasury which amounted to \$53 490 000, or half the total subsidy that Saskatchewan could ever receive under the 1905 agreement. For these reasons, Gardiner submitted that all resources as yet unalienated should be returned to the province and that the proposal that the subsidy should increase to \$1 125 000 when the province's population reached 1 200 000 should remain in effect. He asserted

that, in the meantime, Saskatchewan should receive \$750 000, and when the population reached 1 200 000, the subsidy should increase to \$1 125 000 in perpetuity.⁴⁸

Gardiner's assertive stance at the 1927 Conference fostered his image as a provincial rightist. The premiers of Manitoba and Alberta agreed to Gardiner's position, and he was placed at the head of the western movement. The populace perceived Gardiner's stance to be solely his own initiative and reflective of his dominion-provincial view. The premier's image as a provincial rightist was taking shape. In reality, however, the premier made no obvious political moves that would suggest he was a provincial rightist. All his tactics coincided with his belief in the proper role of the province in a federal system. The preservation of Gardiner's strong relationship with King was of prime importance. On the other hand, the premier took no direct action that could be conceived as a federal bias.

By early 1928, Gardiner's confidence in the successful negotiation of the resource transfer question was deflated when the 1927 Conference failed to produce any concrete results. Ottawa was still not offering a generous enough proposal that Gardiner could politically afford to accept. The premier consequently prepared to secure his position in the event that negotiations collapsed completely. He made it known that while the province was "quite prepared to accept the natural resources and, as a matter of fact felt

that they could be much better administered from Regina than from Ottawa," the government believed "that the province is in greater need of the revenues now derived from subsidies than...of the natural resources themselves."⁴⁹ Such sentiments reveal Gardiner's nationalist thinking. He did not see the control of the resources as a necessary assertion of the province's autonomy from the dominion. It was not absolutely necessary for the resources to be transferred to provincial control. When presented with arguments in favor of the transfer that contained attacks on the dominion, moreover, Gardiner more often than not came to the defense of the federal system. He disagreed with critics who accused the dominion of usurping control of the provincial public domain. He argued with his supporters and colleagues who were critical of the dominion policy that the present resource agreement was not

a specific private agreement, but an arrangement entered into through the acceptance of the Autonomy Bill, first through the Parliament of Canada, and then by the people of Saskatchewan through an election. If you go back to the election of 1905, you will find that through the whole campaign there were only two questions before the people of the Province; one being the natural resources and the other the separate school question, as involved in the Autonomy Bill. The same was true to a large extent of the 1908 election. On both occasions the Province accepted the proposals made by the Federal Parliament, which proposals were to the effect that twenty-five million acres of land in Saskatchewan were to be used for the purpose of inducing immigrants to come to Canada. The lands have been used, the immigrants are here. If the province had had the land we, in all probability, would

have done exactly the same thing as the Federal Government has done.⁵⁰

In April 1928, the United Farmers of Canada petitioned Gardiner to continue asserting the rights of the province by putting the question of ownership of the resources to the courts. They believed that because Premier Gardiner had asserted the unconstitutionality of the dominion's right to the resources, the courts must solve the problem. Gardiner realized that any judicial interference in the issue would be politically detrimental to his and King's strategy of receiving the benefits of settling the transfer question without the courts. In support of this strategy, Gardiner made the observation to a supporter that

it is advisable in national matters, as well as private dealings, to avoid courts as much as possible, providing the same end is to be reached, without becoming involved in court procedure.⁵¹

He informed the United Farmers of Canada that

the Province is likely to be much farther ahead by arriving at a mutual agreement with the Federal Government than by entering into legal controversy with them so long as there is reasonable hope that we can establish our rights without a legal controversy. That reasonable hope does exist and is based upon a willingness of the Federal government to deal fairly with the three Western provinces.⁵²

In the meantime, a unanimous resolution was passed in the House of Commons on February 18, 1929, that called for the unconditional surrender of the western provinces' natural resources. The resolution was moved by Dr. J. W. Edwards, Conservative member for Frontenac, and demonstrated

the fact that the transfer was politically popular with both parties. With this kind of backing, Prime Minister King invited Gardiner to meet with him to discuss the resources transfer in late February 1929. King was anxious to settle the case of all three provinces, and there was already progress with two of the three provinces. On November 23, 1928, the Turgeon Commission had been ordered by Parliament to enquire into the question of the natural resources of Manitoba. King was also having success in the Alberta negotiations and wished to achieve some progress with Saskatchewan.

During the February negotiations, Gardiner requested the return of all unalienated natural resources in the province, a subsidy of \$1 125 000 to be continued in perpetuity, and an accounting of all lands disposed of by the dominion government since 1905. King agreed to transfer the lands and resources to provincial control, but offered only the current subsidy of \$750 000. Gardiner was forced to refuse the prime minister's offer because his provincial popularity was founded on the successful procurement of the greater subsidy. The provincial election was approaching, and the premier knew that it was going to be a difficult contest. His political situation was weighing more heavily on the resource negotiations than King's so he could afford to oppose the prime minister's offer publically. Gardiner presented his case that more lands had been alienated in

Saskatchewan than in either of the other two provinces. The subsidy in lieu of lands should therefore go on to increase according to section 20 of the Saskatchewan Act of 1905 until it reached the maximum amount.

As with Gardiner, political considerations would not allow King to compromise his position. The prime minister realized that if he gave Saskatchewan what it was requesting, he would have to renegotiate with Alberta and Manitoba, offering them similar proposals. King conceded to Gardiner that Saskatchewan's position with its resources was different from that of Alberta and Manitoba, and probably did warrant a greater subsidy. Whereas Alberta was rich in coal, oil, and other resources apart from lands, and recent discoveries had revealed the mineral value of Flin Flon for Manitoba, Saskatchewan's mineral wealth was yet to be proven. Furthermore, Saskatchewan's chief wealth had been found in its agricultural lands, much of which had already been disposed of by the dominion. The only solution for King and Gardiner was to await the completion of negotiations with the other provinces.⁵³ While it was not usual for Gardiner to dissent from King's policies, political conditions made it unfavorable for either politician to abandon his position. Both men understood this.

Gardiner was forced to return to Saskatchewan empty-handed on the eve of a provincial election. Even

though the negotiations failed, the premier was viewed as having stood up to the power of the dominion and refusing to back down from the original offer which contained the inherent rights of the province. The media heralded Gardiner as the undoubted champion of the province's constitutional rights. Gardiner's stand at the negotiations of 1929 was further justified by the Turgeon Commission's provincially sympathetic report on the Manitoba resources question. The Saskatoon Star Phoenix of June 4, 1929 reported that

what should be noted here is that the report of the commissioners completely justifies the stand taken by Gardiner and his government on Saskatchewan's behalf.⁵⁴

The Turgeon Commission allowed Manitoba a cash grant in lieu of the province not having received the total grant throughout the years previous to 1930. It recommended that the future payment of the subsidy to the other two provinces should compensate for the lesser grant that was lost prior to the transfer.

Gardiner's close relationship with the dominion began to cost him support in Saskatchewan in 1929 due to increasing regional discontent and the resulting decrease in the popularity of the Mackenzie King government. Complicated provincial factors combined with this discontent with federal policies to defeat the Gardiner government. The provincial election of 1929 resulted in the Liberal

number of seats was reduced from fifty to twenty-eight while the Conservatives increased from three to twenty-four.⁵⁵

On September 9, 1929, J.T.M. Anderson formed a coalition government of Conservatives and Progressives and became premier of Saskatchewan. The change in government immediately affected Saskatchewan's negotiations over the resource transfer. In late 1929, Mackenzie King met with Premier Anderson to discuss the natural resources issue. Even though Anderson upheld the same position that was championed by Gardiner and authored by Thompson, King and Anderson's partisanship hampered the tone of the negotiations. For example, when Anderson took office, King made a point of not stopping to visit him during his 1929 western tour.⁵⁶ A Liberal dominion administration and a Conservative provincial administration did not result in the same conciliatory atmosphere that existed when Liberal governments held office at both political levels. The prime minister offered to establish a Royal Commission to investigate the matter but Anderson was not in accord. The provinces of Alberta and Manitoba officially signed the agreement to receive control of their resources on December 14, 1929. Mackenzie King displayed the strong partisan nature of his relationship with Gardiner when he recorded the event in his diary: "Had Gardiner been in office...the Sask resources would also have been transferred."⁵⁷

In January 1930, Gardiner used his personal relationship and correspondence with King to ask the prime minister to enhance his own political position:

I have been a little concerned to know what procedure to follow in connection with the Natural Resources Question...I am inclined to think that the Federal Government are in a fairly strong position in the matter. It would strengthen our position very much here if we could claim some of the credit...without injuring your position.⁵⁸

The prime minister's response reflected the two men's relationship throughout consideration of the issue:

...it was evident that he[Anderson] came to the East to play the party game and to make trouble politically, not to settle the resources question, and that, if the province has been saved from losing everything, it has been due to the moderate attitude of our Administration here and the ground laid by your own Administration in previous discussions.⁵⁹

In the first week of March 1930, Premier Anderson went to Ottawa to discuss the resource question. The two heads of government finally agreed to postpone an official settlement of the matter until after the Supreme Court of Canada had reviewed the issue and decided whether Saskatchewan had a right to compensation for lands that were alienated by the dominion before 1905. In the meantime, a tentative agreement was reached which would give the province control of its resources, as well as a subsidy of \$750 000 per annum.⁶⁰

The Anderson government was able to reach an agreement with the dominion because King was intent on seeing the

transfer of the western provinces' natural resources. The long standing issue was near a solution, and the great majority of the negotiating process had been completed by the Gardiner administration. Gardiner had done all the preparatory work, and Anderson simply tied up the loose ends. A conference on March 20, 1930, between the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan resulted in the 1930 Resources Agreement. The Saskatchewan Legislature ratified the Agreement on April 4, and an Imperial Statute was passed making it official on October 1, 1930. The Resources Agreement provided that a Commission be appointed to work out the details of the transfer, but the appointment of the Commission was delayed for over three years because the province's claim to compensation for resources alienated prior to 1905 was submitted to the Supreme Court and then appealed to the Privy Council. In the end, the courts concluded that Saskatchewan had no right to these resources before it became a province. The Royal Commission was appointed on December 29, 1933.

The public perception of James Gardiner as a provincial rightist was a misunderstanding of the man's political thinking, his political motives, and his views on dominion-provincial relations. The reputation was founded on the premier's leading role in the provincial resource transfer but did not take into account his reasoning for accepting this position. Gardiner's nationalist loyalty to

the united Liberal front did not allow for a provincial rights sentiment. He advocated the resource question not as a contradiction to his political views, but in support of them. The federal leader, Mackenzie King, made it apparent that the time was appropriate for the transfer of the natural resources from dominion to provincial control. This land policy was going to be beneficial to the dominion Liberal government so Gardiner had no problem in supporting the issue from the provincial standpoint. The Saskatchewan resource question was not an issue of dominion-provincial disagreement for Gardiner and King. Rather it was an opportunity for both political levels to benefit by having Liberal administrations resolve a contentious issue amicably. Gardiner's behaviour throughout the resource negotiations reflected his intense loyalty to the federal Liberal leader and his strong desire to maintain a harmonious dominion-provincial relationship. In the negotiations for the resource transfer, Gardiner displayed his staunch political convictions and his adherence to them. He demonstrated his loyalty to the national Liberal party, to the federal Liberal leader, and to his own political fortunes. Gardiner did not oppose the creation of the provincial rights reputation because it was politically popular. The usurpation and adoption of Bram Thompson's position on the resource issue demonstrates that Gardiner did not have a provincial rights stance of his own.

Thompson's case proved useful in founding the premier's reputation but he did not hold to the provincial rightist ideological principles that it contained. It was a useful practical policy, and Gardiner was a practical politician. Once Gardiner's reputation as the champion of provincial rights was secured, the politician did nothing to question it. Instead he spent the next four years allowing it to build and become a permanent facet of his political career.

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Chapter Two
OPPOSITION TO BENNETT

Gardiner's second term as premier from 1934 to 1935 permanently secured his reputation as the champion of provincial rights. This public perception occurred because of the premier's ardent partisan opposition to Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett during such incidents as the On-to-Ottawa Trek. Despite this public perception, Gardiner's national Liberal views actually grew stronger during the decade. The Depression caused a major re-evaluation of the Canadian political system that led to the desire for a government with a more expansive federal role and more responsibilities. It undermined the political establishment and forced the main-line parties to question their very foundations. The constitutional framework of the nation seemed inadequate in dealing with changing conditions and the traditional dominion-provincial relationship was clearly in need of some kind of revision.

Any elation attached to the successful transfer of Saskatchewan's public lands was short-lived. Almost immediately after gaining control of the province's natural resources, consisting mostly of agricultural lands, Saskatchewan became the focal point of the nation's worst land disaster. The Depression destroyed the economic prosperity that was generally characteristic of the 1920s and reversed the trend in dominion-provincial relations by

placing greater emphasis on the central authority. The devastating crisis crippled the economy of the Prairies but was most destructive to Gardiner's agriculturally dependent province of Saskatchewan. The Depression drained the financial assets of Canada's provincial governments and forced them to turn to the dominion government for assistance. Symbols of growing provincial autonomy, such as the resource transfer, were soon forgotten as the western region became reliant on monetary handouts from Ottawa. In an ironic twist of fate, Saskatchewan soon found itself unable to afford the upkeep of their recently purchased lands.

Like most Canadian political figures of the day, Gardiner's nationalist views were strengthened by the Depression. While strengthening his federal political views, the Depression radically transformed his federal economic views. Gardiner had previously held to the view that in the Canadian political system the provinces were to be subordinate to the federal government, but the 1930s also made him realize that it was necessary for Ottawa to possess economic control. The federal government was to be the central power that directed the political and economic policies of the nation. The present distribution of powers as outlined by the British North America Act did not give enough power and responsibility to the federal government, and did not suit the modern, increasingly industrialized and

urbanized Canada of the mid-twentieth century. James Gardiner was fortunate enough to witness the effects of the Depression while in opposition. Like Mackenzie King, Gardiner was defeated on the eve of the economic disaster that plagued the early 1930s and was thereby able to reap the political rewards from being in opposition. Gardiner observed the effects that the Depression had on the lands of his province and became convinced that while control of lands could be maintained constitutionally by the provinces, a strong federal government was needed to offer aid in times of dire circumstances. This was especially true for the agriculturally based provinces of the Prairies.

Gardiner's strengthened national views were not displayed during his second term as premier from 1934 to 1935. Political opportunism and partisanship prevented him from demonstrating his true dominion-provincial attitude. Mackenzie King had been replaced by Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. This change in the political stripe of the federal government altered Gardiner's fundamental loyalty to the federal leader and inevitably affected his dominion-provincial relations. His intense partisanship prevented him from co-operating with the Bennett administration in any way. As with the natural resource issue, Gardiner's clash with the dominion government over the On-To-Ottawa Trek helped augment the image of the premier as a defender of provincial rights. Gardiner

emerged from his second premiership widely known as a champion of the rights of the province but this reputation does not stand up to close scrutiny. A study of his second period in office demonstrates, once again, that Gardiner never faltered from his staunch, nationally-oriented political foundation. Like the resource issue, the situation with the Trek provided the premier with politically beneficial opportunities that did not actually require him to alter his political ideals. His actions during the event coincide with his previously established political loyalties and philosophy.

Saskatchewan had never previously faced an economic crisis that matched the magnitude of the Depression. The early years of the province were marked by rapid development, active immigration and expanding trade. The War years had increased the demand for agricultural goods but had also resulted in extensive credit purchasing. Gardiner's years as premier (1926-1929) were also good years for Saskatchewan economically. Record harvests in wheat stimulated railway construction and secondary industry. Increased government revenues and subsequent surpluses allowed Gardiner to satisfy the demands of the province by increasing services and advocating such measures as the transfer of the natural resources.¹

The boom of the 1920s, however, gave way to one of the worst depressions in Canadian history, and Saskatchewan was

the hardest hit province. From a period of relative prosperity, the province entered an economic slump that continued until the onset of the Second World War. Conditions of drought accompanied the general recession, resulting in an agricultural crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Average per capita income decreased the most in Saskatchewan, falling by seventy-two per cent in the period from 1928 to 1933. Export-oriented farm products, particularly wheat, suffered a disastrous price fall that reduced the farmer's purchasing power by 63.8 per cent.²

As if this was not enough, successive crop failures in Saskatchewan from 1930 to 1937 affected an area of cropland equal to one-quarter of the total improved farm acreage in Canada. The drought decimated lands in the province, affecting one-half of all Saskatchewan farmers.³ By 1937, two-thirds of the farm population in the province were destitute, and the average yield of wheat had fallen from a general average of 15 bushels to 2.6 bushels per acre.⁴

The massive reduction in farm income was also reflected in the non-farm sectors of the provincial economy. The towns and cities of Saskatchewan were almost exclusively service centers for the farming population, and as a result, an urban economy, separate from that of agriculture, did not exist. Every section of the province was dependent on the fortunes of agriculture.⁵ In times of crisis the fortunes of agriculture were dependent on the municipalities and the

provincial government for relief support. The Depression forced many farmers into bankruptcy and many urban dwellers to unemployment. Both groups had to turn to the government for financial aid.

While the British North America Act made no mention of unemployment or relief, poor-law tradition placed this responsibility with local authorities. The provinces, with their jurisdiction over the "property and civil rights" of their citizens, were generally held responsible for social needs. Dominion politicians had remained faithful to the poor-law tradition by insisting that care of the destitute was a provincial and local matter. In the 1920s, the increasing costs attached to the emergence of urbanization and industrialization caused the provinces to demand more federal support in paying relief costs but the dominion did only what was necessary. In the meantime, they continued to insist that responsibility lay with the provinces. The responsibility for the provision of direct relief that the Canadian constitution placed with the municipal authorities and provincial governments included food, fuel, and clothing. Agricultural aid included seed, feed, and fodder. The balance between the provincial expenditures and revenues, however, was extremely precarious due to the lack of deficit financing. The increasing financial crisis was shattering the provincial balances, and this threatened the relationship that existed between the dominion and the

provinces. The extensive drought of 1931 and the resulting fall in wheat prices forced a shift in the public burden from the municipality to the provinces. As the decade progressed the crisis became one of such magnitude that neither the municipality nor the provinces could support the demand for relief without large-scale dominion support.⁶ As the provinces became unable to handle their growing expenses they were forced to rely on the dominion for monetary support.

The problems of the Depression eventually produced such a critical situation that the federal government was forced to accept an increasing share of the responsibility for the provincial debts. Throughout his administration Prime Minister Bennett attempted to deal with the Depression by pursuing temporary solutions that reflected the traditional view that relief expenditures were the responsibility of the municipalities and provinces. The economic crisis was straining the resources of the dominion treasury, and Bennett did not wish to take over the financing of areas he perceived to be under local jurisdiction. Bennett's temporary policies of sending support to the provinces, as indicated by the 1930 and 1931 Relief Acts, proved to be inadequate in dealing with the provincial debts and did little to solve the overall problem. The provinces continued to demand increased financial aid, while Bennett continued to blame the provincial debt on a lack of fiscal

management. He eventually had to alter his previous convictions and provide the necessary support for the economically crippled provinces. From September 1930 to July 1934, the dominion, provincial, and municipal governments were each to pay one-third of the costs of direct relief. By 1934 the situation had become such that the national government was forced to pay one half the costs while the province and municipality each covered one quarter.⁷ Finally, in early January 1935, Bennett suddenly announced his 'New Deal' in which it was argued that unemployment was a national emergency which fell into Ottawa's residual authority to ensure "peace, order, and good government."

The emergency state of the Saskatchewan economy made it difficult for Bennett to avoid sending aid to the province. Despite his desire to avert federal expenditures, all the money to finance relief costs in Saskatchewan during the period from 1930 to 1935 came from the federal treasury.⁸ For the period from 1930 to 1937 the relief burden amounted to three-fifths of the total ordinary revenues of the provincial and municipal governments of Saskatchewan compared with one-fifth for the remainder of the dominion. In 1937 relief costs amounted to 163 per cent of provincial and municipal revenues in the province.⁹ This statistic demonstrated that relief costs reached the point where they surpassed the overall costs of administering the province.

Saskatchewan had no choice but to become increasingly reliant on federal support.

Gardiner entered the Depression years with the same nationalist views toward relief expenditures as King and Bennett. It was established in federalist thought that the dominion and provincial governments had distinct powers and responsibilities that were designated by the B.N.A. Act. Fiscal responsibility for the local needs of citizens was not a dominion concern but was to be handled through the resources of the municipality and province. King and Gardiner held to an established economic belief that included the classical Liberal idea of the importance of individual initiative as opposed to government intervention. Gardiner was in agreement with King that the increasingly popular theory of Keynesian deficit financing was unorthodox and potentially disastrous. The only economic course that King could find possible to adhere to was the traditional policy of fiscal entrenchment and balanced budgets. The prime minister's traditional economic policies during his first two administrations in the 1920s had shown him that monetary restraint could balance the budget and maintain the nation on a sound footing. Neither King nor Gardiner saw why they would not continue to prove successful.

The years in opposition from 1930 to 1935 allowed the two Liberal leaders the opportunity to observe Bennett advocating policies of fiscal restraint that were similar to

those pursued by the previous Liberal administrations. Despite King's success with these traditional policies during the previous decade, the provincial and federal Liberal leaders were forced to recognize that they were not sufficient in dealing with the Depression. The economic disaster slowly altered King and Gardiner's beliefs as they came to realize that in times of disastrous economic crisis, balanced budgets were impossible. Despite this realization, the Liberal leaders stubbornly clung to their view that much of the problem could be alleviated through expenditure restraint. Throughout the Depression King continued to advocate better financial management as the solution to the debt problem, and refused to admit the necessity of providing the provinces with the level of support they were demanding. The Depression experience did not totally transform King's economic principles but it did teach him that when the provinces were facing dire economic crisis, they were unable to manage their expenditures without extensive federal aid. This realization served to strengthen King's belief in the necessity of a strong federal system.

Gardiner agreed with King that it was not the responsibility of the dominion government to support provincial debts. Economic jurisdictions had been clearly outlined in the BNA Act. He wrote King in 1932:

Bennett is ruining this province financially as well as the dominion with his blank cheque. Were it not for the fact that the Federal [sic] could keep the amounts which he is recklessly lending to this province out of the subsidies, I would come out with a policy of refusing to acknowledge the debt which he is loading the province with. The government in this province would have had to quit long ago had it not been for Bennett coming to their rescue. I do not think it was ever intended that the principle of responsible government should be interfeared[sic] with through the federal treasury being used in the provinces to place the Provincial Governments in a position where they could not be made to give an accounting to the legislature for their expenditures until months after the expenditures have been actually made.¹⁰

Gardiner believed in the constitutional distribution of powers but the emergency conditions facing his province demonstrated the need for change. As the Depression continued to cripple Saskatchewan, Gardiner was induced to take the stand that federal intervention into the established provincial jurisdiction was necessary. With one-third of the agricultural population in his province receiving government assistance by 1934, Gardiner's nationally-oriented political beliefs became more soundly-based.¹¹ It was necessary for Ottawa to take a strong leading role, both politically and economically. Saskatchewan relied on its lands as the prime resource. When a situation arose that crippled this resource's productivity, the provincial administration had no financial power to reverse the trend. It was essential that the dominion government have the power to intervene and lend the

support that was so desperately needed. The Depression experience strengthened Gardiner's attitudes about the strong role that the dominion was to play in the federal system. Like King, Gardiner had come to the conclusion that "the task of financing and administering assistance to the drought area is a Federal responsibility."¹²

The Gardiner-King relationship remained strongly intact during both men's years in opposition and served to demonstrate that the Saskatchewan premier's federal bias was consistent. Both politicians observed the lessons to be drawn from the crisis and the resulting implications for the dominion-provincial relationship. They concluded that a stronger federal system was necessary. Gardiner used the time in opposition to evaluate the success of the present dominion-provincial system, to rebuild the Liberal organization in the province, and to aid its reconstruction generally throughout the West. He was increasingly called upon by King to play the part of the dominion's regional advisor. By 1930 King was relying heavily on Gardiner's provincial position to provide him with political advice on important federal western policies:

I wish at your convenience, you would give me your view of the political situation in the West...Is the time ripe for us to begin a series of public meetings to convince the electorate of the mistake they made in July last and to line up all forces behind the Liberal banner? Would it be wise for me to think of going as far West as Winnipeg to deliver an address between now and the time parliament reassembles? Do you see any signs of

revival of the third party? These are all matters on which I should be glad to be more fully informed.¹³

Gardiner answered King's call to be the dominion regional representative in the West. He did not take the position because he felt an unbreakable loyalty to the region or province as King assumed, but rather because he was loyal to Liberalism, the Liberal party, the federal Liberal leader, and to his own political fortunes. Gardiner's established position in the West made the role as regional advisor appropriate and helpful for the Liberal party. The Saskatchewan Liberal leader listened to the many regional protests that were directed at the federal system and made certain that they were brought to the attention of Mackenzie King. Gardiner saw the West as the region upon which the national Liberal party would have to depend in the future. It was therefore essential that the party maintain a tight hold on the region. He believed that the antagonism which fostered itself in the provincial rights movements could be avoided by responding to the problems of the particular regions. He saw these protests as a consequence of the belief that the interests of the particular region were being ignored. If the dominion government responded to the needs of the region and allowed the protests a vehicle by which to voice their concerns, there would be no need for provincial rights movements:

If it were possible for Liberals in Western Canada to know that their views were at all times definitely before you when decisions were being reached, there would never at any time be any hesitation in following to the letter any suggestions which are made. There is, however, a very considerable section of the Liberal party which sometimes wonders whether or not their views are expressed. If I may be pardoned for saying so, I believe that that section of the Liberal party in the West as elsewhere is the one upon which Liberalism must rest for its future. It is the section of the party which remains Liberal in face of all opposition and which would remain Liberal even if it thought its leader to be wrong on occasions which, happily, it has not been compelled to think under your leadership.¹⁴

Despite the sense of regional isolation that the West experienced during the Depression, Gardiner refused to acknowledge a division of the Liberal party into regions. The economic crisis did nothing to disrupt the premier's dream of creating and maintaining his united Liberal front. While Gardiner recognized the distinct regional interests of the nation, he did not believe that this required a split within the party organization. Gardiner responded to the threat of a potential regional division in the Liberal ranks by informing King in October 1934:

I think it not advisable to have a conference of Western Liberals at the present time. As a matter of fact, it is my opinion that it is always a mistake to have Liberalism divided either into East or West, or by names which indicate divided opinion whether they are applied to the East or the West.¹⁵

Gardiner's desire for the united Liberal front included the necessity of defeating Bennett. To accomplish this he remained a bitter opponent of Bennett's administration

throughout its term in office. Apart from his criticism of the Conservative's fiscal policies, partisanship also played a large role in explaining Gardiner's opposition to Bennett. The Saskatchewan premier's political loyalties to Liberalism and the Liberal party ultimately guided his relations with the federal Conservative government. Although he originally held to the doctrine of fiscal entrenchment and balanced budgets, his proximity to the focal point of the Depression quickly made him realize that federal aid was needed. The Saskatchewan politician based his opposition on the popular Prairie resentment that was being aimed at Bennett's handling of the West. The poor economic conditions that were especially crippling for the Prairies were inevitably blamed on the federal government. Gardiner's opposition to Bennett naturally gained the Liberal leader public approval. As a result his reputation as a provincial rightist and defender of the region was increased. Gardiner accused Bennett of not responding to the distinct needs of Saskatchewan and the western region, and justifiably suffering in political popularity as a result. Gardiner's intense partisanship and constant opposition produced tenuous relations between the two men. To increase political opposition to Bennett and thereby enhance his own popularity, Gardiner joined the other Prairie provinces in vociferously denouncing the relief policies of the Conservative government as being inadequate. Political

resentment and anger in the region were heatedly aimed at the dominion government in Ottawa, and Gardiner planned on profiting politically by joining the attacks.

Gardiner's attacks on Bennett intensified after his return to office in the June 19, 1934 provincial election. In the contest, fifty Liberals were elected, while five Co-operative Commonwealth Federation candidates won seats and all the Conservative candidates went down to defeat.¹⁶ With Gardiner back in office, Ottawa-Saskatchewan relations worsened. Mackenzie King had used compromise to sway the premiers to his position and produce an atmosphere of cooperation and conciliation. Bennett, on the other hand, attempted to assert his authority to gain the loyalty of the premiers. Gardiner responded to Bennett's political stripe and personality by attacking the federal government with as much political skill and vigour as he could muster. His opposition to Bennett was strictly motivated by partisanship. Dominion-provincial relations had been harmonious during his first reign as premier because an important aspect of his political philosophy included a loyalty to the national Liberal leader. Now, with a Conservative government in Ottawa, Gardiner used any vehicle available to denounce the federal administration.

Gardiner blamed any difficulties he had in obtaining increased dominion subsidies and financial support on Bennett's partisanship. In 1934 the excuse proved useful

when the premier failed to obtain his desired loan from Ottawa. He accused Bennett of refusing Saskatchewan aid because it was now governed by a Liberal administration. Gardiner's opposition to almost every proposal put forward by the Bennett government quickly became a damaging factor for the Conservative administration. The premier no longer kept the dominion-provincial disputes out of the public's view as he had done when King was prime minister. Gardiner attempted to highlight his opposition to the already increasingly unpopular federal government, and thereby increase the popularity of his own administration and the national Liberal party.

Gardiner's extensive opposition to the Bennett government enhanced the development of the premier's reputation as a provincial rightist. Gardiner's partisanship and political opportunism was mistakenly viewed as the actions of a provincial rightist. His opposition to Ottawa was viewed by the Saskatchewan populace as an attempt to protect the constitutional rights of the province. In 1935, for example, W.A. Gordon, the dominion minister of agriculture, announced that the drought areas in the three Prairie provinces would be divided into the areas of ranching, wheat, and mixed farming. They were to be administered by the federal department of agriculture. When Gardiner heard of this proposal he was totally opposed. He based his opposition to the dominion initiative by arguing

that the dominion government was attempting to usurp the constitutional powers of the provinces by ignoring the provincial departments of agriculture.¹⁷ Ironically it would be Gardiner who would later advocate a similar position after he had entered the Liberal federal government. His opposition to the proposal was based entirely on partisan grounds.

The struggle over dominion relief support gave the Bennett and Gardiner administrations the opportunity to demonstrate their partisanship. At the Dominion-Provincial Conference of 1934 Bennett lectured the provinces on their fiscal mismanagement and threatened to cut their relief support. Dominion aid was reduced by twenty percent overall, but the three Liberal provinces of Ontario, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan suffered the largest cuts.¹⁸ In the correspondence between the dominion and province, Gardiner continuously attacked the national government for basing its Saskatchewan policy decisions on partisanship. In April 1935, Gardiner wrote to W.A. Gordon:

...but since you are approaching a Federal election and have held down your position in Ottawa to the last moment which is allowed you under the Constitution of this country, you are able to think in no other means that those which are political, and therefore are making use of your position to send out in the name of the Government of Canada letters written purely for political purposes under the guise of attempting to take care of those in need of this province.¹⁹

The dominion government responded in like measure, accusing Gardiner of being equally partisan in his relations with Ottawa. This was demonstrated when Bennett saw Gardiner as attempting to take the credit for federal relief funding:

Your Province has unfortunately been passing through unprecedented trouble and difficulties, so great indeed that one would anticipate that matters political could at least for the time being be forgotten.²⁰

Partisan relations between the dominion and province became strained to the point that Ottawa threatened to discontinue Saskatchewan's relief assistance. Gordon informed Gardiner that "the administration of relief disbursements in Saskatchewan has been far from satisfactory." The federal minister of agriculture called Gardiner's proposed arrangement for handling the relief problem in the drought areas, "totally uncommendable" and "rendered more inefficient by failure to exercise adequate inspection and control."²¹

Besides conflict over relief expenditures, the issue that served to secure Gardiner's reputation as a provincial rightist during his second term as premier was the 1935 On-To-Ottawa Trek. Gardiner's antagonism toward Bennett was displayed in its most hostile form when the premier attempted to cause havoc for the dominion government by directly and publically opposing the prime minister on the issue. Once again, Gardiner's partisan opposition was

mistakenly perceived as a provincial rightist sentiment. As with the natural resource issue, Gardiner did not make an effort to dispel the association but rather profited from the political benefits that it offered.

Gardiner was not the first premier to grapple with Bennett on the issue. Signs of dominion-provincial conflict first emerged between Bennett and the Liberal premier of British Columbia, T.D. Pattullo, when the premier declared that the government at Ottawa was responsible for the care of single homeless men. The situation escalated on April 4, 1935, when some 1500 relief camp workers in British Columbia struck their camps and moved into Vancouver in an attempt to gain an audience for their particular complaints. The B.C. provincial government, when interviewed by a delegation of strikers on April 12 1935, informed the men that it was impossible to grant their demands without federal assistance.²²

The strike leaders realized that the provincial governments had no resources to finance their demands. The Vancouver strike was receiving popular support but with little hope of winning their concessions, the strikers decided that their demands could only be dealt with by Ottawa. The strikers consequently boarded freight trains and set out for Ottawa to take their grievances directly to Bennett.

Throughout the On-To-Ottawa Trek, dominion officials continued to insist that the maintenance of law and order was a provincial responsibility. They argued that the dominion was prepared to intervene in provincial jurisdiction only if requested to do so by the province concerned. Bennett announced in the House of Commons on June 7, the day the men arrived in Calgary, that the railway companies had not requested assistance to stop the trespassers, but if they did, and the provincial authorities requested aid, the dominion would act. Bennett emphasized the responsibility of the provinces:

We are not in a position to render any assistance until some complaint is made, and that matter...is one that rests in its inception and its carrying forward with the provincial authorities.²³

This position gradually changed as the strikers continued their movement eastward. Bennett initially believed that the regional protest would lose force and eventually dwindle away. He underestimated the Prairie discontent that supported the Trek and the principles it represented. The federal government became increasingly apprehensive when the Trek moved through British Columbia and Alberta. Rather than losing momentum, the movement became increasingly popular. As the protestors approached Regina, Bennett realized that the movement was not likely to disperse before it entered the traditionally radical province of Manitoba. Bennett had to act quickly and decided that Saskatchewan--

with its considerable Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment, its location as the last province before Manitoba, its small capital city, its Liberal provincial administration, and its extremely vociferous and politically troublesome premier-- was the place to halt the Trek.

Gardiner's opposition to Bennett was reflected in the bitter disputes that raged between the two leaders throughout the three months of the strike and the Trek. The Saskatchewan Premier was a vocal opponent of Bennett and did not hesitate to display his quarrel before the public. Partisanship overrode all other concerns as Gardiner inevitably opposed Bennett on every facet of the problem. In opposing Bennett, Gardiner aligned himself solidly alongside the Prairie provinces and the striking men. The population of the Prairies was ripe for receiving the trekkers, and the premier recognized the political benefits that this stance could offer. The destitution of the farmers and working people instilled such an animosity toward the Bennett government that the administration became the most unpopular in living memory. Twenty per cent of Regina's population was on relief, and per capita income from 1930 to 1935 had dropped seventy-two per cent. Unemployment was an abiding concern.²⁴ Gardiner was in a strong position provincially due to the recent obliteration of the provincial Conservatives as a political force.²⁵ He

used this position of strength to lead the province against the intentions of the dominion.

The provincial premiers of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan demanded that the dominion government take action to halt the movement before the trekkers moved through their own province. Once the provincial governments were confronted by the trekkers, their chief concern became the speedy exit of the men with as little trouble as possible.²⁶ When the Trek entered Saskatchewan, Gardiner decided that the best solution was not to deal with Bennett and the dominion government, but to facilitate the movement of the trekkers through the province as quickly as possible. His partisanship prevented him from attempting to deal with the Conservative prime minister. If the Liberal administration of King had been in office this would not have been the case.

In June 1935, Gardiner decided that the men would be treated as transients and provided with food and shelter. The province would assume the cost. Everything was in place to have the protestors pass smoothly through Saskatchewan, when two days before their arrival at Regina, the federal government announced that the Ottawa-destined movement would go no further.²⁷ Prime Minister Bennett had been surprised by the Prairie provinces' desire to push the transients through their area, without requesting Ottawa's assistance. The provinces' intention to allow the trekkers through

became a source of anxiety for Bennett. The Trek was gathering public momentum as it moved East, and there was no sign that it would come to an end before it reached its destination. The situation became serious enough that the national government planned to put an end to it. Events surrounding the trekkers stay in Calgary were probably what finally convinced Bennett and his ministers that the Trek was not going to disintegrate on its own accord. The credibility of Bennett's government was being questioned, and its popularity was at an all time low. On June 11, while the trekkers were still in Medicine Hat, the dominion decided to stop the movement when it reached Regina. This decision was reached through no consultation with Gardiner, who was in direct opposition to the move. The premier was first informed of the dominion's intention by the assistant commissioner of the RCMP rather than a representative of the federal government.²⁸

The dominion justified its decision by claiming that it was responding to a request from the railways to prevent trespassing on their trains. The Railway Act was under federal jurisdiction, and the dominion government claimed to be acting within its legal limits. While the trekkers were in Saskatchewan, Bennett began organizing the halting and disbandment of the movement. At the same time he developed a strategy that would be used to deal with Gardiner's administration. The prime minister planned to argue the

federal legitimacy of assisting the railways. He hoped that this argument would outmanoeuvre the Saskatchewan premier's anticipated response that the maintenance of law and order was a provincial responsibility.²⁹

Gardiner reacted immediately and vehemently to the dominion government's intentions to prevent the trekkers from continuing eastward. The tone of the correspondence between the premier and the prime minister had previously been colored by the politicians' political stripes, but after June 11 exchanges became outrightly hostile. Gardiner perceived Bennett's intention to halt the Trek in his province as based solely on political motives. He was not ideologically opposed to the federal intervention into provincial jurisdiction. Rather he saw the move in partisan terms; it was as an obvious attempt to embarrass the Liberal administration that had been making political gains by assisting the popularly backed trekkers. The fact that the movement was being stopped, not only in Saskatchewan, but without his prior knowledge, offered Gardiner an additional reason to vent his fury against the dominion government. The provincial opposition to the dominion's actions was argued publically on constitutional grounds. The premier informed Ottawa that

we protest your action as being unconstitutional and would state that your lack of action before these men left British Columbia and every action you or the railway have taken since these men left British Columbia to bring two forces to grips in

Regina was bound to produce a riot in Saskatchewan if the present orders are carried out.

Gardiner wrote that he strongly protested what he called "this flaunting of the constitutional rights of the province."³⁰

When the federal minister of railways, R.J. Manion, met with Gardiner to discuss the dilemma he was shocked by the premier's partisan hostility toward the federal government and his expressed intention not to cooperate with Ottawa:

Mr. Gardiner took the attitude...the Ottawa Government was responsible for whatever trouble might arise here in Saskatchewan...they felt we had no right to stage the affair in Regina or in Saskatchewan, they taking the attitude that the movement should have been stopped either in British Columbia or Calgary or some place else...Mr. Gardiner was very resentful of the actions of Ottawa in giving orders to Police in Saskatchewan without request from him, and he also resented the fact that he had not been communicated with in regard to our coming here...his whole attitude was one of antagonism to anything that the Ottawa Government had done, and he took the position of not cooperating to any extent whatsoever.

Manion went on to describe Gardiner's attitude toward Ottawa as "very ugly and anything but helpful."³¹

To maintain his provincial popularity, Gardiner employed constitutional arguments to oppose the prime minister. As Bennett had expected, the Saskatchewan premier took the position that the maintenance of law and order was within provincial jurisdiction and, as a result, Ottawa had undermined the inherent rights of the province by taking control of the police force. He argued that the trekkers

had been allowed to enter his province peacefully and should be allowed to leave in the same fashion. By the terms of the agreement of 1928, the power to police the province was a provincial responsibility. The police were to act under the instructions of the provincial attorney general and not dominion officials. If the province needed assistance, Gardiner claimed that he would ask for it.³² Gardiner's stance was mistaken as that of a defender of provincial rights and was widely supported throughout Saskatchewan. The populace assumed that the same political leader who had fought Ottawa over the return of the natural resources was now prepared to do battle with the dominion government to resist the dominion encroachment of provincial powers. On June 27, Gardiner wrote a very sarcastic letter to the prime minister:

Throughout the whole course of this matter your government has acted without our knowledge, consent or concurrence and took complete charge of our police force and assumed the unquestionable functions of a provincial government. You and you alone have prevented this government from fulfilling our constitutional responsibilities. If you now desire to publicly withdraw from that position, and place us where we can assume our constitutional obligations, kindly wire us accordingly.³³

On June 17, the Saskatchewan premier presented a series of statements to the press, including the actual correspondence that was being carried on between the province and the dominion. Gardiner laid his position

before the public to discredit the Bennett administration and improve the political harvests from his apparent defense of provincial rights. In his partisan zeal to ensure that the public realized that it was the Bennett government which had halted the Trek, the premier declared that

we consider the efforts being made from outside to create trouble in the midst of this province, the most diabolical conspiracy ever perpetrated upon the people of any province or city.

The following day he continued his verbal attacks:

The federal government attempted to interfere with the administration of Justice...at time and under circumstances which would indicate that they were carrying out a planned scheme which could only result in trouble between two outside forces coming to a head in Saskatchewan at the city of Regina.³⁴

The dominion and province clashed again on June 26 when the province issued permits allowing truck owners to carry trekkers to the Manitoba border. Although highways fell under provincial jurisdiction, the trucks were intercepted and impounded.³⁵ The incident proved to Gardiner that the federal authorities had taken it upon themselves to instruct the RCMP in the province's ordinary criminal law, and not merely in matters falling under the Railway Act.

The inevitable clash between the strikers and authorities occurred in the form of the Regina Riot on July 1, 1935. Immediately after the incident, Gardiner continued his obstinate efforts to reassert provincial control of the situation by assuming the task of dispersing the trekkers.

The premier demanded to know what the dominion government's intentions were in regard to the men, but then arranged for their disbandment without awaiting a response.³⁶ Gardiner regained official control of the situation when Bennett wired that he had "no intention of interfering with any action you may decide to take..."³⁷

Throughout the Trek, Gardiner maintained his correspondence with Mackenzie King and received the federal leader's constant advice. The cooperation between the two politicians worked in two ways. While Gardiner was able to benefit from King's advice, the Liberal leader of the opposition was able to employ the extensive and inclusive Gardiner-Bennett correspondence that the premier had provided him to attack Bennett's policies and justifications.

The On-To-Ottawa Trek highlighted and intensified the extreme partisan antagonism that existed between the Gardiner and Bennett administrations. The incident revealed the character of Gardiner's provincial relations with a federal administration that was not of the same political brand. By the time the Trek entered Saskatchewan, relations between the two levels of government had deteriorated to the point that no party was able to deal constructively with the situation. Gardiner's attitudes toward the role of the dominion government had become stronger due to the Depression experience, but he was still antagonistic toward

the federal Conservative government. Partisanship and a political sensitivity to the situation were undoubtedly the main obstacles between the achievement of a smooth dominion-provincial rapport, and like the natural resource transfer, they guided Gardiner's relations with the dominion authority. Whereas during the resource issue these conditions had produced a harmonious dominion-provincial relationship between Saskatchewan and Ottawa, during the Trek issue they produced a relationship filled with controversy. Gardiner's actions during the Trek were motivated totally by partisan intentions. The constitutional arguments put forward in support of provincial rights were used by Gardiner as a justification for opposing Bennett.

James Gardiner's two terms as premier created the lasting impression that he was a provincial rightist. In both the resource transfer and the On-To-Ottawa Trek, the Saskatchewan premier was able to maintain his loyalty to the Liberal cause, the Liberal party, the national Liberal leader and to himself. The fact that Gardiner was mistakenly portrayed in the eye of the public is essential to understanding and explaining his eventual move to the federal scene and his resulting policy initiatives. Otherwise James Gardiner's ideas on dominion-provincial relations can quickly become a series of misleading inconsistencies.

Endnotes

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Chapter Three THE MOVE TO THE FEDERAL CABINET

James Gardiner's move to the federal cabinet in 1935 demonstrated his national Liberal convictions. The discussions over a cabinet portfolio with Prime Minister King displayed several important and revealing aspects of Gardiner's political thought. They proved that he still maintained his well established loyalties. Moreover, they demonstrated the fact that Gardiner was not a western regionalist. While Mackenzie King understood that the public perception of Gardiner as a provincial rightist was a mistake, he did believe that Gardiner was attached distinctly to the western region. King was anxious to have Gardiner in the dominion cabinet as his western lieutenant and simply concluded that the Saskatchewan premier would be happy with one of the traditional western portfolios. The cabinet discussions showed, however, that Gardiner's overall political philosophy had even eluded King. The prime minister had recognized Gardiner's loyalty to Liberalism, the federal Liberal leader, and to his own political fortunes, but had failed to see his loyalty to a national Liberal party. Once Gardiner's provincial career was behind him, he was intent on pursuing openly his political goals and ambitions. He saw a dominion cabinet post as a promotion and possessed ambitions and goals that went beyond the bounds of what King was willing to offer. The premier

wanted a major portfolio and did not see any problem in taking responsibility for a department that was not essentially western in focus. Gardiner's political beliefs were distinctly national in sway and are essential in an overall understanding of the politician's view toward dominion-provincial relations.

Mackenzie King could not help but be impressed by Gardiner. His provincial career had proven that his loyalties to Liberalism and the national Liberal leader were unquestioned. The premier had followed King during the natural resources question. He dealt a crushing defeat to Anderson's provincial Conservatives, and his constant efforts to undermine the Bennett administration had contributed to the Conservatives' extreme unpopularity.

The organizational talents of the 'Gardiner Machine' were offered to Mackenzie King and the federal Liberals for the 1935 general election. The Saskatchewan premier continued his established trend of actively participating in dominion elections. Once again he demonstrated the fact that he saw no distinction between the provincial and dominion wings of the Liberal party. The provincial administrations were subordinate to the federal organization and were expected to contribute to the success of the dominion party.

King greatly admired Gardiner's organizational skills and recognized that his unflinching loyalty would always be an asset. He wrote in his diary on June 10, 1935:

With both Ralston and Dunning dropping out, we will be considerably handicapped. However, Dunning spoke of Gardiner as one who would expect to come in, and would be most helpful, and as one who had greatly improved as a result of a period of opposition. It may be that Gardiner will be just as good as Dunning, and probably will demand a larger following. Moreover, there will be no question in the mind of anyone as to his loyalty in all directions.¹

The prime minister had temporarily passed over Gardiner for a cabinet position in 1926 but he was intent on bringing him to Ottawa in 1935. Saskatchewan politicians had a reputation for their loyalty to Ottawa and were often called upon to join the federal cabinet. When King looked to the western Liberal stronghold of Saskatchewan after the 1925 general election, he noted Gardiner to be his second choice for a cabinet portfolio after Dunning. Premier Dunning had received most of the credit for the Liberal electoral success in Saskatchewan but King recognized that it was to Gardiner that the party owed its organizational strength. Mackenzie King was an avid complainer about the lack of organization in the federal party and was greatly impressed by Gardiner's potential as a national minister. Gardiner was also proving to be a likely western representative who could be relied upon to remain loyal to the party and its leader. Mackenzie King's early years in politics had shown

him the importance of maintaining party unity. To achieve a sense of unity, Canada's diverse regions had to be represented in the federal cabinet. Regional representatives were carefully chosen to maintain a strong hold on their particular region. King recognized Gardiner's potential as a regional representative and immediately employed his understanding and growing influence in the West. Following the general election of 1925, Gardiner was invited to Ottawa where he played an impressive role in the formation of the federal cabinet. The prime minister began relying quite heavily on Gardiner's analysis of the western situation. In King's mind Gardiner became distinctly attached to the western region, and he assumed that this was where the Saskatchewan politician's ambitions inevitably lay.

In 1925 King decided that it would be profitable for Gardiner to remain at the provincial level because of the animosity that existed between him and Dunning. Both men had ambitions for a dominion cabinet position and were pragmatic politicians who had an eye for their own political fortune. This caused a competitive element to enter their relations. With growing concern and jealousy, Dunning observed Gardiner's rapid rise in political popularity and his able manipulation of the party organization. Dunning wanted Gardiner to remain in the provincial field and thereby eliminate potential competition for the role of the

national western representative. Regardless of Dunning's intentions, Gardiner's first term as premier led King to believe that Gardiner was devoted wholeheartedly to the West. The prime minister decided that when the time was right, the premier would replace Dunning as the western representative for the dominion government. King recorded his intention of using Gardiner in the West when the premier visited Ottawa in March, 1928:

Tonight I had Gardiner, premier of Sask...to dinner at country club...I advocated very strongly cooperation & fusion...both federally and provincially & spoke of need of solid Liberal support from West next session.²

As early as 1925 Gardiner had displayed his national sentiments by showing a keen interest in a possible federal cabinet position. In personal discussions between King and Gardiner, the then minister of highways demonstrated an interest in the cabinet, where "in the Federal field bossing the organization of the three[Prairie] Provinces he would be happy."³ It was Gardiner's unfaltering political convictions and his animosity toward Dunning that caused King to keep him temporarily at the provincial level. King greatly admired Gardiner's political loyalties but believed that at times of political crisis even stalwart principles such as these must be sacrificed. One such example was the divisive threat created by the Progressives. Unlike Gardiner, Dunning had supported King's policy with the

Progressives. As a result, Dunning was chosen for the federal cabinet in 1925 while Gardiner was left to control the provincial scene. The prime minister made certain that he consoled Gardiner privately, promising that he would be brought into the government later, even if Dunning objected. It was clear to both King and Gardiner that his political career was going to lead him to the national realm. King viewed Gardiner as an obvious western representative for the cabinet. Gardiner possessed a strong western background and was extremely knowledgeable about the main western industry, agriculture. During his two terms as premier, Gardiner had seemed to demonstrate a strong emotional attachment to the region. He was seen as a regional leader who had influence in the other western provinces as demonstrated by the leading role that he played in the resources transfer and the opposition to Bennett during the On-to-Ottawa Trek. The public and the media were convinced that the premier was a defender of western interests. King knew that the provincial rightist label was not appropriate for Gardiner but he did want to believe that the premier was a regionalist.

Choices for western representation in the cabinet were limited for King in 1935. The three obvious candidates all posed individual problems. King had little liking for Thomas Crerar, who had previously been the leader of the Manitoba Progressives. Dunning's health and career were

uncertain, and the loyal but elderly W.R. Motherwell was close to retirement. The Depression had served to aggravate the regional dissent of the West, and King needed a strong western representative to diffuse the growing western alienation and resentment that was being directed at Ottawa. The consequences of not having influential western representation had been demonstrated by Bennett's disastrous showing at the western polls. King viewed Gardiner as the key western Liberal at the time of the 1935 election who was essential in maintaining the party's hold on the region.

The Saskatchewan premier did not intend on disappointing his chief by refusing a federal cabinet position. Gardiner had intended on entering the national realm since the beginning of his political career. This intention was amply demonstrated by his correspondence with King in 1926 and fit in with his national Liberal views. Because the provincial party was subordinate to the federal, the move to Ottawa would be a promotion in careers. A cabinet position would allow Gardiner a better opportunity to further his goals and ambitions for the Liberal party.

Gardiner's shift to the dominion cabinet was by no means perceived as an abandonment of the province by the Saskatchewan populace nor did it destroy his image as the defender of the province. Instead the people viewed it as a promotion to a new position that would entail even greater influence and prestige than the provincial premiership.

Saskatchewan politicians had established a tradition of making the eventual move to the national scene. Gardiner was following the immediate path of his predecessor, Charles Dunning, who had made a political name for himself in the province and then moved on to the federal cabinet as the next logical step. The western populace believed that as the defender of the province, Gardiner would be able to produce even greater benefits from the federal level where he would hold an even more powerful and influential position. His provincial bias would not be forgotten and would even translate into a general concern for the western region. From this elevated position, Gardiner would continue to protect the interests of the province. He was believed to be the champion of provincial rights and had served his position as premier well. As a former provincial leader he was expected to have a sensitivity to western interests and concerns. The move from the provincial rightist premier to the regionalist federal cabinet minister was therefore seen to be logical.

For Saskatchewan people agriculture was the natural portfolio for Gardiner. His experience and demonstrated concern for the West, combined with the fact that agriculture was traditionally a western portfolio, made this conclusion valid. On October 22, 1935, the Prince Albert Herald accepted Gardiner's move to the federal cabinet as beneficial for the region:

[Gardiner] will be a valuable spokesman for the West in federal circles because of his intimate knowledge of the problems of western agriculture, being himself a practical farmer.

Saskatchewan will regret Mr. Gardiner's going, but there is some consolation in the fact that his entry into the larger political sphere will give the west such an ardent crusader in federal government.⁴

Other newspapers agreed that Gardiner's new post as agriculture minister would be beneficial for the region as a whole. It was a natural, logical, and expected move.

What the public failed to learn, however, was that the agriculture portfolio was not Gardiner's first choice. He did not possess the unbreakable attachment to the western region that the public believed he did. Just as their perception of the premier as an ardent defender of provincial rights was a false perception based on their lack of understanding of Gardiner's political beliefs and motives, their view of the premier as dedicated solely to the West and agriculture was also a misconception.

The prime minister also perceived no problem in outfitting Gardiner with a cabinet position. Mackenzie King was intent on securing Gardiner for his cabinet and was confident that the premier would accept any position without posing any problems. After all, Gardiner was noted for his ability to follow the decision of his prime minister without causing too much trouble. King believed that Gardiner's attachment to the West would cause him to desire a western portfolio. This perceived attachment furthered the prime

minister's belief that he would have no difficulties in having Gardiner accept a suitable portfolio. The prime minister confided to his diary on July 31, 1934:

"I told him[Gardiner] I regarded him as the one with whom I wished most to share confidence re Saskatchewan."⁵ He described the premier as

the best solution to Saskatchewan representation, as Gardiner is easily the best informed and ablest of the Liberals in that Province. He would be a real strength to me & his claim to recognition could not be disputed.⁶

The prime minister did not stop to think that Gardiner might have ambitions and objectives that were outside of the position of western representative. King needed Gardiner to fill this role, and his own desires did not allow him to anticipate any dissenting views from Gardiner. The lack of possible western cabinet ministers strengthened the prime minister's convictions that Gardiner was essential for his government and blinded him to any personal wishes that the premier may have possessed. As far as King was concerned, with his own seat in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan "would have the satisfaction of having both the provincial and the Dominion Premiers as its representatives." Gardiner became the key needed to cement cabinet representation from the West. King noted that "if we had Dunning, Gardiner and Crerar in the Government, I should feel we had the farming interests pretty safely protected."⁷

The premier's move to the federal cabinet was complicated by more than just the choice of possible portfolios. The Gardiner-Dunning antagonism that emerged during the cabinet negotiations created further problems for King and served to reflect Gardiner's political convictions. Gardiner had nothing but distaste for Dunning. His experience in Saskatchewan had shown that he was unable to get along with the present minister of finance. This personal antagonism was based on competition between the two men, as well as what Gardiner perceived to be Dunning's utter lack of political scruples. In a conversation with King, Gardiner described Dunning as a man who

had always taken the easy course, had got in in by-elections, and had been pretty selfish generally; that in his last campaign an effort had been made to bring him in as a saviour of the situation in western Canada, when the battle itself had been won; that Dunning always wanted to see how things were going to go before he would take any part. [Gardiner] spoke of him as not being too loyal, except to his own interests. [Gardiner] mentioned that [Dunning] had himself undertaken to secure financial help for some of the candidates in the West, without telling him (Gardiner) of it. This was undoubtedly to have a string on these men. [Gardiner] referred to different articles in the press, which he thought had been inspired.⁸

In his discussions with King over joining the dominion cabinet, Gardiner informed the prime minister that "he must fight with his back to the wall to keep Dunning out, if that were possible."⁹ The last part of Gardiner's statement

indicated that he was willing to compromise his own personal interests if King so willed it.

King responded to Gardiner's strong hostility toward Dunning and the threat it posed to his entrance into the cabinet by playing on the premier's perceived regionalism. King assumed that Gardiner would give in to the temptation of having sole control of the western region if it was promised that Dunning would have to take a seat in the East. The prime minister realized that Dunning's political reputation was not as distinctly regional as was Gardiner's:

I tried to ease Gardiner's mind by saying that, if [Dunning] were to be considered at all it would be on the understanding that he should find a seat in eastern Canada, not in the west, that so far as the west was concerned, the field would be left clear to himself.¹⁰

These temptations were based on King's firm belief that Gardiner was loyal to the West.

If there was to be a choice made between Gardiner and Dunning, Prime Minister King knew what the result would be. Dunning was a valuable asset to the cabinet as the minister of finance but he himself stated that his political career was uncertain, and he did not possess the same value as a possible regional lieutenant as Gardiner. Both King and his most able Quebec representative, Ernest Lapointe, agreed that Gardiner was justified in his feelings toward Dunning. He was not as loyal to King as Gardiner, and they believed that Dunning had been selfish and ambitious. They decided

that "if Gardiner held out we would have to accept his views and not seek further to secure Dunning."¹¹

The Gardiner-Dunning issue demonstrated the hierarchial order of Gardiner's national Liberal loyalties. Gardiner proved that his loyalty to the national Liberal party outweighed any ambition that he may have entertained to establish a powerbase in the western region, and that his loyalty to the national Liberal leader outweighed his own personal interests. Gardiner eventually acquiesced to the wishes of King but not for the reasons that the prime minister expected. The temptations of western regional power that King was offering were strong inducements, but Gardiner's loyalty to the national Liberal leader and the national Liberal party were stronger than his loyalty to his own political fortunes. The Saskatchewan premier noted King's strong convictions about Dunning's influence in the cabinet. The prime minister recorded in his diary: "Gardiner said that, feeling as I did, he naturally would not raise any objection to Dunning coming into the Government."¹²

Gardiner's national Liberal views were further displayed when it came time to negotiate for the actual cabinet portfolio. Despite the assumptions of both the Saskatchewan populace and the prime minister that Gardiner would be intent on securing the agriculture portfolio and thereby maintaining his position as defender of Saskatchewan and the

western region, the premier's first choice for a portfolio was what Prime Minister King saw as the traditionally eastern-based position as minister of finance. When King began to question Gardiner on his ministerial intentions, the Saskatchewan premier stated "that he was more interested in financial matters than in agriculture, or any other matters of the kind."¹³ The prime minister suggested the possibility of national revenue which had to do with tariff regulations, customs and excise, income tax, and taxation generally. The other possibility that King brought forward was a consolidation of portfolios to be known as immigration and resources, which included immigration, colonization, lands, forest, mines, Indians, and territories. King was still under the impression that Gardiner would be inclined to hold a position from which he could defend the interests of his region. He described the combined portfolio to Gardiner as one which "covered, in the main, all matters of most concern to western Canada." Gardiner was not interested in the western-based cabinet portfolios and continued to push for a position "having to do with finances." King slowly came to realize that the premier was willing to sacrifice the leading position in the West to gain a portfolio that obviously was of more personal interest and contained more influence in the dominion. The perception of Gardiner as the idealistic defender of Saskatchewan and the western region was obviously not

accurate. The prime minister noted that after he "talked the matter over further with Gardiner," he "saw more clearly what was in his mind, which if possible, is to secure the position of Minister of Finance himself."

Once King realized Gardiner's intentions, he set about searching for methods to entice and coerce the premier into accepting the portfolio of agriculture and the position of federal western representative. The prime minister had waited since 1926 for the opportunity to bring Gardiner into the cabinet and employ his political loyalties and talents for the national party. His need of a western lieutenant, together with Gardiner's western popularity, made King determined to obtain Gardiner for the agriculture portfolio. He was not about to allow the premier to take an eastern-oriented position. The debt situation in western Canada following the Depression may have provided some justification for having a westerner as minister of finance, but King had decided that the position was to be an eastern portfolio. The nation's largest and most influential financial interests were based in the East. Gardiner's value could be best exploited by using his established reputation as a western provincial rightist and Prairie regionalist.

Another reason that King did not wish to have Gardiner as minister of finance was the fact that the prime minister did not believe the western politician to have the required

reputation in business. King did not doubt that Gardiner had "as much ability in financial matters as Dunning," and was well aware that the premier had demonstrated his financial skill in the party organization of his province. Gardiner had displayed his talent as provincial treasurer under Dunning and during his premiership had "won the confidence of the financial men in Toronto and Montreal." The problem for King, though, was that Gardiner "was not yet known as a financial man by the country." Instead, Gardiner's reputation had been established as the 'champion of the province', the 'farming premier', and the 'western spokesman'. The prime minister realized that this reputation caused the country to view Gardiner perpetually as a regionally biased politician. The finance portfolio was particularly reliant on the support of eastern financial interests. Any actions that Gardiner would take as minister of finance would have to be agreeable to eastern Canada. On the other hand, his established western reputation would lead the Prairie provinces to expect certain benefits from having Gardiner as minister of finance. Because of these western expectations, he would be

in the very embarrassing position of dealing with the several provinces of financial readjustments; that, doubtless, as premier of the province of Saskatchewan he had been taking a stand for the province and would be expected to go as far as he could in that direction; whereas as a federal minister, he would have a different kind of obligation to the Dominion; that one of the first questions that would come up would be Alberta's

desire for a loan, and there he would be embarrassed as being the minister for Western Canada.¹⁴

Dunning also remained an important factor in the cabinet negotiations. There was still a good chance that he would be willing to enter the cabinet. If this was the case, he would expect to resume the finance portfolio. Dunning's previous handling of this cabinet position was not forgotten by King. Dunning had been a federal representative since 1926 and had made an influential name for himself. He had the confidence of eastern business interests and did not possess the same distinctly regional reputation that Gardiner did. King noted that "the public would feel that he[Dunning] was better qualified for the finance portfolio than Gardiner was."¹⁵

Prime Minister King was forced to tempt Gardiner into accepting a western portfolio by reminding him of the amount of power he would have there. It was pointed out to the Saskatchewan politician that all the work of the finance department was centered in Ottawa. If he accepted a western-based cabinet position the premier was promised the position as "master of an empire...while Dunning would be in the east." At least in the West, Gardiner had already created an organization and reputation with which he could work. King made it clear that the situation in the East was one with little patronage and one which would place him once again in competition with Dunning, as well as other powerful

ministers. In fact, both King and Lapointe promised Gardiner to use their influence and stand behind him as the master of western affairs.¹⁶

These inducements slowly began to have an effect on Gardiner by playing on his loyalty to the national leader and his own political fortunes. He was intent on moving to the federal scene even if it meant accepting a portfolio that was not his first choice. King had always planned on having Gardiner as minister of agriculture but had not anticipated the premier's desire to obtain the portfolio of finance. Gardiner was prepared to accept agriculture if he could not get finance. The most important thing was the promotion to the dominion cabinet. By the end of his discussions with the prime minister, Gardiner began to realize that he was going to be coerced into accepting the agriculture portfolio. If this was to be his fate, Gardiner was determined to work for other political benefits that could be gained out of this position. King, meanwhile, was still uncertain if his inducements had worked so he continued in his efforts. On October 21, 1935, the prime minister contacted Crerar and asked him if he "had any way of causing Gardiner to take Agriculture." Crerar suggested calling on the aged but influential Motherwell to see what kind of pressure he could exert on Gardiner. Motherwell was greatly respected by the premier, and his loyalty to the western region was unquestioned. Motherwell's main concern

was that if Gardiner accepted an eastern portfolio, the agriculture position would also fall into eastern hands due to the lack of potential western representatives. For a true western regionalist, this was unthinkable.

Motherwell, for his part, was determined to force Gardiner into accepting agriculture. He perceived Gardiner's desire for an eastern portfolio as a sacrificing of western agricultural interests. Motherwell consequently made it clear to Gardiner that he would not be so quick to give the premier his seat in the dominion parliament as had been planned

Motherwell said if Gardiner was going to leave the grain business to the eastern people, there would be no advantage in his letting Gardiner have his seat.

This new pressure on the premier further deflated Gardiner's hopes of obtaining the cabinet position of his choice. Because the premier was counting on taking over Motherwell's federal seat, the agriculture portfolio became an even greater certainty. Motherwell's threat hinged around not only Gardiner accepting the agriculture position, but also around the premier using the post to have the Board of Grain Commissioners transferred to the department of agriculture. Motherwell believed that if Gardiner became the minister of agriculture, this transfer would have a better chance of taking place, and western farmers would benefit. In this matter, Motherwell represented a true western regionalist.

Unlike Gardiner, his main concerns centered on the region before the dominion.

On October 22, Gardiner made a last effort to gain a more powerful portfolio than agriculture and somehow tie it in with King's desire to have him remain as the western representative. Gardiner saw a possible solution in having the portfolio of trade and commerce moved into the western sphere. He wrote to King:

The more I think of it the more I am convinced that Trade and Commerce would please our province best in the view of the fact that wheat is handled there.¹⁷

Gardiner suggested to King that if he could have Trade and Commerce, the transfer of the Board of Grain Commissioners to this department could be accomplished and Motherwell would probably be satisfied. He would be able to have Motherwell's seat and still serve as the western representative. King made it clear, however, that this was not possible. The department of trade and commerce was essential for Ontario representation in the cabinet, while agriculture and natural resources were for the western provinces. The choice for Gardiner therefore came down to the two western positions in order that King could maintain him as the western lieutenant. The premier made it clear that the natural resources portfolio was extremely undesirable. He referred to it "as a sort of glorified Parks commission." Gardiner felt insulted that he was being

labelled as a regionalist who was associated only with the West and agriculture. He sulkingly told King that "if they only wanted him for Agriculture in the east, they could not think much of him, or did not want him badly."¹⁸

At this point King's patience began to wear thin. He recognized Gardiner's political loyalties and merits but he had distinct plans and needs for the premier as the western regionalist. He had made some attempts to satisfy Gardiner's wishes but was becoming annoyed that he was not falling into line. King also came to recognize Gardiner's ambition. In his diary he wrote:

I picked up a copy of Animal Life...and felt it had something of significance for me. When I looked at it there was a picture of two peacocks on the limb of a tree, a large one and a small one. The magazine was for October, 1935...I said to myself-these two birds mean Crerar and Gardiner, with their respective vanities, each ambitious for high and higher office.¹⁹

The prime minister realized that he had perhaps overestimated the Saskatchewan politician's loyalty to his province and region and underestimated his loyalty to his own political fortunes. There was still no doubt as to his allegiance to the party and leader: "Gardiner's loyalty to Liberalism and myself, and his organizing ability are the strongest factors in his favour." But the cabinet negotiations clearly indicated that Gardiner was not a western regionalist of the same mould as Motherwell. His political convictions were actually similar to those of

King. The premier's ambitions seemed to be guiding his desires for a more influential portfolio, but in actuality this consideration fell behind his other established loyalties to the party and its leader. The prime minister was aggravated that Gardiner was resisting the portfolio of agriculture. King did not wish to have Gardiner gain too much influence and power and as a result he condemned Gardiner's wishes as mere selfishness and ambition. King wrote:

He[Gardiner] is not large-minded, and he has ambitions to be in touch with the big interests, and to create a machine. I can see this, and it is not in his favour.

He went even further in his criticism of Gardiner on October 21: "The truth is the little beggar is angling for one of the more important portfolios, and running the danger of getting out of his depth."²⁰

With the prime minister's firm demonstration that any possibility of further negotiations was finished, Gardiner was forced to acquiesce and accept his lot. His loyalty to the national Liberal leader was more important than his loyalty to himself. Gardiner informed King that he was in agreement with Motherwell over the transfer of the Board of Grain Commissioners, and requested the right to make an attempt to bring it over to the department of agriculture. King agreed that if Gardiner joined the cabinet as minister of agriculture, he would set up a committee of which the

minister of trade and commerce would be a chairman, and of which the minister of finance and agriculture would be members. The committee would consider all questions related to wheat.²¹

The cabinet discussions forced King to recognize Gardiner's true political convictions. The prime minister had not expected so much trouble in convincing Gardiner to accept agriculture or to remain attached to the western region. The premier was not a regional politician, but rather a national politician who had made his career by rising in the ranks of provincial politics. When the opportunity arose, he was certain to make the move to the federal realm. In the cabinet negotiations he attempted to gain as powerful a position as possible. Despite the inconveniences that Gardiner presented the prime minister, King had what he wanted in the end. As he reported in his diary: "Matters had now shaped themselves so that he, Gardiner, would have to take the Department of Agriculture."²²

Both King and Gardiner recognized the fact that it would be beneficial for the dominion government and Gardiner's interests in the West if the premier's true desires and ambitions were kept quiet. The popularity and influence of Gardiner in the West were well established, and any knowledge of his intentions to sacrifice these interests for a more powerful portfolio based in the East would have

been damaging for Gardiner and King. The prime minister needed Gardiner to maintain his reputation if he was to maintain his western influence for the dominion as the federal regional representative. If the Saskatchewan population knew that their provincial champion did not feel an unbreakable attachment to the Prairie region, his influence as the western representative would be weakened. This knowledge would also hurt Gardiner's own political popularity. King recorded the public course to be taken:

I...told him[Gardiner] that I would let it be known, in the statement I was issuing to the press, that I had asked him to take the Department of Agriculture, and was most anxious that he should; that I was keeping the portfolio unfilled, in order to give him a chance to confer with members of his government, and also with his following in the Legislature. He said if I would say that, it would help him very much.

On November 1, 1935, Gardiner was officially sworn in as minister of agriculture.²³

The discussions over Gardiner's entry into the dominion cabinet display a great deal about his true political beliefs and motives. While contradicting his popular, established provincial rightist and regionalist reputations, they were in line with the political loyalties that guided his career. The negotiations made King realize that Gardiner's beliefs and ambitions extended beyond the provincial and regional realms. Even the prime minister had been misled by the popular perception of Gardiner as the western champion, but during the cabinet negotiations with

the premier, King was forced to alter his views. Gardiner was clearly a national politician who was not attached to a distinct region of the nation. In fact any division within the country into regions was seen by Gardiner to be undesirable.

Gardiner's dominion-provincial views did not undergo any radical transformation during his career, nor were they based on mere political opportunism. The apparent inconsistency was caused by a public misperception of Gardiner's political philosophy. His political views were actually quite simple and very sound. The perception of him as a provincial rightist was an assumption based on his defence of the provincial realm as premier. The perception of him as a western regionalist came out of his strong federal role as regional advisor to King during his provincial career. Idealistically, Gardiner was neither a provincial rightist nor a regionalist, but practically he was both. His hierarchy of political allegiances placed him as loyal to the Liberal cause, to the party, to the leader, and to his own political fortunes. As premier, Gardiner did uphold his allegiances while in the meantime performing the duties that his office demanded. It was one thing for Gardiner to be perceived as a provincial rightist and regionalist, but it was quite another for him to believe the perception himself.

This then explains Gardiner's desire for a powerful cabinet position which did not necessitate a western regional portfolio. For Gardiner, any regional division within the Liberal party could only be divisive to the Liberal cause in general. If he was to maintain a western position, then he would use his abilities and resources to do all possible in aiding the party. If he undertook an eastern portfolio, he would work there with equal fortitude for the party. Gardiner's political background gave him considerable influence in the West but he did not feel any unbreakable loyalty to the region. While Motherwell displayed the sentiments of a true regionalist, Gardiner displayed the sentiments of a true Liberal nationalist.

An understanding of Gardiner's views toward the relationship between the provinces and dominion, and the Canadian political system in general, is required to appreciate his political actions. The apparent inconsistencies in Gardiner's policies did not end with his move to the federal cabinet but continued to emerge during his career as minister of agriculture, especially in relation to his land policy. His work with the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration seemed to contradict the work that he had done while premier of Saskatchewan. Once again, an understanding of his political philosophy demonstrates that his actions were in agreement with his beliefs.

Endnotes

1. University of Saskatchewan Archives (henceforth USA), William Lyon Mackenzie King Diaries, Transcript 94, June 10, 1935, p.412.

2. USA, King Diaries, Transcript 61, March 22-23, 1928, p. 5097.

3. H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: 1924-1932. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p.94.

4. Saskatchewan Archives Board(henceforth SAB), James G. Gardiner Papers, R-1022, Reel #43, Prince Albert Herald, October 22, 1935.

5. USA, King Diaries, Transcript 87, July 31, 1934, p.321.

6. Ibid., Transcript 95, July 23, 1935.

7. Ibid., Transcript 98, October 17, 1935.

8. Ibid., October 18, 1935.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., October 19, 1935.

13. Ibid., October 18, 1935.

14. Ibid., October 19, 1935.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. National Archives of Canada(henceforth NAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, J1 Series Primary Correspondence, Reel #2294, pp176509-176510, Gardiner to King, October 22, 1935.

18. USA, King Diaries, Transcript 98, October 21, 1935.

19. Ibid., October 23, 1935.

20. Ibid., October 21, 1935.

21. Nathaniel A. Benson, None of It Came Easy.
(Toronto: Burns and MacEachern, 1955), p.164.

22. USA, King Diaries, Transcript 98, October 22, 1935.

23. Ibid.

Chapter Four

THE PRAIRIE FARM REHABILITATION ACT

The assumption of the dominion agriculture portfolio finally provided Jimmy Gardiner with the opportunity to present his true views on dominion-provincial relations through his policy decisions and actions. No longer did his position demand that he pursue policies that were primarily provincial in orientation. Federal legislation such as the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (P.F.R.A.) served as an ideal vehicle to demonstrate his sentiments. Although first conceived by the Bennett government, the P.F.R.A. was embraced by Gardiner as the only workable solution to the problem of the Prairie drought. Gardiner's work turned the legislation into a programme that proved helpful in the rehabilitation of western agriculture. The minister was able to amend the P.F.R.A. to include dominion retention for the responsibility of provincial lands that had been recently gained through the natural resources transfer. Jurisdiction of these lands was taken over by the federal government for the purposes of rehabilitation. This repossession of jurisdiction was accomplished without considerable provincial opposition because of the desperate state of Prairie agriculture. Another important factor that allowed for the repossession was the faith the public placed

in Gardiner's past reputation as defender of the province and region. Gardiner's work with the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act demonstrated his national brand of politics and his views of the dominion-provincial relationship.

Upon entering Mackenzie King's cabinet and finally accepting the portfolio of agriculture, Gardiner settled into the position as the prime minister's regional lieutenant for the West. Gardiner took advantage of his western-based reputation which had been formed during his career as premier of Saskatchewan. He did not resist the transfer of his public reputation from the provincial to the national realm of politics. This transfer entailed the transformation in his reputation from a provincial rightist to a federal regionalist. The public believed that Gardiner's career promotion suggested a promotion in his political capabilities. At the provincial level he was capable of defending the interests of his province. At the national level he would be expected to defend the interests of his region. For Gardiner there was no inconsistency in this transformation of reputation from a provincialist to a regionalist. As premier of Saskatchewan, he had done all that was possible to protect the province's domain, without creating friction or challenging the Liberal dominion government. During Bennett's reign he had done everything possible to create friction and challenge the federal

administration. As a result, the public inevitably saw Gardiner as a provincial rightist. This perception did nothing to hamper the premier but in fact aided his political influence. He found it unnecessary to confirm or deny the reputation that was producing the rewards gained from his insightful political opportunism. As the western regional lieutenant it was his responsibility to present the interests and concerns of the Prairies to his dominion colleagues.

Gardiner had demonstrated his dominion-provincial views during the discussions over his cabinet position with Mackenzie King. He made it obvious that he did not wish to be attached to one particular region of the country. Gardiner's personal desires and ambition, however, were sacrificed in the interests of the prime minister's need for strong western representation. The portfolio of agriculture was the western-oriented position from which Gardiner could continue his influence in controlling the Prairie provinces for King and the Liberal party. The position would undoubtedly further his attachment to a distinct Canadian region rather than give him the national reputation he so desired. Gardiner wished to be viewed as a national Liberal politician who upheld the interests of his own region and worked relentlessly for his section of the nation, while still giving the federal party its primary importance. He wanted to be known as a politician who brought his region's

plight to the notice of the dominion government, making it their concern as well. The agriculture portfolio was not what the former premier would have most preferred, but it did offer him a politically sound and powerful position from which he could employ his substantial reputation and possibly increase its influence. It was also where he could be most beneficial to the party and the national leader.

At the federal level Gardiner was finally able to advocate and implement policies which accurately reflected his dominion-provincial views. Although the portfolio of agriculture was not his first choice for a national position, Gardiner worked to his potential to fulfill King's expectations. As with all his political appointments, Gardiner took his position seriously and employed all his possible resources to ensure that his duties were performed well. He brought the same determination that had been the hallmark of his provincial career to the dominion cabinet.

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was the policy that Gardiner became inextricably associated with during his tenure as minister of agriculture. It was also this national attempt to rehabilitate the economically depressed Prairie region by repossessing jurisdiction of the provincial lands that apparently created the most blatant inconsistency in Gardiner's dominion-provincial views. After having witnessed Premier Gardiner lead the battle to gain control of the province's lands in the 1920s, the

Prairie provinces were requested by the same politician to transfer control of these lands back to the dominion for the use of the P.F.R.A. in 1935. The minister of agriculture did not hesitate to usurp control of the public lands that he had so recently fought to secure for the western provinces. Gardiner never displayed any misgivings that he was betraying any previously established attitude toward dominion-provincial relations, yet there were certain aspects of the programme which directly contradicted his past policies. Once again the answer to Gardiner's puzzling dominion-provincial policies lay within the folds of his political thinking and can be found through an understanding of his political motives and objectives.

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was passed by the Bennett Conservative government in April of 1935, in the midst of western Canada's most devastating drought. Ottawa realized that some sort of aid to the agricultural industry was essential, and the P.F.R.A. became one of several new initiatives enacted by the Bennett government in the later part of its term in office. The legislation was a national initiative because the ecological crisis was proving that the provinces did not have the fiscal power to provide the resources that were necessary for the rehabilitation of the agricultural industry.

The P.F.R.A. legislation provided specifically for the "rehabilitation of the drouth and soil drifting in the

Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta." Its immediate task was to promote the conservation of surface water resources on farms and to encourage the use of cultural practices designed to combat the serious soil drifting resulting from the prolonged drought of the 1930s.¹ The financial appropriation for work under the Act was \$750 000 for the fiscal year 1935-36, with further provision for expenditures not exceeding \$1 000 000 annually in each of the four succeeding years. After this period, it was hoped that the crisis and need for the programme would be finished. Administration was vested in the dominion minister of agriculture who was to be assisted by advisory committees comprising officials of the federal and provincial governments and representatives of farmers and ranchers in the afflicted areas.² Under the terms of the P.F.R.A. the dominion minister of agriculture was authorized to promote such systems of farm practice as tree culture, water development, land utilization, and land settlement as would afford greater economic security to farmers located in the drought areas of the Prairie provinces. It was designed to aid farmers in controlling soil drifting, in constructing dugouts to catch the spring run-off waters for their livestock, gardens, and household use, in regrassing their lands, and even on occasion, in moving to more suitable land.³ The programme was administered by a director located at Regina, who was directly responsible to the deputy

minister of agriculture in Ottawa. Since P.F.R.A. activities were closely allied to those of certain provincial departments, it was understood that every endeavour would be made to cooperate with these agencies.⁴ Despite these overtures of cooperation, the programme was completely in dominion control.

Gardiner and the Liberal party in general did not resist the creation of the P.F.R.A. as they had resisted other government programmes during Bennett's term in office. The severity of the Depression in Saskatchewan had led Gardiner to recognize the necessity of some governmental form of Prairie rehabilitation. Gardiner's farming operation at Lemburg was situated in the midst of the area designated as the worst by the Saskatchewan Relief Commission. He was better off than most thanks to his legislative indemnity and his salary as leader of the opposition, but he was by no means removed from the suffering and deprivation.⁵ As Nathaniel A. Benson points out in his biography of Gardiner, None of it Came Easy, the idea of such a land policy was not a novel objective:

The thoughts which later developed into Prairie Farm Assistance and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation, were in Gardiner's mind and had been recounted to the public while he was Premier of Saskatchewan and long before any such legislation had been introduced in Ottawa...When he went to Ottawa in 1935, he had very clearly in mind a plan for rehabilitating Western Canada.⁶

The programme was one that Gardiner recognized as necessary for the Prairie region, and it was in accordance with the economic shift that had occurred in his dominion-provincial thinking as a result of the Depression. While he had always advocated a leading political role for the federal government, the Depression caused him to advocate an equally strong economic role. He saw the rehabilitation of the wheat economy as involving national support for social and business services in the agricultural communities of the West. Financial aid was necessary to bring the farmers through the crisis. The experience of the early 1930s had shown that through periods of economic depression and crop failure, the Prairie provinces could not maintain minimum standards of living.⁷ Something had to be done about the disastrous state of the top soil which was the number one Prairie natural resource, and only the dominion government was able to finance the kind of effort that was needed.⁸

The P.F.R.A. was easily absorbed into Liberal doctrine. The Liberals were able to justify the legislation on Liberal ideological grounds. All the emphasis was on the individual farmer and the provision of individual assistance to help solve agricultural problems.⁹ As minister of agriculture Gardiner could not have opposed any measure that obviously supported the Prairie agricultural industry and was so popular in the region without losing substantial support. The western agricultural industry was in dire need of some

kind of governmental aid and favored any national initiative. Thus, even though the measure was Conservative in origin, Gardiner's western-based position as minister of agriculture and his reputation as defender of the western region forced him to support the programme. Liberals were also well aware that this Conservative policy initiative was too late to rescue Bennett's government from the electorate. The fact that the P.F.R.A. was a Conservative policy that was supported by the Liberals would not cause the Liberals any substantial embarrassment. They could afford to uphold the initiative. The P.F.R.A. was popular in the West and was a recognized necessity for the region. The legislation was beneficial to both the region and the popularity of the party. When the Liberals formed the government in 1935 they had every intention of profiting from the popularity of the policy.

Gardiner's acceptance of the P.F.R.A. was not based only on a concern for the western region. His desire for the more influential portfolio of finance during the cabinet negotiations demonstrated his powerful ambitious drive for a more prestigious position. Although Gardiner was forced to accept agriculture he remained determined to raise its status, and in doing so, increase his own influence. He wrote that he came to Ottawa "to raise Agriculture from the rank of 'poor relation' to that of a basic industry 'and to bring agriculture to the front as one of the most important

departments of government." The P.F.R.A. proposed a strong federal role in the agricultural industry throughout the nation and immediately upon accepting the portfolio, Gardiner adopted the programme as his own project and set his goal to restore and secure Prairie agriculture to its 'proper' place in the nation's economy. This also entailed securing Gardiner's own 'proper' place in the nation. From 1935 to 1939 he would attempt to eradicate the effects of drought and depression from the Prairie region and in the process, enhance his own standing.¹⁰

In 1936 there was no doubt as to where Gardiner stood on the role of the dominion in rehabilitating Prairie agriculture. Whereas in the 1920s circumstances allowed him to push Ottawa for provincial control of the public lands, he argued in 1936 for the necessity of national intervention into the recently acquired provincial jurisdiction. Gardiner saw the only solution to the agricultural problem as increased cooperation between the dominion and Prairie provinces. This cooperation actually meant increased provincial subservience to the dominion department of agriculture. After a federal-provincial agricultural meeting in January of 1936, the new minister reported to King:

a conference between the Federal Department of Agriculture and representatives of the three prairie provinces has been held in an endeavour to arrange a workable, cooperative plan to place

agriculture on a sound basis throughout the area which has recently been afflicted by drought.

Gardiner wanted the Prairie provinces to follow the lead set by the federal department. He stated that a plan was necessary to "call forth the greatest cooperation possible between the Federal and Provincial authorities to assist in rehabilitating those areas."¹¹ Gardiner urged the prime minister to allocate the department of agriculture wide-ranging federal powers that would override any provincial objection. The justification for these sweeping measures was the desperate state of Prairie agriculture.

In 1935 there was still no immediate end to the crisis in sight. The costs of direct relief had risen from miniscule beginnings to average nearly \$5 million in the years 1931-1932 to 1934-35.¹² "Continued drought conditions," he argued, "have brought about an emergency." The solution was "drastic measures promptly and effectively applied...if a major disaster...is to be avoided." Gardiner argued that it was necessary to "appoint over this whole drought area an administrator with wide powers to act."¹³ According to the minister of agriculture the problem was serious enough to demand Ottawa's entrance into previously established provincial jurisdiction.

As the year progressed, Gardiner's nationalist views became more pronounced, and he became more convinced and adamant that the dominion had an important part to play in

the rehabilitation of the Prairie region. His letters to King became more insistent in tone and nationalist in perspective. The rehabilitation could be accomplished only through his department, which required a "blank cheque" to finance the project. Despite the overtones of an intended equality between the two levels of government, the minister of agriculture made it clear which level was to have the power:

I think the lead should be given by the Federal Department to ensure uniformity and that sufficient financial assistance should be provided from Ottawa to secure the necessary direction.¹⁴

Gardiner's approach to the dominion-provincial relationship emerged fully during his early years as minister of agriculture. He did not hesitate in demonstrating his nationally-oriented beliefs. The dominion was to have substantial power to override traditional provincial jurisdiction if it was deemed necessary. The Depression was providing a situation that Gardiner believed required strong federal initiative. Now that he was in a national position he planned on exercising the power that he believed was required. In 1936 he came to the conclusion that the P.F.R.A. had to be widened, its sights raised, and its goals extended. The programme enacted by the Conservatives was a good start but it did not go far enough in adequately solving the steadily deteriorating situation. The emergency state of Prairie agriculture combined with the

fact that Gardiner wished to enlarge the powers of his own portfolio led him to work for a substantial amendment in the P.F.R.A.

Gardiner's desire to widen the scope of the P.F.R.A. became a reality on February 11, 1937, when he rose in the House of Commons to present a bill to amend the programme. The area of stricken land had expanded year by year until by 1937 it embraced 250 Prairie municipalities and 18 000 000 acres--a quarter of all arable land in Canada. In the House, Gardiner pointed out that unless massive rehabilitation was undertaken, the social and economic survival of 900 000 people would be threatened. Without federal financial aid the farming communities would not be able to continue. The entire area was heavily dependent on agriculture and if the industry was not rehabilitated, the communities would not survive. Gardiner claimed that the federal government would have to reclaim approximately two million acres of ruined farm land in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.¹⁵ He urged the expenditure of \$10 000 000 a year and an overall cost of \$50 000 000. With these financial resources he believed that many ecological problems facing Prairie farmers could be solved. Experiments in Manitoba had provided the scientists with possible methods of controlling grasshoppers. Rust could be overcome by the use of resistant varieties of wheat. The

soil scientists were confident that wind erosion could be controlled with time, money, and machinery.¹⁶

Prime Minister King relied on Gardiner's knowledge of agriculture and usually followed his regional lieutenant's advice. The minister of agriculture's arguments and proposed amendment were consequently accepted; land utilization and land settlement became additional objectives of the programme. The inclusion of land policy substantially increased the federal power of the programme. One of Gardiner's objectives was to create community pastures and place them under federal control. But because the control of natural resources was vested with the province, this act required the acquiescence of the provincial governments. This naturally proved to be a difficult task for it necessitated the three provinces turning back the clock and returning control of their lands to the dominion government. The provinces' control over their lands had been achieved only recently, and as a result, they were hesitant about returning it to the dominion, even for a brief period of time. The three Prairie provinces argued that a much more satisfactory arrangement would be for Ottawa to finance the establishment of the pastures and then turn their management over to the provinces.¹⁷

When dealing with the provincial administrations the minister of agriculture displayed the attitude that the

provinces were subservient to the dominion. He quickly became impatient when the provincial administrations demonstrated any hesitancy in giving control of their lands back to Ottawa.¹⁸ With the emergency state of Prairie agriculture and his desire to have the provincial departments of agriculture under federal control, Gardiner saw little room for opposition.

Despite their immediate objections to the amendment, the provincial opposition was by no means a formidable obstacle for Gardiner. The three Prairie provinces realized that they were reliant upon federal financial support for the rehabilitation of their lands. Saskatchewan was in a particularly vulnerable position because its agricultural lands were the main provincial resource. Despite the obvious loss of control over the recently acquired provincial jurisdiction, Gardiner's provincial and regional reputation also served to provide the Prairie provinces with confidence that the dominion's actions were in their best interests. They had faith that the minister of agriculture was acting not only as a federal minister but also as a defender of the Prairies. Because of his reputation, they believed that he would only take initiatives that would protect the region.

By the summer of 1937, the provinces agreed to acquire the land necessary for the community pastures and deed it to the dominion. Active cooperation and coordination was most

fully secured in the case of Saskatchewan due to its heavy reliance on federal aid and the personal influence of Gardiner. The minister of agriculture continued to exert almost as much pressure on the government of the province as he did when he was premier.¹⁹ Even after becoming a cabinet minister, Gardiner spent a considerable portion of his time in Saskatchewan where the government functioned mainly as a western distribution agency for national assistance.²⁰ The fact that the Saskatchewan provincial government was strongly under the influence of Gardiner was amply demonstrated on June 17, 1937. The minister of agriculture informed King that the provincial legislature had passed a resolution "expressing gratitude to the Federal Government for its generous assistance" in making provisions in the drought area. The resolution commended

the Minister of Agriculture for the thorough manner in which he has surveyed the Province ascertained the needs of our people and the very substantial way in which he has provided feed and fodder for the stock throughout the Province.²¹

The agreement between the Saskatchewan government and dominion effectively returned control of certain lands to the federal government. In the process of establishing, maintaining, and managing community pastures, grazing reserves, and irrigation works, the province leased at a nominal rate or transferred to the dominion all affected lands to which it had title. This was done in return for federal assistance in establishing the pastures. Where

privately owned lands were involved, the province undertook to facilitate the transfer of these land to Ottawa.²² In a letter to a western farmer, Gardiner explained the deal on October 12, 1937:

The plan worked out in Saskatchewan is that since the natural resources belong to the Provincial Government the Province organizes projects about irrigation, community pastures, or reserve pastures and presents them at our Prairie Farm Rehabilitation organization at Regina. Their proposals are investigated by our officials and if considered feasible the Province agrees to turn over control of all lands involved to the Federal Government either by leasing or giving title whichever the Federal Government requires of them. When this is done, the Federal Government assumes full responsibility for setting up the project and providing for its administration after it is set up, in order to see that the proposed rehabilitation continues to be worked out over a term of years.²³

Gardiner adopted the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, enlarged its budget, and expanded its powers. He converted it from a temporary cure to a permanent resolution for the rehabilitation of Prairie lands. The programme initiated what would later become known as Gardiner's "national policy for agriculture." The disasters of depression, drought, and later war demonstrated that a crisis existed within the agricultural industry. This crisis made a "reconstruction of ideas" necessary.²⁴ Gardiner's work as the minister of agriculture perpetually secured his reputation as 'the champion of the West.' His successful efforts to raise the status of the portfolio were not only based on an interest in the region. He always worked relentlessly in whatever

strong federal system and have his policies remain in agreement.

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act demonstrated Gardiner's adherence to his views on Canadian federalism that had been developed in the early years of his political career. As minister of agriculture, he maintained his political loyalties. Never during his career did James Gardiner waiver from his prescribed path, but rather he continued to believe in a united Liberal front in which the provinces would remain subordinate members of the federal system. This did not rule out adopting and advocating other politically opportune positions that could produce inaccurate reputations, as long as they were not counter-productive to the overall goals of the Liberal party. While Gardiner was prepared to contradict his practical policies in adapting to new circumstances, he was not prepared to contradict his ideals.

post he filled, and his inability to obtain a more powerful portfolio led him to endeavor to increase the influence of the position he was given.

The national land policies of Gardiner were not publically viewed as inconsistent with his previous provincial land policies for several reasons. In the shift from the provincial to the federal level of political life Gardiner was not perceived to be abandoning Prairie interests. Rather, the move and the ensuing policies were seen as Gardiner's expansion of his role from defender of the province of Saskatchewan to defender of the entire Prairie region. The popular perception of Gardiner did not allow the public to recognize any inconsistency in his actions that required explanation. This faith that was placed in Gardiner to protect the interests of the region, along with the crippling effects of the Depression, made his federal land policies not only acceptable, but also desirable.

James Gardiner's actions in regard to the P.F.R.A. were important in that they accurately demonstrated the minister of agriculture's dominion-provincial attitudes. Once in place as a federal cabinet minister, Gardiner's true political beliefs emerged. No longer were Gardiner's national sentiments confined by the constraints of provincial politics, partisanship, and political opportunism. Instead, he was able to avow his desire for a

Endnotes

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3. E.S. Archibald, "Prairie Farm Rehabilitation," Canadian Geographical Journal, 21, 1940, p.161.

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5. Norman Ward and David Smith, Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp.129-130.

6. Nathaniel A. Benson, None of it Came Easy. (Toronto: Burns & MacEachern, 1955), p.252.

7. Britnell, "The Rehabilitation of the Wheat Economy," p.526.

8. James H. Gray, Men Against the Desert. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1967), introduction.

9. Ibid., p.99.

10. David E. Smith, "James G. Gardiner: Political Leadership in the Agrarian Community," Saskatchewan History, (2,1987), pp.49-51.

11. National Archives of Canada(henceforth NAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, MG 26, J1 Series Primary Correspondence, Reel #3688, p.186955, Gardiner to King, January 22, 1936.

12. Ward and Smith, Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal, p.130.

13. NAC; King Papers, Reel #3685, pp. 183935-183936, Gardiner to King, July 28, 1936.

14. Ibid., p.187060, Gardiner to King, September 5, 1936.

15. Gray, Men Against the Desert, p.109.
16. Ibid., pp.1-5.
17. Ibid., p.136.
18. Ibid., p.137.
19. Ibid., p.211.
20. Ibid., p.107.
21. NAC, King Papers, Reel #3725, p.201375, Resolution passed by the Saskatchewan Legislature, June 17, 1937.
22. A. Stewart, "The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Programme," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 5, 1939, p.315.
23. NAC, King Papers, Reel #3725, p.201398, Gardiner to Smith, October 12, 1937.
24. Smith, "James G. Gardiner: Political Leadership in the Agrarian Community," p.51.

Conclusion

At first glance James Garfield Gardiner's actions in the area of dominion-provincial relations appear to represent an obvious inconsistency. While at the provincial level Gardiner became the defender of provincial rights by negotiating control of Saskatchewan's natural resources, at the federal level he became the promoter of a strong central government by reclaiming control of a portion of the resources for the dominion government. A closer look into Gardiner's career at both the provincial and federal levels demonstrates that the inconsistency can be explained within the context of his political thinking.

James Garfield Gardiner is traditionally viewed as a provincial and regional politician who placed the interests of Saskatchewan and western Canada above all others. This reputation was gained during his long career at both the provincial and national levels of Canadian political life. But this view of Gardiner is a misconception based on a misunderstanding of the man's political beliefs and motives. Gardiner's approach to the Canadian dominion-provincial relationship reflected his strong Liberal nationalist convictions. He was an intensely partisan Liberal who placed his faith in the perseverance of the federal system. Gardiner represented the western region in the Liberal party but did not believe that this justified the label of

regionalist. The Canadian federal system was made up of provinces and regions, and it was natural that a federal politician should represent one of these in the cabinet. While Gardiner's major achievements consisted of land policies on behalf of western Canada, he did not view himself as a regional politician. Because his positions placed him in the province of Saskatchewan and in the western region, he did all he could to work for the interests of this area. Throughout his political career he attempted to obstruct the provincialism and regionalism that his name became so attached to. Gardiner wished to see a truly national Canada in which each region made its contribution and received its just reward. On May 20, 1926, the Toronto Globe reported:

Mr. Gardiner declares that Saskatchewan wishes to join hands with the citizens of any other Province to the end that sectional divisions upon national questions may be removed from Government councils. The great wheat Province of the West, according to Mr. Gardiner, claims a special fitness to hold and spread a national, as opposed to a sectional viewpoint.¹

For Gardiner, a distinctly western party with a western viewpoint would be contrary to the fundamental idea of Liberalism.²

Gardiner's political beliefs, in particular his view of the dominion-provincial relationship, can be explained in terms of a hierarchial system of loyalties. In considering policy, Gardiner was always careful that his actions were

not contrary to the notions of Liberalism that he had established at the onset of his career. Early on, Gardiner became a Liberal of the Laurier and King tradition. His political life was based on a loyalty to the cause of Liberalism as defined by British nineteenth-century Liberalism and represented in Canada by Laurier. Second to this was a loyalty to the federal party structure. Gardiner saw the need for a strong federal system that encompassed the provincial wings of the party. For the national party to function, the provincial branches had to remain subordinate. In 1926 he publically declared that "there was one Liberal Party in the Province of Saskatchewan and that it was neither a Provincial or Federal, but a united party."³ This loyalty to the federal party structure was followed by a loyalty to the national party leader. This allegiance was strengthened for Gardiner by the respect and admiration that he had for William Lyon Mackenzie King. The fourth plank of Gardiner's political philosophy was a loyalty to his own fortunes. While falling behind the other three aspects, political opportunism was always a factor in the determination of his policy initiatives. Gardiner's nationalistic view toward the dominion-provincial relationship, as demonstrated by his political allegiances, was formed as early as 1905 when Saskatchewan became a province, and never during his career did it waiver.

The public perception of James Gardiner as a provincial and regional politician was based on his practical policies. Yet each policy was governed by factors that actually reflected Gardiner's national Liberal beliefs and loyalties. Gardiner was misinterpreted as a provincial rightist during the natural resources issue because of his leading role on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan. This image was strengthened when he was given a substantial role to play on behalf of the entire western region as federal minister of agriculture with particular responsibility for the P.F.R.A. The public was given the strong impression that Gardiner was determined to defend the rights and interests of the province and region. As far as the public was concerned the issue allowed "the Hon. J.G. Gardiner" to reveal "himself as an able and fearless champion of western rights."⁴

Gardiner's leading role in the resource issue that led to the founding of his provincial rightist reputation, was actually in accord with his nationalistic political principles. Prime Minister Mackenzie King acknowledged that the time to negotiate for the transfer of the resources was at hand. Premier Gardiner followed his loyalty to the federal Liberal leader by advocating the same cause but from the provincial standpoint. He accepted the leadership role and advocated Bram Thompson's provincial rightist case because of the obvious political rewards that could be

gained in Saskatchewan. Through these actions, Gardiner was abiding by his loyalty to his own political fortunes.

The misinterpretation of Gardiner as a provincial rightist was continued during R.B. Bennett's term as prime minister. The premier's insistent opposition to the dominion government, which came to a head during the On-to-Ottawa Trek, caused the public to view Gardiner's actions as a demonstration of his determination to defend the province against the encroachments of Ottawa. The public failed to realize that Gardiner's opposition to the dominion government during this period was based largely on partisan grounds. Gardiner's personal dislike of Bennett and his loyalties to Liberalism prevented him from co-operating with the Conservative government in any way. In his opposition to Bennett and the Conservatives, he was displaying his loyalty to the cause of Liberalism. Gardiner was aiding the national Liberal party and its leader by causing as much political trouble as possible for Bennett's administration. Once again the premier had an eye on his own political popularity in the province which was increasing as a result of his perceived defence of Saskatchewan's interests against a very unpopular dominion government.

If Gardiner's views toward the dominion-provincial relationship changed at all during his career in provincial politics, they became increasingly nationalistic in

orientation. The impact of the Depression greatly affected Canadian attitudes on the constitutional distribution of powers and led the way to the establishment of the 1937 Rowell-Sirois Commission which concluded that a stronger federal system was required. Along with strengthening Gardiner's belief in the need for a stonger federal political system, the Depression altered his economic thinking to include a belief in the need for a strong federal economic system. The Depression was particularly influential on a politician from the most devastated province. Gardiner emerged from the crisis with a clearer view that the nation needed a stronger federal government.

The shift from the provincial to the national realm of political life did not diminish Gardiner's provincial reputation, but rather served to enlarge it. In the public's view, the premier advanced from the defender of the province to the defender of the region. The public assumed that Gardiner had amply displayed his protective attachment to Saskatchewan and that the move to the dominion cabinet would be a promotion which would offer him further opportunity not only to protect his home province but also the region. The tradition of political promotion from the provincial to the national level that existed in Saskatchewan made Gardiner's transition from provincialist to regionalist an easy one. When he accepted the western

portfolio of agriculture as publically anticipated, his perception as a regionalist was secured.

The cabinet negotiations between Gardiner and King accurately demonstrated the premier's national orientation. The portfolio of agriculture was by no means Gardiner's first choice for a cabinet position. He was not even concerned that he possess one of the traditional western portfolios, but was more interested in advancing his own career with the eastern-based finance position. He did not see himself as having an unbreakable attachment to a territorially defined region. This attachment would have implied a limit on his ministerial activity. Gardiner displayed his loyalty to the national Liberal party organization by refusing to admit a division within the structure into regional units. There was one united Liberal party and, although it consisted of representatives from Canada's diverse regions, it did not consist of regional divisions. There was no reason why a western politician could not serve the dominion from another position. His loyalty to the national Liberal leader caused Gardiner to acquiesce to Mackenzie King's desire to fill the post of western representative. While attempting to advance his own political prestige with a more powerful portfolio, Gardiner's loyalty to his own fortune was sacrificed for the more important planks of his political philosophy.

Once in place as the minister of agriculture, Gardiner's reputation as the defender of the western region was enhanced with his work toward the rehabilitation of the Prairie lands. His labour within the agricultural industry constituted his major achievement and served to strengthen the reputation of Gardiner as the western regionalist. It became the perpetual image of the politician. The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act became distinctly attached to Gardiner who received credit for making substantial gains toward the rehabilitation of the West. The public viewed his work with the P.F.R.A. as based on a regional attachment to the area.

The P.F.R.A. gave Gardiner the opportunity of introducing policies that accurately reflected his dominion-provincial attitude. Because his portfolio was agriculture, he set about employing all of his capabilities to serve the party and the nation through this capacity. Gardiner's loyalties to Liberalism remained intact regardless of his political position. Just as conditions had allowed for the transfer of the public lands to the provinces in 1930, as far as Gardiner was concerned, conditions in 1935 were such that it was necessary to transfer control of some of the Prairie lands back to the dominion. Throughout his work with the P.F.R.A. he remained loyal to the federal Liberal leader by serving as King's western representative in the cabinet. While Gardiner had

desired a more powerful ministerial position, his acquiescence to King did not suggest that he could not work to increase the prestige of the position that he was given. The minister of agriculture was concerned with rehabilitating the West but he was equally concerned with enhancing his own position and political fortune. The P.F.R.A. was assumed to be regional in perspective but for Gardiner it was an act to raise the agricultural industry and the portfolio of agriculture to national levels of importance.

James Gardiner was a Liberal nationalist. He was a party politician and a 'relentless Liberal' who worked tirelessly in whatever political position he was placed to advance the Liberal cause. For Gardiner, this position was in western Canada where he built up a considerable reputation as "the real fighter for the farmer's cause" and "the West's most stalwart supporter at Ottawa." His Liberal political philosophy was established at the beginning of his career, and he remained true to its principles. He never considered his role to be that of a regional politician. Gardiner's politics were regional in terms but national in effect. The national significance lay in the beneficial effects that the policy had for the region. This idea originated in Gardiner's concept of national Liberalism. As early as 1926, Gardiner "spoke of the great bond that existed between the Liberals throughout the Dominion" and

how "we are all Liberals because Liberalism stands for the rights of the people no matter what the issue may be."⁵

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