

"BETTER THAN A FEW SQUIRRELS:"  
THE GREATER PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN ON THE  
FIRST NATIONS RESERVES OF THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

by

Bruce W. Dawson

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of History  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

Fall 2001

© Bruce W. Dawson 2001

## PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of History  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 5A5

## ABSTRACT

On March 19, 1918, the government of Canada announced a new, nationwide agricultural policy called the Greater Production Campaign. Established to increase food production across the country for the good of the war effort, a Greater Production Campaign was also implemented by the Department of Indian Affairs on the prairie reserves. Promoted as being of great benefit to the reserve residents, the Campaign featured three distinct operating components: a program to increase agricultural production by reserve residents; a government farm program; and leasing of reserve land to non-Aboriginal farmers and ranchers. In reality, the initiative provided few benefits to the First Nations people of the prairies. In implementing the Campaign, the department made several amendments to the Indian Act that provided extremely coercive powers to W.M. Graham, Commissioner for the department's Campaign operations. Graham utilized these powers to create a cumbersome and mismanaged agricultural empire, parts of which were still functional as late as 1932. In doing so, Graham was able to achieve personal renown and profits for the department operations at the expense of the reserve residents upon whose land these farms and grazing preserves were located. The few dollars of revenue received by the prairie reserves did not compensate for the impediment the Campaign operations caused to the reserve farming initiatives. In resistance, a number of reserves launched successful challenges to the department's Campaign. The

six-year effort by the Blood people was particularly noteworthy for its complexity, consistency, its level of success, and ultimate impact on the policies of the Department of Indian Affairs. The Greater Production Campaign could have provided tremendous benefits to the reserve residents. But, like so many other government initiatives, the campaign proved more profitable to the department officials rather than to the individuals whose interests they were supposed to be looking out for.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For all those whose path I crossed in my journey to complete this project, I thank you for your assistance, wisdom and guidance. In particular I would to thank my supervisor Jim Miller for his keen advice, patient reading of numerous drafts and unfailing support. I also thank my committee members, Bill Waiser and Valerie Korinek, for their teachings and encouragement throughout this process. Heartfelt thank you's are also owed to the staffs at the Glenbow Archives, Public Archives of Manitoba, the National Archives of Canada and the Saskatchewan Archives Board for their friendly and helpful assistance; the MacNeil family, the Moses family and Bertha Davis for letting me into their homes and sharing their stories; Janine Reed for the countless hours spent transcribing my oral interviews; John Scime for many helpful tips on finding information in Ottawa and informative commentary on the subject; Yvonne Kroeger and Cory Penno for many thought-provoking discussions and Jan & Susan Spoor for their support. I also wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of the College of Graduate Studies, the Messer Grant Fund and the J.S. Ewart Memorial Fund towards the completion of this project. I leave to last those I most appreciate, Mom, Dad, Adele, Peter and Crista, without whose patience, love and support this work would not have been possible.

To Mom and Dad

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
ABBREVIATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTION:	
"Better than a Few Squirrels:" The Greater Production Campaign on the First Nations Reserves of the Canadian Prairies.	1
CHAPTER ONE:	
The Roots of Agriculture: A Historiographical Review of First Nations Agriculture and Government Indian Policy	7
CHAPTER TWO:	
Preparing the Field: Western Canada prior to the Introduction of the Greater Production Campaign	39
CHAPTER THREE:	
"Good, Practical Farmers:" The Sowing of the Greater Production Campaign	57
CHAPTER FOUR:	
"No more successful enterprise has ever been launched in Canada:" The Operation of the GPC on the Prairie Reserves	74
CHAPTER FIVE:	
Reaping the Harvest: Evaluating the Demise of the GPC	120
BIBLIOGRAPHY	129
APPENDICES	139

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
Glenbow	Glenbow Museum and Archives, Calgary
GPC	Greater Production Campaign
MG 26, I	Papers of Arthur Meighen
NAC	National Archives of Canada, Ottawa
PAM	Public Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg
RG 10	Records of the Department of Indian Affairs
SAB	Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina and Saskatoon



## INTRODUCTION:

"Better than a Few Squirrels:"<sup>1</sup>

The Greater Production Campaign on the  
First Nations Reserves of the Canadian Prairies.

The manner by which the First Nations Peoples of the prairies were compelled to practice agriculture was unique in the history of western Canada. Unlike the self-determining experience of the non-aboriginal agriculturalists that settled in the west, the First Nations farmers and ranchers had virtually no control over the success, failure or direction of the agricultural pursuits undertaken on their land. With the establishment of the prairie reserves in the 1870's, the government assumed control over all facets of agricultural operations on behalf of the reserve residents. Often the decisions made by these officials were for the benefit of the government rather than the First Nations farmers and ranchers whom they were supposed to be representing. As a result, a great deal of mistrust and ill will developed between the two sides. The occasional resistance by reserve residents to unjust government decisions met with questions by department officials about the Aboriginal peoples' ability, integrity and interest in agriculture. A significant episode in this strained relationship was the implementation of the Greater Production Campaign in the spring of 1918.

---

<sup>1</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1918, 1050. The quotation is part of a response issued by Arthur Meighen, Minister for the Department of Indian Affairs, to questions regarding the ability of Reserve residents to hunt on reserve lands leased for cultivation by the Federal government under the Greater Production Campaign.

It was not supposed to be that way. When the First Nations peoples of the West entered into treaty negotiations with the federal government in the 1870's, they did so with a sincere desire to learn agriculture as well as an expectation that the government would look out for their interests. In 1871, Chief Sweetgrass and other Cree leaders wrote a letter to the Canadian government stating "Our country is getting ruined of fur-bearing animals, hitherto our sole support, and now we are poor and want help--we want you to pity us. We want cattle, tools, agricultural implements, and assistance in everything when we come to settle--our country is no longer able to support us."<sup>2</sup> When Chief Sweetgrass made this request for assistance to establish an agricultural economy, he was not alone in his views. During the 1870's, there was a growing realization amongst the First Nations leaders that a lifestyle completely dependent upon hunting would not be possible on the Canadian prairies. Agriculture was viewed by many as a means to survival.

The government also considered these ideas. In the treaties negotiated with various First Nations groups of the prairies during the 1870's, the government made substantial promises to facilitate the establishment of farm and ranch economies on the newly established reserves. These commitments included providing implements, seed, livestock and instructors. As Senator Haythorne announced to the Canadian Senate in the debate on the Speech from the Throne on February 9, 1877, "It has been the policy of this Dominion to raise the Indians in the scale of civilization, to make them farmers, mechanics and members of society, so as to induce them to depend upon other and more certain modes of livelihood than by the chase."<sup>3</sup> As the 1870's drew to a close, and

---

<sup>2</sup> PAM MG 12, File 272: Chief Sweetgrass to Canadian government (with attachments from other Cree Chiefs), April 14, 1871

<sup>3</sup> Canada, Debates of the Senate, 1877, 6

treaties 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 were concluded, both the government and First Nations signatories seemed to be hopeful regarding the commitments made to the development of a vibrant and self-sufficient agricultural economy upon the western reserves.

The hopefulness with which the treaties were signed soon turned to despair for many reserve farmers as the expected new economy failed to take root. Progress was hindered by a number of factors. Natural factors such as unsuitable reserve locations, non-availability of proper grain seed and series of natural phenomena were compounded by questionable interpretations of treaty commitments and implementation of repressive agricultural policies by Department of Indian Affairs officials. By the early twentieth century, the struggling reserve agricultural program was of little concern to the government as its attention was focussed upon burgeoning number of immigrants who were establishing themselves on the Canadian Prairies.

In the spring of 1918, few in the Dominion were concerned about the development of agriculture on the Prairie Reserves. World War One was well into its fourth year, and the nation's attention was focussed upon meeting the material and human needs of the Allied forces fighting in Europe. The primary concern was ensuring the troops and residents of the Allied countries had an adequate supply of food. With this thought in mind, the government announced the Greater Production Campaign on March the nineteenth.

When introduced by Prime Minister Robert Borden in the 1918 throne speech, the Greater Production Campaign (hereafter GPC) was touted at a nation-wide plan to increase the production of meats and grains. The plan was quite extensive. The government desired to increase yields on fields then currently in production as well as bring all unutilised and under-utilized lands in Canada into full production. To reach these goals, cash assistance totalling \$280,000 was allocated to the provincial agriculture

departments. These funds were to be used to purchase tractors to break new land, procure top quality seed and hire supervisors to oversee the provincial operations. As well, partnerships with two youth service clubs, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Soldiers of the Soil, were formed to provide youth labour for farmers, and a media campaign about the necessity of increasing food production was launched. Even clergymen were requested to give two sermons on the matter.<sup>4</sup>

Attached to the end of the Campaign outline was a lengthy description of a second aspect of the GPC: how the program was to be implemented on the Indian Reserves of Canada. Framed in patriotic fervour, the methods were similar to those being employed on private lands. The sum of \$300,000 was advanced from the War Appropriation to be spent on the agricultural reserves of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The money was for machinery, implements, seed and livestock. The Inspector of Indian Agencies for southern Saskatchewan, W.M. Graham, was promoted by the DIA to act as the GPC commissioner for the reserve operations of the GPC.

However, in application, the two phases of the GPC programs were quite distinct. Under the program initiated on the reserves, the Indian Commissioner was given power to lease, without band consent, reserve lands "which may be needed for grazing, for cultivation or for other purposes."<sup>5</sup> As well, the Commissioner was given ultimate control over the spending of funds from band accounts. The allocation of these powers went against the rights guaranteed in the treaties and, thus, necessitated changes to the Indian Act. However, government officials seemed unconcerned about the impact these changes would have on reserve residents. They also seemed unfazed by the significant

---

<sup>4</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1918, 25-27

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 27

shift the Indian Act amendments would have upon the department's attitude towards First Nations farming initiatives. During the debates in the House of Commons on the proposed changes to the Indian Act, Arthur Meighen, the Minister for Indian Affairs concluded his thoughts, curtly stating "We will still leave him enough to trap on, but even if we did not thirty bushels of wheat to an acre is a lot better than a few squirrels caught by the Indian."<sup>6</sup>

Despite the concerns of a handful of Members of Parliament, the Indian Act was changed and the GPC became fully operational. During the five years the GPC was operational, the government used the program to enact a number of policy decisions on the reserves that appear to undermine the treaty commitments made to developing agricultural economies. Thousands of acres of reserve crop and grazing lands were alienated from the Aboriginal farmers, either to be leased to non-Aboriginal farmers or to be farmed by government operators using non-aboriginal labour. These decisions were made despite repeated objections from the reserve residents and their non-Native supporters. Perhaps the most definitive words of objection come from R.N. Wilson, former Indian Agent on the Blood reserve, who referred to the GPC policies as "A Prostitution of Trust."<sup>7</sup>

A multitude of questions could be asked about the operation of the GPC on the reserves in western Canada. Probably most important is how was the Greater Production

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 1050

<sup>7</sup> R.N. Wilson, Our Betrayed Wards: A story of Chicanery, Infidelity and a Prostitution of Trust (Ottawa 1921)

Campaign implemented on the Indian reserves of the Canadian prairies? Just as important is a consideration of how the residents of these reserve communities experienced the Campaign. The purpose of this thesis is to explore these questions and illuminate this important, yet seemingly forgotten, period of First Nations history.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### The Roots of Agriculture: A Historiographical Review of First Nations Agriculture and Government Indian Policy

Historians have largely ignored the agricultural pursuits of the First Nations peoples of the prairies.<sup>1</sup> Despite the many explorer accounts, ethnographic recordings and archaeological suggestions of an agricultural tradition amongst a number of Aboriginal groups on the northern plains, until relatively recently, historians have rarely mentioned Indian farmers in their annals. More often, the historical record has dismissed the concept of Aboriginal agriculture. Occasionally these dismissals have been subtle, such as the opening lines to eminent prairie historian W.L. Morton's article "A Century of Plain and Parkland":

One hundred years ago the prairies, the lands rolling upward from the Red River to the foothills of the Rockies, were primitive, with little trace of human habitation. No rut scored the sod, no furrow scarred the long roll of the prairie.... The plains were as thousands of years of geological and climatic change had made them. Men had hardly touched them, for man himself was primitive, in that he had adapted himself to nature, and nature to himself.<sup>2</sup>

The flowing, poetic description of an empty land inhabited by peoples who could not conceive of utilizing the land in an agricultural sense Morton put forth in 1969 is

---

<sup>1</sup> The First Nations groups to be studied are the ancestors and descendants of those groups which signed treaties 1, 2, 4, 6 & 7 with the Canadian government between 1871 and 1877.

<sup>2</sup> W.L. Morton, "A Century of Plain and Parkland" *Alberta Historical Review* 17 (Spring 1969), 1

matched by the blunter dismissal issued by early Saskatchewan historian John Hawkes, who stated "The Indian was not a natural farmer. He was a born hunter and warrior. Century upon century had ingrained in him the nomadic instinct; steady labour, so many hours a day, week in and week out, was as foreign to his nature as a dog kennel to a fox."<sup>3</sup> The concept these authors suggest, that the First Nations peoples had no tradition, interest or aptitude for agriculture, is incorrect.

Agriculture is defined as the cultivation of soil and the rearing of animals. Archaeologists suggest that people first began to domesticate plants and animals approximately 12,000 years ago. During the succeeding 8000 years, most peoples around the world adopted agriculture as their primary livelihood. By 7000 years ago, the first cultivated plants, gourds, were being grown in midwestern parts of North America.<sup>4</sup> The crop most often associated with the Aboriginal peoples of North America, maize or corn, was first grown in what is now the southwestern United States approximately 2500 years ago. During the succeeding 2000 years, the growing of maize spread throughout the eastern and midwestern parts of the continent. Early European explorers noted the extensive agricultural pursuits of eastern Aboriginal peoples such as the Huron living in the Great Lakes region and the Mandan who resided along the Missouri River in what is now North Dakota.

Agriculture was not prevalent on the Canadian prairies, but it did exist. Archaeological research indicated that corn was being grown in southern Manitoba by 1400 A.D.<sup>5</sup> Near the

---

<sup>3</sup> John Hawkes, Story of Saskatchewan, Vol 1. (Regina: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co 1924), 80

<sup>4</sup> Brian Fagan, People of the Earth (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company 1989), 347



town of Lockport the remains of corn, large storage pits and hoes made from bison shoulder blades were found during the 1980's. While the evidence does not indicate who these farmers were, patterns found on pottery remains associated with the Lockport site were similar to those associated with agricultural groups that lived in northern and central Minnesota.<sup>6</sup> The agricultural pursuits along the Red River appear to have been abandoned during the fifteenth century at the height of global climate change called the "Little Ice Age". This phenomenon, which affected temperatures around the world for over 400 years, resulted in short, cool summers which made farming in Manitoba impossible.<sup>7</sup> By the time Europeans arrived on the Canadian plains, agriculture was not part of the daily lives of the aboriginal residents. However, as Flynn and Simms noted, "local Aboriginal peoples were both familiar with the cultivation of numerous plants by their neighbours and trading partners along the Missouri River, its tributaries, and other rivers in the vicinity and that they cultivated fields of their own at various times and in various locations over a 400 year period prior to contact with Europeans."<sup>8</sup>

The written record supports the assertion made by Flynn and Simms that the Aboriginal groups on the Canadian plains were familiar with plant cultivation. In 1733 Pierre de la Vérendrye and his sons travelled overland from New France to initiate a French fur trade on the western plains. In reporting the establishment of a fort along the Red River, de la

---

<sup>5</sup> First Farmers in the Red River Valley (Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship No Date), 2

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Flynn and Leigh Syms, "Manitoba's First Farmers" Manitoba History 31 (1996), 7

<sup>7</sup> First Farmers, 11

<sup>8</sup> Flynn and Simms, "Manitoba's," 10

Vérendrye noted that "the Cree chief intended to remain with the elders of his people near the French fort all the summer, and that he was even going to raise wheat, seed of which had been supplied him by the Sieur de la Vérendrye."<sup>9</sup> In 1734, de le Vérendrye travelled south with a group of Cree on their annual excursion to purchase corn from the "Ouchipouennes."<sup>10</sup> Of the Ouchipouennes, La Vérendrye noted fields of corn, beans, peas, oats and other grains were raised by men of the community for sale to neighbouring groups.<sup>11</sup> The agricultural tradition of the Dakota is extensive. Anthropologist Bryce Little wrote that the practice of agriculture greatly predates the arrival of Europeans and was such an integral part of the society that the Dakota name for the month of June translates as "the moon when the seedpods of the Indian turnip mature."<sup>12</sup> Little later asserts that the shift by the Dakota peoples in the late nineteenth century from a fur-trade economy to agriculture "was more a case of re-employment of a known practice rather than any result of white-acculturation."<sup>13</sup> This tradition followed the Dakota onto the Canadian plains, and as late as 1951 a distant variety of "Indian Corn" was noted in the possession of Dakota peoples residing in Canada.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Burpee, Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes De Le Verendrye and his Sons (Toronto: The Champlain Society 1927), 106

<sup>10</sup> Burpee, Journals, 119. The Ouchipouennes are likely the Mandan, a well established community of aboriginal agriculturalist who resided along the Missouri River in what is now North Dakota. It is also possible that the Ouchipouennes is a reference to the Hidatsa or Arikara who were also sedentary agricultural groups living along the Missouri River.

<sup>11</sup> Burpee, Journals, 119

<sup>12</sup> Bryce Penneyer Little, "People of the Red Path: An Ethnohistory of the Dakota Fur Trade, 1760-1851." (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1984), 46

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 95

<sup>14</sup> James Howard, The Canadian Sioux (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press

Even among the Blackfoot, the group who at contact seemed most distant from farming activities, evidence of an agricultural tradition can be found. In 1879, the significant chiefs of the Peigan, Blood and Blackfoot signed a statement that asserts that their ancestors were tillers of the soil.<sup>15</sup>

With this agricultural tradition amongst the Aboriginal peoples of the plains, one may ask why the only full-time practitioners at the time of European contact were the peoples of the Missouri River valley? Two possibly linked suggestions have been put forth. The most significant suggestion is the influence of the climatic phenomenon known as the Little Ice Age. A worldwide event, the Little Ice Age was a period of slightly reduced global mean temperature that lasted from approximately 1350 to 1850. According to geographer Jean Grove, the impact of this climatic episode upon agricultural pursuits in the northern hemisphere was dramatic. Throughout the Scandinavian countries, it is estimated that almost half of the medieval farms were abandoned during the period because the upper limit of the altitude above sea level at which cultivation could be practiced was lowered by over 150 metres.<sup>16</sup> The Canadian Plains are believed to have been affected in a similar manner.

Historian James MacGregor suggested an alternative theory regarding the discontinuation of agricultural pursuits. He asserted that bison populations rose dramatically due to some environmental occurrence. "When this happened, they (the First Nations peoples of the northern plains) became nomadic buffalo hunters and abandoned their agricultural way

---

1984), 5

<sup>15</sup> United States, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1879, pt 3, page 80 as in Oscar Lewis, Effects of White Contact Upon Blackfoot Culture (Washington: Smithsonian Institute 1942), 8

<sup>16</sup> Jean Grove, The Little Ice Age, (New York: Routledge 1990), 414

of life."<sup>17</sup> The suggestion by MacGregor would seem to support the scientific data of the Little Ice Age impact upon arable land of western Canada. Bison are well adapted to living in cooler environments and would have definitely been an "easier" food source when compared to numerous agricultural failures which would have occurred with the Little Ice Age climatic impact.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Little Ice Age influence was diminishing, and the pursuit of an agriculturally based economy, though difficult, again became a possibility. Concurrently, bison populations began to decline due to increased hunting and other human activities in the plains region. The thoughts of the Aboriginal residents again turned to agriculture.

In the Qu'Appelle valley in 1857, Charles Pratt, a missionary of Cree-Assiniboine descent, commented to James Hector, geologist on the Palliser Expedition, that the Cree in the area were growing concerned about the scarcity of buffalo and were "anxious to try agriculture... (and) would make a start on it if they only had spades, hoes and ploughs"<sup>18</sup> Two years later, Hector was told of a similar request by the Stoney people living near Howse Pass in what is now Alberta.<sup>19</sup> Also in 1859, a scientist exploring the prairies on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company, Henry Youle Hind, noted a letter written from Chief Peguis to the governor of the Company. Most of the letter discussed concerns regarding the fulfilment of the promises outlined in the 1817 treaty between Peguis and the Lord Selkirk. Peguis's main

---

<sup>17</sup> James MacGregor, *Behold the Shining Mountains* (Edmonton: Applied Arts Products Ltd 1954), 159

<sup>18</sup> Irene M. Spry, *The Palliser Expedition* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company 1963), 60

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 240

areas of concern were the size of the growing settlement as well his desire to be furnished with "mechanics and implements to help our families in forming settlements"<sup>20</sup>

Just over a decade later, as the bison populations continued to decline, the plains peoples expressed a heightened interest in establishing a modern agricultural lifestyle. The 1871 statements to Governor Archibald made by Chief Sweetgrass and other Cree leaders all emphasised the desperate desire to pursue subsistence farming.<sup>21</sup> Another Cree Chief who had an interest in agriculture at this time was Ahtahkakoop. Living along the shores of Fir Lake, Ahtahkakoop and his band made their first attempts at cultivating the soil in 1872.<sup>22</sup> In 1874, realizing that his people needed training in agricultural practices, Ahtahkakoop sought the assistance of John Hines, a missionary who had come to the west seeking to teach farming to Indian peoples. The band, along with Hines and his assistants, relocated to Sandy Lake in 1875 and that year cleared enough land to produce 180 bushels of wheat and barley.<sup>23</sup> The interest these leaders and other plains residents showed in agriculture significantly influenced the approach and desire of the First Nations people to negotiate the treaties with the government.

The early 1870's were an extremely difficult time for the First Nations peoples of the plains. Bison populations were in freefall, causing hunger amongst all groups on the plains.

---

<sup>20</sup> Henry Youle Hind, Narrative of The Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine And Saskatchewan Exploring Expeditions of 1858 Part 2 (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd 1971), 175

<sup>21</sup> PAM MG 12, File 272: Chief Sweetgrass to Canadian government (with attachments from other Cree Chiefs), April 14, 1871

<sup>22</sup> Deanna Christensen, Ahtahkakoop (Shell Lake Saskatchewan: Ahtahkakoop Publishing 2000), 153

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 204

An outbreak of smallpox in 1870 struck the prairies, causing a great number of deaths amongst the resident groups, particularly the Blackfoot. 1870 also witnessed what would be the last large-scale battle between First Nations groups on the Canadian plains when a group of Cree and Saulteaux attacked the Blood and Peigan camped near what is now Lethbridge Alberta. The invaders suffered heavy losses while the defenders suffered few losses. Ever increasing numbers of Europeans were arriving in the west, starting farms and businesses. In 1870 the Government of Canada acquired the North-West Territories from the Hudson's Bay Company and established the Province of Manitoba with no consultation with the First Nations residents. Stories of the bitter encounters between the Aboriginal residents and the military were arriving regularly from the United States. It was in this atmosphere that treaties One through Seven were conceived and negotiated.

For several decades, the standard historical reference on this period and the treaty negotiations was George F. Stanley's Birth of Western Canada, published in 1936. In this work, Stanley devoted significant attention to what he describes as "The Indian Problem." The problem, according to Stanley, was the inability of the First Nations peoples to understand or adapt to the changes the superior white society was bringing to western Canada.<sup>24</sup> He went on to state that during the fur trade period, the plains peoples had come to view white society, embodied by the Hudson's Bay Company, as "representative of a superior civilization and the embodiment of fair dealing"<sup>25</sup>. The growing incursion of less scrupulous traders, white settlers and elements of white society left the "hapless" First Nations peoples confused about how to deal with the evolving situation.<sup>26</sup> When these situations were combined with the

---

<sup>24</sup> George F. Stanley The Birth of Western Canada (1936; Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1973), 194

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 197

previously noted concerns of the 1870's, Stanley claimed that it became the task of the government to calm the "excited spirits" by determining "...a policy which would ensure a continuance of these peaceful relations, convince the Indians of the government's good faith and assist them over the difficult transition from savagery to civilization."<sup>27</sup> The government, according to Stanley, chose a benevolent approach that would extinguish First Nations title to the land while establishing the peoples upon reserves. On these reserves they could be taught agriculture and religion in relative safety from the vices of European society.

Stanley's interpretation of the treaty process was to remain virtually unchallenged until the 1970's. When the reappraisals came, they focussed on two themes: What role and/or influence did the First Nations peoples have in the drafting of the treaties, and did they have a clear understanding of treaty process and the documents they were signing? Noel Dyck was one of the first to grapple with these questions in his 1970 MA thesis "The Administration of Federal Indian Aid in the North-West Territories, 1879-1885." In this thesis, Dyck concluded that the downfall of the initial reserve agricultural programme was primarily a result of the government's drive for economy. He also posed the question of First Nations involvement in the treaty process.<sup>28</sup> Dyck suggested that the First Nations population was interested in pursuing the treaty process, though their concept of the purpose of the treaty was different than that of the government.<sup>29</sup> As well, while he is not sure whether the Aboriginal

---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 198

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 204, 215

<sup>28</sup> Noel Dyck, "The Administration of Federal Indian aid in the North-West Territories, 1879-1885" (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1970), 81

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 12

peoples were clear about the full ramifications of the treaties, his posing of the question paved the way for others to explore the question.<sup>30</sup> John Taylor deliberated the question of the First Nations role in his 1975 paper "Canada's Northwest Indian Policy in the 1870's: Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations." In this paper, he challenged the concept promoted by Stanley that the government was completely responsible for the "wise" and "benevolent" treaties. Rather, he found that for Treaties 1, 2 and 3, many of the important treaty terms, such as agricultural aid, were not in the original government treaty drafts, but were added as "outside promises" after negotiation with the First Nations representatives.<sup>31</sup> The involvement of First Nations peoples in the treaty process described by Taylor, later referred to as "active...agents" by J.R. Miller, has been supported by several authors.<sup>32</sup>

The debate regarding the understanding the aboriginal treaty signatories had of the meaning and intent of the treaties has been more pronounced. An important aspect of this discussion has been to move past Stanley's notion of non-comprehension by the Native peoples and focus on the impact of cultural differences upon the interpretation of treaty terms

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 13

<sup>31</sup> John Leonard Taylor, "Canada's Northwest Indian Policy in the 1870's: Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations" Richard Price, ed, The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy 1980), 5

<sup>32</sup> J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1989), 163. In addition to Miller, others who have written on the active involvement include J.E. Foster, "The Saulteaux and the Numbered Treaties: An Aboriginal Rights Position?", The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties ; Hugh Dempsey, Treaty Research Report: Treaty Seven (Ottawa, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1987); Sarah Carter, Lost Harvests (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1989) John Taylor, Treaty Research Reports for Treaties 4 and 6 (Ottawa, Government of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs 1985) and Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties(Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2000)



and the process. John Taylor, in a 1981 article, noted a number of statements made by treaty signatories that seemed to indicate differing interpretations of the concept of "surrender" and the signing over of subsurface mineral rights. He felt, however, that the First Nations interpretive evidence is generally inadequate and composed of too many conflicting views to provide an effective challenge to the treaty text.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, John Tobias believed that the Plains Cree leaders had a clear understanding of what they wished to gain from the treaty process and followed a strategy of negotiation based upon the tactics they had successfully used for two centuries in the fur trade.<sup>34</sup> These efforts were for naught, found Tobias, as the Government utilized political, legal and physical forces to eliminate the Cree interpretations of the treaties with the goal of obtaining complete control over the Cree peoples. In a similar vein, J.R. Miller found the entire process doomed to difficulty, as the First Nations peoples believed they were establishing a treaty of friendship, assistance and mutual land usage while the government viewed the treaties as surrender of all Aboriginal title to the prairies.<sup>35</sup> It was under this cloud of misunderstanding that the First Nations peoples began their full-scale pursuit of an agrarian lifestyle.

The historical literature on the immediate post-treaty agricultural endeavors of the plains reserve residents follows a similar pattern to that on the treaty process. Again, George Stanley provided the benchmark analysis in his The Birth of Western Canada that was to stand for several decades. His interpretation was not positive. Stanley asserted that the childlike

---

<sup>33</sup> John Taylor, "Two Views on the Meaning of Treaties Six and Seven" in Richard Price, ed, The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy 1981), 44-45

<sup>34</sup> John Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885" Canadian Historical Review LXIV, no 4 (1983), 521-522

<sup>35</sup> Miller, Skyscrapers: 168-169.

and nomadic nature of the First Nations people was not conducive to an agricultural lifestyle. Their desire for the good old days of savage self-reliance, suggested Stanley, caused most of the reserve residents to be despondent and resentful towards the government's policy.<sup>36</sup> As he poignantly stated, "as long as the herds of bison tramped the prairies and the antelope sped across the plains, they were loath to abandon the thrilling life of the chase for the tedious existence of agriculture."<sup>37</sup> Therefore, according to Stanley, in spite of the tenacious efforts of the church and the government officials, the inability of the reserve residents to adapt to the new lifestyle caused the early failure of agricultural programs.

The 1970's witnessed the beginnings of a significant re-evaluation of Stanley's view that First Nations Peoples were unsuited for farming. One of the first to present a revised view of Aboriginal farmers was Noel Dyck. In his aforementioned 1970 thesis, Dyck concluded that "the greatest obstacle in the way of the reserve agricultural program was the government's willingness to place considerations of economy above all else."<sup>38</sup> Sadly, Dyck went on to add, "Indians who were fed so little that they remained in a constant state of hunger could not become self-sufficient farmers."<sup>39</sup> He further explored this idea in "An Opportunity Lost: The Initiative of the Reserve Agricultural Programme in the Prairie West." In this 1986 piece, Dyck examined why the Canadian government pursued policies between 1880 and 1885 which undermined the reserve resident's attempts to establish an agrarian economy. He began by outlining how many of the problems could be traced back to the differing impetuses for

---

<sup>36</sup> Stanley, *Birth*, 217

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 218

<sup>38</sup> Dyck, "Administration," 81

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 81

both groups to enter into the treaty negotiations. According to Dyck, the government was merely interested in gaining control of the west as frugally and expediently as possible.<sup>40</sup> Alternatively, First Nations people viewed the treaties as the beginning of a long-term alliance.<sup>41</sup> As a result, Dyck asserted, the government reluctantly began to fulfil the treaty requirements to assist in establishing reserve agriculture only after being forced to pay for massive amounts of relief supplies to feed the prairie Indians in 1879.<sup>42</sup> The remainder of the article summarized the various means by which, in Dyck's view, the government mismanaged the administration of the agricultural programme and thwarted the real interest the reserve residents had in pursuing an agricultural lifestyle. To Dyck, displaying power and control over the aboriginal peoples was the ostensible goal of the government policies. Missed by the government, according to the author, was that the Cree were agitating for agricultural assistance and not the change in lifestyle prompted by reserve life. If these agricultural needs had been met, the 'agitating' would not have occurred.<sup>43</sup> The result of the government's focus on control was that "the farming conducted on prairie reserves after 1885 was no longer the achievement of Indians who were seeking to become self-sufficient members of a new society; instead, it comprised the carefully supervised activities of a people who had become the involuntary wards of the government."<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Noel Dyck, "An Opportunity Lost: The Initiative of the Reserve Agriculture Programme in the Prairie West." 1885 and After: Native Society in Transition, F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram, eds. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre 1986), 122

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 123

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 124

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 130-33

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 133

One author who became synonymous with this re-interpretation was Sarah Carter. In 1983 her article "Agriculture and Agitation on the Oak River Dakota Reserve, 1875-1895" was her first contribution to the new approach of historical writing in this area. In this work, Carter repeatedly challenged Stanley's conclusions with examples of hard work, farming experimentation and crop successes by the residents of the Oak River reserve. But, in spite of the First Nations interest and aptitude during the first decade of agricultural experimentation, by the mid 1890's the reserve was no longer producing wheat crops. The reason for the downfall of the agricultural program, Carter found, was a combination of poor environmental conditions and repressive government policies.<sup>45</sup>

Carter further explored one of these repressive government policies in her 1989 article "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-97." In the piece, Carter examined the implementation and impact of the 'peasant' farming policy introduced by Commissioner Hayter Reed in 1889. Under this policy, reserve agriculturalists were forced to abandon the use of mechanical equipment and revert to the use of simple hand tools to plant and harvest their crops. The implementation of the policy, Carter discovered, "had a stupefying effect on Indian farming, nipping reserve agricultural development in the bud."<sup>46</sup> Throughout the article, Carter suggested that the policy was implemented to break down tribal unity and promote individualism as well as to reduce the amount of land the band could effectively put to crop and, in doing so, create "surplus" lands which could be surrendered and sold.<sup>47</sup> As well, the policy prevented the reserve farmers from competing with

---

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Carter, "Agriculture and Agitation on the Oak River Dakota Reserve, 1875-1895" *Manitoba History* 6 (Fall 1983), 8

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-97" *Canadian Historical Review*, LXX, 1 (1989), 28

white farmers for the limited markets. Reed defended his policy by suggesting that in order to "civilize" the reserve residents, they needed to start with the basic tools of agriculture and "progress" to the use of machinery. He suggested that the use of machinery would interrupt the steps necessary to advance a civilization and would cause the First Nations peoples to become lazy. Despite numerous reports from reserve agents and farm instructors about the detrimental effects the policy was having upon the agricultural program, Carter found that Reed persisted in pursuing the policy because of political pressures from white settlers, naivety regarding western Canadian agriculture and his driving belief that "Indians were incapable of understanding these concepts, and could not operate farms as business enterprises."<sup>48</sup>

In 1990, Sarah Carter released the book *Lost Harvests*, which remains the most significant work published in the area of First Nations agriculture. The book examined the agricultural development on the prairie reserves from 1874 through until World War One with particular emphasis upon the reserves within the boundaries of Treaty 4. Thematically, the book concentrates upon an in-depth exploration of the hypothesis she explored in her earlier articles: that repressive government policies and actions were responsible for undermining the earnest efforts of the reserve residents to establish commercial farming operations. The initial reserve agricultural policy, which Carter labels the Home Farm Experiment, was implemented in 1879. The program involved establishing 'home farms' on numerous reserves through which government farm instructors could teach the reserve residents farming methods via example. Problems with weather, slow-maturing seed and lack of markets that affected all western farmers, according to Carter, were compounded by the agent positions being staffed by ill-trained patronage appointees from Eastern Canada who knew nothing about prairie

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 30, 31

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 40

farming or the First Nations peoples whom they were to instruct.<sup>49</sup> Overshadowing the aforementioned problems, says Carter, was the "work for rations" policy through which the reserve residents were expected to meet levels of both work and food production before government rations would be issued. The unrealistic expectations of this policy led to starvation and discontent on the reserves, as well as doubts and feelings of mistrust by both the government officials and the reserve residents about the dedication to fulfilling the treaty promises.

The 'Home Farm Experiment' was phased out in the mid 1880's and replaced by the 'Peasant' farming policy discussed earlier. Also at this time, the government implemented a permit system by which the agents assumed control for selling First Nations crops, a pass system that restricted reserve residents' movement off the reserves, repressive actions which Carter states "place restraints above and beyond those shared with other farmers in the West."<sup>50</sup> As well, the government introduced a policy of severalty onto the reserves. This policy of subdividing the reserve into individual farms, according to Carter, was implemented by Commissioner Hayter Reed because of his belief that the best way to undermine the tribal system was via individual farmers building self-reliance on their own land plots.<sup>51</sup> More important, "severalty would confine the Indians within circumscribed boundaries and their 'surplus' land could be defined and sold."<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 84-86, 98-99

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 158

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 193

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 236

As well, Carter also explored a secondary theme of First Nations protest against the restrictive policies as they were implemented during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. She found that the reserve residents quickly came to believe they had been misled by the treaty commissioners about the potential of developing an agrarian economy. Numerous examples of letters and comments of protest to government officials and missionaries are noted, protests which were largely ignored or dismissed as being spawned by laziness, incompetence and the inclination of the Aboriginal peoples to complain. Despite these rebuffs, Carter found that "At no time, however, did Indians adopt a policy of passive submission, disinterest, or apathy. The tradition of protest continued."<sup>53</sup>

Not surprisingly, the results of her study are similar to the conclusions she drew in her earlier articles. As she notes in her conclusion, "...histories written until very recently, obscure or overlook the Indians' positive response to agriculture in earlier years. Equally obscured and forgotten has been the role of Canadian government policy in restricting and undermining reserve agriculture."<sup>54</sup>

While Sarah Carter has been the dominant author in the field of First Nations agriculture, others have been active. J.R. Miller's *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* (1989) looked at agriculture as part of his survey of relations between the Native and Non-Native populations in Canada from 1600 to present. Unfortunately, the broad scope of the work permitted only a few pages within a chapter entitled "The Policy of the Bible and the Plough" devoted to agriculture. The chapter title refers to Miller's idea that the federal government, through the use of coercive powers, forced the reserve residents to take up agriculture as part

---

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 255

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 258

of their assimilation mandate.<sup>55</sup> Force was necessary because not all prairie Indians were enthused about adopting the whiteman's ways.<sup>56</sup> Different from Dyck, who saw the government acting out of need to control people, Miller followed the ideas of Carter, by whose work he was heavily influenced, that most policies were driven by political expediency: keeping the white voters happy.<sup>57</sup>

While extremely restricted in his look at the subject, a number of positives emerge from Miller's work. Notably, he accounts for variability. As mentioned earlier, he noted that not all First Nations peoples wanted to become farmers. As well, he indicated that poor climate was a contributing factor to the failure of the agricultural policy.<sup>58</sup> However, like Dyck, Miller mentioned one reserve where success was gained but does not explore why this success was garnered in that location. Miller also provided no specific dates, only references such as "late 1880's". Having dates would be helpful in comparing the farming experiences with concurrent events so as to evaluate why success came or not. Like Dyck, the broad, thin look at agricultural policies paints the entire prairies with one brush.

The approach taken by Miller is almost duplicated in Helen Buckley's From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare. Like Miller, Buckley's book is a survey of government policy. Buckley, however, focussed only upon policies and interactions in the Prairie Provinces. The more limited scope allows a somewhat more in-depth look at some specifics of Western Reserve agriculture.

---

<sup>55</sup> Miller, Skyscrapers, 189

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 164

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 201

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 199



Unlike Miller, more similar to Dyck, Buckley found that the government's desire for control was at the root of failure.<sup>59</sup> Specifically she suggested the real holder of power within the government structure was the local agent. Referring to successful agriculturalists, Buckley asserts that "their success was, in essence, another aspect of control, for the grants or loans needed to make money out of farming were available to a select few, handpicked by the agent."<sup>60</sup> This last comment provided a possible answer to the hanging questions of both Dyck and Miller regarding the cases of sporadic agrarian success. Similarly, Buckley, like Miller, suggested climate as a possible cause of limited success down to the late 1890's. Illness and unrefined technologies are also suggested as limiting factors that affected not only Aboriginal farmers, but also the previously unmentioned early white agriculturalists in the region.<sup>61</sup>

Buckley provided interesting insight into the reserve agriculture. Most important was the dedication to bringing out individualism. Faceless, unified-in-action government officials were not pitted against equally faceless, unified-in-action Aboriginal peoples. Buckley noted that some agents acted as individuals. She also explored the mindset of Superintendent Reed so as to explain why the peasant agriculture policy was implemented.<sup>62</sup> As well, she acknowledged that some First Nations gave up agriculture in the 1890's.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, the

---

<sup>59</sup> Helen Buckley, From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1992), 43, 56

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 54

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 51

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 53

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 54

work is still a survey piece and, like Miller, glossed over many dates and subtle changes in policy.

Another author who has contributed to the scholarship regarding Aboriginal agriculture is Peter Elias. In his book The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Elias chronicled the challenging experiences of various bands of Dakota during their efforts to establish a land and economic base on the Canadian prairies. Elias, like most of the other authors, found that the early successes of the Dakota agricultural initiatives were hampered by a harsh environment and repressive government interference. Unlike Miller and Carter, and similar to Dyck, Elias suggested that the government interference was based upon a desire to control all Indian matters on the prairies via physical presence, repressive policies and the “coercive power of the law.”<sup>64</sup> Though these governmental intrusions, Elias found, did serve to limit the agricultural potential of the farming Dakota bands, farmers continued to experience success and were able to develop moderately sized, small profit agricultural operations that were perpetuated until the time of writing.<sup>65</sup> Any cultural or economic success, he concluded came “when the Dakota were independent to act within the general framework of Canadian law.”<sup>66</sup>

A comparison of the pieces by Dyck, Miller, Elias and Buckley to the works by Carter highlight a number of subtle, yet important differences in approach and findings. Unlike the other authors, Carter seldom referred to First Nations agriculture with terms like “successful”, preferring to describe the reserve agricultural pursuits with terms like “accomplished” or

---

<sup>64</sup> Peter Douglas Elias, The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 83

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 82, 108, 128, 164

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 224

“improved.” To utilize the term ‘success’ would undermine her primary theory that “government policies made it virtually impossible for reserve agriculture to succeed.”<sup>67</sup> In addressing why the government pursued these policies, Carter did not present a clear statement. She did note that some policies regarding the use of reserve land were influenced by white settlers, similar to the political expediency argument expounded by Miller.<sup>68</sup> She also discussed the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) negotiations with the Militia and the NWMP to help enforce Indian policy.<sup>69</sup> As well, Carter examined the deal struck between the DIA and Battleford merchants that prohibited the reserve residents from selling grain in the local market.<sup>70</sup>

These latter two points suggest a conspiracy against the First Nations peoples, but Carter did not tie these ideas together in any stated conclusion. This last observation, the lack of a stated conclusion, is seen in other situations in the book. A lot of information, and specific detail, is presented but readers are often left to their own devices to make connections other than to farmer persistence and government repression. Beyond these differences in focus and approach, the works of these five authors provided a viable alternative to the Stanley interpretation of early reserve agriculture. Most notable is the repudiation of Stanley's notion that reserve residents were not interested in farming, thus accounting for their lack of success. Miller discussed the idea of the First Nations as being "active agents," aggressive and interested in securing the benefits of the whiteman's world.<sup>71</sup> Elias described the long history

---

<sup>67</sup> Carter, *Lost Harvests*, ix

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 185-86

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 150-51

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 188

of successful agricultural pursuits the Dakota had previous to coming to Canada which they were anxious to perpetuate if the government had assisted with adequate land and equipment.<sup>72</sup> Dyck, more directly, stated "there is evidence not only of the willingness of prairie Indians to embark upon an agricultural way of live, but also of their continuing concern from the time of negotiation of the treaties in the mid 1870's to prepare for this eventuality."<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Buckley explained "setbacks were due not to want of character or training, as many believe to this day, but to the economic and climatic conditions that made it a high risk enterprise for Indians and settlers alike."<sup>74</sup> Sarah Carter dedicated much of her introduction to renouncing the concept of Aboriginal lack of interest and exploring ideas similar to those mentioned by the other three authors. Consensus also exists amongst the revisionist authors that the frugality of the federal government in the area of Aboriginal affairs contributed to the limited growth of reserve agriculture. Buckley asserted, in reference to treaty negotiations, that "the terms were set with a view to minimizing obligations in the light of commitments already made to the construction of the railway and other costly enterprises."<sup>75</sup> Noel Dyck was even more forthright, stating "the drive for economy in Indian administration systematically retarded agricultural development."<sup>76</sup> This frugality in fulfilling the treaty requirements, according to the authors, facilitated the failure of reserve agriculture.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Miller, *Skyscrapers*, ix

<sup>72</sup> Elias, lxvi

<sup>73</sup> Dyck, "Opportunity," 121

<sup>74</sup> Buckley, *Wooden*, 52

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 35

<sup>76</sup> Dyck, "Opportunity," 127

<sup>77</sup> Buckley, *Wooden*, 52; Miller, *Skyscrapers*, 162, 200; Dyck, "Opportunity," 122,

It is interesting to note that the experiences of the First Nations residents of the Canadian prairies were mirrored by those living on the American plains. In "Talking with the Plow: Agricultural Policy and Indian Farming in the Canadian and U.S. Prairies," Rebecca Bateman compared the experiences of the Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples of Oklahoma with those of reserve residents of western Canada. In both areas Bateman found that the respective governments enacted policies and procedures such as the non-use of labour-saving equipment and severalty with the joint goals of creating excess lands to sell to white settlers and to create "the eventual cultural disappearance of Native people at any rate, rendering any permanent administration of their affairs ultimately unnecessary."<sup>78</sup>

A similar cross-border comparison was authored by Hana Samek entitled The Blackfoot Confederacy 1880-1920. In this work, Samek looked at the similarities and differences of the Blackfoot Peoples who reside on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel. Samek suggested the Canadian system of reserve administration, when compared to its counterpart in the United States during the same period, had a number of advantages.<sup>79</sup> However, none of these advantages made much of a difference when both administrations launched badly conceived and badly managed agricultural programs on Reserves which

---

133; Carter, Lost Harvests, 51. Carter does not actually state that the limited government spending inhibited farming, but does provide numerous cause and effect statements which imply this assertion. For example, on page 63 she comments on the Government's non-desire to spend money on animals and farming implements. On page 65, she notes that the inability of the band to take in the crop was due to lack of equipment and draught animals.

<sup>78</sup> Rebecca Bateman, "Talking with the Plow: Agricultural Policy and Indian Farming in the Canadian and U.S. Prairies", The Canadian Journal of Native Studies XVI, 2(1996), 219-225

<sup>79</sup> Hana Samek, The Blackfoot Confederacy, 1880-1920 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1987), 180

were unsuitable to grain farming. As a result, "many Blackfeet simply gave up on farming" and the subsequent reserve allotments and surrenders "further impeded the development of a reservation economy."<sup>80</sup>

Thomas Wessel made similar findings. In "Agriculture on the Reservation: The Case of the Blackfeet, 1885-1935" Wessel noted that the Blackfeet people of Montana were victims of repressive rations policies and enforced agricultural projects which were inappropriate to their environmental circumstances. As a result "instead of independent agricultural communities, the government created pockets of rural poverty physically fractionalized and politically factionalized."<sup>81</sup>

In 1987, R. Douglas Hurt published Indian Agriculture in America. In many ways, his work, a survey of the agricultural experiences of American reserve residents from treaty into the twentieth century, is similar to Carter's Lost Harvests. The examples of repressive government policies implemented by naive and often indifferent officials are also similar. The biggest difference between Hurt's work and that of Carter and the other recent authors is his Stanleyesque assertion that "the difficulty of cultural change...was most significant in the failure of the old nomadic and hunting tribes to adopt a whiteman's agricultural way of life."<sup>82</sup> Beyond this difference, Hurt concluded "...severalty, cultural resistance, and the western environment, together with federal leasing and heirship policies and inadequate agricultural support, placed the Indians, not

---

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 180

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Wessel, "Agriculture on the Reservations: The Case of the Blackfeet, 1885-1935" Journal of the West 23, no 4 (1979), 17

<sup>82</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, Indian Agriculture in America (University of Kansas Press 1987), 152

on the white man's road to self-sufficiency and civilization, but on the road to peonage."<sup>83</sup>

Hurt's findings are similar to those suggested by Wessel and Bateman and would indicate that the immediate post-treaty agricultural experiences for most of the First Nations peoples in North America were, unfortunately, similar.

Historians have been rather remiss in appraising the aboriginal farming activities that occurred on the plains after the turn of the century. The plethora of books and articles that examine the experiences of immigrant agriculturalists during the early part of the twentieth century rarely mention Native people's endeavours and, if they do, it is only a cursory note. Even amongst the earlier-mentioned works of Buckley, Miller and Carter, the evaluation of post-1900 agriculture is limited.

Within this scant history, two themes dominate the discussion. All the authors find that the government's primary focus during the period was to encourage the reserve residents to surrender land from their reserves so that the growing number of white settlers could use these properties.<sup>84</sup> Both Miller and Carter follow their earlier explorations of repressive government policies by noting the lengths to which the government went to encourage land surrenders. These actions included changing the Indian Act in 1906 and 1911 to make the process easier.<sup>85</sup> Under these amendments, the government was able to: release to the reserve residents up to fifty percent of the land sale monies in cash, a tempting situation for a cash poor society; see reserve land expropriated for the use of land development companies and

---

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 153

<sup>84</sup> Buckley, *Wooden*, 56; Miller, *Skyscrapers*, 202; Carter, *Lost Harvest*, 237; E Brian Tittle, *A Narrow Vision* (Vancouver, UBC Press 1986), 22; James Dempsey, *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War 1* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre 1999), 15

<sup>85</sup> Miller, *Skyscrapers*, 202; Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 244-245

municipalities; as well as remove reserve residents from reserves near communities with over 8,000 residents.

The second theme to emerge involves the First Nations' resistance to the increasing government incursion. James Dempsey stated that during the period after the turn of the century, "government domination had reached its peak and resistance was at a low ebb."<sup>86</sup> Miller's comments would support this assertion as he suggested the cases of successful resistance were few as the government would use "tools of compulsion,"<sup>87</sup> specifically, changes to the Indian Act which would impede or eliminate the reserve residents' ability to challenge the Department's desires. Carter's views on this are similar, as she stated "Indian resistance to surrender was generally pronounced and adamant to begin with but was generally broken down through a variety of tactics."<sup>88</sup>

The period also featured the establishment of the File Hills Colony in Saskatchewan. Created in 1901, the colony was the brainchild of W.M. Graham, then an Indian Agent at the Qu'Appelle agency. The colony was a farming settlement composed of select graduates of the local residential schools. These young men and women were brought together, expected to marry, set up modern and successful farms on pre-selected plots within the colony and live according to the Euro-Canadian ideals they had been taught in school. Based upon these objectives, E Brian Titley in his article "W.M. Graham: Indian Agent Extraordinaire" found that the colony was "undoubtedly a success."<sup>89</sup> In "Demonstrating Success: The File Hills

---

<sup>86</sup> James Dempsey, *Warriors*, 15

<sup>87</sup> Miller, *Skyscrapers*, 202

<sup>88</sup> Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 247

<sup>89</sup> E. Brian Titley, "W.M. Graham: Indian Agent Extraordinaire" *Prairie Forum*, vol 8, no 1 (1983), 28



Farm Colony", Sarah Carter agreed that, from an agricultural perspective, the colony was successful. However, in perpetuating her earlier themes of repressive government policies and aboriginal resistance, Carter noted numerous activities that were forbidden in the colony.<sup>90</sup> She also provided examples of resistance amongst the colonists to these suppressive rules, specifically those involving the continuance of traditional ceremonies.<sup>91</sup> However government reaction to opposition was the same here as on the other reserves and Carter found that objections and grievances were ignored or met with changed policies so as to secure government success.<sup>92</sup> An alternate point of view regarding the File Hills Colony is expressed by Eleanor Brass in I Walk in Two Worlds. As one of the first children born on the File Hills Colony, Brass's 1987 autobiography offers a rare glimpse at a First Nations perspective of the impact of these policies. Generally, Brass reflects positively upon the File Hills Colony, providing numerous examples of the agricultural and economic successes her family and neighbours enjoyed. Her view of the repressive and paternal administration by Graham and other government officials is very matter-of-fact and denotes no sense of grievance. For example, in referring to the earliest days of the colony, Brass comments "Mr. Graham made his own plans which were felt to be quite strict at times. A few beginners could not stand up to these rules and soon left for other parts."<sup>93</sup>

Another early twentieth-century reserve agricultural program that has been accorded some scholarship is the Greater Production Campaign (GPC). Unfortunately, most of these

---

<sup>90</sup> Sarah Carter, "Demonstrating Success: The File Hills Farm Colony" Prairie Forum Vol 16, no 2 (Fall 1991), 165

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 169-171

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 171

<sup>93</sup> Eleanor Brass, I Walk in Two Worlds (Calgary: Glenbow Museum 1987), 11

works merely summarize the program. In Lost Harvests Sarah Carter devoted two pages to the GPC, with particular attention to the repressive aspects of the policy. She found that the project "was plagued by problems of mismanagement and the financial returns were not impressive. The experiment was soon phased out."<sup>94</sup> Miller holds a similar view to Carter, and briefly described the "ill-starred" 'Greater Production' scheme through which Ottawa could "help themselves" to reserve lands for the good of the war effort.<sup>95</sup> James Dempsey is of similar mind, stating that the GPC "was an indication of how easily the government could override native rights by simply amending the Indian Act."<sup>96</sup> More bluntly, Rob Omura described the Indian Act amendments under the GPC as "perhaps the most blatantly coercive policies under the DIA administration."<sup>97</sup>

Three authors have a slightly different interpretation of the GPC. E. Brian Titley devoted a number of pages to the campaign in his book A Narrow Vision that examined the public career of Duncan Campbell Scott, long time head of the Department of Indian Affairs. Although a good portion of the discussion is dedicated to the strained relationship between Scott and William Graham, the individual appointed Commissioner for the Campaign in 1918, Titley also provided a good summary of the program. While expressing concern over the "gradual erosion of Indian control of their reserve lands,"<sup>98</sup> Titley concluded that the

---

<sup>94</sup> Carter, Lost Harvests, 251

<sup>95</sup> Miller, Skyscrapers, 203

<sup>96</sup> James Dempsey, Warriors, 74

<sup>97</sup> Rob Omura, "Blackfoot Legal Culture: Wrongful Injuries on the Canadian Blackfoot Reserves, 1880-1920" (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1995), 133

<sup>98</sup> Titley, Narrow Vision, 41

extraordinary intrusions were understandable in a time of war and justified by the economic success of the campaign.

The most detailed look at the GPC is found in John Leonard Taylor's Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years 1918-1939. Taylor considered the contemporary arguments both for and against the campaign, reprinting parts of the House of Commons debates as well as R.N. Wilson's memorandum. In his appraisal, Taylor dismissed Wilson's assertions as narrowly focussed and politically motivated, believing "it is difficult to establish criteria for success in connection with a project like Greater Production."<sup>99</sup> He also states that the GPC did not result in permanent loss of land by the reserve residents.<sup>100</sup>

In his article "Introducing 'Our Betrayed Wards,' By R.N. Wilson," anthropologist A.D. Fisher examined the views and concerns expressed by R.N. Wilson in his 1921 memorandum "Our Betrayed Wards." In his critique, Fisher stated that Wilson was correct in asserting that the implementation of the GPC on the Blood Reserve in Alberta resulted in the destruction of the reserve's agricultural base. He outlined how the Blood people, despite the lack of support from governmental and local officials, had developed a flourishing stock cattle industry.<sup>101</sup> The collapse of this industry between 1918 and 1921 coincided, noted Fisher, with the years during which the GPC was administered. While much of the blame can be attached to the new government policies, Fisher cautioned, there were several circumstances that aggravated the situation. He suggested that Minister of the Interior Arthur Meighen, while a capable man,

---

<sup>99</sup> John Leonard Taylor, Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years 1918-1939. (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1984), 20

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 25

<sup>101</sup> A.D. Fisher, "Introducing 'Our Betrayed Wards,' by R.N. Wilson" in Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology vol 4, no 1 (1974): 21-31

was too busy and too far removed from Alberta to know the impact of the Act. As well, overzealous agents at the local level and poor weather conditions also contributed to the industry's collapse.

The studies on the GPC highlight the intriguing and repressive aspects of the program, but were limited in their approach. Fisher's article, while interesting, only looked at the impact upon the Blood Reserve within the frame of reference established by the original memorandum written by R.N. Wilson. Carter's attention to the Campaign was constrained by her focus on the pre-World War One situation. The book by Titley concentrated on the long career of D.C. Scott and was, therefore, unable to delve deeply into any of the specific programs undertaken while he was in charge. A similar statement may be made of James Dempsey, whose focus on First Nations involvement in World War One left little room for analysis of a home-front agricultural policy. Taylor's study was also part of a much larger work. The sum of scholarship on the GPC, then, is a short list of publications that essentially survey the subject, leaving many of the details and effects of the Campaign unexplored.

Such is the case for most aspects of First Nations agricultural history. Most studies of agricultural pursuits are considered within the framework of a larger study of government policies. While agriculture is often a central feature of the policy analysis related to the western reserves, as is the case in the works of Dyck, Buckley and Miller, the level of exploration of the subject is somewhat minimal as the agricultural policies are studied in conjunction with other socio-economic initiatives of the Government. Only Sarah Carter explored the topic in any depth. However, her focus upon the dual themes of government repression and First Nations resistance, while important avenues of approach, do somewhat limit the scope of her studies. Aside from agents, senior bureaucrats and other government officials, what other individuals could have induced success or failure? Did any reserve

residents influence failure?<sup>102</sup> These questions need to be explored in greater detail. As well, why do discussions of agriculture within these works stop at 1920? The period of reference for both Miller and Buckley extends to the present day, and Carter's decision to stop at World War One was arbitrary. In their defence, the authors might offer that the government was no longer interested in promoting agriculture; hence the selling and leasing of reserve land after 1896.<sup>103</sup> However, new reserve agriculture policies continued to be introduced, and agriculture is still a significant resource base on most of the prairie reserves. This period needs research. The field of historical study of First Nations agriculture has grown greatly during the past twenty years. From the general acceptance of Stanley's concept of the First Nations as an uninterested group who could neither comprehend nor adapt to agriculture, the field has bloomed to include a number of works which identify the long association and interest the Aboriginal peoples of the prairies have had with agriculture and the numerous obstacles they have had to battle in an attempt to practice an agrarian lifestyle. However, in spite of this new literature, the history of the reserve agriculture traditions and the importance of agriculture within the economic and social spheres of the reserve residents is still not truly appreciated, particularly by the government. Consider the recently completed Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. After several years of research, in November of 1996 the Commission released a final report containing over 4000 pages of background information and recommendations on the various aspects of the past relationships between Aboriginal peoples, non-Aboriginal peoples and the levels of government as well as recommendations on

---

<sup>102</sup> In this assertion I am not promoting the 'untrainable' argument asserted by Stanley. Rather, did any First Nations individual, through mistake or malice, damage agricultural aspirations at the local or regional level?

<sup>103</sup> The three authors (Dyck is excused for his study period ends in 1885) allude to this idea within their respective works.

how to redefine these relationships. A significant portion of the report dealt with land issues yet agriculture is accorded little more than passing comment within the historical background of the paper. Obviously more work is still needed to enhance our understanding of the significance of agriculture to the lives of First Nations peoples. A new field of historical study has been broken.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### Preparing the Field: Western Canada prior to the Introduction of the Greater Production Campaign

"Do you know kid, its(sic) hard work parting with your own folk & old friends, not knowing -----, well I'm going to come back anyway. So will only say au revoir, with kindest remembrance to all friends, love and kisses for Flo, + all you want for your dear self..."<sup>1</sup>

Private Leslie Dawson's words to his fiancé upon his departure from training in Ireland echoed the thoughts of a generation of men who participated in World War One. Prompted by duty to King and country and filled with trepidation, these men left their homes and loved ones for the far-flung battlefields of Europe. The war suspended all that was normal for not just the soldiers, but for all those in the participating nations. As the battles went on and the casualty counts rose, Canadians sought to bring balance and solace to their lives in a variety of ways. Most supported tremendous increases in Government incursions into daily life; some focussed upon cultivating new political ideologies; others turned to social and religious based movements. The pursuit of these actions was wrought with moral deliberation and all were perused in the name of patriotism. It was in this tremulous atmosphere that the Greater Production Campaign was conceived and introduced in April of 1918.

The western Canada that Dawson had left in 1914 was already a region in transition. The preceding twenty-five years had witnessed tremendous changes in the west, and the prairie

---

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Dawson to Helen Luscombe, April 27, 1915. Letter in author's possession.

peoples and economy were still trying to adjust when the war broke out. The most notable aspect of this transition in the west was the immense increase in population. Census records indicate that the population of the prairies had grown by 529%, from 251,000 in 1891 to 1.328 million in 1911. The population increase resulted in a number of new realities on the prairies. With the immigrants came many new languages, cultures and customs which served to challenge the traditional French/English dualism that had emerged in the west. As well, the newcomers brought a variety of political ideas which conflicted with the English-style class hierarchy which dominated much of the prairies. A third significant change was the evolution of an urban population in the west. Often overlooked is the fact that at least one-third of the many thousands who arrived on the prairies prior to 1914 ended up in the flourishing cities and towns in the west, creating a new rural/urban friction.<sup>2</sup>

With all the new factions trying to find identity and voice within the new western Canada, the existing spheres of power changed. Prior to 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Churches were the authors of power and influence in the west. In 1870, the Federal government assumed the decision-making power for the prairies, and exercised it primarily through the North West Mounted Police, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Indian Affairs. By 1914, these former determiners of prairie life were sharing the decision-making and influencing role with new corporations, two new provincial governments, a number of labour unions and cooperatives, several cultural-based organizations and many municipal governments. Within the federal government, power over western affairs had shifted from the Police and Indian Affairs Departments to the settlement and commerce-oriented Department of

---

<sup>2</sup> Douglas R. Francis and Howard Palmer, eds., *The Prairie West*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press 1992), 511



Interior. In the drive to establish these new relationships and hierarchies of influence, the First Nations People were seldom a consideration.

While the rest of western Canada was booming in the pre-war years, the lot of the reserve residents of the prairies was literally shrinking. The 'peasant' farming policies implemented in the early 1890's had, as earlier stated, stalled any progress that had been achieved in the early 1880's. By forcing the reserve residents to use basic hand tools in place of the modern machinery that had been used earlier, the policies did more than just limit the acreage that could be farmed and the potential agricultural production. The policies created a great deal of anger and mistrust towards the Department of Indian Affairs officials and caused many to lose interest in farming.<sup>3</sup> The election of the Liberal government in 1896, and the resulting removal of Hayter Reed as Deputy Minister in 1897, saw the end of the 'peasant' farming policies. However, few other positives were to occur during the pre-war period. Given charge of both the Ministries of the Interior and Indian Affairs was Clifford Sifton. Because of the increasing importance and complexity of the role of the Department of the Interior due to the increasing western settlement, Indian Affairs often finished a distant second in terms of the Minister's dollars, interest and time. During Sifton's tenure, the budget for the Department of the Interior increased five-fold while that of Indian Affairs rose a mere 30%.<sup>4</sup> Sifton also perpetuated a government tradition of hiring employees who "had little direct contact with the Indians and

---

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Carter, Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1999), 170; Helen Buckley, From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 54

<sup>4</sup> D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1896-1905" Prairie Forum vol 2, no 2 (1977), 128

most were relatively unsympathetic, if not 'hard-line,' in their attitudes."<sup>5</sup> These 'hard-line' attitudes presented themselves in a number of ways.

A constant feature in the Department's approach to reserve administration was a desire for economy. Money was to be saved and generated by any means possible. Soon after Sifton took office the Department closed the Commissioner's Office in the west, eliminated the position and most of the staff, and centralized all administration functions in Ottawa. Not only did this action remove much of the manpower to deal with western issues, it placed even greater distance between the policy makers and the First Nations peoples of the prairies. At the same time, average annual salaries in the Department decreased by 4%.<sup>6</sup> One of the positions most drastically affected by the reductions was that of Farm Instructor. The 25% salary reduction experienced by a number of Instructors during Sifton's regime reflects the importance the new administration placed upon agricultural training.

The lack of concern for agriculture as shown by the in-house reductions found its way into other methods of economy practiced by the Department. The late 1890's witnessed a concerted effort by the Department to raise funds for reserve operations through sales of 'unutilised' reserve lands. The surrender and sale of reserve lands was not a new concept, having been in practice since the 1870's. What was new was the vigour with which the Department pursued this policy in the first decade of the century. A number of factors contributed to this impetus. Most notable was the demand for farmland being created by the tremendous number of immigrants. As settlement increased, good farmland became more difficult to find and sold for ever-increasing prices. Coinciding with the immigrant interests was

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 130

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 132

that of townfolk and land speculators already in the west. Most of these groups believed that the First Nations peoples held far more land than they could ever use, often good quality agricultural land in locations close to settlements and railways. These groups took their cue from the government who felt that the small acreage totals which had been developed since the 1870's indicated that the reserve agriculture program was unsuccessful.<sup>7</sup> Not to make use of these 'idle' lands was perceived as foolish and an impediment to the successful development of those areas.<sup>8</sup> The selling of the land was also attractive to the department. The monies realized from such sales could be utilized to alleviate distress on reserves, for payment of debts or as a capital resource for the reserve developments. Moreover, the department was always concerned with reducing what it felt was an exorbitant operating budget for the western reserves; as accountant Frederick H. Paget noted in a memorandum to Duncan Campbell Scott in 1913:

It should be explained to them [the Blackfoot] that it has been simply an act of grace on the part of the Department to have borne the expense all these years of feeding them and providing many of their other wants; that the Department is under no obligation in so far as the Treaty made with them is concerned; that the large tract of land that was set apart for them when the Treaty was entered into was intended to be the means of supporting them, not by retaining it all, but by selling a portion of it when it became valuable and thus provide a fund out of which their wants could be met.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Proponents of this idea ignored the fact that almost one half of the homestead applications filed between 1870 and 1930 by non-Aboriginal farmers failed. See Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1987) 309

<sup>8</sup> Stewart Raby, "Indian Land Surrenders in Southern Saskatchewan" *Canadian Geographer* XVII, (1973), 37-42; Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press 1990), 246

<sup>9</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Paget to Scott, November 10, 1913

The government balanced these pressures, which often came with political pressures, with their mandate to serve the reserve residents. Sifton did ponder these issues and went on public record numerous times defending the necessity of securing surrenders by the Reserve residents before any sale could take place. However, he did still default to the position that surrenders would be sought "when we think it will not interfere with the means of livelihood of the Indians."<sup>10</sup> Sifton's successor as Minister of the Interior and Indian Affairs, Frank Oliver, was not so reflective. Oliver had long been a non-supporter of maintaining reserve integrity. In 1881, Oliver's *Edmonton Bulletin* expressed great concern over the decision by a group of Cree to locate their Reserve across the river from the city, asking if the government "was to be run in the interests of the settlers or merely the Indians."<sup>11</sup> An editorial in the same paper commented, "The land is needed by better men." Oliver's disposition did not change upon becoming minister. In response to a question in parliament regarding the possible delays in development that might be caused by 'unused' prairie reserve land, Oliver responded that while First Nations rights should be protected, "if it becomes a question between the Indians and the whites, the interests of the whites will have to be provided for."<sup>12</sup> His position was further qualified in the 1908 Department Annual Report, which stated:

So long as no particular harm or inconvenience accrued from the Indians' holding vacant lands out of proportion to their requirements, and no profitable disposition thereof was possible, the department firmly opposed

---

<sup>10</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 1904, cols. 6952-3, July 18, 1904. As in Hall, "Sifton and Indian", 142

<sup>11</sup> Raby, "Indian", 39. This quotation paraphrases copy in the *Edmonton Bulletin*. 17 Jan. 1881.

<sup>12</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 74, cols 948-49 (30 March 1906) as in Titley, *Narrow Vision*, 21.

any attempt to induce them to divest themselves of any part of their reserves.

Conditions, however, have changed and it is now recognized that where Indians are holding tracts of farming or timber lands beyond their possible requirements and by so doing seriously impeding the growth of settlement, and there is such demand as to ensure profitable sale, the product of which can be invested for the benefit of the Indians and relieve *pro tanto* the country of the burden of their maintenance, it is in the best interests of all concerned to encourage such sales.<sup>13</sup>

So as to better facilitate reserve land surrenders, Oliver made significant changes to the Indian Act. In 1906 the Act was amended to increase from 10% to 50% the portion of the purchase price that could be distributed directly to Reserve residents. More extreme were the two amendments made in 1911. The first allowed all companies, municipalities and other authorities with statutory power to expropriate as much reserve land as was necessary for public works. The second amendment, called section 49a or the Oliver Act, allowed for the forced removal of residents of any reserve located next to a town of 8000 people so that the reserve could be expropriated for use by the town or other authority.

The period from 1896 to the First World War witnessed a great number of land surrenders and sales across the prairies, particularly after Oliver took office in 1905. In 1909, Oliver reported to the House of Commons that between July 1, 1896 and March 31, 1909, the Department had sold 725,517 acres of land.<sup>14</sup> In Saskatchewan alone, 300,367 acres were surrendered for sale.<sup>15</sup> The directive towards accelerated land surrenders came

---

<sup>13</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, xxxv (1908). As in John Leslie and Ron Macquire, eds., The Historical Development of the Indian Act (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1979) 105

<sup>14</sup> Titley, A Narrow Vision, 22

<sup>15</sup> Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, Indians Rights and Treaties Research Program Report (Regina, 1981), 35

at an unfavourable time for the reserve residents of the west. The First Nations population on the prairies had steadily decreased from the time of the signing of the treaties through to the turn of the century. While populations did stabilize during the first decade of the twentieth century, the reduced population made it easy to justify the alienation of reserve lands. The period was also one of flux within the leadership of the prairie reserves as the last of the Treaty signatory chiefs died and were replaced by new leaders.

In spite of these internal factors, the Government directives and the pressures for surrenders put forth by the non-Aboriginal populace, the reserve residents did offer resistance to the surrender offers. Some groups, such as the residents of the Blood and Ochapowace Reserves managed to rebuff significant pressures to surrender portions of their land during the pre-war period.<sup>16</sup> The government ascribed these rebuffs, as well as other surrender resistance efforts, to the work of "bad" or "non-progressive" Indians or the influence of outside "troublemakers." In response to these challenges, the government made the aforementioned changes to the Indian Act, allowing agents to dangle the promise of greater amounts of money to be distributed onto the cash-strapped reserves, or to just bypass the necessity of surrenders completely in favour of expropriation. Faced with these pressures, the realization of the positive benefits the cash infusion would have on their standard of living as well as the government's tendency to force repeated surrender votes until a definitive decision was reached, it is not surprising that many thousands of acres of land were alienated from reserves during this period.

The push for land surrenders was not the only pressure being exerted upon the reserve residents during the pre-war period. Since the introduction of the Indian Act in

---

<sup>16</sup> Raby, "Indian Land Surrenders", 6

1876, the government had introduced numerous amendments that were aimed at the coercive assimilation of the First Nations peoples of the prairies. The belief of the department was a Darwinian attitude that the Anglo-Victorian lifestyle and belief system were inherently superior to those followed by the reserve residents and, thus, the First Nations peoples should abandon all elements of their lifeways and adopt the "superior" way of life. The government was fearful that this process, if left to natural devices, would take many years, and, thus, be a significant expense. Therefore, the policies and laws imposed in the post-1876 period were aimed at dismantling the traditional ceremonial, economic and political structures of the plains peoples, while, at the same time, providing opportunity for indoctrination of Anglo-Canadian religious and educational philosophies. In the pre-war period, a number of amendments to the Indian Act were made to aid this indoctrination process.

In 1894 the Act was changed to give the government the power to make, via an order-in-council, the attendance of First Nations children at government-sponsored schools compulsory. When the treaties were signed, the First Nations peoples had encouraged the establishment of government administered schools as they were seen as an aid to understanding the Anglo-Canadian culture with which the treaties had been negotiated. The satisfaction the reserve residents had at the establishment of the schools soon turned to despair. The on-reserve schools asked for in the treaties were poorly equipped and staffed and the government placed greater emphasis on promoting denominationally run, centralized residential schools. The removal of the children from "deleterious home influences" to these facilities created, according the government, a better environment in which to civilize the young Aboriginal population while, at the same time, satisfying the political pressures being exerted by religious organizations.<sup>17</sup>

---

Understandably, First Nations parents were apprehensive to send their children away to these facilities for extended periods of time. This apprehension was increased by the poor physical treatment of the students and wretched living conditions. These conditions contributed to the diseases that claimed the lives of more than 25 percent of the pre-1914 residential school students.<sup>18</sup> The 1894 Indian Act amendments were an attempt by the government to pacify the concerns of the missionaries and agents about the large numbers of children who were not attending school. Though the government did not make attendance compulsory for many years, it was hoped that the threat of such legal actions would encourage wary parents to send their children. It was a losing battle. Attendance requirements were unenforceable during this period and a growing number of parents refused to send children or removed their children at the earliest opportunity.<sup>19</sup> By the turn of the century, the new Sifton-administered DIA was disheartened by the state of, and lack of success within, the educational system. In 1904, Sifton admitted to the House of Commons "the attempt to give a highly civilized education to the Indian child was practically a failure."<sup>20</sup> Reflecting the government's argument about the perceived short-coming and inabilities of the reserve residents used to explain the lack of success in farming, Sifton attributed the failure of students emerging from the education system to the deficient physical and moral make up of the Indians.<sup>21</sup> The 1910 overhaul of the

---

<sup>17</sup> J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1989), 196

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 199

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 198

<sup>20</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 1904, 6948 as in J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1996), 135

<sup>21</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*: 135



education system that provided more operating funds and better living conditions was built around a reduced educational structure aimed "to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment."<sup>22</sup>

The 1895 amendment to Section 114 of the Act contained a clause that forbade First Nations participation in, or hosting of, ceremonies that involved the giving away of gifts and/or any form of body disfigurement. On the prairies, the amendment was aimed at curtailing the Sun and Thirst dances. These were large, multi-band ceremonies staged in the summer that could involve both the forbidden elements, though all ceremonies involving dancing could be banned. The inspiration for the law was two fold. On one hand, religious leaders believed that the propagation of any form of traditional ceremony retarded any civilizing actions they could undertake through the schools and chapels. On the other hand, Indian agents were concerned that these activities disrupted pursuit of the agricultural lifestyle by removing complete families from the farm for several days in the middle of the growing season. Although the penalties were fairly severe, with jail terms lasting from two to six months, the law was difficult to enforce. The wording of the amendment was ambiguous and enforcing the legislation was left to the ability and interpretation of local agents.<sup>23</sup> Reserve residents also became adept at modifying ceremonies to fit within the law's parameters, exposing loopholes within the amendment or, simply, holding ceremonies covertly. Still, arrests were made, and ceremonies important to the traditionally blended economic, political and spiritual lifestyle of the plains peoples were disrupted.

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 140

<sup>23</sup> Katherine Pettipas, Severing the Ties that Bind (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press 1994), 109

The ultimate extension of these assimilative policies of the government was the creation of the File Hills Colony in 1901. The colony was the brainchild of William M. Graham. Graham began his career with the Department of Indian Affairs as an eighteen-year-old clerk in the Moose Mountain Agency in Manitoba in 1885. He progressed quickly through the department and was named Agent at the File Hills Agency in 1897.<sup>24</sup> Graham was introduced to the department and its policies at an early age by his father, who had begun working for Indian Affairs in Manitoba in the 1870's.<sup>25</sup> William Graham was a firm believer in the department's objectives to "civilize" the First Nations Peoples, meaning all past traditions would be abandoned to be replaced by a Christian-based Euro-Canadian culture.<sup>26</sup> These policies were rooted in the theories of "nineteenth century evangelical religion, cultural imperialism, and laissez-faire economics."<sup>27</sup> Graham's philosophy on enacting these policies was to assert strong paternal guidance over his charges. He believed that the only way to make reserve residents a part of mainstream society was to remove them from "negative" influences of family and tradition. These influences included First Nations' supposed tendencies towards laziness, uncleanliness and lack of organizing ability.<sup>28</sup> Graham used all these personal views in creating File Hills.

---

<sup>24</sup> E. Brian Titley, "W.M. Graham: Indian Agent Extraordinaire" Prairie Forum Vol. 8, No. 1 (1983), 26

<sup>25</sup> William Graham, Treaty Days: Reflections of an Indian Commissioner (Calgary: Glenbow Museum 1991), 2

<sup>26</sup> Titley, "W.M. Graham," 25

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 25

<sup>28</sup> Graham, Treaty Days, 6-7; Titley, "W.M. Graham," 27

The project conceived by Graham was "an experiment in radical social engineering" which would feature hand-selected graduates from residential schools being paired off to establish an agricultural-based colony on 19,000 acres of the Peepeekisis Reserve in Saskatchewan.<sup>29</sup> Graham's objectives were to halt the "retrogression" of school graduates upon their return to the tribal community by creating a group of First Nations peoples who had adopted the religious and economic virtues of the Anglo-Canadian culture. With department assistance, and careful supervision, it was hoped that a completely assimilated and self-sufficient community would emerge. Part of this careful supervision included the prohibiting of contact with non-colony Aboriginal peoples and only limited interactions between the colonists themselves, as well as forbidding any Native ceremonial expression. From an economic perspective, the Colony was a success. In 1914, 2000 acres were under crop by the thirty-three farmers on the Colony and all had modern equipment as well as wood frame houses furnished with up-to-date accessories.<sup>30</sup> The Colony served as a showpiece for touring dignitaries, providing evidence of the progress of the prairie reserve residents as well as the effective administration of department policies by the ambitious Graham. On a social level, however, the Colony failed. While the colonists adopted the recreation activities, religious mores and individualism desired by Graham, assimilation was not completed. Most colony residents did not wish to give up their traditional culture in a trade-off for living in the colony. However, with all movements heavily monitored, the colonists had to sneak off the colony to attend forbidden dances and feasts with non-colony Indians.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Titley, "W.M. Graham," 27

<sup>30</sup> Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 239

<sup>31</sup> Eleanor Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum 1987), 13

Unfortunately, the Colony residents, due to their voluntary choice to join and stay in the colony, were viewed with suspicion by non-colony First Nations peoples.<sup>32</sup> The result was a group of people that did not fit in either the tribal or the Euro-Canadian communities.

In spite of the obstacles placed in front of the reserve residents, there were a few positive occurrences during the period. The population of the First Nations peoples on the prairies balanced in the late 1890's and began to show small growth in the pre-war years. Reserve farmers also had some success during the period. The land under cultivation on the prairie reserves grew from 13,490 acres in 1896 to 52,669 acres in 1914.<sup>33</sup> In 1907, Agent R.N. Wilson was successful in gaining department approval to launch wheat farming on the Blood reserve. By 1914, this reserve had 4,665 acres cultivated, the most of any Reserve in Alberta.<sup>34</sup> These positives, though, were few and far between on the prairie reserves of the pre-war period.

The outbreak of World War One in the summer of 1914 found Canada enthusiastic, though unprepared. Most foresaw the war only lasting a few months with a quick and decisive victory by the allied forces. Many Canadians were concerned that the war would in fact be over before they were able to reach the front lines. Few anticipated the incredible carnage that was wrought during the gruelling four-year global conflict.

The announcement of the war had a number of immediate impacts upon the prairies. Most noticeable were the young men who began to leave the west in large

---

<sup>32</sup> Edward Ahenekeew, Voice of the Plains Cree (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd 1973), 131

<sup>33</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report (1896, 1914)

<sup>34</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1914

numbers either for Canadian military units or to return to their former homelands to take up the fight. As one recruit said of his battalion: "Few of us had any relatives there; the majority of us were Britishers who had left the old country to try our luck in the new land..."<sup>35</sup> The war announcement also served to eliminate much of the unemployment crisis which had plagued the prairies since the economic bust of 1913. Suddenly, out-of-work labourers and unsuccessful homesteaders had an opportunity to gain secure temporary employment at \$1.10 per day as well as support for their families by joining the armed forces.<sup>36</sup>

By 1915, the harsh reality of the war had sunk into the collective mindset of the country. The glamourized idea of the war as an exciting romp that would be over in a few months was replaced by the glum realization that the battle might last many months or years. With that realization came the recognition that these troops were going to need supplies. Of these, food was most crucial. Britain had been in the unenviable position of being unable to grow enough food to feed its population since 1860, relying on the nations of the Empire to keep its larders full.<sup>37</sup> As the war ground on, the sustenance needs of the soldiers exacerbated the food shortage immensely. The task of feeding the allied forces fell to the other countries of the world, of which Canada was the closest. This important role was not lost upon the Canadian officials who projected great pride in making statements such as "under such conditions, food production in North America

---

<sup>35</sup> Thompson, *Harvests*, 24

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 25

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1983*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, (New York, Longmans 1984), 4

assumes an unprecedented importance and it is not surprising that those in authority in Great Britain should be looking to Canada as never before for supplies of food."<sup>38</sup>

The war years were generally good for the prairie farmers. The tremendous need for grain production for the war caused a great increase in the price of wheat. To slow the inflationary prices, the federal government set the price of wheat at \$2.21 per bushel in 1917, an amount which was more than three times the pre-war price.<sup>39</sup> The war years were also a period of good growing conditions across most of the west, with 1914 and 1915 especially good. These two factors led many to take up farming. Between 1916 and 1921, over 40,000 new farms were created in the prairies.<sup>40</sup> The favourable growing conditions, combined with the prices and the constant encouragement of the government to plant more crops allowed the wheat acreage in the west to increase by 73%, from 9.3 million acres in 1914 to 16.1 million acres in 1918.<sup>41</sup> Beyond the positive crop returns during the war, the ongoing need for food made the farmer an essential service in the eyes of many government officials. So much so, farmers were promised an exemption from the 1917 conscription bill.

The 1914 to 1918 period also saw tremendous social change in the west. As the months turned into years and the impacts of the war reached into every household, people were faced with ever-deepening questions regarding the fallacies of the modern society that allowed such a calamity. Answers to these questions were sought through a variety

---

<sup>38</sup> SAB RG 261 File 29.5 "Sasks part in the Greater Production Campaign" (no date)

<sup>39</sup> Thompson, *Harvests*, 59

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 61

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 61

of social and political movements that, though active prior to the war, gained popular resonance and support during the years of conflict. The prairies had a mish-mash population of recently arrived immigrants from around the globe, though primarily from Britain and the United States. These various groups, in place of the still evolving prairie social and political identity, turned to their past experiences to help them create what they hoped would be a better society than the one that entered the war. Those that believed that women's participation in the democratic process would add a needed dimension to the parliamentary process were successful in prompting the enacting of universal suffrage legislation in the Prairie provinces. Others who believed that easy access to liquor was the cause of society's decay were able to have prohibition laws passed across the land. Labourers who thought that the capitalists were the cause of societal imbalance were able to organize numerous unions and associations as well as stage multiple strikes during the war years.

A common thread in all these movements was reliance upon increased governmental controls in the population's work and personal lives to effect the desired changes. Government incursion was a feature of daily life during the war. The passing of the War Measures Act on August 14, 1914 essentially suspended most parliamentary processes for the duration as the Government assumed unilateral power to take whatever actions it deemed necessary for the good of the war effort. During the four years of the war, the federal government was forced to walk a difficult line between maintaining some semblance of a democratic state and meeting the ever increasing calls for government controls to stave off inflationary and profiteering influences upon the economy.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> The Government of Saskatchewan went so far as to ask the Federal Government to fix prices for agricultural equipment, nationalize coal mines, packing houses, flour mills, and railways as well as to ban the domestic use of bacon, cheese and

The war reached into the Prairie reserve communities as it did to the rest of western Canada. Despite their meagre financial and human resources, the reserve communities of the west were willing and generous patrons of the war cause. Driven by the same loyalty to the King as other volunteers, as well as the opportunity to escape the monotony of reserve life and to fulfil the traditional male role as warrior, over 400 men from the prairie reserves joined the military.<sup>43</sup> Those who could not leave helped contribute over \$28,000 to various patriotic fund-raising initiatives.<sup>44</sup> However, with the spectacle of war taking place, First Nations peoples slid nearly completely from public consciousness between 1914 and 1918. There was not much new to see. Daily life on the reserves continued to be beset by the same issues as in the pre-war years: paternalistic government administration, inadequate and misguided schooling, improperly supported agricultural programs and the continued push for land surrenders. Reserve farmers, like their non-Native counterparts, were urged to do all they could for the war effort. Yearly campaigns to "help win the war" were announced, as were garden competitions amongst Reserve agriculturalists.<sup>45</sup> For some, though, these efforts were not enough. With the government's movement towards nationalizing services and means of production in the name of the war, there were those both internal and external to government who felt that Reserve lands should be appropriated to use in more productive ways. The stage was set for the Greater Production Campaign.

---

margarine. SAB RG 261, File 29.5: Memorandum titled "Agricultural Production in 1918."

<sup>43</sup> James Dempsey, *Warriors of the King* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center 1999), 83

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 106

<sup>45</sup> RG10, Volume 3086, File 27922-1A; RG 10 Volume 1620



## CHAPTER THREE:

“Good, Practical Farmers:”<sup>1</sup>

### The Sowing of the Greater Production Campaign

"One of the greatest schemes for developing production that ever took place in Western Canada"<sup>2</sup> is how W.M. Graham described, to Arthur Meighen, his idea to increase grain production on reserves. Graham's letter set in action a series of meetings and events that would see the development of a nation-wide agricultural program known as the Greater Production Campaign.

Graham's timing of his letter could not have been better. The Union Government under the leadership of Robert Borden had been elected just weeks before and was anxiously trying to develop policy ideas for 1918. The Prairie provinces had been extremely supportive of the Union cause, returning Unionists in 40 of 43 seats, and were hopeful that the new government structure would bode well for the region.<sup>3</sup> One of the early objectives of the new government was to repair the strained relationship between

---

<sup>1</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, (1918), 1052. The statement was made by Mr. Henders, Member of Parliament for the riding of MacDonald in Manitoba in support of leasing reserve lands to white men as he believed "a considerable amount of the land held by Indians and ostensibly farmed by them is now in such a condition of filth..."

<sup>2</sup> MG 26, series I, Volume 4, pg 2223-2225, W.M. Graham to Arthur Meighen, January 7, 1918

<sup>3</sup> John Thompson, *The Harvests of War* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd 1978), 145

westerners and Food Controller's Office. Introduced in 1917, the Food Controller's Office was established to facilitate the conservation of food products, an idea that was viewed as unfair and even prejudicial against prairie residents.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a prairie-focussed program was desired.

Another factor in Graham's favour was the ever-increasing need for grain production. When the war would end was still in doubt. As well, the need for grain in Europe would continue for at least a season after the conclusion of hostilities as the continent rebuilt its agricultural infrastructure. With these thoughts in the minds of many government officials, any plan to stimulate farm production was encouraged.

The Government's desire to stimulate farm production was also motivated by decreasing crop returns occurring on the prairies. A combination of poor farming practices and drought conditions across the prairies caused the crop yield to decrease steadily after 1915.<sup>5</sup> By 1918, average crop yields were less than half their pre-war values and more production was needed just to keep the grain supply level.

Graham's cause was also assisted by his political connections. His most important ally was Arthur Meighen, the future Prime Minister, and in 1917-18, the Minister of the Interior and overseer of the Department of Indian Affairs. The connection arose from Graham's wife, Violette, who was the sister of Meighen's wife's stepfather. Though a seemingly distant relative, Violette was viewed by the family as Meighen's aunt, and their correspondence reflected this closeness.<sup>6</sup> Another significant political connection of Graham's was W.R. Motherwell, who in 1917-18 was the Minister of

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 158

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 68

<sup>6</sup> E. Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision (Vancouver: UBC Press 1986), 185

Agriculture for the Province of Saskatchewan. Motherwell's wife, Kate Gillespie, had previously been the Principal of the File Hills Presbyterian Indian boarding school and helped Graham pick the first group of student settlers for the File Hills Colony.<sup>7</sup> After Kate left the missionary service to marry Motherwell in 1908, both husband and wife were regular visitors to the Colony, which was located only a few miles from the Motherwell farm. Mrs Motherwell was particularly active in the affairs of the Colony and in the lives of the colony residents.<sup>8</sup>

Graham's proposal received immediate attention from his Department as well as his politically connected friends. On January 31, a circular was sent out to all Indian Agents promoting the need for increased farming activities and asking agents to "call your Indians together and organize a greater production campaign in your agency."<sup>9</sup> Also on January 31, Graham received a letter from James Calder, Minister of Immigration and Colonization asking him to come to Ottawa to meet with Ministers who were interested in the scheme.<sup>10</sup> The letter went on to explain that the Ottawa invitation arose from the forwarding of the program proposal to Calder by Motherwell, who was in support of the scheme. The letter also contains reference to the activities as the "greater production campaign."

---

<sup>7</sup> J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1986), 146

<sup>8</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 146; Eleanor Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum 1987), 9, 38; Sarah Carter, "Demonstrating Success: The File Hills Farm Colony" *Prairie Forum* 16, vol 2, (Fall 1991), 164

<sup>9</sup> NAC RG 10, Reel C14868, volume 1620, page 359: Circular to Silas Milligan, Indian Agent, Leask, Sask, January 31, 1918.

<sup>10</sup> Glenbow, M8097, Box 1, File 1 "Graham Papers". Letter from Office of Minister of Immigration and Colonization to Graham, January 31, 1918.

It is unclear when Graham went to Ottawa, but the development of the program progressed very quickly after January 31. On February 7, W.R. Motherwell called a meeting with all his Branch Heads to draft a list of suggestions outlining what the Province could do towards the Greater Production Campaign.<sup>11</sup> The resulting list featured nine suggestions for producing more grain and seven ideas for increasing livestock. Suggestions included working with municipalities to better organize the supply and demand of labour, better control of weeds, gopher-killing campaigns, the development of co-operative marketing for livestock and inoculation of all herds against blackleg. These lists were brought forward to a federal-provincial conference staged on February 15 and 16 focussed on developing the national Greater Production Campaign. At this conference, the Federal Minister of Agriculture announced that the program would be administered through the Canada Food Board and would feature the purchase of tractors, placing farm tractors on the free list (from import tariffs) and the purchase and distribution of large quantities of seed grain.<sup>12</sup> The Minister went on to state "...it is the earnest desire of the Government that every province should cooperate in this movement by consultation with the Food Board as to the way in which provincial and municipal machinery may best be utilized."<sup>13</sup> C.A. Dunning, the Treasurer for the Province of Saskatchewan, was named Director of Production for Western Canada.

---

<sup>11</sup> SAB R268, File 1.1 Department of Agriculture Records. Memorandum from Office of Deputy Minister of Agriculture to Mr. Logan, February 7, 1918.

<sup>12</sup> SAB R268, File 1.1 Department of Agriculture Records. Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture on the Necessity for Increasing Production of Food Stuffs.

<sup>13</sup> SAB R268, File 1.1 Department of Agriculture Records. Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture on the Necessity for Increasing Production of Food Stuffs.

The provincial delegates returned home to implement their GPC plans. In a February speech to the Saskatchewan Legislature, the Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan outlined the province's role in the 1918 Greater Production Campaign. The Minister spoke at great length about the tremendous effort that had been put forth during the war by both the province's farmers and government departments to produce agricultural produce. However, more could be done if the federal government was able to assist with equipment and labour. As well, it was suggested that to organize such a massive program, "the head must be a representative of the Federal Government."<sup>14</sup> In addition to the calls for people and machinery resources, Mr. Motherwell also recommended that "the power of the Dominion Gov't under the War Measures Act should be employed to conscript on fair conditions, the use of vacant lands for productive purposes in order to assist men who can advantageously and efficiently employ additional lands in food production."<sup>15</sup>

Concurrent with the conclusion of the conference, the Committee of the Privy Council agreed to the proposal contained in a report submitted by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs regarding "utilizing the vacant Indian lands in the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and also the officers and employees of the Department of Indian Affairs in these Provinces with a view to increasing the production of grain and livestock."<sup>16</sup> In this report, Superintendent General Meighen recommended

---

<sup>14</sup> SAB R261, File 29.5 "Sask's Part in the Greater Production Campaign," page 13

<sup>15</sup> SAB R261, File 29.5 "Sasks Part in the Greater Production Campaign," page 9

<sup>16</sup> Glenbow M 8097 Box 1, file 1 "Certified copy of a Report of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1918"

that William M. Graham be appointed Commissioner for the Department of Indian Affairs in the Prairie Provinces. Under this appointment, Graham was given the following duties and powers:

1. To make proper arrangement with the Indians for the leasing of reserve lands, which may be needed for grazing, for cultivation or for other purposes, and for the compensation to be paid therefore;
2. To formulate a policy for each reserve;
3. To issue direction and instructions to all Inspectors, Agents and employees in furtherance of that policy;
4. To make purchases and engage or dismiss any extra or temporary employees, and market the yield of grain and livestock, and in effect to have sole management of this work subject to the approval of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to whom he shall report fully at close and regular intervals.<sup>17</sup>

Graham was also granted \$300,000 from the War Appropriation Fund to purchase machinery, supplies, and livestock and to pay for salaries and other costs associated with his projects.<sup>18</sup> The grant was to be paid back as profits from the operations permitted. With these discussions and appointments concluded, both groups set about laying the groundwork for their programs, awaiting the official announcement of the program in the House of Commons.

The announcement of the Greater Production Campaign in the Commons came on the second day of the spring sitting, March 19, 1918. Opening with the statement "the increased production of food is a vital question," Prime Minister Borden outlined the

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>18</sup> This would be equal to over \$3.3 million in 2001 dollars

activities that the Minister of Agriculture was undertaking to meet the need.<sup>19</sup> Primarily, the announcement was a recap of what had been decided at the Dominion-Provincial Conference: The program would be administered by the Canada Food Board; a total of \$280,000 was to be given to the provincial governments for use as was best suited for their regions on a 50-50 spending arrangement; 1000 Ford tractors had been purchased for distribution across the country; seed supplies were being secured and arrangements had been made with the Young Men's Christian Association and the Soldiers of the Soil organizations to organize teen-aged boys to assist with farm labour.<sup>20</sup> The stated aims of these initiatives were to:

- 1a: To plant this spring every acre possible of wheat, oats, barley and rye.
- 1b: To bring into cultivation every acre possible of new land for crop in 1919.
- 1c: To increase cattle, hogs and sheep to the greatest possible extent.
- 2a: To secure cultivation of gardens and vacant lots in towns and cities with a view to raising the maximum amount of vegetables. This should be accomplished through the municipal or existing organizations in such manner as will ensure proper supervision.
- 2b: By encouraging every householder in small towns and villages to secure and raise one pig through the season, with a view to utilizing all garbage for food.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1918), 25

<sup>20</sup> \$280,000 would be equal to just over \$3 million in 2001

<sup>21</sup> Glenbow M 8097 Box 1, file 1 "Certified copy of a Report of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1918"

In addition to the aforementioned methods for meeting these aims, Borden also called on the provincial governments to work with the Canada Food Board to coordinate a massive public relations program to promote the GPC.

After thanking the Minister of Agriculture for his hard work and insight into the food situation, Borden went on to state that "the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs has also taken into account the very urgent need for increased food production during the present year and has taken effective action."<sup>22</sup> After rereading the provisions of the February 16<sup>th</sup> Order-In-Council by which Graham had been appointed Commissioner, Borden reported on the early activities of the program. In addition to purchasing tractors and ploughs for breaking land and preparing acreage for seeding, these activities included many visits to prairie reserves to discuss land surrenders with "the authority to inform them that land may be taken without surrender under the War Measures Act for temporary use."<sup>23</sup> The purpose of this program, according to Borden, was to ensure that every available acre was under crop, that breaking would be increased so that the following year's crop would be greater and that grazing lands should be available to ranchers and farmers throughout the west. Borden concluded the announcement with a patriotic call for increased food production, asking, "that every member of this Parliament, everyone within sound of my voice, will lend his aid and his influence to this all-important movement in order that the purposes of the Allied nations may thereby be assisted, and, I hope, rendered triumphant."<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1918), 27

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 27

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 28



The expenditures required to implement the GPC program through the Department of Agriculture prompted no debate and were passed immediately. Approving the proposals of the Department of Indian Affairs GPC program was more complicated. Two aspects of the DIA program precipitated changes to the Indian Act, and, as such, were included in Bill 64, "An Act to amend the Indian Act." The provisions contained in Bill 64, section 4, were both listed as amendments to section 90 of the 1906 Indian Act. Section 90 gave the Governor in Council power to spend, with band permission, band-owned funds for the purposes of purchasing land and cattle for band purposes or the construction of permanent improvements upon the reserve. The first of the new amendments, to be called subsection 2, stated:

In the event of a band refusing to consent to the expenditure of such capital moneys as the Superintendent General may consider advisable for any of the purposes mentioned in subsection one of this section, and its appearing to the Superintendent General that such refusal is detrimental to the progress or welfare of the band, the Governor in Council may, without the consent of the band, authorize and direct the expenditure of such capital for such said purposes as may be considered reasonable and proper.<sup>25</sup>

Providing the government with complete control over Reserve funds was necessary for the implementation and potential use of the second amendment under Bill 64 that stated:

Whenever any land in a reserve, whether held in common or by an individual Indian, is uncultivated and the band or individual is unable or neglects to cultivate the same, the Superintendent General, notwithstanding anything in this Act to the contrary, may, without surrender, grant a lease on such lands for agricultural or grazing purposes for the benefit of the band or individual, or may employ such persons as may be considered necessary to improve or cultivate such lands during the pleasure of the Superintendent General, and may authorize and direct the expenditure of so much of the capital funds of the band as may be

---

<sup>25</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers* (1918), No 26, 84

considered necessary for the improvements on such land, or for the purchase of such stock, machinery, material or labour as may be considered necessary for the cultivation or grazing of the same, and in such case all the proceeds derived from such lands, except a reasonable rent to be paid for any individual holding, shall be placed to the credit of the band: Provided that in the event of improvements being made on the lands of an individual the Superintendent General may deduct the value of such improvements from the rental payable for such lands.<sup>26</sup>

The powers contained in these two amendments were quite extensive, a fact that was not lost upon the members of the House of Commons. When the bill was read for the second time in the House on April 23, 1918, an intense debate erupted. Most of the questions focussed upon the extremely wide powers provided under the measure and concerns for the security of a land base for the reserve residents. In response, Mr. Meighen was, at the same time, both overtly paternalistic and strikingly dispassionate towards his Indian charges. He blamed the reserve residents for the necessity of such legislation due to their inability to make "proper" choices for their own well-being, stating "it is putting it out of the power of what one may call reactionary or recalcitrant Indian bands to check their own progress by refusing consent to the utilization of their funds or vacant lands."<sup>27</sup> The benevolent intent of this justification was nullified when, later in the same answer Meighen described how the GPC that being conducted would necessitate the use of reserve acreage. Therefore, Meighen stated "We do not want to have those bands stand in our way and say to us: Notwithstanding the necessities of today, you must keep off all this vacant land unless we choose to give it up to you and ourselves forego the great privilege of roaming on it in its old, wild state."<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1918), 1048

One of the particularly concerned House Members was Frank Cahill, representing the riding of Pontiac, Quebec.<sup>29</sup> Mr. Cahill asked "Is it the intention of the department to make any provision for the Indians in cases where the larger part of the reservation is leased?" to which Meighen retorted "The Indian is very fortunate; he has all he had before, and now in addition he has the rental for this land. I do not think we need waste any time in sympathy for the Indian..."<sup>30</sup> Evidently, Mr. Cahill felt more sympathy for the Indians than the Minister who oversaw their affairs, for he responded "The Indian has only got now what we left to him after confiscating what we wanted. Now we are proposing to take the balance of rights we then reserved to him."<sup>31</sup>

Mr. Cahill's most profound observation came towards the end of the debates when he professed:

If the only purpose of the Bill is to deal with vacant land, there are thousands and millions of acres of vacant land throughout the West owned by large corporations, and why we should take from the Indian his rights, where he is living on the land in his own way, to make way for settlers or renters, and leave to the large corporations their lands which they are holding for profit, is a mystery to me. I think if we are going to do any confiscating of land for the benefit of the whiteman, you should take the whiteman's land.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 1048

<sup>29</sup> Frank S. Cahill (1876-1934) was first elected in the general election of 1917. A Liberal, and born in Quebec, Cahill became familiar with the plight of the prairie reserve residents between the years 1906 and 1924. During this period, Cahill was a part-time resident of Saskatoon, where he owned extensive property holdings and operated a real estate business in Saskatoon.

<sup>30</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1918), 1049

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 1049

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 1051

This statement went unanswered by the Minister. Rather, Mr. Meighen's most insightful comment of the evening on the subject of land leases was the crass, "We will still leave him enough to trap on, but even if we did not thirty bushels of wheat to an acre is a lot better than a few squirrels caught by the Indian."<sup>33</sup> The statement indicates there was a dangerously pathetic and indifferent level of concern for First Nation's rights held by the senior bureaucrat of an organization established to look out for the best interests of the Aboriginal population.

Concerns expressed during the debate regarding the spending of band funds without consent found similar retorts. To these, Mr. Meighen replied "...The presumption of the law is that he has not the capacity to decide as to what is for his ultimate benefit in the same degree as has his guardian, the Government of Canada. Consequently, it has been affirmed that the fund of the band should be, and can be, used with or without his consent..."<sup>34</sup> Despite the objections, the amendments were passed and Bill 64 was assented to on May 24, 1918. The Greater Production Campaign and all its provisions were legal and operational.

The Greater Production Campaign was composed of two related, but operationally distinct segments. One of the segments was administered by the Canada Food Board, the second by the Department of Indian Affairs. Though similar in purpose, the two parts of the GPC followed very different paths of operation.

The provincial government, farmers and community organizations greeted the part of the program administered by the Canada Food Board with great interest. A number of farmers wrote to their provincial representatives to inquire about getting involved in the

---

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 1050

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 1052

program. Some, such as Lewis Cook of Darlingford, Manitoba offered his help to the provincial agricultural department, stating he was "much pleased to read in the Free Press of the 16<sup>th</sup> instant it is the intention of your department to assist and encourage the breaking of more land for greater production."<sup>35</sup> Others, like C.W. Reimer, offered land for the province to use for the program.<sup>36</sup> The National Council of Women's local council in Saskatoon reported involvement in many activities. The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire chapters launched a vegetable growing campaign as well as a community canning kitchen.<sup>37</sup> The Saskatoon council also worked with the city's Parks Board to create a vacant lot garden plan across the city and also organized lectures and gardening demonstrations by Professor Greenway of the University.<sup>38</sup>

The provincial governments pursued a number of projects. In Alberta, the government announced plans that very much paralleled the federal announcement on March 19. Alberta hired a number of field representatives to organize labour, teams or horses and tractor requirements in rural areas as well as arrange for good seed and provide advice on eradicating weeds.<sup>39</sup> Their work commenced April 1<sup>st</sup> of 1918 and lasted four months. Prince Edward Island was allocated \$5,000 from the federal government as its share of the

---

<sup>35</sup> PAM, RG14, B45, File 2553. Letter from Lewis Cook to Manitoba Department of Agriculture, April 17, 1918

<sup>36</sup> PAM, RG 14, B45, File 2562: Letter from C.W. Reimer to Manitoba Department of Agriculture, April 19, 1918.

<sup>37</sup> SAB G438.4: Reports of Federated Associate Local Councils of the National Council of Women of Canada, Annual Report, 1918-19, 38

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 38

<sup>39</sup> "Trained Agricultural Directors for Alberta" *Farm and Ranch Review*, Vol xiv, (April 20, 1918), 427-428

\$280,000 and planned to focus upon a number of projects, including organizing a greater production committee in every school division, securing adequate amounts of seed, increasing hog pastures and organizing farm labour.<sup>40</sup> In Saskatchewan, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Charles Dunning noted in the Department Annual Report for 1918 that as result of the GPC funding, the field staff of the Weeds and Seed Branch was doubled and tasked with writing reports and recommendations on conditions affecting agricultural production across the province.<sup>41</sup> Across the country, almost 20,000 boys were employed to work on GPC-related farm projects farms through the Soldiers of the Soil Program.<sup>42</sup> Soldiers of Soil was a national organization which worked with the provincial departments of labour and education to place boys aged thirteen to eighteen in jobs necessary for the war effort. Farm work, particularly at harvest, was particularly high upon the list of suitable tasks for boy labour.

The initial interest in the program was not sustained. By the end of the war, the Greater Production Campaign was no longer a priority, and when the Canada Food Board was disbanded in the spring of 1919, the program ceased to exist. No mention is made of the program in the federal Department of Agriculture Annual Report for 1918. One of the reasons for the decreased interest in the program, suggests John Thompson, was the grave

---

<sup>40</sup> NAC RG 17, Volume 133, Docket 26449: Personal notes of the Minister of Agriculture in response to House of Commons debate questions asked by Mr. Sinclair (Queens) and answered on May 16, 1919.

<sup>41</sup> SAB, 1918 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture: Report of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, May 1, 1919: 9

<sup>42</sup> NAC RG 17 Volume 2320 docket 263884: Letter to Dr. J.H. Grisdale, Deputy Minister of Agriculture from C.M. Wright, Acting National Boys Work Secretary, January 13, 1919

distrust that western Canadians had for the Canada Food Board and its initiatives.<sup>43</sup>

Another problem highlighted by the National Council of Women was the failure of the program organizers to establish a means by which the efforts of rural women could be organized along with those in the cities.<sup>44</sup> It would seem that the Greater Production Campaign became what R.G. Motherwell feared when he wrote

Two well-intended campaigns in 1915 and 1916 when "Patriotism and Production" and "Production and Thrift" were the slogans did much less to promote production than the very practical and timely aid of the Federal Government in selling seed to needy farmers on credit terms. The campaign for 1918 will depend for its success not upon the urgency of the need nor the catchiness of its slogan, but on the measure of assistance given in supplying labour to farmers who are in need of more men to utilize their land and machinery and horses or tractors for production.<sup>45</sup>

The quick demise of the segment of the GPC implemented on non-Native farms is in sharp contrast with the phase of the program administered on the First Nations Reserves. The program established on the reserves proceeded with great speed and fanfare, and remained an active initiative of the Department of Indian Affairs until 1922. To a great degree, the continued activity related to Greater Production on the reserves was due to the different administrative structures and focuses of the two segments of the program. The Canada Food Board program was run by an appointed board which had to continually liase with provincial and municipal officials to implement the campaign. By contrast, the Department of Indian Affairs centralized its administrative control of the

---

<sup>43</sup> John Thompson, *Harvests*, 159.

<sup>44</sup> SAB G438.4: Reports of Federated Associate Local Councils of the National Council of Women of Canada, Annual Report, 1918-19, 39.

<sup>45</sup> SAB Record Group 261, File 29.5: "Wartime Food Production File," untitled speech notes dated 1918.

GPC under William Graham, the man who inspired the program. The degree of power Graham was granted is suggested in a letter written to him by friend Samuel McDougall soon after the House of Commons approved the program. In this letter, McDougall recounted a conversation he had been party to in Ottawa regarding Graham's GPC scheme. During this conversation, Arthur Sifton, Minister of Customs, is reputed to have stated "Graham has been given the widest authority of any man in the Government service, either inside or out, and in my opinion, he is the only man in any of the services that I would consent to give the powers to, and if anybody can make the plan a success, Graham is the man."<sup>46</sup> It was with such high praise and Ministerial support that Graham implemented his GPC plans.

Indeed, Graham's authority was wide. Under the February 16 Order-in-Council, he had been given administrative control over 2.91 million acres of reserve land in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Alberta, management of over 150 Department staff and the task of marketing farm crops worth \$1,209,957 and beef products worth \$240,323.<sup>47</sup> The provisions of Bill 64 provided Graham and the Department with authoritative control over the trust accounts of the band members of the prairie reserves, which in 1917 totalled just over two million dollars. Apparently not content with the broad powers of control already at his disposal, five days into his new job the ambitious Graham was granted another coercive tool. In a February 21<sup>st</sup> letter from D.C. Scott to Graham, Scott stated that the Justice Department supported the proposition that the War Measures Act could be utilized to obtain surrenders of reserve lands without the consent of the Bands.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Glenbow M 8097, File 1: Letter from Samuel McDougall to W.M. Graham dated May 4, 1918.

<sup>47</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report (1918), 13, 42, 72



Scott did hope, though, that the Indians would consent to the use of their "vacant" lands as part of the scheme.<sup>49</sup>

It was at this point that the differences between the Canada Food Board program and the Department of Indian Affairs program became quite glaring. The Food Board program was mostly administrative and advisory, concerning itself with organizing labour for, and distributing money to, pre-existing municipal and provincial agencies. The monies were distributed as 50-50 split grants and were used largely to top-up operating funds for already functioning programs. Meanwhile, the Department of Indian Affairs program resulted in a newly created administrative unit, the office of the Commissioner for Greater Production. The money issued to this office was not a grant, but a loan which was to be repaid through the business operations managed by Commissioner Graham. So that Graham would be able to generate revenue from these operations, the powers given to the Commissioner's office were not merely advisory, but absolute. Graham could use as much reserve land on the prairies as he desired. He could also spend every cent of money contained in the band accounts, monies raised in common by reserve residents during decades of agricultural efforts, to achieve his objectives under his Greater Production Campaign. Protected by the War Measures Act and the provisions of Bill 64, Graham could proceed unchallenged, even by the reserve residents who would be affected by his plans. With these great powers at his disposal, Graham set his plans in motion.

---

<sup>48</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 4070, File 427,063: Letter From D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham dated February 21, 1918. This powerful tool of leasing "idle" reserve land without Band consent was confirmed for the duration of the war by an August 15, 1918 Order-in-Council and, more significantly, made a permanent amendment to Section 90 of the 1906 Indian Act under Bill 64.

<sup>49</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 4070, File 427,063: Letter From D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham dated February 21, 1918

## CHAPTER FOUR:

“No more successful enterprise has ever been launched in Canada.”<sup>1</sup>

### The Operation of the GPC on the Prairie Reserves

In the spring of 1918, even the ambitious William Graham had to be amazed with the good fortune which had shone upon him. In just a couple of months he had witnessed his vision of a Greater Production scheme announced as a major, cross-department program of the Federal Government. In addition to the program becoming operational, Graham was promoted to the new position as Commissioner of Greater Production, arguably the second most powerful job in the Department of Indian Affairs. As well, to assist Graham with the operation of his GPC program, The War Appropriations Fund had granted him the significant sum of \$300,000 in 1918 (to be followed by a further \$75,000 in 1919). Buoyed by his great success, Graham approached the implementation and operation of the GPC program with great zeal.

Graham commenced operating the GPC on the reserves of western Canada in March of 1918. His plan had three goals: first to lease as much land as feasible to non-aboriginal farmers; secondly to create and equip a series of government-run Greater Production farms on reserve lands; and thirdly, to stimulate increased agricultural productivity amongst the reserve residents. The goals sounded laudable and completely appropriate to the spirit and intent of the mandate of the Department of Indian Affairs. It

---

<sup>1</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1919), 4665. Arthur Meighen made this statement during the debates surrounding the DIA budget for 1919.

soon became evident, however, that Graham and the other department administrators had less commendable objectives for the project. These viewpoints would cast doubt upon Meighen's flippant statement "I do not think we need waste any time in sympathy for the Indian, for I am pretty sure his interests will be looked after by the Commissioner."<sup>2</sup>

Of the three activity areas of the program, the one which should have received the most attention and interest on behalf of the department was the effort to increase agricultural productivity on reserves amongst the reserve residents. Not only was the infrastructure in place for reserve agriculture, and a labour pool at hand, but the promotion of agriculture by reserve residents was supposedly a core function of the department. However, by 1918, the Department of Indian Affairs had been operating for over twenty years on the philosophy that First Nations peoples made poor and unenthusiastic farmers. Meighen personified this attitude during the April, 1918 House of Commons Debates when, amongst the aforementioned comments, he stated "we would be only too glad to have the Indian use this land if he would; production by him would be just as valuable as production by anybody else. But he will not cultivate this land..."<sup>3</sup> Graham, while having first hand knowledge of the agricultural production on the File Hills colony, did not believe that the general reserve population was capable of high levels of agricultural production. Operating from this mindset, Graham did not expect much of this aspect of the GPC.

This is not to say that no effort was made. In the first weeks after his appointment as Commissioner, Graham staged a series of meetings with Agents and Inspectors across the west. One of the topics of these meetings was the need to encourage greater

---

<sup>2</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1918), 1049

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 1049

production amongst the Reserve residents.<sup>4</sup> These meetings were complemented by a number of Department Circulars issued by Graham. His first memo, issued on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, emphasised that all farming Indians must be "persuaded" to cultivate as large an area as possible. Graham also stated "the practical goal it is decided is to aim at is average per farming Indian of ten acres of breaking, and your monthly reports must contain information definite and precise, as to the progress being made."<sup>5</sup> This circular was soon followed by one that contained instructions for the monthly reports that were to be submitted to Graham. Under a new heading, "Greater Production," Agents were advised, "Under this head information will be required only as the special steps being taken and the actual progress of work outlined to be done, with a view towards greater production undertaken by the Department itself."<sup>6</sup> The highlighted section of this instruction, which stated "Details regarding actual or proposed surrenders of lands and subsequent lease resulting therefrom are not required in monthly reports but should in all cases form the subject of separate special correspondence with the Commissioner in Regina," suggests where the department's focus truly lay.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> A number of agents in their letters, diary entries and reports in the subsequent months refer to meetings with Graham and their efforts to follow up on issues of production and surrenders which had been discussed. Glenbow M1781, File 35: Agent's Diary for Battleford Agency, 1918; NAC RG 10 Volume 12649 File 110/34-1-7: Letter from G.H. Race to W.M. Graham, March 23, 1918; Glenbow M1784: Letter from Graham to J.H. Gooderham, March 19, 1918.

<sup>5</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 1392, letter 331: Circular #1 Office of the Indian Commissioner, April 3, 1918

<sup>6</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 1392, letter 334: Circular #4: Office of the Indian Commissioner, April 11, 1918

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

The reserve farming program operated much as it had prior to the advent of the GPC. None of the War Appropriation money was used to enhance the work of individual reserve farmers. Of the total appropriation of \$375,000, only \$37,364.64, or 10.04% was spent on projects for reserves without Greater Production farms. A majority of this amount was spent on the purchase of cows and hogs to be raised, without paying rental for grazing, on Graham's former Agency, the File Hills Colony. A sum of \$2062.42 was spent on the purchase of a tractor for Alexander's reserve in Alberta and the cost of one season's operation. When the Agent for the reserve suggested to Graham the potential benefits of using the tractor for the reserve farmers, Graham expounded "If you are under the impression that the tractor is to be used by the Indian farmers, you are quite mistaken, as this is to be run entirely separate by Mr. Laight and more as a home farm for Greater Production."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, purchases of seed, machinery and labour continued to be made with funds from either the farmers' individual accounts, or from the common band account, with all purchases subject to approval by either Deputy Superintendent-General Scott or Commissioner Graham. Since neither of these men had much faith in the abilities of reserve farmers, requests for machinery necessary to increase acreage and production were often refused. Agent Gunn of the Peigan Reserve was turned down in his request for twenty-five horses to break land, Graham telling him to "make use of all available power you have at the present time, without any further expenditure of money, as our farming experience on your Reserve in the past has not proved very successful."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, when he requested machinery for the Thunderchild Reserve, Agent Rowland

---

<sup>8</sup> NAC RG 10, Acc 85-86/125, Volume/Box 4, File 110/34-1-136: W.M. Graham to G.H. Race, March 27, 1918

<sup>9</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 1416, page 430: Letter from W.M. Graham to Agent Gunn, Peigan Reserve, April 2, 1918

was told "the purchase of machinery of this nature for the Indians does not appeal to me. I know of only one instance where a tractor and plows (sic) were bought for use by the Indians and the venture was a failure."<sup>10</sup> G.H. Race, Agent for the Alexander and Enoch reserves in Alberta, in the same letter in which he was chastised by Graham for suggesting that a tractor be purchased for Greater Production work on the Alexander Reserve could be used by the reserve residents to break land, was further told that "I have no desire to undertake the responsibility of purchasing a large number of horses and seed for the Indians of Alexander's Band."<sup>11</sup> While occasional approvals for major equipment purchases were granted, such as the \$5000 that was loaned from band capital account to four farmers on the Pasqua Reserve, these concessions were few and far between.<sup>12</sup>

Despite these in-house discouragements, the reserve farmers approached the Greater Production Campaign with vigour. Agents commented in their monthly reports on how well the farmers were taking to the call for increased production levels. Some, such as S.L. MacDonald of the Battleford Agency, were hopeful that "a far larger acreage will be under crop next year than ever before."<sup>13</sup> The season-end report issued by D.C. Scott commented that the department had "a great measure of success" in increasing acreages of individual Indian farmers.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 1017: Letter from W.M. Graham to J.A. Rowland, May 13, 1919

<sup>11</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 12649, File 111/34-1-7: Letter from W.M. Graham to G.H. Race, March 27, 1918

<sup>12</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 1131: Letter from Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to the Governor General in Council, May 10, 1918

<sup>13</sup> Glenbow M1781, file 6: Monthly Report for Battleford Agency, June 7, 1918

<sup>14</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 10, File 427,063: Memorandum to Arthur Meighen,

The degree of success, though, is difficult to determine, as there are conflicting totals for acreages cropped and broken during the first three years of the GPC program.<sup>15</sup> The numbers put forth in a season end report for 1918 prepared by D.C. Scott suggested a high level of productivity. His records indicated that total acreage cropped on the prairie reserves increased 24.5%, from 40,285 in 1917, to 50,175 acres in 1918. As well, he asserted that the 1680 prairie reserve farmers came close to meeting the 10-acre of breaking per farmer goal issued by Graham, with just under 15,000 acres being broken during the season.<sup>16</sup> The totals suggested by Graham in his 1921 three-year recapitulation of the GPC program, differed slightly from Scott's. Graham's numbers indicated that the 1918 crop acreage increased by 21.4 %, to 49,652 acres in 1918.<sup>17</sup> The totals proposed by Graham and Scott are significantly different than those in the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports. The Reports indicate the land under crop on the prairie reserves actually decreased by 14 acres to 42,127 acres in 1918.<sup>18</sup> These conflicting totals are further blurred when the totals from the Agents' reports are considered. For example, the 1918 farming report for the File Hills Agency stated that 2215 acres of oats, 780 acres of wheat and 100 acres of barley, a total crop of 3095 acres, was grown on the four reserves

---

February 28, 1919

<sup>15</sup> The standard for judging "success" could be determined in a number of ways. In this study the standards I have used are those outlined by the government when they launched the Campaign, namely that the DIA strive to increase the land acreage cropped on the reserves and provide economic and training benefits to the reserve residents.

<sup>16</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4069, File 427,063: Memorandum from D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen: February 28, 1919

<sup>17</sup> NAC MG 26, I, Volume 31, Series 2: "Statement of Greater Production Activities on Indian Reserves for the Years 1918, 1919 and 1920"

<sup>18</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report (1917, 1918)

in the Agency.<sup>19</sup> The total in Scott's report is similar, at 3090 acres.<sup>20</sup> The annual report, though, varies greatly, noting seventy-five acres of wheat, 388 acres of oats and no barley.

A comparison of the 1919 and 1920 totals in the Department Annual Reports and the Graham GPC reports revealed continuing differences in cropped acreage totals on the prairie reserves. In 1919, Graham put forward a total of 55,691 acres while the annual report listed a total crop of 51,641 acres. For 1920, Graham recorded a crop of 47,903 acres, the annual report stated 46,655 acres. The differing levels of detail by which these totals are broken down within the Scott and Graham reports, combined with the incomplete availability of Agency farming reports, make a full analysis of the farming results virtually impossible.

However, a full analysis is not necessary to allow two observations to be made. Most notably, the GPC had little impact upon individual Indian farming. A comparison of the rate of growth of land under crop listed in the Annual Reports for the five years prior to 1918 shows a growth rate of 30% during the 1913 to 1918 period, just over 5% higher than that witnessed during the GPC program.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the statistics offered by Graham were consistently better than those offered by other Department officials, supporting the idea that he was more interested in enhancing his reputation and building his agricultural empire than in truly improving the situation of the reserve farmer.

---

<sup>19</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 1392, page 362: Statement of land under crop in the File Hills Agency for season 1918

<sup>20</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4069, File 427,063: Memorandum from D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen: February 28, 1919.

<sup>21</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Reports (1913-1917). During this period, the land under crop increased by 9724.5 acres on the prairie reserves, from 32,396.5 to 42,151 acres.



As was also the case amongst non-Native agriculturalists, the focus on Greater Production faded as the war drew to a close. By the fall of 1918 Agents were no longer listing specific GPC activities in their monthly reports. The Department of Indian Affairs annual report for 1918, which featured two pages on the various GPC activities across the country, dedicated two lines to the efforts of the prairie reserve farmers, simply stating "extensive arrangement have been made to increase grain production by individual Indians."<sup>22</sup> The 1919 Annual report dedicated three pages to the GPC, most of which focussed on the department-run Greater Production Farms. The space that was dedicated to the efforts of the reserve agriculturalists concentrated largely upon the poor weather conditions which limited crop production, though, it did state that the reserve farmers "had a total of 55,657 acres in crop, which is the largest acreage that has ever been sown."<sup>23</sup> Reference to the Greater Production Campaign, in connection with the reserve farmers, disappears from the annual report after 1919. After 1919, reports and comments made by department officials simply referred to their efforts to encourage the reserve residents to increase grain production on the reserves, an approval that was similar to the types of comments which had been issued prior to the introduction of the GPC.

The reserve farming aspect of the GPC was really a non-factor in the overall program. Operations continued much as they had before the program and as they did after the shutdown of the Campaign. At best, it could be suggested that agricultural production grew during the years of the GPC, although the comparison to the five-year period that preceded the GPC would suggest the rate of growth would have occurred with

---

<sup>22</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report* (1918)

<sup>23</sup> Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report* (1919)

or without the GPC. At its worst, the significant legal clout of the War Measures Act, combined with the department focus upon the government farm and leasing aspects of the GPC, likely combined to stop the small steps which the reserve farmers had made towards the individual farming model the government desired.<sup>24</sup> In reality, this aspect of the GPC was just one more example of how the government's lack of faith in reserve farmers allowed others to profit and an opportunity to develop a productive and more self-sufficient reserve agriculture program to pass by. More bluntly, in his 1921 memorandum, R.N. Wilson stated:

The last mentioned feature of the "Greater Production" activity (the assisting of Indians to extend their individual farming), while it was really the only commendable undertaking of the four, was also the most neglected, and the farming efforts of the Indians were interfered with, retarded and discouraged in a number of ways in favour of the Government farm which was given right of way over everything.<sup>25</sup>

The government farm operation to which Wilson referred was the most controversial as well as the most crucial element of Graham's GPC plan. Under this phase of the program, a number of grain farms were to be established on reserve lands and operated separately from the reserve administration. The department kept any profits generated by the farm for the Commissioner to use at his discretion. Not surprisingly, these farms were the focus of most of Graham's attention and dollars.

---

<sup>24</sup> Rob Omura, "Blackfoot Legal Culture: Wrongful Injuries Law on the Canadian Blackfoot Reserves, 1880-1920" (Unpublished thesis, University of Calgary, 1995), 166. Omura suggests that the implementation of the GPC likely halted the Blackfoot farmers' first forays into pressing personal action and purchasing insurance.

<sup>25</sup> R.N. Wilson, *Our Betrayed Wards* (Ottawa, 1921), 22

In the spring of 1918, Graham chose five reserves upon which to establish his GPC farms. In Alberta, the Blood and Blackfoot reserves were chosen, while in Saskatchewan, the Assiniboine, Muscowpetung and Cowessess reserves were selected. Largely, these reserves were chosen because of the availability of good quality farmland. However, Graham's experience with the File Hills colony had proven to him the value of having his operations in the southern, more accessible and publicly visible parts of the prairies.

Having chosen the reserves, Graham's next endeavour was to secure the reserve residents' permission to use the land. He did not have to take this step. Under the War Measures Act, he could take as much land as he felt necessary. However, he decided it would be more expedient to gain favour of the reserve populations by working with them, and, therefore, negotiated for the land use. As it turned out force was not needed as the reserve members wished to support the patriotic nature of the program.<sup>26</sup> Most of the reserves agreed to allow Graham to use their lands for token rental fees.<sup>27</sup> The Blood Reserve members, under the surrender signed on May 30, 1918, provided the government "the free use of whatever land on the Blood Indian reserve it may require for the greater production of food producing grains."<sup>28</sup> The conditions specified by the Blood

---

<sup>26</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1: R.N. Wilson to D.C. Scott, March 25, 1918; Glenbow M 4738, Box 29: H.S. Gibbon to Indian Commissioner, July 22, 1918

<sup>27</sup> NAC MG 26, I, Volume 31, "Statement of Greater Production Activities on Indian Reserves for the Years 1918, 1919 and 1920." In this document, the annual surrender payments for the farms are listed as: Assiniboine, \$1200; Blackfoot, \$500; Cowessess, \$1474 and Muscowpetung \$1537

<sup>28</sup> The NAC RG 10 Volume 7102, File 773.3-1-1, pt 1. Surrender dated May 30, 1918

peoples were that reserve labour be used when possible; that the operations were to be funded by the government and that the "land be returned to the Indians for farming purposes" when no longer needed for greater production purposes.<sup>29</sup> The land claimed from the reserves was impressive, with a total acreage of 20,880. On the Blackfoot Reserve, two farms were established; one of 5,500 acres, a second composed of 2,500 acres. The GPC farm on the Blood Reserve contained 4,880 acres. On Muscowpetung the farm was 3,500 acres, on Cowessess, 3,500 acres and on the Assiniboine Reserve, 1,000 acres. With the land secured, Graham began purchasing equipment and hiring work crews to break the land in preparation for the 1919 growing season.

The scale of the operations launched in 1918 was impressive and expensive. Twelve gasoline tractors were purchased as well as multiple teams of horses. Numerous binders, harrows and ploughs were bought, as well as accompanying wagons, tools and equipment. Dozens of men were hired to run the equipment as well as build fences, barns and camp buildings. In the first fourteen months of operations, Graham spent a total of \$305,486.81 on GPC farming operations.<sup>30</sup> The only agricultural revenue during the period to offset the huge expense was the sale of a few acres of wheat and oats that had been planted during the breaking period of 1918 and the sale of earlier mentioned cattle and hogs on the File Hills Reserve. The total revenue, though, was only \$44,193.83.

The mounting bills did not preclude Meighen from boasting of the program in the House of Commons. In recounting Graham's 1918 efforts, Meighen proudly stated that "the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs is now the largest farmer in the Dominion,"

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix A

with a broken acreage totalling 20,448 acres.<sup>31</sup> Meighen went on to praise Graham for his effective management of the program and the benefits he was bringing to the reserve residents by preventing them from being “idle.”<sup>32</sup> His concluding statement that “the greatest value of all accrues so far as the nation is concerned in the tremendous increase that Mr. Graham has been able to secure in the actual product of the soil upon those Indian reserves in Western Canada”<sup>33</sup> reinforced the department’s financial focus for the GPC program.

Not so enamoured with the direction of this phase of the GPC was Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs. In a 1919 letter to Arthur Meighen, Scott expressed his belief that the operation of farms by the government, independently from the reserve residents, was a bad idea. Such operations, he felt, were beyond the scope of the department and only initiated due to the requirements of the war. The war being over, Scott believed that the department should cease these “wholly foreign thereto” operations, transfer the farms and equipment to the Soldier Settlement Board and focus upon the goal of the organization, “the rapid

---

<sup>31</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1919), 4664. The remaining acres between the total acreage and the broken acreage, some 432 acres, were lands used for the roads, offices, barns and other facilities necessary for operating the farms.

<sup>32</sup> Meighen’s comment regarding “idleness” provides further evidence of his extremely negative attitude towards his First Nations charges and lack of awareness of the situation on the western reserves. Occasions of “idleness” would have been difficult as the earlier-mentioned increases to crop acreage on the reserves during the war years were accomplished despite the fact that, as previously mentioned, over 400 of the able-bodied men from the prairie reserves, a proportion higher than other population groups in the country, voluntarily joined the war effort.

<sup>33</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1919), 4665

civilization of the Indians.”<sup>34</sup> Scott’s calls fell on deaf ears, and Meighen continued to support his man Graham and his ambitious project.

The farm sales for the 1919, 1920 and 1921 seasons were impressive, averaging over \$276,000 per year.<sup>35</sup> The farm-related expenses continued to be high, averaging almost \$185,000 per year over the same period. A significant portion of the expense was dedicated to the employment of over 172 employees per year to work the farms.<sup>36</sup> If the start-up costs were not factored in, the profits seemed incredible. It was this image that Graham promoted. As he had done with the File Hills Colony, Graham worked with the press to promote himself and his projects. In 1920, he organized a tour of the Blackfoot Indian Reserve for the members of the Imperial Press Association. Each member was given a statistics sheet with the crucial information about the Reserve, including the size of the two Greater Production Farms that were “being worked for the benefit of the Band.”<sup>37</sup> On January 1, 1921, the Manitoba Free Press ran a half page feature on Graham and the Greater Production Campaign. A glowing picture is painted of the benevolent and patriotic intentions of the GPC and of Graham, “the first man to solve the problem of making the Indian take kindly and successfully to farming.”<sup>38</sup> The article suggests that the crop value of the GPC for 1919 and 1920 was \$1,081,000, with expenses of

---

<sup>34</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4069, file 427,063, Scott to Meighen, April 3, 1919

<sup>35</sup> See Appendix A for farm income for 1919-20 through 1921-22 fiscal years.

<sup>36</sup> NAC MG 26, I, Volume 31, “Statement of Greater Production Activities on Indian Reserves for the Years 1918, 1919 and 1920”

<sup>37</sup> Glenbow M4738, Box 11, “Blackfoot Indian Statistics,” 1920

<sup>38</sup> “A Man and his Work”, Manitoba Free Press, January 1, 1921: 21

\$480,000. While the expense totals are similar to the Annual Report, the income suggestion is extremely high and reflects Graham's propensity to produce statistics that are more self-glorifying than those in the Annual Report. Other papers that ran stories glorifying the program during this period include the Winnipeg Tribune and Saturday Night.<sup>39</sup>

Scott continued to be dissatisfied with direction of Graham's program, but as long as Arthur Meighen remained in a position of power, there was little he could do. The elevation of Meighen from Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to Prime Minister in 1920 did not help the situation. Scott did, though, send a letter to the Justice Department on June 1, 1921 asking if the Order in Council by which Graham had been appointed Commissioner was still valid as it had been implemented as a War Measures Act program. The Deputy Minister replied that the Order was operational but could be revoked if it was the wish of the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>40</sup>

The election of the Liberal Government in the fall of 1921 left Graham without a patron and brought numerous changes to the Department of Indian Affairs. Less than three weeks after the changeover, the Privy Council had already voted on the request by the Superintendent General to rescind the Order in Council by which Graham was operating the GPC.<sup>41</sup> On February 22, Scott had the privilege of informing Graham that the GPC farms were to be closed as the need for such operations had passed and the

---

<sup>39</sup> Glenbow, M 8097, Box 3, Files 10 & 11

<sup>40</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, File 427,063-A: Letter from Deputy Minister of Justice to D.C. Scott, June 9, 1921

<sup>41</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, file 427,063: Letter from the Clerk of the Privy Council to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, January 10, 1922. The letter does not indicate who the Acting Superintendent was in place of Charles Stewart

operation of the farms was beyond the scope of the department and distracting from the development of department objectives.<sup>42</sup> Graham was directed to seed the farms with Brome rye grass and sell the machinery at the conclusion of the 1922 operations. It is interesting, yet sad, to note that Scott was very concerned about ensuring that Graham was focussed on the department objective to advance the Indians, yet his directives were for Graham to develop strategies to return the crop lands to grass and sell the equipment rather than a plan to use the land and equipment for reserve farming initiatives.

While the directives of Scott were a discouraging reminder of his thoughts towards reserve farmers, the words of the new Minister of the department, Charles Stewart, were more positive. In an address to the House of Commons on April 4, 1922, Stewart reiterated the statement that it was time for the department to get out of the business of farming. He did say, however, that it was the goal of the department to place the former GPC farmland in the hands of graduating Indian students as fast as they were able to take up the land.<sup>43</sup> He went on to state that until the students were ready, Graham would continue to operate the GPC farms, but later added "it is not the intention of the department to continue the cultivation of this land purely as a department enterprise any longer than the time required to dispose of it. As soon as it can be turned over we shall, with just that speed, close out the greater production enterprise."<sup>44</sup>

Scott had wished for an immediate shutdown of operations, but grudgingly acquiesced to several recommendations to slow the shutdown and consider reserve-

---

<sup>42</sup> Glenbow, M 8097, Letter from D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham, February 22, 1922

<sup>43</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, (1922), 681

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 1261



farming options for the land.<sup>45</sup> The farms on the Blackfoot Reserve were shut down before the 1921 season, and most of the other farms were closed by the end of 1922. All was not lost for Graham as he had been able to convince his superiors to maintain the Muscowpetung farm to provide grain seed for the other prairies reserves. Still, he was quite upset by the loss of his farming empire and the powers he had been granted under the Order in Council. In retaliation, Graham launched a personal attack on Scott. In an eight-page letter to Superintendent General Stewart, Graham accused Scott of having a personal vendetta against him.<sup>46</sup> This vendetta, suggested Graham, was the primary reason why Scott requested rescinding the Order in Council and shutting down the GPC operations. Graham went on to state that there could be no other reason for shutting down such a profitable and beneficial program, which the former Minister Arthur Meighen indicated should be operated “for five or six years, as it was anticipated that it would take that long to bring it to a successful conclusion.”<sup>47</sup>

To help him with his assault, it would appear that Graham also appealed to Arthur Meighen for assistance. During the 1923 House of Commons debates over the expenditures for the Department of Indian Affairs, Meighen, then the Leader of the Opposition, challenged Stewart over the status of the GPC. Meighen forced the Minister to recount the accomplishments of the GPC and the high profits achieved in 1923.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, file 427 063-A, Letter to William Kearn, Assistant Auditor General from D.C. Scott, February 26, 1923

<sup>46</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, file 427,063-A1, letter from W.M. Graham to Hon. Charles Stewart, June 13, 1923

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>48</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, (1923), 2155. The profit indication for 1923 was artificially inflated due to the income realized from the selling off of equipment

Meighen then asked the Minister why such a profitable enterprise, which could generate great income for the department, would not be continued. Stewart countered that it was his intention to see that the reserve residents were given every encouragement and opportunity to use the land and the debate was ended.

Graham's direct approach to Stewart was also equally unsuccessful. Stewart provided Scott with a copy of Graham's letter, to which Scott replied that the GPC was always intended to be a program of a temporary nature.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Scott provided quotes from correspondence with Meighen in which the Superintendent General agreed with the idea of the GPC being a temporary measure.<sup>50</sup> Scott went on to state "I cannot believe that the operation of these Greater Production farms has not affected the general administration of Indian Affairs."<sup>51</sup> As an example, Scott indicated that Graham had not inspected the operations of any of the Manitoba Agencies in the five years since he had been named Commissioner, and three reserves had been without farming instructors during the period. In the aftermath, Graham was left to handle the day-to-day issues of administering the prairie Agencies and watch over the seed-growing operations on the Muscowpetung Farm. He continued in this role until the spring of 1932, when the department eliminated his position, closed the farm and forced him to retire.

---

from the four GPC farms closed in 1922.

<sup>49</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, file 427,063-A1, letter from D.C. Scott to Hon. Charles Stewart, June 29, 1923

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Scott refers to a portion of a letter written by Meighen on May 13, 1920 in which he indicates that the whole future of the GPC should be questioned, "the direct farming features particularly."

<sup>51</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, file 427,063-A1, Letter from D.C. Scott to Hon. Charles Stewart, June 29, 1923

Scott's view regarding the GPC farms was largely correct.<sup>52</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs was not in the business of operating large-scale commercial farms and was ill suited for the task. Operations were too spread out and were being administered largely by Department of Indian Affairs farming officials, a class of employees that had proven through successive administrations to be generally an incapable lot. Financially, the GPC appeared to be a profitable enterprise through 1923, making just over \$127,000 on farming operations, or almost \$58,000 if all the non-lease related administration expenses are factored in.<sup>53</sup> However, the numbers were flawed. For, if the government had not in essence expropriated the land with minimal compensation to the reserve residents for use of their land, the story would have been much different. If the government had been required to pay rent on the 20,880 acres of reserve land used for the farm project at the same rate as non-aboriginal farmers under the GPC program, \$5 per acre, per year of operation, a rental charge of \$490,700 would have been levied against the project income through 1924.<sup>54</sup> Instead, based upon the stated rental rates, a total of only \$21,918 could have been charged to the department. Within the department records, this token rental income is somewhat of a mystery. Graham applied no consistency to the rentals paid for the farmlands. Deputy Superintendent Scott was concerned to discover that the Blood band was being paid no rental at all, suggesting "it might be charged that

---

<sup>52</sup> A significant flaw in Scott's assertion was that his idea to transfer the farmland to the Soldier Settlement Board would be contrary to the terms of the 1918 surrender agreements in which the government pledged to return the lands to the bands when no longer needed.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>54</sup> See Appendix B

there is discrimination in this one item as against the Blood Indian.”<sup>55</sup> Where rentals had been negotiated, the records do not indicate payment. Graham lists these rents in the “profit and loss” statements for each of the farms in his report to Meighen on the GPC activities. However, the Auditor General records for the Department at no time shows these rentals in any expense column associated with the GPC, nor as revenue into any of the Band Trust accounts or the general GPC trust account. The missing rental monies were just one more example of the difference between Graham’s accounts of the program and those made by Ottawa. Wherever the rental income went, if paid at all, the total was merely a token amount and does not detract from the fact that had Graham had to pay the current rental rates on the property, a loss of over \$400,000 would have been realized on the operation of the GPC farms.

Looking beyond the great loss of potential rental revenue, the GPC farm program did have a few benefits for the reserve residents. Some casual labour positions were created. The aforementioned 1921 Manitoba Free Press article proudly proclaimed that 60% of the labourers used on the 1919 breaking crews were reserve residents.<sup>56</sup> No statement is made of how many reserve residents worked on the farms after the breaking was completed. The 60% total seems high when compared to the statement by George Gooderham, Agent on the Blackfoot Reserve, who wrote, “there were two large farms - one of 2500 acres and the other of 5500 acres - which were operated under a foreman and

---

<sup>55</sup> NAC, RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773.3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from D.C. Scott to Honourable Mr. Meighen, June 8, 1920.

<sup>56</sup> “A Man and His Work”, Manitoba Free Press, (January 1, 1921), 21

mostly with white workers. The Indians did take part from time to time.”<sup>57</sup> In his diary, Gooderham makes reference to Indians being involved in stooking during the 1920 harvest.<sup>58</sup> More work seems to have been made available to reserve residents on the Blood Reserve. In a letter of complaint over the GPC operations, a number of chiefs from the reserve expressed outrage at the Commissioner’s evaluation of their efforts on the farms, stating

Though every operation after breaking the sod was performed by the Indians, excepting only the duties of steam engineer and separator man on the threshing outfit purchased by us with our own savings, the Commissioner falsely says that it “it could not properly be called Indian farming at all.”<sup>59</sup>

The chiefs also commented in the letter that they “broke sod for about \$1.85 per acre,” work which the Commissioner described as “waste and destruction.”<sup>60</sup> In a letter of defence by Graham regarding the charges made against him in Wilson’s memorandum, Graham indicated that almost \$20,000 was paid to the reserve residents who worked on the Blood reserve farm through 1920, which is approximately 48% of the total wages paid to farm employees during the period.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Glenbow M 4738, box 10, Autobiography of George Gooderham, (July 31, 1974), 37

<sup>58</sup> Glenbow M 4738, box 1, Diary of George Gooderham

<sup>59</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from Chiefs of the Blood Reserve to Hon Charles Stewart, December 20, 1922, 15

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>61</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, W.H. Graham to Arthur

On the Muscowpetung Reserve, Graham personally arranged for two boys from the File Hills Colony who had been turned down for military service to work on the government farm.<sup>62</sup> Under these arrangements, the boys were to be paid \$50.00 per month and board, a rate that was \$11 a month lower than the Saskatchewan average for farm labourers in 1918.<sup>63</sup>

Another benefit that emanated from the shutdown of the Greater Production farms was the transfer of some of the farmlands to reserve farmers. In 1923, Graham indicated that approximately 7850 acres of land has been divided amongst over 70 reserve farmers.<sup>64</sup> Virtually all of these new farms were established in 1921 on the Blackfoot reserve, with forty-five and the Blood Reserve, with twenty-five. For some of the Blood farmers, the establishment of these new farms was a chance to start over after being wiped out in the drought of 1919.<sup>65</sup> Joe Bullshields was one of these recovering farmers; his daughter recalled that each new farmer was given forty acres of cultivated land and expected to clear the rest. James Gladstone was also granted a farm on the former GPC farm and found the

---

Meighen, January 20, 1921, page 6. Canada, Sessional Papers, "Auditor General Reports" (1919, 1920, 1921, 1922)

<sup>62</sup> NAC RG 10, File 1392, page 379. Letter from W.M. Graham to Mr. Stanton, August 6, 1918

<sup>63</sup> John Thompson, Harvests of War (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 176

<sup>64</sup> Glenbow M 8087, File 5, "Condensed Comparative Statement re work on Indian Reserves in the three Prairie Provinces"

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Bertha Davis, Standoff, Alberta, August 22, 1997. Bertha Davis is the daughter of Joe Bullshields

land to be very poorly broken.<sup>66</sup> While the worked land was returned free of charge, any improvements such as fencing and buildings, as well as any Greater Production farm equipment, had to be paid for either through the band trust account or by the individual reserve farmer. The money raised via the leasing portion of the program had been placed in a trust account to assist farmers such as Gladstone, who borrowed \$1000 to purchase his equipment and horses.<sup>67</sup> The new farmers on the Blackfoot reserve were even less fortunate. Not only did they have to pay for the equipment, their band trust account was charged \$15,300 for the value of the breaking done on land under the GPC.

The farmland not turned over to reserve farmers was used for a variety of purposes. The second farm on the Blackfoot Reserve, which was already located on surrendered land, was successfully rented for several years and generated thousands of dollars in revenue for the band trust account. The Muscowpetung farm was closed in 1932 and seeded to grass. A similar fate would appear to have befallen the remaining GPC farms.

The few dollars which were made by reserve residents as wage labourers on the farms, or saved by not having to break land on their new farms, does not compensate for the lost potential revenue had these lands been leased to paying tenants. The First Nations people surrendered the land for the GPC free of charge as a patriotic gesture. They had not foreseen the greed of the government officials to exploit their kind deed well beyond

---

<sup>66</sup> Hugh Dempsey, *The Gentle Persuader* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books 1986), 66

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 65

the conclusion of the difficulties caused by the war. They had wanted no part of a multiple year program under such terms.

The focus of Graham upon the operation of the Greater Production farms had a negative impact upon the farming operations of regular reserve farmers across the prairies. As already mentioned, Manitoba farmers were almost completely neglected during the five years the GPC was in operation. On the Blood Reserve, Wilson listed a number of grievances in his Memorandum that were directly attributable to the operations of the Greater Production Farm. Most serious was the claim that the two band-owned tractors were taken in 1918 to break land on the government farm. This action forced the reserve residents to plant their seeds by hand, leaving them unable to thresh their grain in a timely manner, and prevented them from breaking additional acreage on the reserve in preparation for the 1919 season.<sup>68</sup> One of the farming instructors from the Reserve was also placed on the GP farm and not replaced.<sup>69</sup>

The hypocrisy evident in the GP farm operations was quite astounding. For decades government officials had used the excuse that reserve residents were incapable of being successful farmers to justify not investing in reserve agricultural projects. Yet it was largely an Aboriginal labour force that performed the farming operations on the GP farms and allowed the same officials to generate the tremendous profits that they were so prone to boast of. The real travesty of the project was the opportunity that was lost to

---

<sup>68</sup> Wilson, *Our Betrayed Wards*, 29-30

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 29



develop a truly profitable reserve agriculture program. The \$375,000 grant amount was almost twenty-seven times the paltry \$14,000 the department spent on agriculture on the prairie reserves in 1918. If the grant money had been directed towards the reserve-farming program, even greater results would likely have been achieved. The labour force would have been largely the same and the money spent on establishing the administration and erecting the infrastructure for the Greater Production farms would have been unnecessary, as it duplicated the services already available on the reserves. Thus, more funds could have been directed towards farming operations.

But the ‘what-if’s’ did not occur, and it is merely conjecture as to how much more successful the reserve-farming program could have been if the money had been directly applied. More importantly, the Greater Production farm project represented one of the best examples of the extent to which some officials were willing to put personal objectives before those of the department. Graham’s government farm scheme had no connection with any aspect of department operations or with fulfilling treaty obligations. His exploitation of the reserve residents and their resources was a “prostitution of trust,” particularly as it was only through this exploitation that the project was able to achieve any profitable success.<sup>70</sup> The highly touted benefits to the reserve residents, while mostly valid, all should have occurred as a matter of daily business if the reserve-farming

---

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* The quotation is taken from the subtitle of Wilson’s booklet and refers to the perceived misguided efforts of the Department officials towards the management of the affairs on the Blood reserve.

program had been operated prudently. Once again, Graham's gain came via an ill-conceived farming program that was not in the best interests of the reserve residents.

The third aspect of the Greater Production program was focussed upon the leasing of reserve lands to non-native agriculturalists. Unlike the government farm program, the issuing of leases was not a new area of operation for the department. For several years, the department has been in the business of leasing reserve lands for grazing purposes and the operations had provided a steady income for a number of western reserves. What was new under this phase of the GPC was the leasing of reserve land to non-native farmers for farming operations. The leasing aspect of the GPC proved to be the most lucrative feature of the Greater Production scheme.

When Graham took on the role of Commissioner in February of 1918, many of his first directives were related to the leasing program. On the March tour to visit department personnel across the prairies Graham impressed upon the agents the pressing need to gain surrenders of land from reserve residents for leasing purposes. In part, this need was driven by Graham's personal desire to build his empire quickly. However, the drive for surrenders was equally stimulated by the desire to have the lands leased in time for the 1918 agricultural season. The agents delivered. During the months of March and April, dozens of surrenders had been taken and approved.

The reserve residents really had few options. In locations that Graham decided should be leased, he utilized a variety of methods to ensure that a surrender was gained. Prior to becoming Commissioner Graham had been unsuccessful in securing a surrender

on the Crooked Lakes Agency due, he believed, to not having cash and the papers at his disposal during the discussion.<sup>71</sup> Now in charge, he was determined not to suffer a similar fate again. On March 18, 1918, Graham sent \$5000 and surrender forms to Agent John Gooderham on the Blackfoot reserve, telling him to “use as much of this amount as you think necessary.”<sup>72</sup> Wilson’s memorandum records other similar forms of bribery and intimidation issued by Agents and Graham to encourage surrenders. These examples included threats of starvation, withholding use of band-owned farming equipment to non-supporters, dangling chief’s medals before a non supporter and using Mounted Police to force a second vote after the first did not support surrender.<sup>73</sup> Where these tactics proved unsuccessful, Graham turned to the War Measures Act. On April 15, The Governor General gave assent to the Bill by which the Minister, under the War Measures Act, could appropriate and lease reserve lands with or without band permission. In the letter, the Minister referred specifically to four reserves of the Hobbema Agency, stating “whereas applications have been made for leases of this said land for the purposes of grazing or cultivation” and “the Indians themselves are unable or unwilling to surrender for such purposes.”<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press 1989), 249

<sup>72</sup> Glenbow M 1784. Letter from W.M. Graham to J.H. Gooderham, March 19, 1918.

<sup>73</sup> Wilson, *Our Betrayed Wards*, 6, 24

Despite the tremendous number of ways Graham could intimidate or pressure a reserve to sign surrenders, there were some recorded cases of resistance by the First Nations peoples. A handful of reserves, such as Thunderchild's Reserve in Saskatchewan, simply voted against any surrender agreements, no matter the pressures placed upon them. Two bands with specific concerns turned to their church officials to write out their complaints and take them to government. On February 10, 1920, the Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan, J.A. Newnham, wrote to D.C. Scott on behalf of the Sioux reserve near Dundurn. In this letter Newnham stated that Graham, whom he accused of having "Greater Production on the brain" was placing very distressing pressures upon the reserve members to surrender land.<sup>75</sup> Newnham argued that to take such actions would seriously disrupt the hard work these people had undertaken to establish a farming economy. He went on describe the poor reputation for statesmanship Graham was gaining amongst the reserve residents and the Agents in the province because of his actions. Newnham also questioned Graham's motivation, stating "nearly all our Indian work is suffering here because he seems to have eyes and ears and enthusiasm only for greater production," supporting the aforementioned accusation by Scott that Graham had let his regular duties slide in his zeal to work on his pet project. Newnham concluded by asking Scott to calm the fears of the band members regarding the status of their land as well as putting Graham in

---

<sup>74</sup> RG 10 Volume 1131, Letter 218, Letter from Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to Governor General, April 15, 1918

<sup>75</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 4070, File 427, 063, Letter from J.A. Newnham to D.C. Scott, February 10, 1920

his place. It would appear that the band's request was heeded, as no surrenders were taken on this reserve in regards to GPC.

Similarly, the Blackfoot people turned to their minister, H.S. Gibbon Stocken, to draft a letter to the Department regarding their concerns about the GPC.<sup>76</sup> Specifically, the band members wanted the officials to stop the lessors on the reserve from cutting hay on non-leased, band-controlled lands. In support of their claim, the band members made Stocken include a statement stating that they had readily consented to the leases so as to support the Greater Production initiative, but that they had been assured that the department would guarantee that enough hay lands would be left for the band members' needs. Again, no further discussion is found in relation to the charges.

A more significant resistance took place on the Poundmaker reserve in Saskatchewan. The biography of John Tootoosis outlines the incident in which the people of Poundmaker's reserve utilized legal counsel to challenge the GPC.<sup>77</sup> In 1920, S.L. MacDonald, Agent for the Battleford Agency, announced to the people of Poundmaker's reserve his intention to establish a GPC lease of five sections of land for a non-Aboriginal farmer to raise sheep. The reserve had decided at a 1919 meeting they had no interest in leasing any portion of the reserve under the GPC.<sup>78</sup> Undeterred, MacDonald told the

---

<sup>76</sup> Glenbow M 4738, box 29. Letter to the Indian Commissioner from H.S. Gibbon Stocken, July 22, 1918

<sup>77</sup> Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman, John Tootoosis (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1984), 119-122

<sup>78</sup> Glenbow M 1171, file 10, Letter from Walter Taylor to S.L. MacDonald,

reserve members that their cutting of hay on the sections did not constitute using it and that the land would be claimed, whether supported by the community or not, under the leasing powers confirmed by the War Measures Act. The community was unanimous in not wanting to lease any land and decided to use some of their band funds to consult a lawyer in Battleford. The lawyer recommended that building a fence around the disputed sections would signify use and make them exempt from seizure under the GPC. Despite threats by the Agent and a showdown meeting with Graham, the band members resisted, even challenging Graham to take them to court. Graham backed off from trying to claim the property and bitterly told the assembly of band members that they would not take care of the land and were wasting the land when they could be making money from it.

The elation of John Tootoosis and the rest of the delegation was captured in the statement “They had confronted the dreaded Graham successfully; they had *not* been arrested and jailed and Poundmaker land was safe again, at least for the present. It was a taste of new freedom. They all felt good, very good about it. It was the way their ancestors must have felt going home after a successful raid or battle.”<sup>79</sup> The statement also highlights the adversarial and fearsome relationship that had emerged between the department officials and the reserve residents. Perhaps, the most significant aspect of the successful use by Tootoosis and others of the Canadian legal system to challenge the GPC policy was the new sense of empowerment that emerged. In the case of Tootoosis, he

---

October 28, 1919

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 121. Emphasis is from Goodwill and Sluman

was able to utilize the experience to spawn a long and successful career as a First Nations politician and rights activist.

The historic record is mute regarding any other forms of resistance, and Graham was able to establish an impressive total of GPC leases. Eighty-one grazing leases were let, thirty-nine leases for farming and three for both farming and grazing. Over half of the Agencies on the prairies had either a farming or grazing lease on one of their reserves. A majority of the leases were set for five years. Total acreages were high: 310,000 acres were leased for grazing purposes and 22,000 acres for farming.<sup>80</sup> On these lands, the lessors had broken over 12,000 acres by the end of 1918, and 20,000 cattle and many thousands of sheep had been let out for grazing.<sup>81</sup>

The reported income from these leases was even more impressive. Graham claims to have collected \$440,009 in rentals between 1918 and 1923, inclusive.<sup>82</sup> Unlike other figures reported by Graham, this total is consistent with the collected leases total in the Auditor General's Reports for the same period. Graham also made note that there was still \$121,482 due and collectable on property rentals. This amount appears to have been written off. The account to which these rentals was being paid was closed by the department in 1924, and rental income related to these leases does not appear in any other revenue account

---

<sup>80</sup> RG 10, Volume 4069, file 427,063, Report from D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, February 28, 1919

<sup>81</sup> RG 10 Volume 1131, Letter from Arthur Meighen to the Governor General, December 8, 1918

<sup>82</sup> Glenbow M 8097, File 5, "Condensed Comparative Statement Re Work on

for the department. The assertion is supported by the sympathetic tone by which Minister Charles Stewart referred to the desperate financial straits a number of the defaulters were in as a result of the high rental charges they agreed to.<sup>83</sup> George Gooderham suggests a possible reason for the sympathy was that many of the leases were given to friends of government officials to speculate in the booming wheat market of 1918-19.<sup>84</sup> If such was the case, then the government's decision not to pursue the defaulters was extremely costly to the various bands. Due to the government's inactivity, the reserve communities, through no fault of their own, were deprived of over 20% of their potential revenue under the leasing program. This seeming mismanagement was a strange course of action for a government whose vision of "civilizing" the reserve residents was based largely upon the concept of "one must pay for everything one gets."

In fact, it was this vision of "paying one's own way" which was used as the primary justification for Scott to close out the leasing aspect of the program. In the letter to Graham in which he announced the cancellation of the GPC, Scott stated, "we cannot expect the Indians to sit by and derive an unearned income from the work of others."<sup>85</sup> The comment is interesting as on at least one reserve, the band was paying the government to lease their lands for them. Under the GPC surrender on the Blood reserve, the department retained ten

---

Indian Reserves in the Three Prairie Provinces"

<sup>83</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1922), 2155

<sup>84</sup> Glenbow, M 3974, File 1 "Twenty Five Years as an Indian Agent to the Blackfoot Band", 2-6

<sup>85</sup> Glenbow, M 8097, Letter from D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham, February 22, 1922



percent of the lease amount at an administration fee, to the ire of the reserve chiefs.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the loss of income for both the reserves and the bands, a majority of the leases were cancelled at their expiry dates, most of which came due in 1922, and the leasing program of the GPC was cancelled.

The leasing portion of the GPC was the most successful aspect of program.

Despite the underhanded or intimidating tactics used by department officials to gain some of the leases, complaints cannot be found from a majority of the reserves where leases were granted. The leases definitely generated revenue for the reserve populations and the records indicate that the money was placed in the trust accounts of the various bands for their use. The inability of the government to collect the significant outstanding rentals raised the question of whose interests the department officials were working towards. In fairness, though, perhaps the accounts truly were uncollectable in light of the economic recession experienced across the country in the early 1920's. Overall, the leasing program was a relatively straightforward operation for Graham as there was a long history of renting reserve lands by the government. The only major problems that were noted in regards to the rentals were the significant problems on the Blood reserve that were the focus of the memorandum by R.N. Wilson.

The experience the Blood people had in connection with the GPC was unique. The community seemingly encountered more problems with the implementation and operation of the program than those experienced by any other prairie community. They

---

<sup>86</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Land Surrender dated March

also demonstrated more pronounced resistance to the policies and procedures of the GPC. A significant aspect of this resistance was the retaining of both an attorney and a solicitor to bring their case to both the political and the public spheres. The success of this resistance and the impact it had upon department policy and operations are exceptional in annals of Government-First Nations relations.

The concerns the Blood Reserve members had with the GPC can be traced back to 1913. At that time, the government was anxious for the reserve residents to authorize a land sale for surrender for a significant portion of their reserve that, at the time, was the largest in the country. An investigation on the reserve as to the disposition of the community towards surrendering land suggested that a surrender vote would be unsuccessful at that time. Furthermore, reserve officials should pursue a number of actions that would encourage a more favourable vote. These actions included cutting off rations to “able bodied” men, the cancellation of credit recommendations for reserve members wishing to make purchases off reserve and providing tours to other reserves, such as the Blackfoot, where recent surrenders had brought a great deal of money to the residents.<sup>87</sup> A call for surrender was not brought up again until the spring of 1917. At that time, the local agent was authorized to negotiate with the reserve members towards surrendering about 90,000 acres of the reserve. On June 17, D.C. Scott received a letter

---

23, 1918; Letter from Blood Chiefs to Hon. Charles Stewart, December 20, 1922

<sup>87</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Letter from J. Markle to D.C. Scott, December 30, 1913

from R.N. Wilson regarding the concerns of the Blood people about the surrender campaign being launched by the reserve agent.

R.N. Wilson had a long association with the Blood people. Wilson had moved to the area in 1882 as a member of the Northwest Mounted Police and in 1886 had opened a store across the river from the reserve. This close proximity, combined with Wilson's strong personal interest in the history of the Blood people, allowed him to develop many close friendships with members of the reserve and a position of trust amongst the band chiefs. A staunch Liberal, Wilson was appointed Indian Agent on the Peigan Reserve in 1898 and became Agent on the Blood Reserve in 1903. He held his position until 1911, and it was during Wilson's period as agent that farming was introduced on the reserve. During this period, Wilson also developed a close friendship with D.C. Scott, with whom he shared a scholarly interest in the history of the First Nations people. The combination of Wilson's connection with the community, knowledge of the department operations and personal contacts made him the logical choice for the reserve residents to turn to for assistance with their resistance efforts.

Wilson's letter was of an extremely friendly tone. He wished to give his friend "early knowledge" of the complaints that the Blood leaders had brought to him and had asked that he submit to the department.<sup>88</sup> In the letter, Wilson outlined the "policy of wholesale intimidation and bribery to secure the necessary votes" which had been

---

<sup>88</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Letter from R.N. Wilson to D.C. Scott, June 11, 1917

launched by Agent Dilworth as well as a number of specific examples. Wilson also volunteered that he believed a surrender of 93,000 acres, if properly attained and managed, would be in the best interest of the reserve members. Scott's reply, addressed to "my dear Mr. Wilson," suggested that he would look into the matter and that he would like to hear more from him on the subject.<sup>89</sup> Little did either recognize that this would be the beginning of six years of continual correspondence regarding the situation on the Blood Reserve.

The initial vote on the proposed 1917 surrender was negative, but the Agent continued working towards swaying the voters. A second vote on February 28, 1918 produced, according to Agent Dilworth's calculations, a narrow majority in favour of surrender. However, complaints regarding a number of irregularities with the vote, including under-age votes being accepted, early closing polls, and misrepresentation of the terms by the Agent were forwarded to Scott.<sup>90</sup> More critical, from the Department's point of view, were the clauses Dilworth placed in the surrender by which the land must be sold by public auction and that rations would be provided for all time to the reserve residents. These clauses precluded the government from using the land for Soldier Settlement, as desired by Meighen, as well as established a very expensive perpetual commitment to feed the band members.<sup>91</sup> In his April 22<sup>nd</sup> reply, Graham advised against

---

<sup>89</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773.3-1-1, pt 1, Letter from D.C. Scott to R.N. Wilson, June 21, 1917

<sup>90</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7201, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Letter from D.C. Scott to W.J. Dilworth, March 14, 1918

accepting the surrender unless significant modifications could be made. No further discussion was conducted and the disputed surrender was postponed. On February 6, 1919, Graham was given authority to re-submit the 93,000-acre surrender to the Blood Reserve members with an additional 58,000 acres surrender with the idea of turning the entire surrender over to the Soldier Settlement Board.<sup>92</sup> The new surrender was never voted upon and the matter seemingly dropped.

Graham's view regarding the land sale surrender was influenced by his vision for the Greater Production Campaign. On March 23, he had secured a surrender on the Blood reserve to lease 6080 acres of land for farming under the GPC program. After the controversial land sale surrender had been set aside in April, at Graham's suggestion, Graham put forth a new GPC surrender to the Blood people on May 30 as a substitution for the March 23 agreement. Many new clauses were present in the new surrender arrangement. The most significant clause was the agreement "to allow the Government the free use of whatever land on the Blood Indian reserve it may require for the greater production of food producing grains."<sup>93</sup> The agreement in place, Graham established the Greater Production Farm and approximately 90,000 acres of grazing leases under the

---

<sup>91</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7201, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Letter from D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham, April 10, 1918

<sup>92</sup> "Papers of Touchwood Hills Agency, 1911-1938, Volume 4," Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Library, Regina. Letter from D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, March 10, 1919

<sup>93</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7201, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Surrender Agreement dated May 30, 1918

GPC, on the same land that was to have been sold under the land sale surrender. It was the changes in the new surrender agreements and Graham's operation of the grazing leases that caused the Blood people to ask Wilson to act as their spokesman.

The battle quickly divided into two camps. Wilson's communication was always directed to his friend Scott, and any communication being sent to Wilson by the department always flowed through the Deputy Superintendent General. This duality was balanced by the relationship between Meighen and Graham. While Graham and Scott communicated when needed, Graham directed much of his communication through his relative and patron Meighen. All four men were quite headstrong in their opinions, particularly Wilson and Graham, and all willing to express their point of view. The result was five years of pointedly critical letters and memoranda.

From 1918 through 1920, Wilson wrote many letter of complaint to the government on behalf of his Blood friends. Also writing the occasional complaint letter was D.L. Matheson, a barrister in the town of MacLeod, and also a friend to many of the reserve residents. The department replies to these letters were polite but non-committal as Scott considered the writing campaign to be "over-zealous" on the part of the authors and warranting little investigation.<sup>94</sup> Through this period, the actions of both Wilson and Matheson had been taken out of friendship and concern for the Blood people. In 1920, this situation changed.

---

<sup>94</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7201, File 773/3-1-1, pt 1, Letter from D.C. Scott to Hon. Mr. Meighen, October 22, 1918

After the collapse of the cattle ranching economy in the winter of 1918-19, and the poor crop of 1919, the Blood people became bolder with their resistance efforts. On May 11, 1920, Shot-On-Both-Sides, head chief for the Blood Indians, granted R.N. Wilson power of attorney to “communicate to the Department of Indian Affairs, the Members of the Dominion House of Commons or to the Public Press of Canada such representations in the interests of the Blood Indians concerning the management of the Blood Reserve as may in his opinion be necessary to secure.”<sup>95</sup> The form went on to list ten specific claims for which Wilson had the authority to pursue on behalf of the community. While a few First Nations peoples had consulted lawyers to act on their behalf, it is believed that Shot-On-Both-Sides’ actions were the first instance of a chief granting power of attorney to a non-government official to take up a case against the department.

Wilson soon laid his argument before the federal government. On May 31, Wilson submitted a memorial to D.C. Scott that contained forty-five points of contention for the Blood people over the operations on the reserve since the GPC began operation. The concerns of the reserve residents fell in three areas. First, the surrender process was improperly conducted and allowed many GPC activities to take place on the reserve that were not desired by the community. Secondly, the mismanagement of the grazing aspect of the GPC directly led to the starvation of most of the reserve-owned cattle and horses. Thirdly, the mismanagement of the GPC farm impaired the ability of the reserve farmers

---

<sup>95</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7201, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Power of Attorney form of

to properly conduct their operations. The memorial was signed by 201 members of the reserve under the heading “we the undersigned Blood Indians hereby give our support to the Memorial of May 31, 1920 presented upon our behalf to the Government by R.N. Wilson and to such other measures he may decide to take in that connection.”<sup>96</sup>

The reaction by Scott was one of reflection. While not prepared to fully accept the charges of the memorandum, he admitted to Meighen that proper explanations were lacking from the department officials as to the situation on the reserve.<sup>97</sup> Scott also commented that Wilson had been the last competent agent on the Blood reserve and that his representations should be considered. Perhaps the most telling comment of his feelings about the Blood reserve situation was revealed when he stated “while no doubt the holding of a judicial investigation would clear the air, I am not sure that the department would come out of it very well. While I have no objection personally to this ordeal, I think it would be better policy to avoid it.”<sup>98</sup>

The Department was slow to initiate any investigation. Only in December did they begin to query local ranchers about their loss ratios in 1919 and in January, 1921, receive a written report from Graham in regards to the Blood people’s concerns. Graham’s defence was based upon two ideas: first that most of the allegations were false

---

Shot-On-Both-Sides, May 11, 1920

<sup>96</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, R.N. Wilson to D.C. Scott, May 31, 1920

<sup>97</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, June 8, 1920



and, secondly, when substantiated, were a result of bad decisions by former reserve Agents.<sup>99</sup> A month later, Graham proposed a new management strategy for the Blood Reserve that would see the GP farm turned over to new farmers and “give them equipment to work with and to put each man who is likely to work well on a farm, properly located and equipped.”<sup>100</sup> The plan was approved and the first farmers were located on the GP farm later in the spring.

Graham’s plan, while positive sounding, did not satisfy the grievances of the Blood people. Nearly a year after sending their memorandum, they had had no contact with the Department about the issues other than a couple of notices to Wilson that the subject was being dealt with. Not content with the status of the concerns, Wilson went public with the grievances. In March, Wilson began giving questions to two members of the House of Commons, Mr. Molloy and Mr. White, to ask during the April question period.<sup>101</sup> Little came of these efforts other than that Department official began to collect negative information about Wilson, particularly his experiences as an Indian Agent and his business operations since leaving the department.

---

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>99</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from W.M. Graham to Arthur Meighen, January 20, 1921

<sup>100</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, February 21, 1921

<sup>101</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Memorandum from D.C. Scott to James Lougheed, March 18, 1921

In May of 1922, Wilson published his booklet Our Betrayed Wards, which contained the 1920 memorandum, and distributed the booklet to the members of the House of Commons. A copy was sent to D.C. Scott with a letter in which Wilson hoped Scott would be able to assist the Blood peoples. In reference to the new department structure in which Charles Stewart was named Superintendent General, Wilson was particularly optimistic regarding Scott's help, stating that it "should be an easy task for you now that the people of Canada have relieved your Department of the blight of Meighenism."<sup>102</sup>

The department finally responded to the Blood Memorial on August 17, 1922, over two years after it had been submitted. In short, the department sympathized with losses suffered by the reserve residents, but found few faults with Graham or the department's administration of the GPC project and DIA. Any problems, the letter stated, were caused by the former agents with whom the department boasted of having dispensed. The reply by the chiefs of the Blood Reserve on December 20, 1922, was a tremendous summary not only of their case but also of their resolve to resist the efforts of the government to dispense with their claims.

In the letter, the chiefs thanked the Minister for the long awaited reply but, as one elder is quoted, "we were hopeful of tangible results from the long expected visit of Mr. Stewart but all he has done for us is to send us a big bundle of the Commissioner's

---

<sup>102</sup> NAC RG 10 Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from R.N. Wilson to D.C. Scott, May 8, 1922

lies.”<sup>103</sup> The chiefs went on to ask the Minister to reconsider their calls for an outside investigation, noting “you will observe the granting of this request will be in line with the policy already announced by you of giving us full information about our affairs.”<sup>104</sup> After a reiteration of the major grievances, the chiefs concluded with a request to have their affairs administered directly from Ottawa as “our people thoroughly distrust the Commissioner and want to have nothing to do with him.”<sup>105</sup>

The letter by the chiefs also poignantly highlighted that the double standards between the government’s goals for the reserve agriculture program and the operations managed by the department had not been lost upon them. The chiefs described the immense efforts the Blood farmers undertook to develop their farms and produce thirty-eight bushels to the acre, commenting, “this Commissioner now describes that work as ‘waste and destruction.’”<sup>106</sup> The chiefs then commented on the government efforts on the GPC farm, stating, “the farming work, though many times more costly than ours, was so badly managed that only 6 bushels of wheat per acre were threshed from the limited acreage that was fit to be cut at all.”<sup>107</sup> Later, referring to the land breaking of 1918, they stated “it remained for this Commissioner to show us the other extreme, to teach us how

---

<sup>103</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2, Letter from the Chief’s of the Blood Reserve to Hon Charles Stewart, December 20, 1922

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*

badly such work could really be done,...we saw a huge acreage of sod on our reserve so badly broken that when the Commissioner's fields were finished his men had to go into them and burn large patches of standing grass so as to make the Greater Production fields look like plowed (sic) land from a distance." In a similar vein, the chiefs also referred to the apparent wastage of money by a department that preached stringent financial restraint, stating "the plea for economy forbade relief to our Indian children crying for food but there was plenty of money for joy riding gasoline." The statements from the chiefs provide a rare glimpse into the specific injustices of the department as well as the degree of recognition by the reserve residents of these issues.

The last letter in the file related to the Blood Reserve situation was a rebuttal by Graham regarding the December 1922 letter from the chiefs. In this letter, Graham renewed his defence that the problems were a result of the efforts of others and that his campaign was beneficial for the reserve residents.<sup>108</sup> He concluded that the reserve residents other than those "poisoned" by Wilson were content, but cautioned "I cannot guarantee however, that this harmony will continue, a man of Mr. Wilson's type can go on any reserve in Canada and create dissatisfaction and discontent no matter how prosperous the Indians might be, or how little ground there may exist for discontent."<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>108</sup> NAC RG 10, Volume 7102, File 773/3-1-1, pt 2. Letter from W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, February 23, 1923

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*

By the spring of 1923, the GPC was finished as a department program and generated little interest in official circles. On the Blood reserve, the leases had expired, the GPC farm had been closed and much of the land transferred to reserve farmers. The resistance was at an end.

The results and impacts of the resistance staged by the Blood peoples were notable. They took a strong stance that they were able to perpetuate for almost six years. They recognized their limitations in understanding the legal framework of the government operations and hired skilled, knowledgeable and committed representatives to act on their behalf. The Bloods experienced unparalleled success, with the help of their representatives, in gaining a public audience for their grievances. Through these representatives, the concerns of the Bloods were taken beyond the Agent's door to Ottawa to be brought before the Department, the House of Commons and the national press. Though they did not get their requested public inquiry, they did gain a meeting with Minister Charles Stewart in 1921 and were able to prompt the Department to take the unusual step of changing the department policies for the benefit of the reserve residents. The move to close the GPC farm prior to the shutdown of the program, and to pledge to provide the reserve residents with access to all the equipment they needed, was a positive response to the Blood grievances by the department, though these steps should have been the standard practice for reserve farming operations from the beginning.

Arthur Meighen was wrong when he announced to the House of Commons in 1919 that the GPC was the most successful enterprise in Canada. While there were

positive results in some areas, the rental incomes for the band trust accounts being the most notable, none of the participants had their needs truly met. The ambitious William Graham was able to implement his vision of the program and run the complete program for four seasons. But at the pinnacle moment, when he felt poised to take the GPC from a temporary, experimental program and see it operate as an ongoing initiative of the department, as had happened with his File Hills Colony, the government closed the program down. Embittered, and with his political supporters no longer in power, Graham lost his empire and was reduced to essentially a paper-pushing administrator until his inglorious retirement in 1932. Scott and the department, though happy to see the farm income that paid for the operations of the Commissioner's office, never truly felt the program fit with the objectives of the Department. As the negative reports, particularly those from the Blood Reserve, and the clashes with Graham's vision, continued to grow, Scott must have been pleased to gain the support of the new Liberal government in 1921 to close the program down and be done with what he felt, was a misguided effort.

The reserve residents were the ones who had their needs most neglected. The program, like many government initiatives, started with great promise for the First Nations peoples. The opportunities to expand the reserve farming economies and help the nation at its time of need were desired and achievable goals for the reserve residents. But, as the program emerged, it became clear that the GPC, like so many other government initiatives designed by the department for the 'benefit' of their charges, was less about truly helping the reserve residents and more about increasing the stature of the

government officials at an economical price. Yes, some benefits did go to the reserves. Some residents got jobs working on GPC farms, farming acreage on the reserves did increase, some young members did get farms of their own established and bank accounts were credited with thousands of dollars raised through rental income. However, these benefits all should have been greater. No learning experiences were offered through the farm jobs as virtually all of the aboriginal peoples were employed in menial tasks. As well, there were no benefits for the reserve women. Unlike the Department of Agriculture program, which featured the IODE and National Coalition of Women as active partners, Graham's program had no role for women.

During the program, farming acreage increased at a rate slightly lower than prior to the GPC, and, therefore, the Campaign was nothing special or even detrimental. Farms should have been created for these new farmers whether the GPC was in operation or not, and, as these farmers had to pay for the land improvements, they gained no benefit from the program. And, while thousands were made, the pittance rental arrangement made with the Government for the GPC farms and the heavy number of defaulters cost the First Nations peoples of the prairies hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost potential income. The incidents of Aboriginal resistance related to the program, while notably successful and empowering for the reserve residents, served more to highlight the differences between the goals and the actions of the department in their efforts to 'civilize' their Indian charges. The GPC offered so much but left all the stakeholders wanting more. When the program was shut down, all those involved likely breathed a sigh of relief.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### Reaping the Harvest: Evaluating the Demise of the GPC

The Greater Production Campaign was one of the largest initiatives launched by the Union Government in 1918. Born of genuine need and interest in stimulating the production of food for the war effort, the GPC gave every appearance of being an apt and proper project. The program launched by the Food Board had some positive effects in terms of youth employment and distributing some badly needed dollars into provincial agricultural departments. But this aspect of the GPC disappeared with little fanfare once the war was over.

The Campaign initiated by the Department of Indian Affairs was different from the one initiated by the Food Board in many significant ways. Commissioner Graham did not view the program as a temporary measure, but, rather, the initial step towards a larger agricultural project with himself at the head. It was in this vision that Graham established the almost burdensome infrastructure to administer the three aspects of the program. The direction taken by Graham was consistent, Graham's agricultural empire first and reserves farming second. It was this attitude that, in part, led to the department shutting down the campaign in 1922.



On the surface, the GPC would appear to have had few measurable effects upon the reserve communities of the prairies. Most notably, the program featured seemingly no direct alienation of land from the reserves. Only one example was noted of land that had been utilized for a GPC lease having been subsequently surrendered and sold, and this was done at the request of the band members.<sup>1</sup> As well, there appears to have been no transfer of any lands utilized by the GPC to the Soldier Settlement Board.<sup>2</sup> Numerous requests were made by Ottawa officials to transfer some of the leased lands in 1919, but Graham, who was also in charge of choosing lands to sell to the SSB, did not transfer any GPC utilized property. And why would he? He had created the GPC program as his empire, and it was to his benefit to maintain and utilize all the land he could. Unlike his Ottawa superiors, Graham would gain no political favours by recommending GPC land to the SSB. Since Graham had it in his control to choose the properties, and believed there were tremendous amounts of excess reserve lands, he chose other properties and left his GPC domain intact.

The GPC did increase farming upon the reserves in that more reserve land was being cropped than prior to the program implementation. However, most of these gains were only experienced during the period of the program. When the leases were cancelled

---

<sup>1</sup> "Papers of the Touchwood Hills Agency, 1911-1928," Volume 4, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Library, Regina: Letter from Muscowequan Band members to D.C. Scott, March 5, 1920

<sup>2</sup> John Taylor, Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years 1918-1939,

and the government farms closed, a majority of this land was returned to grass. The crop acreage for the reserve residents did increase, but only at a level comparable to the yearly gains being made prior to the GPC implementation. The overall acreage jump at the end of the program when the new farmers were placed on the former GPC farms would likely have happened whether the GPC had been in place or not.

The GPC operations did result in increases to the band trust accounts where lease and farms had been established. And the trace evidence suggests that these funds were used to provide loans and assistance to new farmers, as was outlined by the department. But there should have been more. The high administration costs of the farm program, including the payment of all the Commissioner's office expenses as well as those for the purchase and maintenance of Graham's house in Regina, significantly reduced any profits. If the department had had to pay more than the token rents they negotiated with the reserves, a considerable operational loss would have resulted. The leasing program was more beneficial to the reserve residents. Under this aspect of the program over \$400,000 was transferred to the band accounts. However, more should have been available. The government's choice to claim 10% of the leasing agreements for "administration" fees was a petty cash grab. More significant was the failure of the department to collect the bad debts, costing the First Nations peoples over 20% of the projected leasing income. Moreover, as the government was already in the business of

leasing reserve lands, the income generated could have been achieved without the GPC and the associated problems of the new administrative body.

Evaluating the impact of the program on the reserve residents is more difficult. Unfortunately, virtually no documents or other direct sources of First Nations thought are available. Therefore, most of the accounts of the GPC are based upon on second- and third-hand accounts. In reference to the impact on the reserve agriculture initiatives, the impact was at best none, and at worst, disastrous. Graham suggested the positive impacts were great, with over seventy farmers being granted new farms. The department would also point to the experiences of Joe Bullshields and James Gladstone as examples. These men built large, productive and profitable farms from the plots granted on the former Blood GPC farm in 1921. By the 1940's Bullshields had an 800-acre farm, all equipment and buildings paid for and had established a farming tradition that his descendents follow today. But, the land already belonged to the reserve residents and the government was supposed to be committed to assisting them to utilize it. Unlike the Food Board Program that provided non-repayable grant monies to its constituents, monies given under Department of Indian Affairs GPC were loans. Therefore, any buildings or land improvements made under the GPC had to be paid for by the reserve residents upon taking over the farmland. So for these farmers, there was no impact or benefit beyond what the government was already supposed to be doing.

In the case of the Blood Reserve, the impacts to agriculture appear to be extremely negative. The repeated grievances issued by the Blood chiefs indicate that the mismanagement of the GPC on that reserve cost them one-half of their cattle and horse stock and inhibited the reserve farmers' abilities to carry on their necessary tasks.

The GPC had a very negative impact upon the relationship between the reserve residents and the government. During the war years and the early 1920's, school-educated First Nations peoples filled leadership roles in many reserve communities. These new leaders, such as John Tootoosis, with their exposure to the language and customs of non-Native society, were not completely dependent upon the DIA officials to explain the laws under which the reserves operated. As a result, with a better understanding of the terms of the treaties and the Indian Act came an enhanced interest in seeing the terms met by the government, the ability to challenge the officials when the terms were not fulfilled, and, moreover, a desire to talk to DIA officials as equals and according to the methods of the non-Natives. The creation of the Commissioner's office should have provided closer ties between the western reserve residents and the Ottawa administrators. Instead, the opposite was occurred. The testimonies from the reserve residents and their supporters indicate that W.M. Graham, very quickly, became a much feared and despised representative of the government and an impediment to communication between the First Nations peoples and the department. This turn of events was particularly discouraging to the reserve farmers. The First Nations peoples of

the prairies had signed the treaties with the idea of developing an economically viable agricultural economy with the assistance of the Canadian government. Instead, the reserve residents were forced to persevere through a series of restrictive policies and an erosion of their land base at the hands of the government.

The announcement of the GPC, with its stated goal to develop and increase reserve farms, appeared to the new leaders to be a return to promises of assistance agreed to in the treaties. When the GPC turned out to be just another program focussed on helping department officials and non-Native farmers at the expense of the reserve residents, a new, wedge was driven between the prairie First Nations peoples and the government. The new, educated reserve leadership, better able to identify and understand the exploitation they suffered under the program, lost a significant level of trust for the DIA, a trust that has yet to be regained. Prior to the GPC, relations between First Nations and government were often tenuous; the efforts of Graham and the other officials made them worse.

The GPC farms allowed the reserve residents an unprecedented opportunity to compare their farming operations with those of their guardians. It was not a positive experience for either party. The reserve residents were able to see the blatant hypocrisy of the government's attitude at a number of levels. They were able to witness poor farming techniques practiced at high expense while they had difficulties convincing officials to provide them with loans to purchase equipment. As well, they heard the

government rave about the great success of the GPC farms while their own efforts were described as wasteful, destructive and not up to the mark. Yet it was largely the same Aboriginal farmers who worked both farming operations on similar lands under the same administration. It was a truly negative and discouraging experience for those involved!

One of the more noteworthy impacts of the GPC was the role the Blood legal activities played in the creation of the 1927 legislation by which First Nations people could not raise or use funds to retain legal counsel not approved by the Superintendent General. When the Bill was read before the House of Commons on February 15, Charles Stewart defended the amendment, stating:

But from one end of Canada to the other it is becoming a common practice to represent to the Indians that they have certain rights and those making the representations usually manage to get the Indians to enter into a contract providing substantial remuneration for their advisers. We think it is to the advantage of the Indians that the department should scrutinize these contracts in order to protect them from exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

Bill Waiser and Dave Debrou attribute the government's decision to enact the legislation to land claim agitation in British Columbia, while John Leslie and Ron McQuire suggest the inspiration for the Act were the events in the early 1920's on the Oneida, St. Regis, Oka and Lorette Reserves whereby some American lawyers had solicited funds to present land claims against the State of New York.<sup>4</sup> However, the efforts of Wilson also contributed to

---

<sup>3</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (1926-27), 324

<sup>4</sup> Dave DeBrou and Bill Waiser, eds., *Documenting Canada* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers 1992), 287; John Leslie and Ron MacQuire, eds., *The Historical*

the decision. Many government officials, particularly Graham, viewed Wilson as an agitator similar to those about whom Scott commented in a 1924 letter to the Deputy Minister of Justice in 1924 in which he asked for a Justice Department opinion about adding a clause to the Indian Act which would “prevent ‘lawyers’ and ‘agitators’ from collecting money from Indians to prosecute claims against the government.”<sup>5</sup> In the House of Commons, Meighen made a direct comparison of Wilson to the ‘agitators’ in both the United States and British Columbia in 1922 when he stated

...I do not want what I say to have any special application to the Blood Reserve, or, indeed, to the Six Nations or any other reserve, although it has just as much application to these two as to any others. The Indian population, perhaps more than any other body of people, are easily susceptible to imposition at the hands of the clever white, and nowhere to do the agitator and the charlatan reap a readier harvest than among the Indian people. I have gone into the complaint raised by the member from Macleod (Mr. Coote) and I have had some acquaintance, too, with the situation in the Six Nations, the complaint being very much in the nature of that brought up this afternoon. In respect of this charge from the Blood Reserve, I want to say frankly that after the most careful investigation I was able to make, after all sides were afforded an opportunity to present their evidence, the case of the department officials was so overwhelming, and the complete crushing of the complainants case was so marked, that there was no doubt in my mind at all it was mainly a result of agitation...

**Mr. Stewart:** Did you have Mr. Wilson's letter before you?

**Mr. Meighen:** --agitation, I am afraid I must say, on the part of those who seek to gain something for themselves. The British Columbia Indians have been subject to this perhaps more than any other body of Indians, and although the matter has been up year after year for I do not

---

Development of the Indian Act 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs 1979), 120

<sup>5</sup> Leslie and MacQuire, Historical Development of the Indian Act, 120

know how many years, I do not think there is any one who would say that it has not been simply a matter of chicanery, an attempt to profit by and live upon agitation.<sup>6</sup>

The impact of the Blood's resistance to the GPC, and Wilson's work specifically, to the change of the Indian Act was perhaps the most significant, though unfortunate, legacy of the GPC program.

The Greater Production Campaign was a relatively expensive, highly publicized government initiative that, under the glitz, was no different than many that came before it. The department produced glowing reports of how the GPC helped the Reserve residents but, in reality, the project served largely to advance the career of W.M. Graham and to pay for department expenses. Most of the perceived gains for the First Nations peoples, such as new equipment for reserve farmers, rental income and developed land, were all supposed to be ongoing operations of the Department of Indian Affairs and, ostensibly, would have happened with or without the GPC. The benefits were enough for the government to be able to highlight their 'progressive' efforts on the reserves but not enough to move the reserve residents beyond the fringes of western society. Viewed in this light, Arthur Meighen was wrong and the GPC was not better than a few squirrels caught by the Indians.

---

<sup>6</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, (1922), 1219



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### **Archival Collections**

##### National Archives of Canada:

Department of Indian Affairs Records (RG 10)  
Department of Agriculture Records (RG 17)  
Department of the Interior Records (RG 15)  
Papers of Arthur Meighen (MG 26, series I)

##### Glenbow Museum and Archives

Papers of William H. Graham (M 8097)  
Papers of George Gooderham (M 4738, M 3974)  
Blood Agency Papers (M 1788)  
Battleford Agency Papers (M 1781)

##### Public Archives of Manitoba

Provincial Department of Agriculture Papers (RG 14, B 45)  
Papers of Valentine Winkler (MG 4, B 45)  
Papers of Adams Archibald (MG 12, A1)

##### Saskatchewan Archives Board

Provincial Department of Agriculture Papers (RG 261)  
Papers of R.G. Motherwell

##### Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Regina

Touchwood Hills Agency Papers, 1911-1938, Volume 4

#### **Oral Interviews**

Bertha Davis interview, August 22, 1997.  
Margaret Moses interview, August 20, 1997.  
Donald & Alf McNeil interview, August 20, 1997.

## Newspapers

Winnipeg Free Press, 1914-1924  
Farm and Ranch Review, 1914-1925  
Ottawa Citizen, 1914-1925

## Published Primary Sources

- Brass, Eleanor. I Walk in Two Worlds. Calgary: Glenbow Museums, 1987.
- Burpee, Lawrence. Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes De La Verendrye and his Sons. Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1927.
- Government of Canada, House of Commons, Debates: 1870-1932.
- Government of Canada, House of Commons, Sessional Papers: 1870-1932.
- Government of Canada, Census: 1891-1921.
- Government of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Reports: 1910-1932.
- Government of Manitoba. First Farmers in the Red River Valley. Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, nd.
- Graham, William M. Treaty Days: Reflections of an Indian Commissioner. Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1991.
- Hind, Henry Youle. Narrative of The Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine And Saskatchewan Exploring Expeditions of 1858 Part 2. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd, 1971.
- Morris, Alexander. The Treaties of Canada with the Indians 1880: Coles Publishing Co: Toronto, 1971.
- Wilson, R.N. Our Betrayed Wards. Ottawa, 1921.

## Other Primary Source Materials

Papers of Leslie H. Dawson. Papers in author's possession.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### Books

Ahenakew, Edward. Voices of the Plains Cree. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd, 1973.

Brown, Robert and Ramsay Cook. Canada 1896-1921. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Buckley, Helen. From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.

Buckley, Helen and Sheridan Campbell. Farming at Mistawasis. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Centre for Community Studies, 1963.

Carter, Sarah. Lost Harvests. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.

---. Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Christensen, Deanna. Ahtahkakoop. Shell Lake, Saskatchewan, Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000.

Daugherty, Wayne and Dennis Madill. Indian Government Under Indian Act Legislation, 1868-1951. Indian and Northern Affairs, 1980.

Dawson, C.A. Pioneering the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1940.

Dempsey, Hugh. Gentle Persuader: James Gladstone, Indian Senator. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986.

---. Treaty Research Report: Treaty Seven. Indian and Northern Affairs, 1987.

- Dempsey, L. James. Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1999.
- Dyck, Noel. What is the Indian "problem": tutelage and resistance in Canadian Indian Administration. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, 1991.
- Elias, Peter Douglas. The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest: Lessons for Survival. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988.
- England, Robert. The Colonization of Western Canada. London: P.S. King & Sons, Ltd, 1936.
- Fagan, Brian. People of the Earth. Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989.
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. Conference Report: All Chief Conference on Indian Rights and Treaties Research, October, 1981. Regina: Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 1981.
- Francis, Douglas. Images of the West. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989.
- Francis, Douglas R. and Howard Palmer, eds., The Prairie West. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992.
- Folke, V.C. The National Policy & Wheat Economy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.
- Goodwill, Jean and Norma Sluman. John Tootoosis. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1984.
- Graham, Roger. Arthur Meighen. Volumes 1 & 2. Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1960.
- Grove, Jean. The Little Ice Age. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Hall, D.J. Clifford Sifton. Volume 2. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985.

- Hanks, Lucien M and Jane Richardson Hanks. Tribe Under Trust: A Study of the Blackfoot Reserve in Alberta. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950.
- Hawkes, John. Story of Saskatchewan. Vol 1. Regina: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co, 1924.
- Henderson, William H. Land Tenure in Indian Reserves. Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978.
- Howard, James. The Canadian Sioux. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Hoxie, Frederick. A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Hurt, R. Douglas. Indian Agriculture in America. University of Kansas Press, 1987.
- Kerr, Don and Stan Hanson. Saskatoon: The First Half-Century. Edmonton: Newest Press, 1982.
- Leslie, John and Ron MacQuire, eds. The Historical Development of the Indian Act. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1979.
- Lewis, Oscar. Effects of White Contact Upon Blackfoot Culture. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1942.
- MacGregor, James. Behold the Shining Mountains. Edmonton: Applied Arts Products Ltd, 1954.
- MacEwan, Grant. Between the Red and the Rockies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952.
- MacKintosh, W.A. Prairie Settlement: The Geographic Setting. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1934.
- Miller, J.R. Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- . Shingwauk's Vision. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.
- Mitchell, Elizabeth. In Western Canada Before the War. 1915: Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981.

- Morton, Desmond and J.L. Granatstein. Marching to Armageddon. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Denny's Ltd., 1988.
- Murchie, Allen. The Agricultural Process on the Prairie Frontier. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1936.
- Pettipas, Katherine. Severing the Ties That Bind. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994.
- Porter, Bernard. The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1983. Second Edition. New York: Longman, 1992.
- Price, Richard, ed. The Spirit of the Alberta Treaties. Toronto: Butterworth and Co., 1979.
- Ray, Arthur J, J.R. Miller and Frank Tough. Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
- Semak, Hana. The Blackfoot Confederacy, 1880-1920: A Comparative Study of Canadian and U.W. Indian Policy. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.
- Sharp Paul. The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948.
- Spry, Irene M. The Palliser Expedition. Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1963.
- Stanley, George F. The Birth of Western Canada. University of Toronto Press, 1973.
- Surtees, Robert J. Canadian Indian Policy: A Critical Bibliography. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Tanner, Adrian, ed. The Politics of Indianness. St John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, 1983.
- Taylor, John Leonard. Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years 1918-1939. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs 1984.
- . Treaty Research Report: Treaty Four. Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs, 1985.

- . Treaty Research Report: Treaty Six. Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs, 1985.
- Thompson, John Herd. The Harvests of War: The Prairie West 1914-1918. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1978.
- Thompson, John Herd. Forging the Prairie West. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Titley, E. Brian. A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1986.
- White, Pamela. Restructuring the Domestic Sphere--Prairie Indian Women on Reserve: Image, Ideology and State Policy, 1880-1930. Montreal: McGill University, 1987.

#### Articles

- Bartlett, Richard. "Indian Reserves on the Canadian Prairies," Native Law Reporter 3 (1980): 3-53.
- Bateman, Rebecca, "Talking with the Plow: Agricultural Policy and Indian Farming in the Canadian and U.S. Prairies," The Canadian Journal of Native Studies XVI, 2(1996): 211-228.
- Brass, Eleanor. "The File Hills Colony," Saskatchewan History 6, 2 (Spring 1957)
- Carter, Sarah. "Agriculture and Agitation on the Oak River Reserve, 1875-1895," Manitoba History 6 (1983): 2-9.
- . "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-97," Canadian Historical Review, LXX, 1 (1989): 27-52.
- . "Demonstrating Success: The File Hills Farm Colony," Prairie Forum 16, 2 (Fall, 1991): 157-183.
- Cuthand, Stan. "The Native Peoples of the Prairie Provinces in the 1920's and 1930's," One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserves Since Treaty Seven. Ian A.L. Getty and Donald B. Smith, ed. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978. 31-42.

- Dyck, Noel. "An Opportunity Lost: The Initiative of the Reserve Agriculture Programme in the Prairie West," 1885 and After: Native Society in Transition, F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram, ed. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986. 121-37.
- Fisher, A.D. "Introducing 'Our Betrayed Wards' by R.N. Wilson," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology vol 4, no 1 (1974), 21-31.
- Flynn, Catherine and Leigh Syms. "Manitoba's First Farmers," Manitoba History 31 (1996), 4-11.
- J.E. Foster. "The Saulteaux and the Numbered Treaties: An Aboriginal Rights Position?," in Richard Price, ed, The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980): 161-180.
- Hall, D.J., "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, in Howard Palmer, ed., The Settlement of the West (Calgary: Comprint Publishing Company, 1977): 60-85.
- . "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1891-1905," Prairie Forum 2, nos. 1 & 2 (1977): 127-151.
- Larmour, Jean. "Edgar Dewdney: Indian Commissioner in the Transition Period of Indian Settlement 1879-1884," Saskatchewan History 33 no 1 (1981): 13-24.
- MacInnes, T.R.L. "History of Indian Administration in Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 12, no 3 (Aug. 1945)
- Morton, W.L. "A Century of Plain and Parkland," Alberta Historical Review 17 (Spring 1969): 1-10.
- Raby, S. "Indian Land Surrenders in Southern Saskatchewan," Canadian Geographic 17, no 1 (Spring, 1973): 36-52.
- Taylor, John Leonard. "Canada's Northwest Indian Policy in the 1870's: Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations," Richard Price, ed, The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980): 3-8.



- Taylor, John Leonard. "Two Views on the Meaning of Treaties Six and Seven," in Richard Price, ed, The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981) 9-46.
- Titley, E. Brian. "William Graham: Indian Agent Extrodinaire," Prairie Forum 8, no 1 (1983): 25-41.
- . "Hayter Reed and Indian Administration in the West," Swords and Ploughshares: War and Agriculture in Western Canada. R.C. Macleod, ed. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993
- Tobias, John L. "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology 6, no 2 (1976): 39-55.
- . "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," Canadian Historical Review LXIV, 4, (1983): 519-548.
- Wessel, Thomas "Agriculture on the Reservations: The Case of the Blackfeet, 1885-1935," Journal of the West 23, no 4 (1979): 17-24.
- Wood, David L. "American Indian Farmland and the Great War," Agricultural History 55, no 3 (1981): 249-65.

### **Unpublished Theses, Papers & Collections**

- Dyck, Noel. "The Administration of Federal Indian Aid in the North-West Territories, 1879-1885." MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1970.
- Leighton, J.D. "The Development of Federal Indian Policy in Canada, 1840-1890." PhD dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1975.
- Little, Bryce Penneyer. "People of the Red Path: An Ethnohistory of the Dakota Fur Trade, 1760-1851." PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1984
- Looy, A.J. "The Indian Agent and His Role in the Administration of the North-West Superintendency." PhD dissertation, Queens University, 1977.
- McKay, Raul J. "A History of Indian Treaty Number Four and Government Policies in Its Implementation, 1874-1905." MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1973.

Osuma, Rob. "Blackfoot Legal Culture: Wrongful Injuries Law on the Canadian Blackfoot Reserves, 1880-1920." MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 1995.

Tyler and Wright Research Consultants Ltd. "The Alienation of Indian Reserve Lands during the Administration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 1896-1911." A Report prepared for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, March, 1978.

APPENDIX A

Statement of Revenue and Expenses for the Operation of the Greater Production Farms

(All data are taken from the Auditor General statements regarding the income and expenses for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1918 through 1926)

Fiscal Year (April-March)	Farm Income <sup>1</sup>	Farm Expense <sup>2</sup>	Office Expense <sup>3</sup>	House Expense <sup>4</sup>
1917-18		\$28,463.19	\$42.17	
1918-19	\$44,193.83	277,023.61	7,272.09	\$14,125.19
1919-20	248,231.09	221,811.03	9,525.57	1519.59
1920-21	296,250.46	246,460.59	7,379.23	1030.55
1921-22	283,564.19	86,203.71	7,361.79	513.47
1922-23	112,770.54	10,113.01	6,190.73	882.12
1923-24	29,273.70	19,677.33	4,750.83	469.06
1924-25	20,781.93	18,275.66	7,576.08	601.19
Total	\$1,035,065.74	\$908,028.13	\$50,098.49	\$19,141.17
		Total of all expenses: \$977,267.79		
Difference between Farm Income over Farm Expense:			\$127,037.60	
Difference between Farm Income over Total Expenses:			\$57,797.95	

<sup>1</sup>Sum of the income related to the Greater Production Farms (not including expenses related to GPC leases)

<sup>2</sup>Sum of expenses related to the Greater Production Farms (not including expenses related to GPC leases)

<sup>3</sup>Sum of expenses for the Office of the Commissioner attributable to the Greater Production Campaign

<sup>4</sup>Sum of expenses for the Commissioner's house attributable to the Greater Production Campaign

## APPENDIX B

### Chart of projected rental income for reserves if rent had been charged for the Greater Production Farm land 1918-1924.

The projected rental rate is set at \$5 per acre, per year, the amount that land was leased under for farming purposes under the GPC.

Blackfoot	\$5/acre x 8000 acres x 4 years =	\$160,000
Blood	\$5/acre x 7880 acres x 3 years =	\$118,200
Muscowpetung	\$5/acre x 3500 acres x 7 years =	\$122,500
Cowessess	\$5/acre x 3500 acres x 4 years =	\$ 70,000
Assiniboine	\$5/acre x 1000 acres x 4 years =	<u>\$ 20,000</u>
Total projected rental income, 1918-1924		\$490,700

The farm on the Muscowpetung was operated for a further six years and would have had a projected rental income over that period of:

Muscowpetung	\$5/acre x 3500 acres x 6 years =	<u>\$105,000</u>
Total projected rental income, 1918-1932		\$595,700