

No. 59 | 2008

\$10.00

Manitoba History

The Journal of the
Manitoba Historical Society

The Origins of Autopac



Manitoba History

Published three times a year by the
Manitoba Historical Society

ISSN 0226-5036

GST Reg. No. 12281 4601 RR0001

Canada Post

Publication Agreement No. 40015704

Manitoba Historical Society

61 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1N7
Telephone: (204) 947-0559
Email: info@mhs.mb.ca
Web: www.mhs.mb.ca

Annual membership

CAD\$, includes subscription to *Manitoba History*

	Canada	USA	All other countries
Regular:	\$40	\$45	\$60
Youth/Student:	\$20	\$25	\$40
Family:	\$45	\$50	\$65
Nonprofit:	\$50	\$55	\$75
Corporate:	\$275	\$280	\$295
Life:	\$575		

Contents © 2008 of the
Manitoba Historical Society.

All rights reserved.

Reproduction inquiries
should be directed to the Editors.

Manitoba 

A project sponsored by
Culture, Heritage and Tourism



The Manitoba Historical Society, established in June 1879, is the oldest historical organization in Western Canada. Its mandate is to:

- promote and encourage public interest in Manitoba and Canadian history
- encourage research and publications relating to the history of Manitoba
- foster the preservation of property relevant to an appreciation of the history of Manitoba
- assist in the formation and work of local historical societies in furthering the objectives of the Society throughout Manitoba

Manitoba Historical Society

The Honourable John Harvard, P.C., O.M., Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, *Patron*
Harry W. Duckworth, *President*
Annabelle Mays, *First Vice-President*
J. M. Bumsted, *Past President*
Francis M. Carroll, *Secretary*
Gwyneth Jones, *Treasurer*
Jacqueline Friesen, *Office Manager*

Manitoba History

Editorial Staff

Robert Coutts, *Editor in Chief*
Nolan Reilly, *Associate & Reviews Editor*
L. Gordon Goldsborough, *Gazette & Photo Editor*
Salix Consulting, *Design & Layout*

Editorial Advisory Board

J. M. Bumsted, *History Department, University of Manitoba*
David Carr, *University of Manitoba Press*
Lyle Dick, *Parks Canada*
Jean Friesen, *History Department, University of Manitoba*
Peter Geller, *University College of the North, Thompson*
Sharon McLeod, *University College of the North, Thompson*
Jim Mochoruk, *History Department, University of North Dakota*
Morris Mott, *History Department, Brandon University*
Michael Payne, *City of Edmonton Archives and Historic Sites*
Adele Perry, *History Department, University of Manitoba*

Printing

Shaw Printing, *Winnipeg*

Inquiries

Editorial and advertising inquiries should be directed to the MHS office or to
journal@mhs.mb.ca.

Manitoba History publishes scholarly, feature-length articles as well as shorter, popular articles, documentary selections, essays, pictorial essays, and reviews relating to the social, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural history of Manitoba and the Canadian West. Scholarly articles should not normally be longer than thirty typed, double-spaced pages, including endnotes. Contributors should consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* when formatting citations, and should allow sufficient time after submission for peer review. Popular articles for the *Gazette* should not be longer than ten typed, double-spaced pages and do not require endnotes. Contributors are not paid but receive six copies of the issue containing their article.

Illustrations provided with article submissions are welcomed. Scanned images must be of sufficient resolution for high-quality reproduction, and no less than 300 dpi. Permission to publish photographs and artwork from archives or other repositories is the responsibility of the contributor. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, preferably in Microsoft Word format. The Manitoba Historical Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Issues of *Manitoba History* are published in February, June, and October.

Readers' responses to articles published in *Manitoba History* are welcome. Letters that add substantial information or new perspectives may be published, and will be edited for clarity and length at the discretion of the Editors. Letters should be no more than 500 words and include the writer's name, daytime phone number, and address (including email, if possible) for verification. Letters should be sent to: Editors, % *Manitoba History*, 61 Carlton Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 1N7, email: journal@mhs.mb.ca.

Manitoba History

No. 59 | 2008



1960s muscle car.

Source: Steve Mann, bigstockphoto.com,
#2975658, © 2008.

- 2 The Origins of Autopac: An Essay on the Possibility of Social Democratic Government in Manitoba
by Daniel Blaikie
- 13 Life History as a Window to Understanding the Politics of Teaching and Schooling: Manitoba Teacher Sybil Shack (1911–2004)
by Rosa Bruno-Jofré
- 25 The Advancement of Knowledge in La Pérouse’s 1782 Expedition to Hudson Bay
by Denis Combet and Constance Cartmill

Gazette

- 34 A Memoir of the CPR Telegraph Office
by Fred McGuinness
- 36 Prairie Monuments: A Video History of Oakville, Manitoba
by Nikki McLeod
- 38 Commemorating Margaret Newton
by Parks Canada
- 40 Manitoba’s War on Wildlife
by Gordon Goldsborough
- 47 Roblin’s Knox Presbyterian Church
by Hazel Blennerhassett
- 48 In Search of Buffalo Hair Cloth
by Laura Peers

Reviews

- 49 Michael Payne, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Illustrated History*
by Scott Stephen
- 49 Donna G. Sutherland, *Nahoway: A Distant Voice*
by Roland Bohr
- 50 J. M. Bumsted, *St. John’s College: Faith and Education in Western Canada*
by Scott Stephen
- 51 Christina Penner, *Widows of Hamilton House*
by Shelley Sweeney
- 52 Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road*
by Roland Bohr

www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/59

The Origins of Autopac: An Essay on the Possibility of Social Democratic Government in Manitoba

by Daniel Blaikie
Montreal, Quebec

As the title suggests, this article will concern itself with the question of whether or not social democratic government is a real possibility in Manitoba. On the one hand, the question may seem odd. The New Democratic Party (NDP) of Manitoba is a social democratic party. It is currently in power in Manitoba, has governed the province for nearly twenty-five of the last forty years, and will continue governing in Manitoba for the foreseeable future. Clearly if the possibility of social democratic government were defined solely in terms of the electability of social democratic parties, the main question of this essay would be absurd. On the other hand, since the 1980s right up until today, the fundamental insight of democratic socialism—roughly, that a democratically elected government should play an active role in the economy to protect the interest of all members of society, not just a small, élite cross-section thereof—has been losing more and more political currency in Canadian society.¹ Not even social democratic parties have been immune from this phenomenon. Thus by 2001, Doug Smith argues, the NDP government in Manitoba—unlike in the 1970s, where the government “had taken over a number of manufacturing concerns”—found itself in a context where it was unwilling even to consider nationalizing the Versatile tractor plant to save the jobs of the 250 members of CAW local 2224.² This was true even though Gary Doer’s NDP has been a strong advocate of maintaining existing public infrastructure like Manitoba Hydro, and vigorously fought the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System in the 1990s.

This does not mean that supporters of democratic socialism have given up on the idea that electing social democratic governments holds value, but it has led to a certain malaise in the social democratic movement.³ A large part of the problem hinges on how to reconcile the “democratic” component of democratic socialism with the “socialist” component at a time when socialism holds very little popular (and therefore electoral) appeal, and there is as yet no clear way forward. For its part, the current NDP government in Manitoba seems to hold that this question

is best contemplated from the government benches—thus erring on the side of populism—than those of the opposition. In the apparent absence of any obvious and politically viable alternative, Manitoba’s social democrats have typically—whether tacitly or overtly—endorsed the strategy.

There is a view, however, that says the question of how to reconcile democracy and socialism is unanswerable *in principle*. James McAllister, the only one to publish a sustained scholarly analysis of an NDP government in Manitoba, maintains that the social democrat faces a dilemma. She must choose either democracy or socialism because parliamentary democracy is inherently conservative and as such, cannot be the vehicle for any major political, social or economic changes.⁴ The present article intends to grapple mainly with this claim, by arguing that the implementation of public automobile insurance in Manitoba by the NDP government of Edward Schreyer presents a counterexample to McAllister’s thesis.⁵ The aim here is not to answer the question of how to reconcile democracy and socialism in the twenty-first century, but simply to establish the legitimacy of the question.

Evidence Against Democratic Socialism

Manitoba’s history of social democratic government began in 1969 when on 25 June, Manitobans sent enough NDP candidates to the Legislature to form, with the help of Larry Desjardins, a then independent, ex-Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly, a precarious minority government. With Desjardins’ tentative endorsement, Schreyer’s government enjoyed the support of twenty-nine MLAs in a fifty-seven seat legislature. If the NDP’s victory came as a surprise to the province’s establishment, one can hardly blame them.⁶ At the start of the 1969 campaign, the NDP was the third party in the Legislature and without a leader. Schreyer was elected leader only two weeks before Election Day and would remain Premier of Manitoba until 1977, when Sterling Lyon’s Progressive Conservatives defeated the NDP.

If it can be said that there is a scholarly consensus on a topic with so little academic publications devoted to it as the Schreyer government, the consensus appears to be that it was not a radically transformative government.⁷ Nelson Wiseman sums it up best when he says: “Although the Manitoba of the 1970s was certainly transformed from the Manitoba of earlier decades, the changes were not so

Daniel Blaikie graduated from the University of Winnipeg with a BA in History and Philosophy. The work for this article began during a course he took on the history of the Canadian Left taught by Dr. Nolan Reilly. He is currently living with his wife in Montreal, pursuing an MA in Philosophy at Concordia University.



University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Tribune Collection, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 31 December 1979, 18-3681-17.

Despite massive protests on the steps of the Manitoba Legislature, public automobile insurance became a reality in 1971.

much a result of NDP government as of broader, national, economic and social trends.”⁸ In other words, the Schreyer government’s program was not significantly different from what its Liberal and Conservative counterparts were undertaking in other parts of the country. These changes included an exponential increase in the size and spending of

If the NDP’s victory came as a surprise to the province’s establishment, one can hardly blame them. At the start of the 1969 campaign, the NDP was the third party in the Legislature and without a leader.

the civil service through the 1960s and 1970s and readiness on the part of all parties—albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm—to use public ownership as a policy tool.⁹

McAllister’s study of the Schreyer government concurs with this appraisal. He suggests the financial restraints faced by any provincial government would limit its capacity to

institute thoroughgoing social programming. However, he does not believe that those constraints can explain:

what was perhaps even more significant than the Schreyer government’s reforms or its failure to innovate in certain areas ... the marginality of the programs and policy changes, which were introduced. Even where a need was recognized and the government was determined to take action, the end product of the policy process was slight; changes were at the margin, resulting in the least possible dislocation.¹⁰

Examples of this occur in a number of policy areas. For instance, in the Schreyer government’s first term, there was a shift in the taxation system from regressive, flat taxes to a more progressive tax regimen. The flat Medicare premiums were reduced by 88 percent while personal income taxes in Manitoba were raised by six percentage points and the corporate income tax was raised by two percentage points. According to McAllister, this was the Schreyer government’s “most dramatic measure

to redistribute incomes in Manitoba,” but by the time, the NDP was defeated in 1977 “both the NDP government of Saskatchewan and the Conservative government of Newfoundland had enacted higher personal income tax rates.”¹¹ Moreover, other governments had comparable personal or corporate income tax regimes. Despite constant upward adjustments of the minimum wage during the Schreyer years, high inflation meant that the benchmark set by the province’s Minimum Wage Board was never reached. The minimum wage hovered between 50 to 55 percent of the average weekly earnings of the industrial composite index, five to ten percent below the recommended 60 percent. Thus, there was “very little change in the lives of Manitoba’s low-income citizens ... despite the legal power of the government to change their standard of living.”¹²

Citing the centralization of power between 1970 and 1977 in the structure of municipal government—particularly in light of the Unicity initiative—as well as a lack of discussion surrounding the question of some form of workers’ control at the work place, McAllister concludes that “efforts by the NDP government of Manitoba to increase public participation in government decision making were few and far between.”¹³ He also contends that housing initiatives undertaken by the Schreyer government were largely due to the significant funds made available by the Liberal federal government. Moreover, these initiatives did “not touch the dominant position of private contractors, land developers, or landlords.”¹⁴ This reluctance to challenge established private interests was consistent with an almost total lack of government planning of the economy, “except for the [wage and price] controls program and a few side-effects of programs like Autopac and mineral exploration.”¹⁵

This reluctance to challenge established private interests went hand in hand with a reluctance to extend government ownership and control of the economy. The Schreyer government’s eventual takeover of Churchill Forest Industries, McAllister says, “was accomplished with very little preconceived, ideological planning” after the government had exhausted every other possibility.¹⁶ The Schreyer government’s Manitoba Development Corporation is criticized as having been a “lender of last resort” that usually took on business projects that could not secure funding elsewhere. This led the government to take “an equity position in firms which were more likely to generate losses than profits” rather than securing public ownership in profitable industries.¹⁷

In February 1970, Premier Schreyer announced that the government would commission a feasibility study on the idea of establishing a publicly owned drug manufacturing company in Manitoba. The Advisory Committee on

Central Drug Purchasing and Distribution was set up within the year, but its terms of reference were restricted to considering a central drug purchasing and distribution plan. In March 1972, the Committee proposed that a crown corporation be established for central drug purchasing and distribution and that doctors and pharmacists be able to substitute generic brand equivalents for their brand name counterparts. What materialized was a twofold initiative. On the one hand, the pharmacare program was implemented to make drugs available to everyone. On the other, drug substitution was enacted as a means to control costs somewhat. The crown corporation to purchase and distribute drugs never came to be, let alone a corporation to manufacture the drugs. The original vision of restructuring the pharmaceutical industry, where “[l]ower prices to consumers and jobs in local drug manufacturing and distribution plants were to be achieved through universal pharmacare, government purchasing and distribution, local manufacturing, and drug substitution,” had practically been abandoned.¹⁸ The plan actually implemented, while it reduced the burden on consumers and contained a moderate measure for price control, left “[p]roduction, purchasing, distribution, and the attendant activities like research ... in the hands of the private sector.”¹⁹ McAllister borrows a phrase to describe the phenomenon: “socialization of costs and the private appropriation of profits.”²⁰

With examples such as these, McAllister argues there was a recurring pattern of unwillingness to challenge private capital directly, or even indirectly, as “the NDP government moved only the minimum distance possible into the domain of the private sector.”²¹ McAllister’s view is that the government’s willingness “to incur tremendous costs to the public sector” through the socialization of costs was “to avoid a loss of electoral support.”²² The perception of what it would take to be re-elected meant—and means—that “enemies could not be made, opponents had to be bought off with public funds, and the wrath of any interest group which felt threatened had to be stilled.”²³ McAllister even goes so far as to suggest that a Conservative, Liberal or Social Credit government may have been more willing to increase the scope of the public sector because they would not have been encumbered with the burden of having to show the “respectability” of social democracy for electoral purposes.²⁴ As a result the “overall evaluation of the Schreyer government, in terms of how close it came to achieving the ideals of democratic socialism, must be rather negative.”²⁵ This in turn, he argues, shows that radical changes to society cannot take place within a system governed by parliamentary democracy and thus vindicates the dilemma he puts to the social democrat.

If it can be said that there is a scholarly consensus on a topic with so little academic publications devoted to it as the Schreyer government, the consensus appears to be that it was not a radically transformative government.

The present goal will be to show that the Schreyer government's nationalization of automobile insurance (a) did not represent the least interventionist option for reform of the automobile insurance industry in 1970s Manitoba; (b) did not involve major financial or ideological concessions, and; (c) represented a risk to the NDP government's electoral success in the political climate of the day. If these three facts about the nationalization of automobile insurance in Manitoba can be demonstrated, this will be sufficient to dissolve McAllister's dilemma.

Low-Intervention Alternatives

Public auto insurance had been a long-standing commitment of the CCF and NDP and correspondingly "was one of the key promises of the NDP during the election campaign and there was no question that it would be brought in."²⁶ Herb Schulz notes that the roots of this policy went back at least as far as 1945 when the CCF government in Saskatchewan implemented a publicly owned monopoly in auto insurance.²⁷ Ever since then it had been a key feature of CCF and NDP policy across the country.²⁸ Sid Green reports that from "1966 to 1969 it was almost automatic for the party to introduce an amendment to the Throne speech resolution, calling upon the government to institute a public automobile insurance scheme."²⁹

On 29 October 1969, a committee was struck to investigate the state of automobile insurance in Manitoba. The terms of reference for the Manitoba Automobile Insurance Committee (MAIC) were to "investigate the feasibility of instituting a program of public automobile insurance and to hear and consider representations respecting all aspects of automobile insurance; to make recommendations deemed to be in the interest of the general public[, and]; to submit draft legislation."³⁰ The three member committee—composed of former

Public auto insurance had been a long-standing commitment of the CCF and NDP and correspondingly was one of the key promises of the NDP during the [1969] election campaign.

chief executive officer of the Saskatchewan automobile insurance plan R. D. Blackburn, Frank Pagan, and the Hon. Howard Pawley, who chaired the committee and was the minister responsible for the auto-insurance file—toured the province, visiting Brandon, Flin Flon, Thompson and Winnipeg over nineteen days of public consultation during November and December 1969.³¹ The MAIC heard from insurance companies, agents and adjusters, the Chamber of Commerce, Labour Federations, and others including "a vigorous response from the general public by way of various communications."³² The presentations made to the MAIC show that there was a widespread dissatisfaction



U of M Archives & Special Collections, Tribune Collection, 18-3681-21.

The Manitoba Automobile Insurance Committee at a public meeting on 4 November 1969. L-R: Ronald Duncan Blackburn, Howard Pawley, Frank C. Pagan, David Randall.

with the automobile insurance industry in Manitoba prior to the NDP's rise to power, and a variety of suggestions on how to improve the industry.

Private citizens complained that they often received less compensation than they were entitled to under their policy.³³ The *Report of the Manitoba Automobile Insurance Committee (RMAIC)* tells one story of a man still in hospital that was approached by an insurance adjuster to sign for a compensation package much lower than he was entitled to, in order that he would receive his compensation money without delay.³⁴ Under the private insurance system, the victim of a car accident had to prove the negligence of the offender in order to receive any compensation at all. In the worst cases—where potential compensation was highest and most needed—the emotional and financial costs of resolving a claim could be very high. In all cases, the litigation process meant that claims could drag out over a very long period of time before being settled by the court. "Hostile" was the word used by the MAIC to describe the private insurance industry as "[t]hose motorists who possess a valid claim and the persons against whom the claim is made are by virtue of the system itself, antagonists."³⁵ Given that 75 percent of all motor vehicle accidents involved two or more vehicles, well over the majority of persons making claims had to navigate this claims atmosphere.

Members of the Schreyer government were not the only ones suggesting there were problems with the auto insurance system in Manitoba. Rod Lawrence, of Murphy & Lawrence Insurance of Winnipeg, recognized the industry as having needlessly high premiums, but saw the cause as being poor drivers making the road an unsafe, accident-prone environment. The remedy, according to Lawrence was to have stiffer penalties for delinquent drivers.³⁶ In this, he was supported by a former Winnipeg police officer who suggested a similar approach to dealing with the high price of auto insurance.³⁷ The Insurance Bureau of Canada also suggested that insurance premiums could be lower than they were by reducing the number of accidents, modifying liability for bodily injury claims of a doubtful

The Origins of Autopac

validity, eliminating or severely restricting liability for property damage claims and reducing repair costs.³⁸ G. C. Trites, managing director of The Wawanesa Mutual Insurance Company, also felt that some improvements could be made to the system.³⁹ The Manitoba Federation of Labour insisted the government should adopt the auto insurance scheme developed in Saskatchewan. They argued that the existing system was inefficient and that the profit motive drove up premiums while driving down payouts.⁴⁰ The Manitoba insurance law section of the Canadian Bar Association presented an eleven-point plan for auto insurance reform in Manitoba.⁴¹ Most telling of all was the testimony of Sylvan Leipsic, a vice-president of Aronovitch and Leipsic Limited, described by the *Tribune* as a “leading Manitoba insurance executive.” He is quoted as saying: “[I]t has become necessary to investigate automobile insurance by government bodies throughout the world. ... Far too long government and industry have complained about the present system. It is up to them now to make the adjustments. ... [I]mprovement is necessary and desirable and in certain ways quite possible.” In the same presentation, the *Tribune* reports, Leipsic declared that “[c]o-operation between government and private industry can lead to reduced auto insurance premiums.”⁴² Recognizing the dissatisfaction with auto insurance in Manitoba, Opposition Leader Walter Weir also brought in a program for auto insurance reform.⁴³

Neither the industry nor the opposition parties were short on ideas to reform the auto insurance sector in a way that would allow for the continued participation of private

insurance companies in the market. For the Progressive Conservatives, competition between private firms in a regulated industry would ensure the lowest possible premium rates and address the worst elements of the industry as it was in 1969. The Liberals were willing to allow a crown corporation to enter the auto insurance industry, “but on one basis only, and that was in competition with free enterprise, or the private companies that were in the business previously.”⁴⁴ The industry preferred that the government not enter the insurance business at all, but was adamant that if it did, it should be on a competitive basis only.

Any of the reform packages advocated by the opposition parties and the insurance industry as an alternative to public monopoly would plausibly have modified the industry enough to address the most egregious aspects of the industry experienced by the electorate. A political strategy aimed at minimizing government intervention in the private sector would likely have sought to steal the middle ground from the government’s opponents. The result might have been the introduction of more government regulation in an industry that would remain in private hands and continue to generate profit for its owners. Such a strategy would have been consistent with that of most other provinces, where similar dissatisfaction with auto insurance industry existed. The Schreyer government chose to proceed with the nationalization of Manitoba’s automobile insurance industry despite the fact that there were less interventionist solutions on the table.

No Concessions

Almost forty years after nationalizing automobile insurance in Manitoba, Edward Schreyer is adamant that his government made no concessions to the industry:

We conceded nothing to the industry because the fact of the matter is we did implement publicly owned automobile insurance and had there been any concession to the industry, the industry would have basically continued ... It was not the kind of thing that you could have a little bit of both.⁴⁵

This stands in contrast to McAllister’s analysis, which sees three components of the government’s implementation of public automobile insurance as an example of “financial concessions” to the industry. These three components were (i) compensation for insurance agents who lost part of their business because of Autopac; (ii) allowing private agents to sell basic coverage, and; (iii) allowing private firms to compete with the government for additional insurance beyond the government mandated basic coverage.

McAllister interprets the government’s decision to allow agents to sell the government plan and provide compensation to those who preferred to quit the auto insurance industry as a political strategy calculated to achieve two goals. First, it was meant to drive a wedge between the insurance firms who wanted to stop Autopac



U of M Archives & Special Collections, *Tribune* Collection, 18-3681-31.

The Empire strikes back. Private insurance agents protested the Schreyer government’s imposition of public auto insurance, 25 April 1970.

and the insurance agents that wanted to achieve the best possible working conditions and compensation under the new plan.⁴⁶ Second, it was meant to secure Larry Desjardins' support of the proposal. Desjardins, whose vote was needed in order for the legislation to pass, made compensation for the agents a condition of his support for the Bill:

There is no way that my conscience would permit me to say, "To hell with these people; let them take care of themselves." Without revealing what happened in caucus, I think that you can be reasonably sure that this [compensation for the agents] is something I argued for, and I can assure you now that I'm committed to this principle. On this, Mr. Speaker, there can be no compromise.⁴⁷

Schreyer himself admits that Desjardins' support was one of two reasons why the government chose to offer compensation to the agents. In his words:

There is no doubt that we needed all the support we could get to get the measure passed ... and since we had something less than a full majority it was necessary to get the cooperation and support ... of not just Larry Desjardins, but also Gordon Beard who was an independent MLA and unless you factor him into the equation, you don't have the numbers.⁴⁸

He denies, however, that the motivation for the compensation package was to divide opposition to the plan, and he maintains that providing support to the insurance agents, who were predominantly small business people, was not out-of-step with the government's ideological heritage.

Desjardins touched on this matter early in the debate. In May of 1970, he said in the Legislature: "No matter what, this [the issue of compensation] to me is a question of conscience and I believe it is the same with the First Minister and many others."⁴⁹ This comment is in keeping those of Schreyer who recounts:

It wasn't just Larry and Gordon Beard ... there was also at least half of the ... NDP caucus [who] were happy to accommodate the agents. Our fight after all was not with the agents at the local community level. They are after all, for the most part, almost entirely what you would call community based small business. ... So it's very easy for me to emphasize that really we had no quarrel, we had no fight with the agents and therefore, making that change was not difficult, not difficult at all.⁵⁰

This does not seem to have applied only to the idea of compensating agents for loss, but also to the idea of allowing private agents to sell the government plan. Recalling the debate around the issue of whether or not

the government should allow private agents to sell the public plan or move everything into the public sphere, Cy Gonick reports:

I don't think there was a very large contingent [within caucus] supporting that the entire operation be placed in the public sector. Although that was the perception that the media put on it and as a consequence, during at least a critical period of time, all the small little insurance agencies were up in arms, because they thought they would be eliminated ... the party and the government had a hard time persuading the general public that that was not really an issue. ... I won't say it was never meant to be, but it was quickly dismissed as part of the system.⁵¹

Thus, while the idea of compensating the agents does not appear to have been part of the original plan, it seems most members of the NDP caucus quickly accepted the argument that the agents should be compensated for the dislocation caused by government policy. The compensation component was not an ideological concession because the agents, understood as small business people—a constituency traditionally claimed by the CCF/NDP along with farmers and labourers—were not seen as the real enemy in the Autopac debate. While the government did provide financial compensation to the agents, it understood the compensation as a just, fair component of the plan. As such, it would not be appropriate to characterize the move in the language of concession.

Giving private firms the right to sell supplementary insurance in competition with the government was a not a concession, simply because the industry was not asking for it. On 23 April 1970—the day after the *RMAIC* was tabled in the Legislature—the *Free Press* reported that: "H. B. Vannan, chairman of the Insurance Bureau of Canada's western advisory committee, lambasted proposals for compulsory automobile insurance in Manitoba Wednesday and said "there would be no point in picking up the crumbs left by the socialists."⁵² He estimated that private companies would only be able to collect somewhere under five percent of the premiums they were collecting prior to Autopac if they could sell only supplementary insurance, an amount he called "inconsequential." Clearly, the industry was not interested in selling supplementary insurance alone, in large part because there was hardly any money to be made at it. Though the government may have opened supplementary insurance in a tactical bid to guard against being seen as dogmatic state monopolists, it did so knowing that the industry would neither want nor benefit from the gesture. Such an act can hardly be called a concession to the industry.

The Schreyer government's approach is vulnerable to criticism on social democratic grounds insofar as "little or no attempt was made to promote Autopac as part of a general expansion of government control and ownership ...



U of M Archives & Special Collections, Tribune Collection, 18-3681-18.

Rural protest. Anger over the nationalization of auto insurance spilled onto the streets of Wawanesa, Manitoba in this photo from the *Winnipeg Tribune* of 1 December 1969.

a portion of the private sector was transferred to the public sector. But little was learned that would have promoted demands for even greater expansion of the public sector.”⁵³ For instance in his speech introducing the legislation, Howard Pawley was quick to insist that “all is not right in auto insurance under the present private system ... [and] this government is introducing this bill at this time not for dogmatic reasons, not because of ideology ... we believe that the system we are proposing is the most practical way to solve the auto insurance problem.”⁵⁴ In a speech to the Legislature on August 5, 1970, Premier Schreyer made sure to single out the auto insurance industry as being a particular situation with its own particular problems, problems that public ownership was best suited to fix:

No other insurance system operates in such an inherently inefficient and illogical manner. The competition that exists in auto insurance today is a competition based not nearly so much on price or service but rather a competition to see who can get out of paying as much as possible. With automobile insurance, because of the need to prove fault, time and money are wasted. It is not as rational an arrangement as could be.⁵⁵

The tactic was a point of contention within caucus. Cy Gonick remembers arguing the minority position that the focus of the argument for Autopac should not have been on the reduced premiums. Rather the focus should have been on the idea of the profits generated by the crown corporation being used to generate public services within the auto industry and beyond:

I made a strong case for it to be the latter strategy, and not simply a matter of saving some money,

in the belief that this could, if it was promoted this way and sold this way, it could promote this concept of moving ... some parts of the private sector into the public sector, to promote that in a more general way, to move from auto insurance to other sectors. But it was certainly not the view of the Premier and I don't know, once the Premier states a position, none of the cabinet in general caucus will contradict him.⁵⁶

Given that there are even fewer nationalized industries in Manitoba today than in the 1970s, it is easy to say with hindsight that the government failed to lay the groundwork for an expansion of government ownership in the economy. However, the tactic of arguing for nationalization by demonstrating how it best realized the commonsense virtue of efficiency was not unreasonable in an ideologically polarized, politically charged atmosphere. Moreover, the tactic could have been replicated for other initiatives comprising an overall social democratic strategy. The fact that this did not come to pass does not mean that it could not have come to pass.

The idea that the government position somehow “permitted supporters of private enterprise to maintain their beliefs unchallenged. None of the norms of the private enterprise ethic was challenged. Indeed, one of its bases—economic efficiency—was being promoted by the supporters of public auto insurance,” however, is clearly wrong.⁵⁷ It is wrong at least insofar as efficiency has long been a value of socialism.⁵⁸ However, it is also wrong in that Manitoba's supporters of private enterprise obviously felt that their core belief in the power of private markets was being challenged by the government. In response, they escalated the conflict with government and promoted their view of what the dispute was about; namely, whether the government has the right to intervene in the private economy in the interests of all members in society, even though it may hurt the interests of a small political or economic élite. The result was a highly charged political environment with support mobilized against the government, presenting a risk to the government's political fortunes.

Risky Business

McAllister has argued that Autopac could be implemented because less than half the insurance agents and an even smaller proportion of insurance firms depended upon auto insurance for their livelihood. Half the insurance agents in the province received less than \$2,000 a year from auto insurance and for most of these this was less than 25 percent of their annual revenue. On the insurance firm side, there were only four companies that received more than a million dollars in net premiums in the province.⁵⁹ Thus, there was a “diffuse pattern of business within the automobile insurance industry” and for that reason few players whose primary revenue source was jeopardized by the introduction of Autopac.⁶⁰ If this is taken at face

The Origins of Autopac

value it is difficult to explain the vehement opposition to the Autopac Bill, particularly in light of the compensation package for insurance agents hurt by the transition from private to public insurance. While the issue of potentially dislocated insurance agents played a prominent role in the arguments of those opposed to public auto insurance, opposition to Autopac stretched well beyond the insurance industry and the main objection was to the principle of a government-owned monopoly replacing an existing private market.

There were two main arguments in this regard. The first was a slippery slope argument contending that if government was willing and able to takeover the auto insurance industry, then no industry would be safe from government expropriation. The other was a pseudo-patriotic, but mainly libertarian argument that contended that Manitoba was built on the value of personal freedom and it would be wrong for government to restrict the choices of its citizens. For instance, Elaine Smith—a stenographer in the private insurance industry for 35 years and demonstrator at a small rally on 25 April 1970 outside the Centennial Concert Hall—is reported to have said: “the government shouldn’t enter into everybody’s business and take it way from them. ... If they go into one, they’ll gradually go into all the others and soon nobody

will have a job.”⁶¹ On 27 April 1970, the Insurance Agents’ Association of Manitoba ran a nearly full-page ad in the *Free Press* asking:

WHO WILL BE NEXT? Will it be the automobile body shops, the drug business, the tractor manufacturers, banks and trust companies, the insurance claims adjusters, the life insurance salesmen, the real estate brokers and their salesmen? The list could go on and on and with it the jobs of many TAX PAYING citizens will go!—with an increase in government bureaucracy.

The advertisement clearly portrays the issue as being one regarding the principle of government ownership:

Manitoba was built by free enterprise. The majority of our citizens are totally supported by free enterprise. Fortunately, Manitobans have enjoyed an ever-increasing standard of living. This is due to our free enterprise system. ... We believe Manitobans want a free enterprise society and reject the idea of a state controlled system. If Manitobans don’t stop this NOW where will it end?—How secure are YOU?⁶²



University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Tribune Collection, 18-3681-01.

A done deal. Howard Pawley (left), the provincial cabinet minister responsible for auto insurance, and James Dutton, the first general manager of Autopac, inspect a claims centre in this photo from the *Winnipeg Tribune* of 2 February 1972.

The Origins of Autopac

The president of the Insurance Agents' Association reinforced this message in the lead up to the 29 April 1970 mass rally called for in the *Free Press* advertisement. For him the issue was a matter of choice: "At the moment a motorist has the choice of hundreds of agents but when the government takes over, if it does, there will be no choice, only compulsion and this is not the basis that has made Manitoba."⁶³ On the day of the rally, the slippery slope argument appeared on placards in slogan form. "Are You Next on the Schreyer List?" the placards asked.

Both arguments were raised in the Legislature. One of the arguments' most colourful proponents, Gordon Beard, who eventually went on to reluctantly support the bill, was adamant at the beginning of the Autopac debate that:

there is a disturbance in the minds of many Manitobans over whether they are facing one issue of car insurance or a sign of creeping government nationalization of private industry, picking them off one at a time. ... If this Bill 56 is accepted by the public, then I say others will follow and I'm sure that our creeping socialism will become walking and running nationalization. ... I am wondering if Manitobans are really prepared to accept their loss of personal freedoms that can be brought about through the domination by government taking over almost any part of our industrial life, but I warn you that to a great extent most Canadians come from families that left their home country to get away from too much government. If we stand by and let government become more and more a part of our life and become more dependent upon them, we will wake up some day to find them our masters.⁶⁴

Beard's rhetorical flights of fancy provide the template for many other speeches by opponents of public auto insurance.



U of M Archives & Special Collections, Tribune Collection, 18-3681-28.

Sunny Manitoba. Motorist Lisa Unrau installs her auto insurance renewal sticker, 13 October 1971.



U of M Archives & Special Collections, Tribune Collection, 18-3681-23.

Hustle and bustle at the Motor Vehicles Branch on Portage Avenue, as motorists line up to renew their auto insurance, October 1971.

The emphasis on these arguments by opponents of Autopac strongly suggest that the "diffuse pattern of business within the automobile insurance industry" had little to relevance to the government's proceeding with and succeeding in establishing a public monopoly in the automobile insurance industry. The many opponents of the plan saw the issue not as a question of dollars and cents, but of power. The question was whether or not government would be able to takeover an entire market in the name of the public interest, and Autopac was a potentially dangerous precedent that could have had application outside the automobile insurance industry. For that reason, opposition to the plan was not limited to those whose business interests were directly affected by the Autopac Bill. Opponents of the initiative were able to mobilize a rally estimated by the *Free Press* to have been "the longest parade in Winnipeg since the general strike" with an attendance of approximately 7,000 people.⁶⁵ Although many companies and agencies released their employees to attend the rally, this demonstration was a clear signal to the government that there was a large, well-organized opposition to their program and therefore a political risk in proceeding as planned.⁶⁶

Conclusion

By the end of 1970, the Schreyer government had negotiated its solution to the problems of the automobile insurance industry through the Legislature. The solution adopted was not the least interventionist solution available and was consistent with the government's social democratic ideology. Opposition to the initiative, which encompassed many more than those who were directly implicated in the industry, felt the prevailing "free enterprise" ideology was under attack and mobilized considerable numbers of people against the government. Despite this opposition, the government was able to argue successfully for public automobile insurance and retain enough support in the

Legislature and the province to survive until the next election and win re-election. In other words, when it came to the question of automobile insurance, the Schreyer government did not have to choose between democracy and socialism.

The idea of public automobile insurance did not first come from government policy rooms. It was a longstanding part of the NDP's political platform and over time a variety of arguments were deployed to show its merit. Some arguments were grounded solidly within a general social democratic vision, while others made a direct appeal to people's pocketbook. In hindsight, it is tempting to say that because of arguments of the latter type, the government was not able to transform its success in the automobile insurance industry to other areas of the economy. However,

Opposition to the plan was not limited to those whose business interests were directly affected by the Autopac Bill and opponents of the initiative were able to mobilize a rally estimated by the Free Press to have been “the longest parade in Winnipeg since the general strike” with an attendance of approximately 7,000 people.

there is no reason to say that “efficiency arguments” could not have been made in favour of other social democratic initiatives. If democratic socialism is to expand its following, it will probably have to continue to show how particular initiatives will benefit average people. In so doing, democratic socialism guards against government intervention for its own sake and remains accountable to itself, particularly its own requirement that government intervention in the economy be for the benefit of all citizens. The kinds of arguments used to justify government policy are important and the argument which projects the vision of a social democratic society must always be heard. However, if social democrats are able to mount other compatible, independent lines of argument for their policies, so much the better for democratic socialism. ☞

Notes

1. This is only a rough characterization of democratic socialism and has no pretence of being its definitive articulation. With apologies to experts in the literature on social democratic theory, this paper will not make any sustained effort to define democratic socialism, and will use the terms “democratic socialism” and “social democratic” interchangeably.
2. Doug Smith, *Stickin' to the Union*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2004, pp. 120–30.
3. Indeed, “despite their unhappiness about the government's inability to intervene effectively in the strike,” certain CAW local 2224 members continued to support the NDP after the strike had ended. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
4. James McAllister, *The Government of Edward Schreyer*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984, p. 172.
5. For this reason, aspects of the Autopac narrative are invoked only insofar as they are pertinent to the argument. For an account of nationalization of automobile insurance with a more complete narrative, see: Joy Cooper, *The Politics of Automobile Insurance: A Case study*, MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978.
6. And surprised they were. The *Winnipeg Free Press* headline the day after the election read: “NDP Registers Stunning Upset.” Conservatives perhaps least of all expected the “stunning upset.” Walter Weir, Conservative Party leader and Premier heading into the election, was quoted as saying: “If they (Manitobans) have made a mistake this time—and I frankly believe they have—they'll correct it next time.” The *Free Press* also reported the reactions of some rank and file Conservatives at their election night party. Comments ranged from ‘We've been shafted!’ to the “dear, little pensioner in the corner” saying ‘I never thought I'd see this day’, to the somewhat more philosophical ‘Boy, they'll be whooping it up in Transcona tonight’, a comment that brought to the *Free Press* reporter's mind “visions of jubilant railroaders bathing in capitalist bubbly.” “NDP Register Stunning Upset” *Winnipeg Free Press* (hereafter *WFP*), 26 June 1969; “Weir Feels Manitobans Will Correct ‘Mistake’” *WFP*, 26 June 1969; “PC Group Despondent” *WFP*, 26 June 1969.
7. Much more often than not, the Schreyer years in Manitoba are referred to in passing, or are examined as a part of a larger historical or political question. Authors that have broached the subject of Schreyer's government in this way include Desmond Morton, Nelson Wiseman and John F. Conway. *Desmond Morton, N.D.P.: Social Democracy in Canada*, 2nd edition revised, Toronto: Hakkert & Co., 1977; Nelson Wiseman, *Social Democracy in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983); John F. Conway, *The West: The History of a Region in Confederation*, 3rd edition revised, Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., publishers, 2006. Apart from McAllister's book, the other main source of information on the Schreyer years is the few memoirs published by New Democrats from that time. Russell Doern, *Wednesdays are Cabinet Days*, Winnipeg: Queenston House, 1981; Sidney Green, *Rise & Fall of a Political Animal*, Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2003; Herb Schulz, *A View from the Ledge*, Winnipeg: Heartland Associates, 2005.
8. Wiseman, p. 141.
9. Between 1961 and 1977 the Manitoba GPP expanded from \$1.9 billion to \$8.6 billion while the size of government increased considerably more; the government budget ballooned from slightly over \$100 million to over \$1.5 billion. These increases in size, however, took place during an era of remarkable inflation and new development of natural resources. In fact, the Schreyer government was responsible for less government growth than the preceding Progressive Conservative government. Wiseman, p. 141. One outstanding example of the degree to which other parties would tolerate public ownership for political reasons was the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, who by 1969 was governing that province. After having been a determined opponent of public auto insurance in opposition, Minister D. Bolt is quoted as having said that “I'm an advocate of private enterprise, but ... I would suggest to the auto insurance industry that in their continued attack on the Saskatchewan [public auto insurance] plan, they are taking the wrong approach. They are simply not on valid grounds in their criticism of the Act and of its administration.” *Manitoba Hansard*, 12 May 1970—Howard Pawley
10. McAllister, p. 79.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

The Origins of Autopac

20. *Ibid.*, p. 68. He attributes the phrase to James O'Connor.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
26. Cy Gonick, 2007. 00:21 See also, Schreyer 2007—1:10; Green, pp. 101–2; Schulz, pp. 51–2.
27. Schulz, p. 51.
28. This remains true in Nova Scotia today. The Nova Scotia NDP have come very close to forming government in that province for the first time in its history, and auto insurance has been a key issue in the province's recent elections.
29. Green, p. 101.
30. Report of the Manitoba Automobile Insurance Committee (RMAIC), p. 3. The purpose of the committee would remain an issue of political contention. A *Winnipeg Tribune* article from late 1969 demonstrates how the issue was framed. It reports: "The role of the NDP government's special committee investigating auto insurance apparently means different things to different people. ... Municipal Affairs Minister Howard Pawley said: 'If this feasibility study showed an even-cost benefit between government and private insurance, then I think the arguments and submissions from Wawanesa would probably tip the scales.' ... Finance Minister Saul Cherniack said: 'The automobile insurance industry has reached the stage where government should become involved ... my feeling is we should become deeply involved.' ... Premier Ed Schreyer said: 'If the findings ... show substantial savings to be had by putting in a government plan, we have an obligation to the people to put in a government-operated car-insurance plan.'" "NDP split on insurance" *Winnipeg Tribune*, 3 December 1969. The insurance industry, through one of its main spokesmen—H. B. Vannan, President of the Canadian Indemnity Company and chairman of the western advisory board of the Insurance Bureau of Canada—maintained that Premier Ed Schreyer was "speaking with a forked tongue—saying one thing and doing another." "Dogmatic socialism: executive" *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 April 1970. In his presentation to the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Mines and Natural Resources—the Legislative Committee to review the bill after first reading—Vannan said that in "August 1969 when we were first advised that the government intended exploring the possibility of their going into ... the automobile insurance business. ... we made representation to the Premier of this Province and asked for a meeting, and at that meeting we were told by Mr. Schreyer: (1) that we are not necessarily dedicated to going into the automobile insurance business. We do want however to explore automobile insurance and we are prepared to, in one form or another, sit down around a table with the members of the insurance industry and discuss ways and means of getting a better program of automobile insurance in this province. We felt at this point that we were probably on the eve of a breakthrough in terms of co-operation of the government. ... We then had a period of what I would suggest was ominous silence for many months, and then the first we knew about the government's intention was when in approximately October we read in the paper a government notice to the effect that they had set up a committee [to address the auto insurance question]." H. B. Vannan, Transcription of Hearing by Standing Committee on PUBLIC UTILITIES AND MINES AND NATURAL RESOURCES, 27 June 1970, p. 42. The Opposition was adamant that the Schreyer government was determined to implement a public auto insurance scheme. "Auto insurance group 'kangaroo court': Weir" *Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 November 1969. Some members of the government certainly reinforced this view: "Agriculture Minister Sam Uskiw says the government auto-insurance committee was biased ... because 'it was the declared purpose of the NDP government to implement a publicly-owned and operated auto-insurance scheme.'" "Insurance committee was biased: Uskiw" *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 June 1970. While the official position of the government was that they would consider the continuation of private insurance in Manitoba if the evidence supported the conclusion that this would be to the benefit of Manitobans, it is also clear that there was a strong feeling on the part of government members that the evidence would support government takeover of the industry. The *Winnipeg Tribune* is hereafter referred to as *WT*.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 3, 4.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5. Just over 2,900 written submissions were received by the MAIC from members of the general public.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
36. "Disguising of premiums dangerous ..." *WT*, 13 November 1969.
37. "Guts required in success formula ..." *WT*, 13 November 1969.
38. "Industry suggests 4 ways to reduce costs" *WT*, 20 November 1969.
39. "Insurance executive says province must compete" *WT*, 27 November 1969.
40. "MFL urges province adopt Sask. Auto insurance program" *WT*, 12 December 1969.
41. "Retain right of suit suggests legal section" *WT*, 16 December 1969.
42. "Premiums can be lower says insurance man" *WT*, 22 November 1969.
43. "Weir proposes 'people-auto' insurance plan" *WT*, 17 June 1970.
44. Gildas Molgat (Ste. Rose), Manitoba Legislative Assembly Debates, 13 August 1970: 4628. Gildas Molgat was leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba at this time.
45. *Ibid.*, 5:25.
46. McAllister, p. 67.
47. Larry Desjardins, Manitoba Legislative Assembly Debates, 13 May 1970: 1909–10.
48. Schreyer interview 2007, 4:35.
49. Larry Desjardins, Manitoba Legislative Assembly Debates, 13 May 1970: 1910.
50. Schreyer interview, 2007, 5:10.
51. Gonick interview, 2007, 5:50.
52. "No Point Getting 'Crumbs'" *WFP*, 23 April 1970.
53. McAllister, pp. 66–7.
54. Howard Pawley, Manitoba Legislative Assembly Debates, 12 May 1970: 1881.
55. Edward Schreyer, Manitoba Legislative Assembly Debates, 5 August 1970: 4219–20.
56. Interview, Cy Gonick 2007, 1; 9:15.
57. McAllister, p. 66.
58. McAllister himself notes in his introduction, where he says that one of the motivating values of the British democratic socialist tradition was to "protest against the inefficiencies of capitalism." *Ibid.*, p. 4.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 65–6. These companies and their earnings for 1970 were: Wawanesa Mutual (\$5.4 million); Co-operative Fire and Casualty (\$2.4 million); Portage la Prairie Mutual (\$1.6 million); and Allstate Insurance Company of Canada (\$1.2 million).
60. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
61. "Schreyer Duck Pickets" *WFP*, 25 April 1970.
62. *WFP*, 27 April 1970.
63. "Agents Organizing Insurance Protest" *WFP*, 27 April 1970.
64. Gordon Beard, Manitoba Legislative Assembly Debates, 15 May 1970: 1981–2.
65. "\$200 Deductible"; "7,000 Protest Govt. Plan" *WFP*, 30 April 1970. Indeed, according to Cy Gonick "it was the largest crowd, or demonstration, in my memory. ... I've never seen a political demonstration as well orchestrated and powerfully presented as that one." Interview, Cy Gonick 2007, 2, 1:20.
66. Cooper, pp. 213–14.

Life History as a Window to Understanding the Politics of Teaching and Schooling: Manitoba Teacher Sybil Shack (1911–2004)

by Rosa Bruno-Jofré
Faculty of Education, Queen's University

Introduction

Sybil Shack helped define education in the province of Manitoba, Canada, as much as Manitoba and its schools defined her. She was a teacher, teaching principal, textbook writer, educational writer, broadcaster, leader of teachers' organizations, and civil libertarian. Her influence extended to the nation-at-large reaching the profile of a national public figure.

This article sets her life history as the context for a discussion of her ideas and professional involvement.¹ This approach is grounded in the thesis that Sybil Shack's views on educational issues were rooted in her lived experience not only as a student and as a teacher, but also as a child of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who settled in the north end of Winnipeg, an ebullient political neighbourhood. Her parents introduced her to socialist and humanistic ideals instilled in her a love for freedom, egalitarianism, and a sense of identity. Her life history provides a window to recreate life and schooling in Manitoba in the first half of the century while helping to understand how she construed the ideas, she expounded.

Sybil Shack's ideas were published in various venues, mostly teachers' magazines and refer to her professional work. She did not pretend to be a scholar. In fact, she distrusted academic educators and their conclusions. Instead, Sybil Shack engaged teachers and the public in the issues of the time. She was guided by her profound belief in the articulation of theory and practice, her own practice, and

her belief in the role of public education in cultivating and strengthening the Canadian polity, the professionalization of teaching, women's rights, and freedom of thought and expression. Rather than creating a new body of knowledge, Sybil critiqued the social institutions and practices of which she was part. At the core of her arguments, there was always the intersection of Canadianism that she absorbed at school, non-marxist socialist ideas, civic humanistic values, and civil libertarian views of freedom.² Not surprisingly, at one point or another, she embraced pedagogically progressive ideas and she even applied the project method that was known in Alberta in the 1930s.³ In the last part of the article, I focus on Sybil Shack's understanding of the role of public education in articulating a Canadian polity and related issues of freedom, diversity, and nationhood. I examine Sybil's mistrust of multiculturalism in the early seventies and her notion of a Canada differentiated from the United States. Her own life history provides an explanation of her inability to break with early political and ideological frameworks to embrace new social demands.

Family Background and Manitoba Context

Sybil Shack's very presence in Manitoba was the result of the mass immigration movement that brought a diversity of people to Canada. She was the daughter of Alexander Shack and Pauline Katz Shack. Sybil Shack's father's family arrived in Canada in 1903 from Odessa (now in Ukraine), when Alexander was nineteen, while her mother's family, originally from western Ukraine, had come to Canada in 1904, after a sojourn in New Jersey. Both families left behind memories of injustice, compulsory military service in spite of being disenfranchised, and lack of rights even to own their land.⁴ Thanks to the pen-strokes of French Canadian immigration officers who shortened a long, and—to their minds—difficult name, Sybil Shack's father officially became Alexander "Shack." Thus, he was able to found a family in Manitoba with a Canadianized surname. Her father had graduated in Odessa from a Jewish technical school where he took a trade, half-days in the trade and half-days in the academic program. He was a polyglot whose languages included Russian, Ukrainian, German, Hebrew, and Yiddish (the language spoken by his family)

Dr. Bruno-Jofré is Professor and Dean of Education at Queen's University, current senior co-editor of Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation and senior founding co-editor of Encounters/Encuentros/Rencontres on Education. She is currently coordinator of the Educational Theory and History of Education Group. Her latest book (2005) is The Missionary Oblate Sisters: Vision and Mission published by McGill-Queen's University Press, in the History of Religion Series. She is also the author of Methodist Education in Peru: Social Gospel, Politics, and American Ideological and Economic Penetration, 1888–1930 published by Wilfred Laurier University Press.

and “had a background rooted in socialism, humanism, and intellectualism.”⁵ Both of Sybil Shack’s parents were also literate in English. From the time that her father entered Canada, he began learning English on his own. However, he held blue-collar jobs and his salary was just enough to keep the family well. In an anecdote shared with the author and a group of women, Sybil Shack recalled that her father once told her that his first reading of English was a sign in a shop window the day he got off the train and walked down Main Street in Winnipeg. The sign read: HELP WANTED. NO ENGLISHMAN NEED APPLY. She concluded ironically, by saying “the remittance men were not popular in a town which was founded by Scots.”⁶ For Sybil Shack’s mother, Pauline, formal education started in the Italian section of New York and ended at age fourteen, in grade eight, in Winnipeg. Pauline Shack had a strong business sense, and when Mr. Shack was out of work, she opened up and ran a small store with great success, but when he got a permanent job, she closed the shop and returned to her duties as homemaker. She inspired Sybil, and in some ways resembled the women described by Sybil in chapter two of her book *Saturday’s Stepchildren*.⁷

The Shacks and their families joined a vibrant Jewish community from Eastern Europe that had made Winnipeg, a real centre of Canadian Jewry, their home.⁸ Sybil Frances Shack was born in 1911, during a period of marked public consciousness of the demographic shifts in immigration that had brought her parents to Canada. By the mid- and late-1910s educational and political leaders identified the large number of non-British newcomers to Manitoba as a public issue. In 1918, the Minister of Education, R. S. Thornton, in his address to the Manitoba Educational Association, emphasized the need to bring newcomers more quickly into Canadian national life, and into the life of the province.⁹

Schools in Manitoba aimed at a form of Canadianism that was rooted in Anglo-conformity. In 1916, the year before Sybil Shack started school, the legislature repealed the section of the Public Schools Act permitting bilingual

instruction, and it unanimously approved the School Attendance Act. While communities such as the Franco-Manitoban one, entered into a phase of active resistance, she argued in her historical writing that such measures were necessary to secure Canadian unity and identity, and to restore some order to the linguistic chaos generated by hundreds of one-room schoolhouses in which no word of English was spoken or taught.¹⁰

Shack’s Early Life

Sybil Shack’s formal education began in Winnipeg in 1917 at the William Whyte School (a school that had been built in the north end for immigrants and their children),

where, according to her recollection, probably two-thirds or more of the pupils were Jewish that first year.¹¹ During Sybil’s early life, the Shack family moved several times, first to northern Manitoba, and then to Veregin, Saskatchewan, home to a Doukhobor community, which Sybil felt offered insight into a very interesting and genuine communal life. Again, there were not many English-speaking families in the district, and Sybil Shack completed two grades in one year in Saskatchewan. In 1920, however, the family returned to Winnipeg, where Sybil was able to complete her studies.¹² The return to Winnipeg underlined the fact that Sybil was indeed a daughter of the north end, where her parents had met, married, and where she was born in 1911 in the bedroom behind her grandparents’ store on Pritchard Avenue. Shack’s detailed descriptions of her colourful neighbourhood

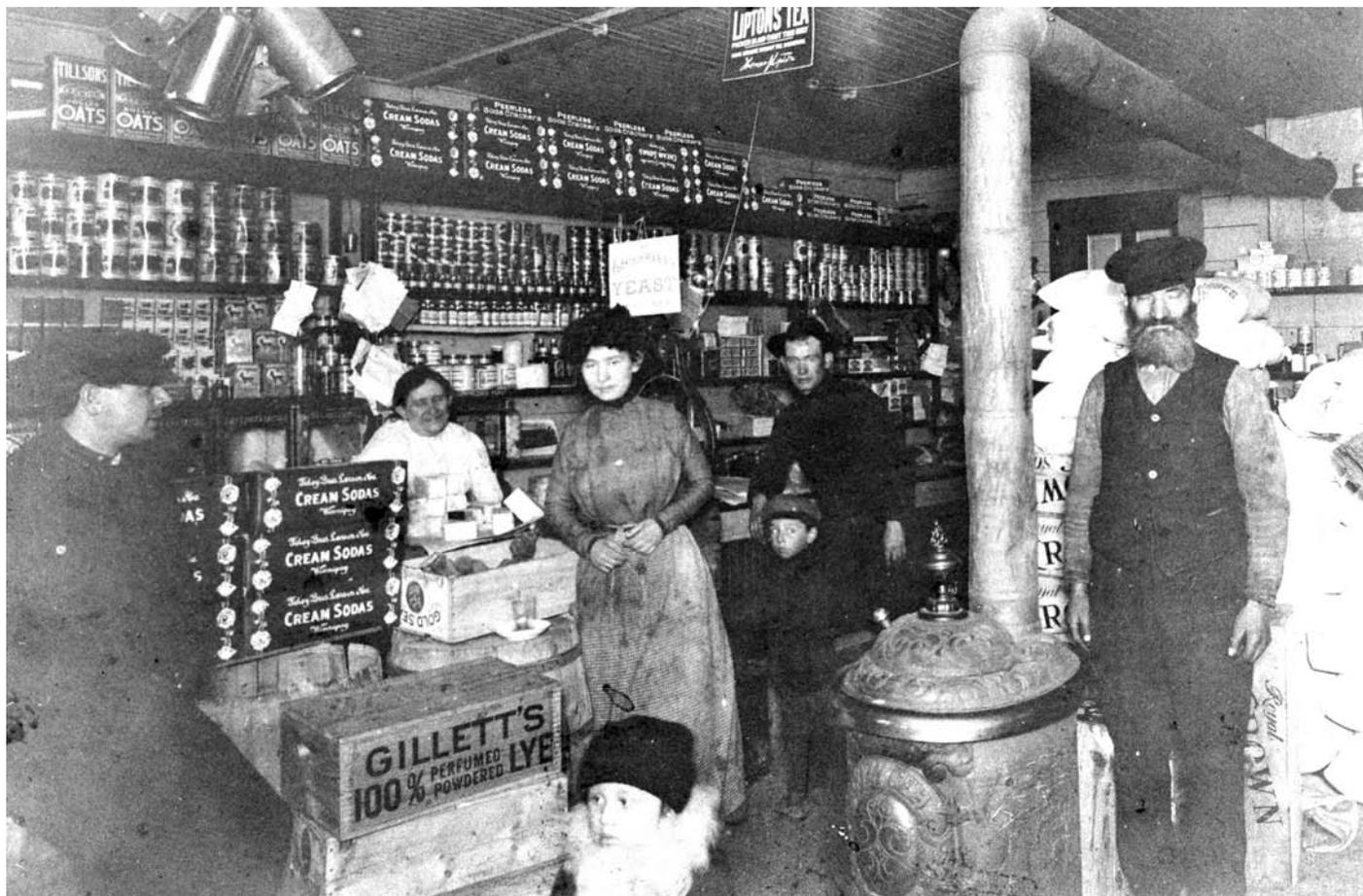
on Boyd Avenue also attest to her sense of belonging there:

Our next door neighbours to the west, when I was a little girl, were the Dahlstroms ... Her voice, with its interesting Swedish lilt, was a familiar part of my childhood. One of the first things I learned from the Dahlstroms was that homes had different smells. Our house, and the houses of my aunts and cousins, smelled of familiar foods, of fish cooking,



R. Bruno-Joffré

Sybil Francis Shack (1911–2004) earned a national reputation as a teacher, writer, and broadcaster. She wrote education texts and general interest books, was president of the Manitoba Teachers Society, director of the Canadian Teachers Federation, and led many professional education committees of the Manitoba Department of Education.



R. Bruno-Jofré

The interior of Shack's grandparents' store on 450 Pritchard Avenue, Winnipeg is seen in this undated photo. The young woman in the centre would become her mother.

and chicken fat being rendered, and onions frying, and bread baking, and clothes being boiled in the large copper boiler on the kitchen range. Mrs. Dahlstrom's house had completely different smells, because, as I learned very soon, she used fats for frying that were forbidden to Jews. Strictly speaking, I wasn't supposed to eat anything in her house because it was not kosher, but I can confess

still officiated (illegally, of course) when a doctor was not obtained, or was too expensive.¹³

The Shack family that included Sybil, her parents, and Freda who was five years younger than Sybil, lived on Boyd Avenue at the time. Later in life Sybil recalled passing shop windows with signs in various languages, Chinese (mostly laundry), German, Yiddish; later Italian, Portuguese, and Japanese. She wrote:

Sybil Shack helped define education in the province of Manitoba as much as Manitoba and its schools defined her.

On windy days newspapers in those languages blew against our legs as we walked to school, and demanded our attention. We picked up the laundry and carried home the groceries wrapped in them. It was no accident that so many of the children of that community became teachers and writers and broadcasters, users of language.¹⁴

now that I loved her cookies, especially those that Tekla, her daughter, used to sneak out to us kids. To the east of us lived the Hinkels, who spoke only German at home because old Mrs. Hinkel, the grandmother, knew no English. She had been a midwife in the old country, and in spite of her age

This diversity had an impact on school life and the boundaries between private and public personae tended to become blurred in the school experience. Sybil Shack and her classmates often resisted and contested the curriculum, especially when it conflicted with, or reflected poorly upon, their ethnic identities. She recalls that in 1922–1923,

at William Whyte, she was one of a group of students who protested having to study *The Merchant of Venice* giving its depiction of Shylock, the Jew, as an usurer and by vocation a villain. The school principal was sympathetic, but she also tried to convince the students that Shylock was really the hero, not the villain of Shakespeare's play. However, in a paradoxical way, Miss Redman (the principal in question) also tried to appease the students by suggesting that Shakespeare had lived at a time when there were no

[Shack] recalls that in 1922-23, at William Whyte, she was one of a group of students who protested having to study *The Merchant of Venice* giving its depiction of Shylock, the Jew, as a usurer and by vocation a villain [S]he also tried to convince the students that Shylock was really the hero, not the villain of Shakespeare's play.

Jews in England; therefore, he could not be expected to portray Jews in an authentic manner. Sybil Shack felt that she learned to become a Canadian from the teachers she and her fellow students admired and imitated in speech and manner, from the songs they were taught (e.g., "Rule Britannia," and "The Maple Leaf Forever"), from the stories told in class, and, of course from the textbooks. However, the process of becoming Canadian for Sybil Shack also entailed accommodation and resistance, as reflected in discussion about the character of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. These and other examples suggest the origins of the tensions in her understanding of diversity and her concerns with policies associated with multiculturalism.

Her journal for 1923 shows a very active student ready to question poor teaching practices. On Monday, 8 October 1923, she wrote with exasperation that a history teacher, Miss Tompson, did not teach them decently. "Her methods are hard to understand and her notes are practically copied from the book." She went on to describe the process that morning,

Dora Stuman, Elsie Dubinsky, Mary Schwarty, Bertha Paskod, Roosie Silvert and I went to speak to her about it. The rest of the girls promised they'd stand by us. Tommie (sic) was to going to give us a history exam and we weren't fit to take it so we were going to complain. We asked the boys to join but one, Morris Pierce, expressed the sentiment of the rest when he said, "you girls, go ahead. We'll see what you can do. But you won't dare complain." So none of them came with us.

Sybil Shack was the first to speak and Dora and Elsie helped her. The rest portrays a school scene of the time, "Tommie flew into a temper and vowed she'd strap us all.

She even sent Rosie Goldin for the strap. And Rosie went. But Mr. Hearne wasn't in the office, I guess, so she got along with knocking us on the head with her pointer and giving a scolding every opportunity she had."¹⁵

At the time, St. John High School met the needs of bright students by acceleration. When she was selected to take grades 10 and 11 in one year, her parents said that she was too young, but Sybil Shack said "No, I'm not," so she took both grades in one year and graduated from grade 11 at fourteen. She recalled, "And I would have probably gone on to take grade 12, because it was free and university cost money, but I got an entrance scholarship that year [the Isbister Scholarship in 1925]. The scholarship was for \$100 and paid all my fees and even left \$10 for books. I bought all the books second-hand from Adele Churchill who was a year ahead of me."¹⁶ She recalled later on in a conversation with the members of the Community of Inquirers that during the first two years at the university, she was afraid of her own shadow. She still remembered standing in line waiting to register behind all those gray flannel pants worn by the young men and she was so short. It was humiliating too in those days to have to pay her tuition fees in two instalments because the family did not have money to pay in full at the beginning of the academic year. Although she was very shy socially, she was outspoken in the class and an outstanding student.¹⁷ In 1927, she recorded in her journal her concern over the finances of the family and the fact that she was going to school. She was only sixteen, but the lines are powerful:

I must be able to pay back in part. I must be worth the sacrifice. Sacrifice, I know sounds melodramatic but it is just that on papa's salary. But I can do it and I will. It isn't conceit to put down here what Mr. Gardner told papa yesterday. He said that it would have been a shame to deny me a University education, that I was clever and could do anything, that I was capable of great things. I wish, I were ...¹⁸

Mr. Gardner was prophetically right. Sybil graduated from the Faculty of Arts, the University of Manitoba, in 1929 with a four-year B.A. [an Honour's B.A.]

Stenographer, Nurse, or Teacher: Career Choice and the Forging of Identity

Like many females of her generation, Sybil Shack had extremely limited career choices upon graduating from the University of Manitoba in 1929. As many other female educational leaders of her time—like Agnes Mc Donald¹⁹ and Myrtle Conway²⁰, for example—following graduation at the University of Manitoba, Sybil Shack at eighteen years of age had three choices: to become a stenographer, a nurse, or a teacher.²¹ She chose the latter, for the following reasons:

I knew I didn't want to be a stenographer. I had some office experience in my student days, and

nursing didn't appeal to me at all. I should have liked to be either a journalist or a lawyer, but two practicing lawyers told my father that women in law firms at that time were treated almost like office boys or gophers. Besides, my sister was coming up to university, and in our house it was not the age of affluence, and no way could we have coped financially with two students at the university. So I went to Normal School for 10 months and became a teacher. For all its problems, teaching remains a satisfying job. Among other things it confers on its practitioners a kind of immortality: a little bit of us, good, bad or indifferent, live on in our students, forever.²²

Sybil Shack emerged from the Normal School in 1930 into the Depression. Thus, for two years she improvised a career by marking papers, by substitute teaching in Winnipeg, and by writing for two weekly magazines. At age seventeen, she had already begun writing a column on City Council for *Weekly News*, which was published by the Independent Labour Party, an organization that her mother and father had joined. After graduation from the Normal School, Sybil also took on another column for an Anglo-Jewish weekly (*Western Jewish News*) that reported recitals and other social events. She stopped writing such columns when her two-hundredth application brought her a full-time teaching position at a high school in Foxwarren, Manitoba, in 1932.

The Normal School, led by Dr. William McIntyre, who also taught philosophy of education, influenced Sybil's understanding of teaching and learning. McIntyre, a reader of John Dewey, was an advocate of progressive education. Instead of setting assignments to further or test knowledge, McIntyre listed on the blackboard topics suggested by the students and from which they made their choice for a project. Working in teams with that freedom influenced her approach to teaching.²³ McIntyre's familiarity with the principles of progressive education is not surprising given that its principles (i.e., child-centered education, the role of experience, the community, and democracy in education) had reached a number of Canadian provinces in the late twenties and early thirties. The traveling of Dewey's ideas and of the pedagogical progressive tenets along with administrative progressive ideas concerned with social efficiency were part of the syncretic progressive ideological configuration of the time. Non-Marxist socialists like Sybil Shack found a natural affinity with the discourse of social reconstruction, developmentalism, and holistic learning often within a naturalistic framework. Sybil Shack's understanding of teaching and learning was embedded in the pedagogical progressive vision of education rooted in an optimistic vision of the humane, developmentalism, holistic learning, and a strong belief in a democratic participatory classroom.²⁴

During the thirties and forties, Sybil Shack devoted her time to teaching at the elementary level (until 1943),

junior high, and high school briefly. She also held an administrative post as a teaching principal in an elementary school during this same period. In addition, Sybil Shack engaged in left-wing political activism (in the 1930s), unionism in the Women's Local of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and she fully contributed to the war efforts.

In 1933, both Sybil Shack and her father Alexander Shack were elected alternate delegates to the founding of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the mother of the New Democratic Party of which she remained a member until she died. They did not go to Regina to the founding convention for they did not have the money for the fare, or for other expenses. She recounts that she got her feet wet—at times literally—in speaking to often indifferent audiences during the 1930s, while campaigning for local Independent Labour Party and CCF candidates. Later in life, she could still remember her embarrassment the first time she stood up at a nominating meeting and had the folding chair collapse with a crash behind her as she opened her mouth to speak.

During World War II, as Sybil Shack said, the open skies of the prairies were the training space for thousands of young men from the Commonwealth and from the "free" segments of the invaded countries, such as Norway, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The Shacks opened their home to them and treasured the friendships that came from these encounters for years to come. The war brought into the citizenship discourse principles of unity, patriotism, and service as realized through war efforts by children and teachers. These principles became ingrained in Sybil Shack's understanding of Canada. During the War, Sybil went back part-time to the University of Manitoba to receive a Bachelor of Education degree in 1945 and a MEd in 1946. Her thesis was on the teaching of Latin in junior high school. This is not surprising given her interest in classical virtues in relation to the common good and civic humanism.²⁵

No Jew could remain unaffected by the Holocaust. Sybil Shack and her immediate family were not religious but they were profoundly Jewish and very much in touch with family memories of oppression. During the war and after Sybil Shack again wrote a weekly editorial for *Western Jewish News*. Thus, when in 1947 the Canadian government allowed the Canadian Jewish Congress to sponsor the settlement of 1000 orphan children and adolescents in Canada, the Shack family welcomed two teen-age boys, who were survivors of the Holocaust. They were John Hirsch and David Ehrlich. David later became a successful businessman. John was a leading theatre man in North America who co-founded the Manitoba Theatre Centre. John lived for a number of years with the Shacks and was very close to Sybil who was single and lived with her parents and later on with her mother.²⁶ He was as faithful a son to Sybil Shack's mother, Pauline, as any natural-born son could be, and the Jewish Post eulogized him in 1989 as a son of the Jewish North End.²⁷

Not surprisingly, Sybil Shack became a member of the Women's Local Conference Committee of the Manitoba

Teachers' Society that negotiated salaries with the school Board. In 1951 she said yes "to a colleague, a desperate colleague", who told her that she was the nineteenth woman she had called to fill a position on that committee. Acceptance of this invitation led her not only to executive positions in the Manitoba Teachers' Society culminating with its presidency in 1960–1961, but opened doors to her involvement with the Canadian Teachers' Federation and with the world organization of teaching professions.²⁸ Teachers' magazines published Sybil Shack's articles on educational issues of the day. In 1950, she also started to write and air a series of radio programs that brought her in direct contact with teachers and children from all over the province. As a result of her lengthy involvement in school broadcasting, she was invited to talks for CBC's afternoon radio programs and to local television programs. During this intensive decade, she also became a textbook writer. By the late fifties, she had become a well-known educator and educational commentator.

The Political Context in Manitoba and Shack's Developing View of Public Education

The fifties were not easy years for educators. At the national level many of the submissions to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences (known as the Massey Commission after its chair Vincent Massey), that worked in the late forties and reported in 1951, lamented lack of knowledge of Canadian issues, students' low level of skills, and a dual history curriculum, for students were learning two versions of history, one French, and another British. The members of the Commission questioned the reliance of teachers upon graduate schools in the United States, singling out Columbia University, in particular, which was heralded as the centre of progressive education (meaning the holistic, child-centered, inquiry-driven, democratic-oriented, social-reconstructionist variety). The members urged Canadians to produce their own materials, for uncritical acceptance of American materials had compromised the Canadian system. In 1953, Hilda Neatby, the Saskatchewan historian who had been one of the commissioners published *So Little for the Mind*, an indictment of the teaching of history and citizenship that was also an indictment of progressive education.

In short, during the fifties, the school system and the overall approach to education in Canada were under attack. In a powerful article published in *Maclean's* in 1958, Sybil Shack dealt with uninformed criticism of teachers and schools. In particular, she focused on comments about the so-called negative impact of progressive education. She balked at the implication that teaching is not a profession. She relayed what a neighbour had said to her, and her response to him:

"When are you people (whenever I am addressed as 'you people' I can guess what is coming) going to throw all those progressive methods overboard,

and go back to teaching the three Rs?" I couldn't explain to him over the back fence that we have never had those "progressive methods;" (about which, incidentally, he knows nothing), that the school is, next to the church, the most conservative institution in our society, and that if he must criticize "us people" for anything, he should be criticizing us for not keeping pace with new ideas as rapidly as he has done in his own business.²⁹

During the 1950s, Shack addressed what she perceived as contradictions dominant in public thinking about education. In particular, she spoke out about the tendency to value money over scholarship, and about the existence of a social order based on presumed male superiority. These topics were elaborated and extended in an article entitled "Can our Schools Face Both Ways?" This piece was originally presented as a talk on CBC radio, but later it was also distributed in print by the Canadian Teachers' Federation to its affiliates. "Every school program in Canada," she wrote, "states that children are to be educated to be citizens of a democracy. Schools, however are far from democratic; in fact, they are organized on autocratic lines."³⁰ Although there was talk of the value of the non-conformist, and of the need to develop the potential of each individual through diversified programs, Sybil maintained that deep down Canadians rejected the non-conformist. "The school may honestly try to respect the non-conforming individual: but we know that when he goes out into the cold world, his struggle to maintain his identity will either embitter him, or be abandoned."³¹

Sybil Shack continued by referring to the lip service that is paid to the ideal of freedom of thought and expression,

During the 1950s, Shack addressed what she perceived as contradictions dominant in public thinking about education. In particular, she spoke out about the tendency to value money over scholarship, and about the existence of a social order based on presumed male superiority.

while that freedom is kept within well-defined limits in schools. She pointed out such unquestioned assumptions such as that textbooks do not lie, and that teachers are the primary holders of knowledge. In this article, she argued that schools were affected by the fact that the citizens had not made up their minds as to whether they believed in cooperation, or in competition. Further, she stated that racial and ethnic prejudices—which every Canadian would deny having—marked the experiences of minority and poor children. However, the most violent of the contradictions

was, in her view, the paradox of preaching peace, while using force (the strap) to discipline children in school.³²

The fifties were the years of the Royal Commissions on Education in a number of provinces and were the prelude to important changes in the sixties and seventies. Economic changes generated a new setting for education and Manitoba was not an exception. Sybil Shack had been a strong advocate of higher standards for teacher preparation. She also advocated the consolidation of thousands of school districts and well over a thousand one-room schools that were spread throughout the province. She did not romanticize the one-room school which, in her view, represented “the theory of the survival of the fittest in a particularly cruel and crude form.”³³ She had the opportunity to make her case as a representative of the Manitoba Teachers’ Society to the Manitoba Royal Commission on Education (the McFarlane Commission) created in 1957 to review and make recommendations regarding education in the province. Out of the recommendations of the Commission, Manitoba proceeded with the consolidation of schools and school districts, the enhancement of teaching as a profession, and substantial changes in curriculum.

“Freedom Implies Dissent”

In 1960–1961, Sybil Shack was the president of the Manitoba Teachers’ Society. During the 1960s, she wrote more intensively, she had extensive involvements in committees, and she was increasingly exposed to a broader public. In 1963, her writing about one controversial incident involving a teacher in Winnipeg illustrates Sybil Shack’s critical view of the rhetoric of citizenship and democracy in the Cold War era. A teacher had introduced visiting students from Minnesota to the Communist Party Secretary in Winnipeg to highlight the fact that this Canadian city was so democratic that it regularly elected a Communist school trustee and a Communist alderman. As a result of this controversial lesson, the RCMP questioned the teacher, and the case went before the school board. Sybil Shack wondered about the effect of such treatment of the teacher on Canadian civil liberties:

Are we so lacking in confidence in our own democratic procedures that we are willing to discard them instantly when they run contrary to our prejudices? Are our famed civil liberties to be limited only to those people whose opinions are the same as ours? [She concluded that,] a good teacher examines things as they are, not as s/he would like them to be. And no one should be penalized for being a good teacher.³⁴

Sybil Shack, who was to become president of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, executive chair and, later in her life, honorary president of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, had a consistent approach to freedom of thought and expression. This is not

surprising as post-war civil libertarian associations had in their leadership as well as in their rank and file many of the social democrats, unionists and Social Gospellers who, like, Sybil Shack, had embraced the cause in the 1930s.³⁵ However, in line with her civic humanistic bent, she objected to radical liberal tendencies that put individual, ethnic, language, religious identities before class, gender, and nation.

The right of children to question was one of the controversial issues that Sybil Shack addressed. She wanted children at school to be exposed to a variety of opinions and facts as part of their civic education. Her aim was “to have a nation of questioners, people who are not afraid to examine ideas and beliefs.” Sybil did not intend to undermine the authority of parents. She explained,

I won’t say to a child, “Don’t believe what your parents tell you.” I also won’t say to them, “Believe everything I tell you.” After all, I don’t have the God-given right to form the children in my mold. I do think that children have the right to be taught to think for themselves, and that can’t happen unless they are permitted to question everything, absolutely everything that comes their way. And many things must come their way so that they do learn to question. Questioners, as I have already said, are disturbing, disturbing to teachers as well as to parents.³⁶

Sybil seriously questioned teachers who taught uncritically what she called political fads, in particular, in the seventies. In her view, teachers had the moral responsibility to teach issues critically from a variety of angles rather than to crusade for their political views in the classroom. While the first approach contributed to the educational process, the second was in her view unprofessional and unethical.³⁷ She strongly believed that a teacher’s leadership in the development of democratic citizenship was exercised by opening the children’s minds to the best information available, by creating opportunities for discussing and formulating their learning, and also in showing a willingness to listen and learn. She said, “It is not the teacher’s business to lead his (sic) students in political activities, or to direct their thinking.”³⁸ Sybil’s emphasis on educative experiences has obvious roots in her exposure to Dewey’s ideas and is grounded on liberal convictions that led her to reject any potential form of indoctrination.

Public Education and the Canadian Polity: Tolerance of Variety without Tolerance of Injustice

During the 1960s, Sybil Shack became highly focused on the role of public schooling in developing a sense of national community, and she was concerned about continuing postwar Americanization of popular culture and education in Canada. The public school was, in her understanding, the best instrument so far devised for carrying the heritage of human knowledge to all strata of the community. It ranked

with the ballot box and the courts of law as an ultimate manifestation of democracy. For Sybil, the very existence of public schooling was proof of humanity's ability to rise above prejudice and the narrow limitations of "tribal thinking", an expression she used to refer to parochial understanding of the world. Schools offered children a healthy experience of the community outside their family, and gave them a taste of the world in a safe environment. Finally, public schools set—however imperfectly—a pattern of law, order, and government in a framework that children could learn to constrain the egocentricity of childhood.³⁹

The preceding ideas were expounded in the context of the emerging Quiet Revolution, and parallel discussions of bilingualism and biculturalism. On such fronts, Sybil Shack asserted:

I am afraid I don't think of myself as being part of a bi-cultural nation; I think of myself as Canadian without hyphen and without reservations. I know and feel as part of my background that this country was settled after 1608 by French, and by English, Scots and Irish. I know that English is the predominant language in the part of Canada in which I live; I know that French is the predominant language in other parts of Canada. The British and the French traditions are a part of everything I think and feel, although as far as I know I haven't a drop of British or French blood in my veins.⁴⁰

The absence of reference to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada becomes noticeable in today's context.

The 1960s brought forward a discussion about the nature of Confederation, Canadian fears of Americanization (economically, culturally, and politically), bilingualism, multiculturalism, human rights, and the constitution. The break-up of the notion of a common identity for all French Canadians and the emerging understanding that Quebec was the "basic polity" of French Canada created a new political scenario.⁴¹ The question of the rights of Francophones outside Quebec came to the fore in Manitoba, and Aboriginal issues began to take a new political dimension at the national level.

In the midst of a metamorphosis, that was affecting the educational system through the introduction of new curricula, various groups began to question a notion of citizenship that glossed over the realities of class, gender, racial, and ethnic discrimination. The old notion of the common school as a public good was under siege within the context of the equality revolution, and the control of public education quickly became a contested arena. It was not only an issue of political control for which government and the various stakeholders started to struggle, but also one of how to restructure the system (including policy making) to recreate the public school in a pluralistic society, and a polity that was moving toward the acknowledgement of diversity.

Throughout the sixties and seventies Sybil Shack



R. Bruno-Jofré

A principled principal. By 1957, Sybil Shack was principal of Lord Roberts School.

reminded Canadians that public schooling was indeed at the core of the public good. Her articles appeared in provincial teaching magazines, in *Liberty*, in *Canada Young Family Magazine*, and consistently in *Monday Morning, Canada's Magazine for Professional Teachers*. Her discourse had a degree of consistency over the years and remained grounded in her early formative ideas. For Sybil, the schools were agents of consciousness-raising about what it means to be a Canadian. In her first book, *Armed with a Primer* (1965), Sybil showed distrust for an evolving move toward a re-articulation of the understanding of the Canadian polity. The use of public schools to maintain ethnic cultures, she wrote in *Armed with a Primer*, "will not make a mosaic, which presupposes order and pattern and conjunction in a design, but a crazy patchwork wherein one element bears little or no relationship to the other;" thus, she saw "the need to stress the unifying elements in the nation."⁴²

Sybil Shack made clear that she did not suggest that the public school be a blender or a "mixmaster," that makes a smooth and indistinguishable paste of all the elements that form the Canadian mosaic.⁴³ She argued that the school has a responsibility to teach children the meaning and worth of many cultural strains, make them conscious of one another, proud of one another, and grateful to one another for what each one can offer. The key sentence in her argument that shows the intellectual and ideological roots of her thinking is the one that reads: "[the school] must teach tolerance of variety without toleration of injustice," and she continues, "[the school] has a responsibility to teach Canadian history in the context of world history without encouraging chauvinism."⁴⁴

In her view, "historically, ethnically, sociologically, geographically Canada is made up of parts, each distinct, each bound up closely to all the others, each independent, each dependent on all others." For the building and appreciation of these interrelationships Shack knows "no better agency than the school."⁴⁵ Her understanding of

the role of history is close to William Galston's (Liberal Purposes) idea that group solidarity and group cohesion depends upon a binding myth that brings people together.⁴⁶ Canadian children, in her view, must acquire a background of experience to make them a part of a past to which their direct ancestors did not perhaps directly contribute, so that Chief Peguis,⁴⁷ Henry Kelsey,⁴⁸ and LaVerendrye⁴⁹ belong to them.⁵⁰ She leaves room for other voices, but that common background becomes foundational.

Obvious tensions and contradictions between her universalistic tendencies and her profound conviction of education as child centered appear unresolved in her writing. Sybil Shack pointed out again and again that our schools cater to the needs and interest of those children who come from comfortable homes. The daily life and experiences of many children who come to school with a background different from textbooks and the middle-class values needed in her view a different program to create a new background of experience in which the new learning would fit.⁵¹ Sybil hoped for the integration of Aboriginal children in the school system and in the wider society and deeply felt her own failure to achieve that aim. In an attempt to explore the issue, she wrote, "So we proceed with the integration in our own well-meaning way. The only thing we lose sight of is the feeling and the humanity of the children whom we are manipulating in the name of a fine, human, and obviously right theory."⁵² However, her proposed solution was an early acculturation of the Aboriginal children to a Canadian set of norms and values by separating them from their mothers during the day in a program that would involve Aboriginal parents (mothers in particular) and was based on dialogue and cooperation.⁵³ She did not understand or address major issues of race, cultural identity, collective experience, and community rights. Her approach that did not acknowledge the unique position of Aboriginal peoples as First Nations did not break with the parameters of her egalitarian framework that ethically neglected unique experiences and silenced voices. In today's context, Sybil's approach to Aboriginal children would be construed as a right-wing and even a colonialist position. It also contradicts her concerns with the need to provide students with backgrounds related to their own experiences. A stand that also contradicts her distrust of Canadian multiculturalism.

Sybil Shack was concerned primarily about the possibility of a democracy based on factional interests, with groups negotiating with the state on behalf of a political system of group policies, and individualism pursued through group interaction with a thin understanding of the common good. This preoccupation clearly appeared in her writing in the 1960s and has persisted until the time of her death. In an article entitled "Widening Horizons"

written in 1977, after her retirement, Sybil wrote about girls in a culturally differentiated community: "The real broadening of horizons, however, comes when girls learn, as did the children on our street that individual and small-group differences and loyalties must yield to the greater good of the total group. Then the "ethnic" vote ceases to be, and the politics of a community grow out of the needs and welfare of the large rather than the small unit."⁵⁴ She envisioned, however, cultural and religious organizations as sites where girls could develop leadership skills and political savvy.

Sybil Shack feared that multiculturalism had the potential to undermine the principles on which the public school had been based. For instance, areas that could be affected included accessibility through public funding, the generation of a common ground, strengthening the sense of Canadian unity by having children from different backgrounds sharing and knowing one another, and encouraging awareness of Canadian identity. Her belief in learning through experience was profound and it permeated her understanding of the world. The term

"multiculturalism" had in her thinking a perceived separatist connotation, for the lack of boundaries when dealing with cultural retention was not an easy issue for her, a feminist teacher.

Sybil Shack strongly advocated full integration of women and development of

their full potential to create a solid democratic polity. The educational system and related organizations remained the focus of her writing. She wrote in 1965, "At the risk of triteness I must say what has been said a hundred times recently without penetrating deeply into our consciousness; in depriving the girls in our school and in our society we are cheating ourselves, since we cannot afford to lose almost half our potential of intelligence and creativity."⁵⁵

Sybil Shack's almost classical liberal egalitarian approach to women and men was present in her thinking from her early years. She defined herself as a feminist very early in her professional life. She advocated for equal pay and equal opportunities and was certainly aware of the limitations she encountered as a woman.⁵⁶ However, she also made women responsible for their reticence to assume leadership responsibilities although she elaborated on the causes. In this regard, Sybil Shack viewed women's exclusion as a socio-cultural gender issue that needed to be addressed early in life to deal with prejudice, stereotyping, and established gender roles. In a 1967 article entitled "What's Wrong with Women?" which summarizes her overall approach, later to be expanded in *Two Thirds Minority*⁵⁷ and in *Women in Canadian Education*⁵⁸, she wrote:

The old notion of the common school as a public good was under siege within the context of the equality revolution, and the control of public education quickly became a contested arena.



R. Bruno-Jofré

Meet the author. Shack's 1965 book *Armed With A Primer* was launched at the Winnipeg bookstore of local literary institution Mary Scorer, seen at right.

But the time has come when women teachers must act as professional people, must face up to male competition and must train themselves to accept the responsibilities which accompany competition and leadership. To achieve this end they must combat actively the attitudes in themselves and others which push them into and leave them in subsidiary roles. They must also ensure that in their classrooms girls learn to speak their opinions, accept criticism and make independent decisions.⁵⁹

Two-Thirds Minority, published in 1973, made an impression with the assertion that while women were a majority in the teaching profession, they were a definite minority in policymaking and in the hierarchy of school administration, which were almost totally dominated by men. The Winnipeg press took note of the book.⁶⁰ But *Saturday's Stepchildren: Canadian Women in Business* published in 1977, was not particularly well received.⁶¹ Reviewers indicated that it did not break new ground or present new ideas and that Shack's scheme for changing male dominance in business was not radical enough.⁶² The development of feminist praxis had moved beyond Shack's ideas.

"I am a Product of the Public School System"

Sybil Shack was a committed teacher and a committed Canadian. Her family and the setting of her upbringing provided her with the initial cultural capital that made

it possible for her to become an organic teacher in a Gramscian sense, a teacher who played a role in shaping the views of her fellow teachers and of women teachers in particular.

In the last part of the paper, particular attention was given to Sybil Shack's understanding of Canada and of the relationship between public schooling and the building of a democratic polity. It aimed at demonstrating that her understanding was rooted in the communities where she lived, in her negotiated experiences in the schools she attended in the north end of Winnipeg, and in her lengthy experience as an educator, one who was fully engaged in the shaping of Canada in the unique contours of school life. In her arguments, she articulated elements of civic humanism, socialism, and liberalism in a rather eclectic way. In Sybil Shack's view, schools were expected to develop children's understanding of the common good, along with the civic virtues requisite to building a strong national character, with all the nuances implied by an ideal of Canadianism that she did not explain. However, she was unable to break with her early patterns of understanding of social reality and embrace previously unheard voices and experiences and searches for identity. Instead, she reconstituted her early views. This seems evident in her approach to women's issues, multiculturalism, and Aboriginal education in the 1960s and 1970s. Her pioneering views then took conservative shapes. It may be that her own, lengthy experience in the school had somewhat of an assimilating effect on her.

Shortly before her death, when she was already weak, she wrote to me about the complexity of reflecting upon one's identity in the context of schooling. I have chosen to end this article in Sybil's words, for her life demonstrates the role that public education held in her day. She had difficulties in coming to terms with Canadian multiculturalism as expounded in the 1970s although toward the end of her life opened her own door toward the understanding of her multicultural identity. Nonetheless, implicit in these words of 2003 is her concern that individuals develop common core values that somehow transcend ethnicity.

I try to identify myself [with] my "Canadianism." Therefore, I ask: am I a Canadian Jew, or a Jewish Canadian? I know now that I am both. I have come to understand that it takes commitment to achieve this one-two- or thousand and two Canadian. The public system of education under which I could maintain the duality that I, as a Canadian had a responsibility to weave to make one out of so many. Not to apologize for it, not to use it for self-satisfaction.⁶³

Sybil Frances Shack died in Winnipeg on 11 February 2004, at the age of 92. ☛

Notes

Sybil Shack was born in Winnipeg, on 1 April 1911. She graduated from the University of Manitoba with a BA in 1929, with a MEd in 1946, and, in 1969, the University of Manitoba conferred upon her the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. She received a certificate to teach elementary school in 1930 from the Normal School in Winnipeg. In the course of her career, Sybil Shack has had several roles, including that of teacher, principal, feminist writer, school broadcaster, and writer of language arts textbooks. In addition, she has also held a series of other posts, including that of president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society (1960–1961); Manitoba Director of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1959–1962); National President of the Canadian College of Teachers (1967); member of the Board of Governors, University of Manitoba (1961–1967); Chair of the Canadian Teachers' Federation School T.V. and A.V. Committees (1961–1965); Member of the CBC Advisory Board on School Television and Radio; President of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (1995); lay member of the Manitoba Law Reform Commission (1971–1979); lay Member of the Manitoba Judicial Council (1987–1994); and a member of the Board of the Jewish Child and Family Services, amongst others. She was a Provost, Order of the Buffalo Hunt, Province of Manitoba, (1984), and a recipient of the Order of Canada (1984).

1. Life history is used here as a retrospective account of Sybil Shack's life as narrated by her orally or in writing. Some of the narrations were elicited through conversations with the interviewer. The narration is placed in the historical, political, and economic context of the time in relation to public education. I did not intend to use Sybil Shack's narration as a testimony but as a means to understand how Sybil Shack made sense of her world. I did not intend to explore her motivations. See William G. Tierney, "Qualitative Research", In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, ed. *Thousand Oaks*, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc., 2nd ed., 2000, pp. 537-554. Susan N. G. Geiger, "Women's Life Histories: Method and Content," *Signs*, Winter 1986, vol. 11, pp. 334–351. There are a number of biographies of teachers in the form of books that brought innovative feminist interpretations of women teachers' life by using life history, discourse analysis, oral history, and archival sources. See Casey, Kathleen, *I Answer with My Life: Life Histories of Women Teachers Working for Social Change*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993; Rousmaniere, Kate, *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005.
2. Civic humanism as a form of discourse had a place in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world and continued having a presence well beyond that time. Peter J. Smith defined it as follows: "Civic humanism was a post-feudal ideology; its inspiration lay in the works of classical historians, philosophers, and rhetoricians who stressed the possibility of liberty and virtue in a republic. Virtue referred primarily to the practice of citizenship in the classical, or Aristotelian, sense of the term. Man was a political animal (zoon politikon) who fulfilled himself by living a public life dedicated to civic concerns and the public good. Virtue necessitated certain moral qualities, for example, the ability to act selflessly for the public good." Peter J. Smith, "Civic Humanism Versus Liberalism: Fitting the Loyalists In," In Janet Aizenstat and Peter Smith, ed., *Canada's Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995, 1997, p. 111.
3. For an account of her application of the project method see Sybil Shack, "Teaching as Growth, 1935-1976: One Woman's Perspective." In Rosa Bruno-Jofré, ed., *Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba: From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices*, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993, pp. 472–473. Sybil Shack did not remember whether she actually read Dewey's writing, or just read about it, but she and her fellow students at the Normal School knew of him. She was more directly influenced by what was happening in Alberta.
4. Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, *Jewish Life and Times, Personal Recollections: The Jewish Pioneer Past on the Prairies*. Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 1993. Pauline Shack's testimony is on page 2 where she described the situation of the family in Ukraine; she related her arrival to Winnipeg in a hot May 1904 by train and her experience with the streetcar (horse-drawn cars) on page 44; she also described the small non-kosher butcher shop at 450 Pritchard Avenue, Winnipeg on page 53.
5. Sybil Shack to Robin Frazer, Winnipeg, 11 March 1987. Photocopy.
6. Rosa Bruno-Jofré and members of the Community of Inquirers, University of Manitoba, interviewed Sybil Shack in Winnipeg on 30 November 1990. The quotation was taken from video transcripts of the interview. The Community of Inquirers was a group of graduate students and women interested in women's history who led by Rosa Bruno-Jofré collected oral narratives in southern Manitoba. The tapes were deposited in the University of Manitoba Education Library. They met once a month at Sybil Shack's home. The Community organized a number seminars, theatrical representations, etc. over a period of eight years.
7. Sybil Shack, *Saturday's Stepchildren: Canadian Women in Business*. Toronto: Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, 1977.
8. Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root, The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*. Toronto: Lester Publishing Limited, 1992, chaps. 7 and 13. See also Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
9. Minister Thornston noted that the 1916 census showed that 42 percent of the population of the province represented thirty-eight different nationalities. Thornston stated that, "while there are other factors at work, our aim is to plant Canadian schools with Canadian teachers setting forth Canadian ideals and teaching the language of the country." "Address of the Minister of Education," *Western School Journal* 13 (May 1918): p. 185. Note that such concerns were spurred by the patriotism of the World War I period. Although education was (and still remains) under provincial jurisdiction, the postwar era engendered an urgent call for "education and the national spirit" and for character formation. These preoccupations were nourished by the massive presence of "aliens," by the depression following World War I, and also by the growth of the Canadian labour movement, which inspired 428 strikes across the country, and the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919.
10. Sybil Shack, personal communication faxed to the author on 29 May 2002.
11. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, interview.
12. She entered Machray School for grades 7 and 8, but earned the latter by passing one examination, completed grade 9 at Aberdeen, and grades 10 and 11 at St. John High's Technical High School.
13. Sybil Shack, "Widening Horizons." *School Guidance Worker* January–February 1977, vol. 32, no. 3. p. 44.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
15. Sybil Shack, Journal, Monday, 8 October 1923. Copy given by Sybil Shack to the author.
16. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, interview.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Sybil Shack, Journal, Monday, 22 August 1927.
19. Agnes McDonald (BA, University of Manitoba 1929; Certificate, Winnipeg Normal School; BEd, University of Manitoba) was the first woman principal of a Winnipeg School Division No. 1, president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society between 1955 and 1956, and a member of the McFarland Commission.
20. Myrtle Conway (BA University of Manitoba 1927, Winnipeg Normal School 1928, BEd University of Manitoba, LLD University of Manitoba, honorary, 1952) was the first woman president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.
21. Rosa Bruno-Jofré (developer and producer), with the History of Education Resource and Research Project. "Women in Education

Sybil Shack and Manitoba Schools

- in Manitoba: The Teacher's Voice" Video. Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, 1991. Transcripts by Erin T. Payne who served as research assistant for a related project in 2002.
22. *Ibid.*
 23. Personal communication. Progressive education. Fax dated 30 May 2002. In the 1930s, she became interested in Alberta's experimentation with the project method of teaching. The method tried to integrate various subjects around themes and applied the principle of learning by doing. See also Sybil Shack, "Teaching as Growth," pp. 472-473. See Heyking, Amy von, *Creating Citizens: History and Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905 to 1980*. Calgary: University of Calgary, 2006.
 24. Sybil Shack, personal communication faxed to the author on 30 April 2002. For an understanding of various strands in the progressive education movement see David F. Labaree, "Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance," *Paedagogica Historica*, 2005, vol. 41, nos. 1 and 2, pp. 275-288. Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*. Boston, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.
 25. "There was no Faculty of Education at the time, just Dr. Woods. And the odd lecturer he could manage to recruit. ... I suppose I was a student at heart. I enrolled in the education programmes and while teaching full time I completed courses by attending classes during the summer, on Saturday mornings, and two evenings a week." Sybil Shack, personal communication faxed to the author on 30 April 2002.
 26. Hirsch became associate director of the Stratford Festival in 1969 and artistic director in 1980. From 1974 to 1978, he headed the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television drama department. He also had a long and distinguished career in the United States. John Hirsch was honoured with a number of honorary degrees and appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.
 27. Sybil Shack to Robin Frazer, Winnipeg, 11 March 1987. Photocopy. Editorial, "The Late John Hirsch—a Son of the Jewish North End", *Jewish Post & News*, 16 August 1989, p. A4.
 28. Sybil Shack, "Teaching as Growth, 1935-1976: One Woman's Perspective." In Rosa Bruno-Jofré ed., *Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba: From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices*. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993, p. 488.
 29. Sybil Shack, "A Teacher Speaks Up to Parents." *Macleans*, 6 December 1958, p. 20.
 30. Sybil Shack, "Can Our Schools Face Both Ways?" *Teachers' Magazine*, Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Quebec, xxxix, June 1959, vol. 197: pp. 12-14.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Sybil Shack, "Who Speaks for Children?" *ATA Magazine*, January 1979, p. 22.
 34. Sybil Shack, "It Could Happen to You—How Free are Teachers?" *Educational Courier*, March 1963, pp. 34-35.
 35. George Egerton, "Entering the Age of Human Rights: Religion, Politics, and Canadian Liberalism." *Canadian Historical Review*, September 2004, vol. 85, no. 3, pp. 454-456.
 36. Sybil Shack, "Who Speaks for Children?"
 37. Sybil Shack, "Teachers and Politics." *Monday Morning*, October 1971, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 6.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 39. Sybil Shack, "Educating a Canadian." *ATA Magazine*, March 1963, p.16.
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. Marcel Martel, "French Canada: An Account on its Creation and Break-up, 1850-1967," The Canadian Historical Association, Canada's Ethnic Group Series, booklet No. 24, Ottawa, 1998, pp. 3-5.
 42. Sybil Shack, *Armed with a Primer, A Canadian Teacher's Look at Children, Schools and Parents*. Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1965.
 43. Sybil Shack, "Educating a Canadian." p. 19.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 45. Sybil Shack, "We Stand on Guard for Thee," dated April 1967. See also "We're all Canadians Here," *Monday Morning*, May 1967, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 8.
 46. William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
 47. Chief of the Saulteaux people, Peguis led his people in the 1790s from Sault Ste. Marie to settle on the banks of Netley Creek, south of Lake Winnipeg. A friend of the Selkirk Settlers, he supported the Hudson's Bay Company in its conflict with the North West Company. He was a defender of Native rights.
 48. Henry Kelsey worked for the Hudson's Bay Company since 1684. He was an explorer able to speak Cree and possibly Assiniboine as well.
 49. Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye (1685–1749) was born in Québec, Canada. He was a Canadian soldier and explorer who traveled farther than any previous European explorer had. He traveled to Winnipeg and then southwest.
 50. Sybil Shack, "Educating a Canadian," p. 20.
 51. Sybil Shack, *Armed with a Primer*, pp. 70-71.
 52. Sybil Shack, "What the 'Indians' Coming into our Urban Schools Need", *Monday Morning*, April 1969, vol. 3, no. 8, p. 9.
 53. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.
 54. Sybil Shack, "Widening Horizons," *School Guidance Worker*, January-February 1977, vol. 32, no. 3, p. 48.
 55. Sybil Shack, *Armed with a Primer*, p. 70.
 56. Sybil Shack exemplifies with her personal and professional life her understanding of feminism.
 57. Sybil Shack, *Two-thirds Minority: Women in Canadian Education*. Toronto: Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, 1973. In 1977, she also wrote *Saturday's Stepchildren: Canadian Women in Business*. Toronto: Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, 1977. The book, in the view of reviewers, offered few new insights.
 58. Sybil Shack, *Women in Canadian Education*, The Quance Lecture. 1975, Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Limited, 1975.
 59. Sybil Shack, "What's Wrong with Women?" *Monday Morning*, December 1967, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 12.
 60. Carol Partridge, "Minority Position of Women Outlined." *Winnipeg Free Press*, Tuesday 1 May 1973.
 61. Sybil Shack, *Saturday's Stepchildren*.
 62. Helene Kerr, review of Sybil Shack's *Saturday's Stepchildren: Canadian Women in Business*, in *Quill and Quire*, October 1977, vol. 13, p. 53. Cullen, Dallas, review of Sybil Shack's *Saturday's Stepchildren: Canadian Women in Business*, in *Branching Out*, 1978, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 46.
 63. Sybil Shack, personal communication faxed to the author in May 2003.

The Advancement of Knowledge in La Pérouse's 1782 Expedition to Hudson Bay

by Denis Combet

Classical and Modern Languages Department, Brandon University

and Constance Cartmill

Department of French, Spanish and Italian, University of Manitoba

One of the greatest figures in the history of the French Navy, Count François Galaup de La Pérouse, is best known for leading a scientific voyage of discovery around the world in 1785–1788. King Louis XVI clearly was not mistaken when he chose one of the most talented officers in his fleet to complete an ambitious project worthy of the Enlightenment, for La Pérouse had participated in numerous campaigns, demonstrating his exceptional qualities as a sailor and a leader of men on the world's high seas, especially during the American War of Independence and the successful missions to the Antilles and to Hudson Bay. This latter mission is the object of our focus here, not so much for its political and economic outcome as for its contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge. The voyage to Hudson Bay gathered vital new information through a variety of means, such as day-to-day navigation, precise hydrographic measurements, new maps and charts, and astronomical readings; even the dangers associated with such a daring mission were a source of valuable insights, as were encounters with the indigenous peoples of Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait.

The various accounts retracing the dramatic moments of this raid on the Hudson Bay posts assume the form of sea journals (including transcriptions of ship logs), military reports, letters and memoirs written by the officers of the three ships: La Pérouse, leader of the division and commander of the *Sceptre*; the Marquis André-Charles de La Jaille, commander of the *Engageante*, and the Chevalier

de Delangle, commander of the *Astrée*, as well as his second-in-command, Pierre-Bruno-Jean la Monneraye.¹ These writings were meant to gather together all the information collected in the course of the expedition, which would then be submitted to the authorities of the French Navy. As such, they are part of a long tradition of travel narratives and are constrained to some extent by precise rhetorical codes as they are meant to convey very specific information of various types: military, geographic, hydrographic, and even ethnographic.

Redrawing the Maps

Undertaken at the end of the American War of Independence in 1782, and shrouded in secrecy, the expedition to Hudson Bay took on the appearance of a mission of discovery: indeed, the information gathered is often of a precarious and uncertain nature, whether pertaining to the navigational routes to be followed or the perils of sailing to be avoided. This is quite the opposite of what one would expect for a military venture requiring a maximum of information on the enemy's defences. In fact,

to a large extent the very secrecy of the mission detracted from its logistic preparations. In this regard, the Marquis de La Jaille, commander of the *Engageante*, observed in his journal:

We had no reports on the perils of sailing on those seas that we were to cross, or on the direction, the force and speed of the currents, or the appearance of land. We did not even know the position of the



Hudson Bay
Company Archives,
1987/363-P-80-D/1.

Jean Francois de Galaup, Comte de la Perouse, born near Albi, France on 22 August 1771, was lost at sea in 1788.

forts that we would have to attack, so that one could truthfully say that with few exceptions, we were going off to discover a country we knew in name only.²

The frustration of La Pérouse, exacerbated not only by a lack of precise information on the region in question, but also by difficult sailing conditions, often gives rise to hyperbolic turns of phrase:

Never has so little been known about a country one wished to attack, and perhaps never has there been an expedition in greater need of a pilot.³

I am not afraid to say that it would be impossible to undergo a more difficult campaign.⁴

However, the lack of detailed information about the region, together with the constant disruptions presented by hostile natural forces at work throughout the entire expedition, were in fact part and parcel of the accumulation of knowledge gathered in the course of navigation. The experience of sailing provided the basis for a type of knowledge that is spontaneous and empirical: its precarious and provisional nature was constantly laid bare by the simple act of observing or seeing. It is hardly surprising that knowledge accumulated throughout the expedition was closely linked with vision and the physical act of seeing, and that anything obstructing visibility (such as fog and ice) calls into question the status and the reliability of this knowledge (the French word "connaissance", which normally means "knowledge", often takes on the meaning of "site" in these texts, as in the phrase "prendre connaissance de", meaning "to sight" or "catch sight of").

We sighted several ice formations to the east, which are undoubtedly close to Monsiolo Island, which we have not caught sight of, because the horizon is very foggy.⁵

In the afternoon, we thought we saw Barren Island, whose cape I had gradually perceived in the morning, but the fog prevented us from distinguishing anything.⁶

The success of the mission depended on one's ability to decode nature's signs, and to recognize which ones could serve as a warning to the sailors:

At daylight, I saw several pieces of ice passing along the shore, and I believed they could be the harbinger of an ice floe.⁷

[...] everything indicates that I am very near land, but I believe it is very low and that one must be quite close to it in order to see it.⁸

Around seven o'clock in the morning, a little snow fell, a warning that we must leave Hudson Bay.⁹

By exercising extreme caution, deduction and quick thinking, La Pérouse distinguished himself from the other members of his crew who seemed more susceptible to making common mistakes, as we see in this passage, which allows us to follow the navigator's thought processes¹⁰:

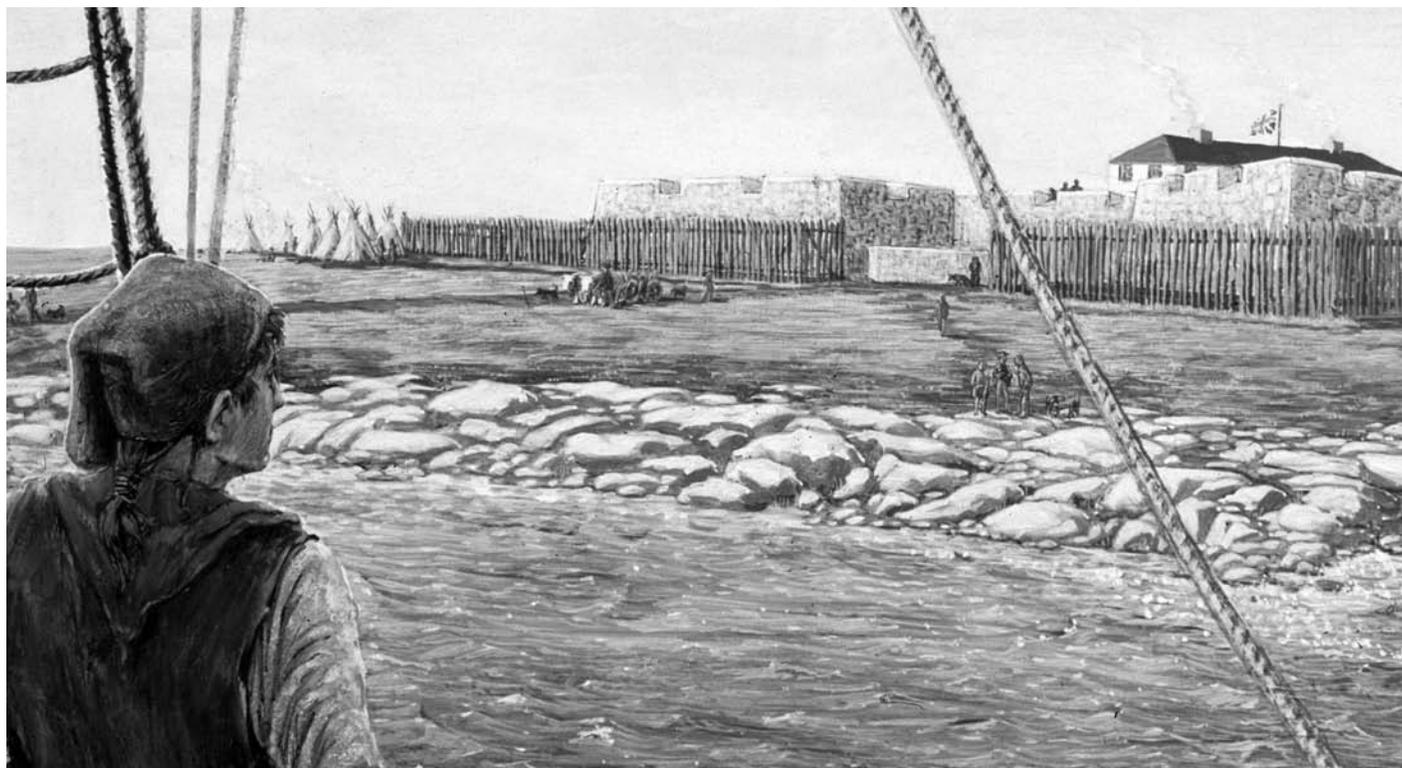
Through the fog, we perceived a very elevated dark mass, and everyone firmly believed it was land. I immediately changed course and hailed the two frigates to do the same; they had also seen the same breakers and had not the slightest doubt that we were in a bay. Consequently I took the S.S.E. tack, but upon reflection, I remained convinced that the breakers which we had perceived spread out over an island of ice or ice floe, and that the dark mass which we had taken for land was a fog patch because, unless we had penetrated some bay, it was impossible for the coast to bear N.N.E.¹¹

King Louis XVI clearly was not mistaken when he chose one of the most talented officers in his fleet to complete an ambitious project worthy of the Enlightenment, for Lapérouse had participated in numerous campaigns, demonstrating his exceptional qualities as a sailor and a leader of men on the world's high seas ...

Some of the knowledge acquired through experience was directly related to the new spaces opened up by sailing in the northern regions, requiring on the part of the sailor the ability to adapt quickly, especially to the dangers of the ice. In addition to this instantaneous knowledge of the unpredictable nature of the sea, one had to take into account the technical

aspects of navigation, an area in which considerable progress had been made by the end of the eighteenth century. The meeting point between longitude and latitude allowed for a much more accurate form of cartography,¹² the details pertaining to which are mentioned regularly throughout La Pérouse's journal, all the more so given that such a technique made it possible to correct faulty measurements which hindered navigation.

The poor elevation made our position quite uncertain [...] I was determined to maintain the ship's course [...] so as not to waste time; finally, at eleven o'clock there was a clear patch and I distinctly perceived Resolution Island whose S.E. headland bore N.E., with a correction of approximately five leagues [...] If I had taken my compass point, it would have differed by 4^d 10', from which I was too far east.¹³



Parks Canada

A modern illustration of Prince of Wales Fort as it would have looked in the eighteenth century.

Hence the absolute necessity of making corrections at precisely the right moment, but also of having the good sense to reject false information which could lead to absolute disaster: "Seeing land made me realize that we had made a considerable error in longitude, and so I will no longer make use of it, but rather wait for an astronomically fixed compass point before correcting it"¹⁴.

In fact, La Pérouse and his engineers made it their duty to correct any information about Hudson Bay that was of a dubious nature, especially that provided by British maps, and the maps of Jacques-Nicolas Bellin¹⁵: "To guide us up to that point," La Perouse commented in a letter, "we only had a few astronomically fixed points, included in the *Practical Navigator*, and based on which Monsieur de Mansuy and myself had drawn a map which we corrected when the fog allowed us to take some bearings by land."¹⁶ The preparation of new maps in the course of navigation went hand in hand with the correction of erroneous information, as we see in this excerpt from La Jaille's journal:

Here we realized how unreliable are the maps found in the Neptunes [sea atlas] provided for the King's vessels. They are far more dangerous than useful. If up until now we have not been able to obtain accurate maps of the Hudson Strait, we may have a slight hope that the one appearing after this campaign will be sufficiently accurate to ensure safe navigating.¹⁷

Another type of knowledge that we find in the sea journals and military reports has to do with factual history and specifically the manoeuvres for landing and surrounding the forts at Prince of Wales and York Factory. In this respect, the description of war movements that we find here belongs to a tradition of military narrative that can be traced as far back as Julius Caesar's War Commentaries; the discernment of the field where eventual battles would take place is integral to the planning of strategies and the resulting initiatives undertaken. Knowledge of a tactical nature is thus envisaged in connection with military actions: the description of the terrain is detailed only insofar as it serves to explain them. The squadron leader's description of Fort Prince of Wales belongs to this category of military narrative:

It was a square of approximately [...] feet, each side constructed in the most solid manner, in freestone, with 42 cannons of large calibre placed on top, surrounded by very high fences, but which did not appear to be dug very deeply into the ground. It was located on the seashore, at the mouth of the Churchill River, one side facing the sea, the other facing the river, the last two facing land running alongside the only avenues, which allowed access to the enemy.¹⁸

Similarly, the Nelson and Hayes Rivers, which come together at Fort York (York Factory), are described in

relation to their strategic location and the French plan of attack:

Hayes Island where Fort York is situated is at the mouth of a large river, which it divides into two branches; the one before the fort is called Hayes River, the other is Nelson River. We knew that all the means of defense were on Hayes River [...] That River, incidentally, is full of shoals, the currents are very rough, the tide rises and falls with extraordinary speed. Our launches could be lying high and dry within cannon reach of the fort [...] it was important for us not to make it so easy for an enemy that is formidable under normal circumstances. Consequently we decided on Nelson River, knowing full well that our troops would have to march approximately four leagues, but all the batteries on the Hayes River were positioned from the rear and were becoming useless.¹⁹

The crossing of the marshlands and the small forest leading to Fort York, which took place 21–23 August, provides one of the longest descriptions of the military campaign, its length undoubtedly a reflection of the difficulties and dangers encountered. Not only does this description underline the connection between military events and the geography of the location, it also allows us to better understand the way in which maps and charts would be drawn up after the campaign. Here, the erroneous map provided by the English prisoners of Prince of Wales Fort was quickly replaced by a new map, which, later on, would be carefully replicated by the engineer Monsieur de Mansuy:

During this time Monsieur de Rostaing himself had searched the wood in vain for the supposed path of the surroundings, which only exists on the map found at Churchill. [...] Finally, we decided to have the troops march towards the upper river by following the meadow and getting as near as possible to the wood, which was surrounded by a marsh so deep that they sank in it up to their waist. [...] Finally, I proposed that we take the map and forge ahead ourselves across the island, using a compass. [...] Monsieur de Mansuy went to work and that same day he penetrated one league, which is about half of the route, but midway he encountered a marshy wood in which they sank up to their knees.²⁰

In this respect, the expedition to Hudson Bay, beyond providing more reliable navigation charts, also produced detailed cartographic data that would be used to make precise maps of the forts and their surrounding landscapes.²¹

Battling Disease and Encountering the Other

Finally, there are other kinds of knowledge related to navigation and the military campaign that touch on important aspects of the life of the sailors, which concerned La Pérouse a great deal—hygiene first and foremost, since the ship captain had to confront the ravages of scurvy. As Michel Vergé-Franceschi has pointed out, one of the essential preoccupations of navy authorities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the health and

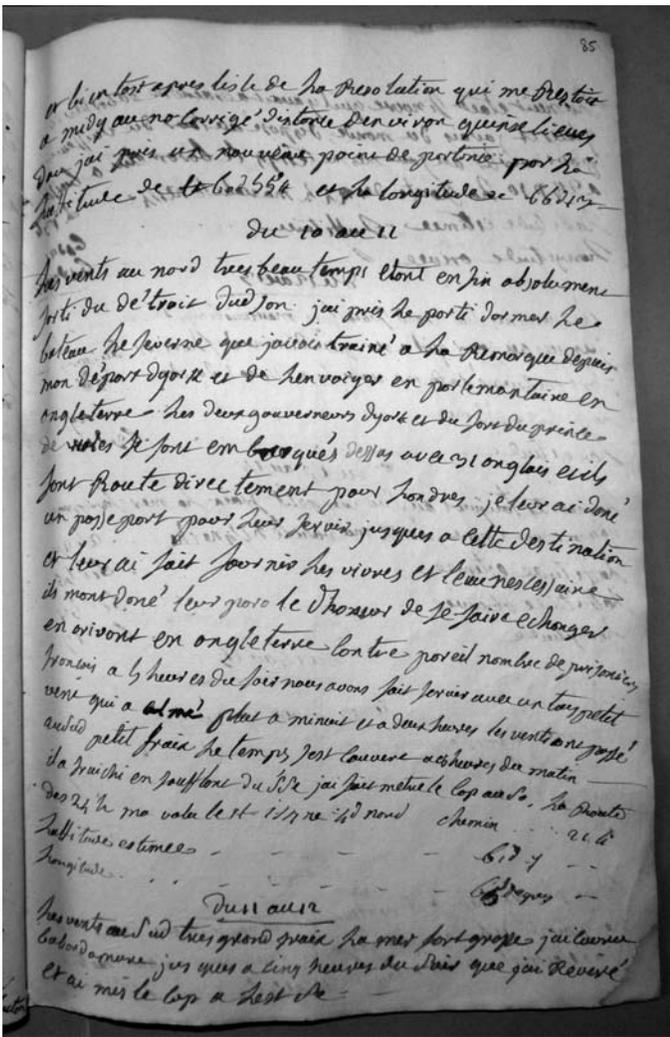
The crossing of the marshlands and the small forest leading to Fort York, which took place 21–23 August, provides one of the longest descriptions of the military campaign, its length undoubtedly a reflection of the difficulties and dangers encountered.

well-being of their crews, without which nothing could be accomplished at sea. Unlike the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century saw disease claim more lives at sea than warfare.²² Not surprisingly, La Pérouse's journal contains many references to this subject, even early on in the expedition: "Disease has advanced at an extraordinary rate on board; I have had 80 sick men since leaving the Cape, and three men have died. However, I have maintained the utmost cleanliness on board: each day everything is turned upside-down; the tween deck, which has been coated with whitewash, is aromatized."²³ The situation worsened in the final days of the expedition as the division made its way back to France:

The situation aboard my vessel is becoming more and more critical, I have been forced to cut back on the water rations of 760 men, 300 of whom are sick, to about two and a half casks; we have soup only once or twice a week; there are not even 20 sailors left on board: all are stricken with scurvy, to such an extent that they are dead or unable to get out of bed. All that remains of my crew are a few soldiers, ship's boys, servants [...] ²⁴

The deplorable condition of the crewmembers, which rapidly deteriorated in a very short time, provides a striking contrast to the overall success of the mission. The health problems, moreover, were not limited to the sailors; they were also affecting the welfare of the officers, in spite of the fact that they belonged to the nobility. As the Marquis de la Jaille wrote in a letter to the minister of Marine:

The loss of men, My Lord, is considerable in such difficult campaigns. I have already lost 15 to scurvy and I may possibly lose half of the 86 who at the present moment are on the stretchers. I am not spared, My Lord, from the ills plaguing the other men, and I often feel that being at sea for seven



Archives nationales de France

A page from La Pérouse's journal, 1782.

consecutive years is seriously harmful to the health. But I forget my suffering in order to occupy myself with ways of deserving the King's graces and your interest.²⁵

The capture of Prince of Wales Fort and contact with the prisoners also allowed the French to gather information on the activities of the British merchants, the links they established with Aborigines, the prices of trading goods and the duties assigned to the employees of the company. La Jaille's enumeration of articles and their worth highlight the economic aspect of the English trade, about which any information was of great interest to the French:

- I learned from the fort's surgeon whom I brought aboard my frigate that:
- one gun was worth 8 beaver skins
 - one handful of game lead, 2 skins
 - one bottle of half-rum, half-water, 2 skins
 - one small mirror, 2 skins
 - one comb, 1 skin
 - one ramrod, one skin

Files and small axes, copper pots of various sizes were also of great value. One may well judge from this account the profits that the company must have been making. Inland there is a kind of bull, very large, whose skin is so esteemed in England that in 1752 the Hudson Company hired hunters for Fort Prince of Wales in order to obtain a greater quantity of these animals' skins; I know nothings else of them, other than what the surgeon told me, whom I have just quoted.²⁶

The impressive architectural design of the fort was painstakingly copied by the expedition's engineers. However, Samuel Hearne was the source of the most valuable information that the French gleaned from this mission:

The commander made an exceedingly curious land trek from the factory, located in 59 degrees as far as 72 degrees' latitude. He was accompanied by forty Indians and subsisted thanks to their hunting for the nine years that the voyage lasted. He was finally stopped by impenetrable ice which he encountered everywhere, and he assuaged the fears of the Hudson Company regarding the discovery of the passage to the North West which has been the ambition of many a traveler.²⁷

This revelation was especially important in that it seemed to put an end, once and for all, to the dream of the Northwest Passage. As Philippe Bonnichon has pointed out, even if La Pérouse could not come up with any new knowledge on this particular point, one of the tasks assigned to him in his later voyage of circumnavigation appears complementary to the 1782 expedition: exploring the northern coast of the Pacific, where he was to determine if there was not some gulf or river providing a passage to the Atlantic, through Hudson Bay²⁸.

In any case, the reception of this new geographical data seems to have been of greater interest to La Pérouse than the immediate political context, even if he was duty-bound to place national interests above scientific progress, for he sent Hearne and the other prisoners back to England on the condition that the British explorer commit himself to publishing his discoveries. In spite of La Pérouse's insistence, however, British interests outweighed the dissemination of scientific discoveries, a major factor in the delay of the publication of Hearne's manuscript until 1795.²⁹ Certainly, in this instance knowledge acquired from the enemy was carefully preserved in the spirit of tolerance and universality, defining characteristics of the Enlightenment. Moreover, La Pérouse shared the limited supplies he had for his men with his enemies, a gesture that earned the gratitude of the English. Unfortunately, his superiors did not share this view, but rather criticized his generosity, as we can surmise in this letter dated 24 May 1783, in which the leader of the expedition attempted to justify his actions:

The political circumstances require that I clarify anew my expedition to Hudson Bay. I have the honour of informing you that I have been meticulously heedful of all of the particular effects, to such an extent that I sacrificed some belonging to the King in order to give them to one hundred of the prisoners. The related accounts rendered by the governor of Fort York and which may be found in all of the English gazettes have given me the highest opinion concerning his love of truth. I had neither water nor supplies, I shared with him what I had left, and in this sharing I consulted my heart more than my needs. He was moved by this and shed some tears when he parted with me. [...] I therefore was able to dispose of them, and I dare say there is not a single citizen in England who is not convinced that I had the right to do so, and that I did so with all the moderation which humanity required of me.³⁰

Certainly, this letter tells us much about the exceptional character of La Pérouse who was known for his humane qualities, however, such an attitude was not uncommon among the officers of the navy who had been educated at the French Royal Navy Academy. A similar attitude of tolerance and openness came into play when these Europeans made contact with the indigenous peoples of Hudson Bay.

While the sea journals, ship logs, and even military reports contain a good deal of information related to sailing and military manoeuvres, some of these texts reveal a different kind of knowledge gathering, one that concerns the inhabitants of the region. Observations of First Nations peoples are filtered through the use of analogy, as we see in this description by La Jaille of the clothing worn by Eskimos and the boats they use, which he tries to relate to comparable European items:

We obtained from them seal skins, polar bear skins, different species of water birds and some quadrupeds that were unknown to us, and all as well cured as anything that can be done in Europe. [...] Their clothing, made of sealskins, consists of an outer garment bearing a hood similar to that worn by the Capuchin friars to cover their heads. They are sewn with admirable skill, using guts as fine as our thinnest threads. [...] The women's canoes are constructed with a few timbers fastened to each other with fish guts. They are similar in shape to our riverboats, which are greatly widened at the bow.³¹

There are also analogies regarding animals and sea state: "We killed several of these birds, which tasted better to me than the fine ducks of Europe. [...] On the 22nd, winds from the southeast, the weather fine and warm, and the sea as calm as a millpond."³² While conveying descriptions

of different Aboriginal peoples of the region, which were provided by Samuel Hearne, the British governor of Prince of Wales Fort, La Jaille makes this comment: "The difference between them is no greater than that which one notices in France between a man from one province and the inhabitant of another."³³ On the one hand, we may be tempted to admire such comments as an example of the values of universality, integral to the Enlightenment, since new information is presented through a comparative and objective lens. On the other hand, such remarks reflect a well-known tendency to simplify the diversity of the world, in order to better control it; in other words, it is much easier to assimilate the recently discovered unknown, by framing it in more familiar terms or concepts.

The advancement of ethnographic knowledge—clearly for the purposes of trade and colonization—is evident in the description of the Eskimos encountered by the French sailors; in La Pérouse's journal (which more closely resembles a ship log), such passages are rather brief and concise, whereas La Jaille's journal offers a much more detailed description. La Pérouse employs ellipsis, for instance, while alluding to the previously published account of the Irish explorer Henry Ellis:

At three o'clock in the morning, only two leagues from the coast, I distinctly heard very loud shouts. The dead calm, together perhaps with the state of the air and the sharp voices of the Indians, allowed me to hear them from that distance. Soon after we saw several canoes making their way toward us. The traveler is so true in what he reports about the Eskimos of the Hudson Strait, that I can only repeat here what he says of that people in his book, more constant than the Europeans in their customs. Certainly there has been no change since 1746.³⁴

La Pérouse seems to have little room for ethnographic elucidation, limiting his reports to concise, factual statements. Such is the case of the summary narrative of the one welcome reserved for the French:

It is because of some superstitious belief that the Indians would not permit our hunters to come inside their dwelling and they said a kind of prayer to purify it, but the meeting was nonetheless convivial; they agreed to dance and received as payment few copper buttons. The two Indian women took care not to hold back their gratitude, but our officers lacked courage.³⁵

Interestingly, we find a good deal more information in La Jaille's version of the same event, which should be read in its entirety:

There they found a tent inhabited by an Indian man and woman, the latter of whom was not too unattractive. The officers conveyed a desire to go

into the tent. The Indian man refused entry and tried to close the tent, when someone raised one of the pegs without him noticing, only to find some raw meat, some blood that had been shed and a little fire. The Eskimo having thus been surprised took on an angry countenance and threw himself down on his knees, raised his eyes and his hands to the sky and uttered several words that were not understood; but it seemed from his expression that he wished to purify his retreat of the shame that it had just endured. Once the prayer was finished, if that's what it was, he reverted to his cheerful demeanor and treated the visitors well enough to offer them his wife with the most demonstrative of signs; but they, far from taking advantage of their right to his hospitality, hurried to give him everything they had that could be useful to the Indians.³⁶

This scene, described in all three accounts, points to the kind of fundamental cultural misunderstanding which must have occurred on a regular basis in early encounters between Europeans and indigenous peoples, those of the Hudson Bay region and elsewhere. Such incomprehension is evident in the descriptions of the phenomenon of the "drinkers of blood"³⁷, first in La Pérouse's journal: "It seems in general that the people fish much more than they hunt, and that whale is their main sustenance: they eat the flesh raw and they drink the oil with as much relish as a European drinking fine wine."³⁸ By way of comparison, La Jaille's account is slightly more detailed: "They are bloodthirsty and eat the animals they catch completely raw, and whose blood they suck as greedily as our sailors drink brandy. They have a bizarre way of making themselves bleed in order to drink their own blood."³⁹ In both texts, are found similar examples of assimilation through the use of comparison, but in the second account, there is a greater tendency to include piquant details, which in some instances, it would appear, border on fiction or myth.⁴⁰

The officers often express doubts as they face the unknown or the inexplicable, yet even then, they suggest an open-mindedness in which the universality of human nature is evoked. Such an attitude may not seem unusual today, but one must keep in mind that this was a time when indigenous peoples were traditionally referred to as "savages" (even in these texts, they are always referred to as "sauvages", even though we have opted to translate that word as "Indians"), which implied that they were uncivilized and therefore less human than Europeans. La Jaille juxtaposed several examples of behaviour which would be out of place in his own land with examples that would be familiar to his countrymen: for instance, immediately after commenting on two aboriginal women whose "gaiety [...] would be considered excessive and intolerable in France," he described an encounter with a mother who refuses to give up her child, and in so doing unquestionably communicates in the universal language of maternal love:

I proposed that one of them sell me her child; at first she thought I meant the pouch in which he was confined, and she immediately stripped naked, but when she was made to understand that it was her child for whom I wanted to trade, she took him in her arms, caressed him while making signs with her head and her hand that she did not wish to give him away.⁴¹

Did La Jaille seriously want to buy this child, or was he merely testing the woman? (Interestingly, he does not say, suggesting that the attitudes of Europeans at the time are at times as strange to us today as the attitudes of the indigenous peoples must have been to them.) Another passage describing the modesty and virtue of a young aboriginal woman employs this same technique of juxtaposition:

The women are not the least reserved. They even seem to derive satisfaction from the pleasures of immodesty. However, I have reason to believe that this is not a general vice, and here is the proof. One of these women who appeared no older than 17 or 18 years of age and who, although not pretty, had certain charms, especially for sailors, attracted looks from several young men. One of them mean to take certain liberties with her; she defended herself, as much as the most recalcitrant virtue would allow. Several men and women, witnesses to this scene as well as myself, did not appear to pay it any notice, but I put a stop to it by an authority that this child seemed to favour with a nod in my direction and a pleasant smile.⁴²

One cannot help but notice a measure of self-aggrandizement in the narrator's attempt to portray himself as the noble defender of the vulnerable young woman who fell victim to the churlish behaviour of the lower-class Frenchmen.

In spite of the lack of understanding between the two peoples, La Jaille recounted with a certain emotion another revealing scene which laid bare the disarray and panic which set in among the indigenous people upon the realization that the British people they had come to know, and with whom they had forged close ties, were being forced to abandon them:

On the 13th I lay anchor a half-league from the fort where the Indians had hoisted a kind of banderole. [...] I brought the English surgeon along with me to serve as an interpreter of the Indians; they recognized him. They surrounded him and told him, expressing their sadness: "So we are to have no more powder or lead." I hired two of these Indians who spoke English to come aboard my ship where, while giving them munitions, I assured them of the King's intention that no harm be done to them. The ease with which they obtain firearms has made them neglect the use of the

bow. I only saw a single one in the hands of these Indians whose kindly air made me sensitive to their hardships.⁴³

And in his final report on the destruction of the British posts, La Pérouse also revealed his basic philanthropy in a final gesture of goodwill towards the Aborigines, leaving one to speculate whether he was attempting to compensate, if only symbolically, not merely for the French raid on the Hudson Bay posts, which obviously disrupted their lives, but also for the presence of Europeans in general, which in the long run had had a negative impact on their way of life. As he wrote in his final report:

Following the King's orders, we burned everything, except for a few beaver and other peltries, which we loaded onto the *Astrée*. We gave the Indians everything they wanted to carry away, especially powder and lead. These hunting peoples – their trade with Europeans has made them neglect the use of the bow, which they no longer know how to use, and they are exposed to death by starvation, if they come to lack munitions. We supplied them with some, which will last a while, but humanity compels me to feel moved by the fate that awaits them, having no time to spare in completing our operations in Hudson Bay.⁴⁴

Beyond the recognition of the drama that was part of the early encounters between Europeans and First Nations, this passage allows us to appreciate the mindset of the officers of the French navy under Louis XVI. It seems difficult to find fault with the attitudes of La Pérouse and that of his officers La Monneraye and La Jaille, as displayed throughout the expedition.

The eighteenth century was an important turning point for geographical discoveries, but it was also an intense period for the acquisition of new scientific knowledge, often a result of sea exploration. By the end of the Seven Years' War, there were in fact precise scientific ambitions tied into the exploration projects of the French and British

The eighteenth century was an important turning point for geographical discoveries, but it was also an intense period for the acquisition of new scientific knowledge, often a result of sea exploration.

navies. As Étienne Taillemite has pointed out, cooperation at the international level was beginning to take place at this time, which helped accelerate scientific progress in not only the area of navigation but also in the human and natural sciences. Contact with different civilizations provided impetus for ethnology and anthropology, while

increased knowledge in the natural sciences would provide the means for the great scientific theories of the following century.⁴⁵ The military expeditions served as the test bed for scientific voyages – such was the case of La Pérouse's expedition to Hudson Bay, which laid the groundwork for his 1785 voyage of circumnavigation. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that in the sea journals of individuals undertaking a mission under unimaginably difficult sailing conditions; we find an unusually diverse accumulation of knowledge. Beyond the immediate results that the officers of that expedition brought back and presented to their superiors (journals, maps, charts, spoils of war), the written record of a voyage that oscillated between military exercise and scientific project, allows the reader to discover and become familiar with a grandiose element which is restrained by a rhetorical code to which the officers had to adhere, but which was nonetheless an integral part of their experience: the sea, magnificent or menacing, but ever-present. ☛

Notes

1. We were unable to locate Delangle's journal. The account by his second-in-command, La Monneraye, was written several years after the events described, and was most recently edited by Philippe Bonnichon in *Pierre-Bruno-Jean de la Monneraye, Souvenirs de 1760 à 1791*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998. For the purposes of this study, we will be primarily interested in the unpublished accounts of La Pérouse and La Jaille, which we have translated, and which were written much closer to the events of the 1782 expedition. There exists another journal from this expedition, written by François-Guillaume de Vienne, who participated in Bougainville's voyage of circumnavigation aboard the *Boudeuse*: it is a ship's log from the expedition, restricted to information on the sea state and weather conditions, although it does contain a few, brief comments on indigenous peoples.
2. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse attacking the English establishments on Hudson Bay, North America", by the Marquis de La Jaille, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, 1/105, 4 M 37, folio 91. Another, slightly longer version of this journal is located in the National Archives in Paris, France. Fonds de la Marine, 3 JJ 68, no 23.
3. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign commanded by Monsieur de Lapérouse, ship captain with the frigates the *Astrée* and the *Engageante* under his command", Archives nationales, Paris, France, Fonds Lapérouse, 489 AP1, Aug. 8–9, 1782, p. 54.
4. *Ibid.*, 4–5 August 1782, p. 50.
5. *Ibid.*, 29–30 July 1782, p. 44.
6. *Ibid.*, 30–31 July 1782, p. 45.
7. *Ibid.*, 6–7 August 1782, p. 52.
8. *Ibid.*, 7–8 August 1782, p. 53.
9. *Ibid.*, 30–31 August 1782, p. 79.
10. As Pierre Berthiaume has demonstrated, the nautical journal constitutes a transcription of the intellect, in that it closely follows the thought processes of the navigator. *L'Aventure Américaine au XVIIIe siècle. Du voyage à l'écriture*. Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1990, p. 83.
11. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, 6–7 July 1782, p. 18–19.
12. Michel Vergé-Franscheschi, *La Marine française au XVIIIe siècle, Les espaces maritimes, Guerre-Administration-Exploration*, Paris: Sedes, 1996, p. 338–343.

La Pérouse's 1782 Expedition to Hudson Bay

13. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, Continuation of 17–18 July 1782, p. 28.
14. *Ibid.*, Continuation of 13–14 July 1782, p. 24. In yet another passage, we see that in his journal La Pérouse keeps a fascinating record, not only of errors but also of what may be considered navigational hypercorrections: "this direction should have proved to me that I mistook Nottingham Island for Diggs Island, but convinced that my map was wrong, and not trusting it in the least, I persevered in my error and set course to sail between the two islands" 28–29 July 1782, p. 43.
15. Philippe Bonnichon discusses the inaccuracies of Bellin's maps in *Des Cannibales aux castors, les découvertes françaises de l'Amérique (1503–1788)*. Paris: France Empire, 1994, p. 303–304. Étienne Taillemite describes the revolution in naval cartography in *Histoire ignorée de la Marine française*. Paris: Perrin, 2003, p. 265–268.
16. Letter by Lapérouse on the attack on Fort Prince of Wales, 1782, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, 1/105, 4 M 37, folio 85.
17. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 92 bis-93.
18. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, 8–9 August 1782, p. 55.
19. Letter by Lapérouse on the attack on Fort Prince of Wales, 1782, *op. cit.*, folio 86.
20. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, 21–22 August and 22–23, 1782, p. 70–71.
21. In fact, they are located today at the Archives des colonies at Aix-en-Provence and at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the following maps, for example, are located in Aix-en-Provence, Archives des colonies, Fonds ministériels, dépôt des fortifications: Fort York, col. II/5PFB/557; the map of the marshlands which the king's troops had to cross, II/5PFB/558; Fort Prince of Wales, II/5PFB/559 and II/5PFB/560.
22. Michel Vergé-Fresceschi, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
23. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, 6–7 June 1782, p. 6. A few lines later, Lapérouse adds: "In the morning, my master carpenter died and I see to my chagrin disease spreading on board" *Ibid.*, p. 7.
24. *Ibid.*, 1–2 October 1782, p. 92.
25. Letter from the Marquis de La Jaille, 10 September 1782.
26. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 94 bis.
27. *Ibid.*, folio 94 bis. Lapérouse also mentions his meeting with Samuel Hearne: "The Governor, Monsieur Hearne, has been stationed here for 16 years. He appeared an educated man and spoke the language of the Indians perfectly. Moreover, he had made a three-year voyage in the north as far as 72 degrees; he assured me that the N.W. passage through Hudson Bay did not exist, and that he had made sure of this during his treks." "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, 8–9 August 1782, p. 57.
28. Philippe Bonnichon, Pierre-Bruno-Jean de la Monneraye, *Souvenirs de 1760 à 1791*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
30. Archives nationales, Fonds de la Marine, B4 266, folio 11. Philippe Bonnichon also alludes to this letter. Pierre-Bruno-Jean de la Monneraye, *op. cit.*, p. 215, note 3.
31. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 93. We find a similar type of comparison in Lapérouse's journal: "The islands of ice are much larger than those we have observed before, and I am not afraid to say that it appeared to me that some of them covered as much surface as the city of Brest." "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, Continuation of 12–13 July 1782, p. 23.
32. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 93.
33. *Ibid.*, folio 91.
34. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, Continuation of 20–21 July 1782, p. 31. Ellis' book *Voyage Made to Hudson's Bay* in 1746 had been published in 1748; the French translation was available in 1749.
35. *Ibid.*, Continuation of 23–24 July, p. 39.
36. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 92 bis. La Monneraye's version of this meeting is just as evocative and even more detailed; his account of events in which he participated often lends impetus to philosophical reflections on nature and society. Certainly hindsight plays a role in the manner in which he describes events that had taken place thirty years earlier: a systematic overview of his life, his narrative is more analytical as the older man recalls his younger days. *Souvenirs de 1760 à 1791*, *op. cit.*, p. 207–210.
37. La Monneraye, in his account written several years later, questions the firmly held beliefs of his day regarding the anthropophagy of the Eskimos, by suggesting that the blood apparently streaming from their noses came from the whale blubber which they consumed. *Souvenirs de 1760 à 1791*, *op. cit.*, p. 203–205.
38. "Journal of the Sceptre campaign", *op. cit.*, Continuation of 19–29 July 1782, p. 33.
39. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 91.
40. As James Kelly recently noted, "whereas a ship's log fulfills a specific utilitarian function, a sea journal is a subjective record containing, in Robert Foulke's words, 'all the defining characteristics of narratives, including plot' [...] The moment the log is improvised as narrative, it mutates and the sea journal is born." "Bordering on Fact in Early Eighteenth-Century Sea Journals" in Dan Doll and Jessica Munns ed., *Recording and Reordering: Essays on the Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Diary and Journal*, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2006, p. 161. Kelly is quoting from Robert Foulke's *The Sea Voyage Narrative*. New York: Twayne, 1997, p. 74. As we have already seen, this distinction between "ship's log" and "sea journal" can help explain, at least to a certain extent, some of the major differences we find between Lapérouse's journal—even if it is undoubtedly a transcription of his original log—and that of his subordinate, La Jaille.
41. "Synopsis of the campaign of the division under the orders of Monsieur de Lapérouse", *op. cit.*, folio 91. In the very next sentence, more difficult to comment upon because of its elliptical and ambiguous nature as hearsay, suggests polygamous practices: "I have heard it said that the men prostitute their women, in the belief that each man was to produce his counterpart, not only physically but even morally, so that a captain must produce a captain, etc." (*Ibid.*, folio 91.)
42. *Ibid.*, folio 91. If La Jaille's sailors were attracted to aboriginal women, they were evidently not the only ones, as he euphemistically refers to the existence of a Métis nation already in existence: "their complexion is generally dark. However some of them are quite white, which I attribute to the Englishmen's keeping company with their women." *Ibid.*, folio 94 bis.
43. *Ibid.*, folio 95.
44. Letter by Lapérouse on the attack on Fort Prince of Wales, 1782, *op. cit.*, folio 86.
45. Étienne Taillemite, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

A Memoir of the CPR Telegraph Office

by Fred McGuinness
Brandon, Manitoba

In 1942, the Winnipeg office of Canadian Pacific Telegraphs was a combination of vast space, strange noises, and a high level of human activity. It was located immediately above the CPR ticket office on the corner of Portage and Main. To the insiders this was known as a "commercial" office involved mainly with telegrams, cables, and dispatches for Canadian Press. It had little to do with the operations of the trains.

I reported for duty at 5:30 each afternoon and worked until one a.m. As soon as I had punched in on the time clock, I reported to the evening wire chief, Jack Greenway. Most evenings this friendly fellow just pointed to a far corner of the Morse section and said "The usual."

My usual assignment was distressing in the extreme. It was known as the 'casualty wire' for a stated reason; it dealt only with casualty messages reporting on sailors, soldiers, or airmen who had been killed, wounded, missing, shot down, or otherwise brutalized in the war in Europe.

This office, known as "WN," was a major transfer office. It received all the bad-news wartime telegrams for Manitoba and Saskatchewan and then re-transmitted them to their destinations.

I had been the subject of one of those casualty messages. When I was 18, I worked in WN as a Morse operator. I joined the navy as soon as war was declared. My naval career was cut short in September of 1940 when the sub-chaser on which I was the "sparker" was involved in a mishap. The injuries I suffered caused me to spend 11 months in hospital in Halifax. I was one of the early "returned men" of WW2. I was now a student by day and a Morse man by evening.

For my entire shift, barring a 30-minute lunch break, I would copy telegrams on the identical format:

Ottawa, Ontario, October 23, 1942.

MRS. HAZEL MONCRIEFF,
SPIRITWOOD, SASKATCHEWAN.

THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
REGRETS TO ADVISE YOU THAT YOUR
SON, ABLE SEAMAN LESLIE MONCRIEFF, IS
MISSING, AND PRESUMED DEAD, FOLLOWING
THE SINKING OF HMCS WEYBURN ON
OCTOBER 19 1942.

(SIGNED) MINISTER OF NATIONAL
DEFENCE.

Some day you feel like a challenge, type thirty of those messages every hour and check to learn if you are still love life.

There were three sections to WN. Nearest the windows were the teletypes, four rows of typists seated in front of keyboards, transmitting telegrams to major cities in Canada and the United States.

Next came the Morse section, with 25 or 30 stations, each of them equipped with telegraph keys, sounders, typewriters and chairs. All telegraph typewriters typed only capital letters. Some of those sounders clattered away all day and all night with news of births, deaths, and non-stop orders for commodities.

WN's third section was technical, with dozens of banks of metal frames carrying the gauges and instruments, which kept the telegraph wires in operation, and also carried the daily programs of the fledgling CBC national radio service.

This was a friendly and interesting place to work, and it gave only one small hint of future troubles. In prominent view in the maze of equipment was a black metal box about five feet tall. I always thought that the Morkham-Kleinschmidt Teleprinter, to give the box its name, had a sinister appearance. When this equipment was hooked up, it would direct the affairs of scores of pairs of copper wires carrying teletype signals; when this machine went to work, there would be no more need for Morse operators. This transformation might not happen for a couple of years, but for practitioners of the dot-and-dash world, the end was clearly in sight.

I must digress here and make a comment on these persons called "brass-pounders."

They came in all shapes and sizes. They included black, white, and yellow colours. They were never asked about their educational attainment; all that mattered was that they had mastered Samuel Morse's curious mechanical language. The majority were sons or daughters of railway station agents. Their railway-depot living quarters were filled with the sounds of telegraph sounders.

The man who directed this body of 45 or 50 operators was R. J. McInnis, a man whose name will last forever in Alberta history books. At exactly 4:10 a.m., April 19, 1903, "R.J." was on duty in the Calgary office of C. P. Telegraphs. He was transmitting messages to the village of Frank, Alberta, when the wire went dead. He reported this to the wire chief and went about other duties. Not until he arose later that day did he learn that the face had fallen off Turtle



Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection 1004, N2604.

Inside the CPR Telegraph Office at the corner of Portage & Main, 11 October 1945.

Mountain, and Frank now was buried under broken rock, which killed 70 of the villagers.

McInnis now had a new responsibility, which kept him busier than usual. He spent part of each day searching for Morse operators who were in retirement; it was his job to get them back on the payroll. I had not been at St. Paul's College for more than a couple of weeks before he tracked me down by telephone. I was offered all the work I could fit into my study schedule.

As being impecunious is the student's natural state, I was always interested in a spot of overtime. My quest for dollars reached a pinnacle on Christmas Day, 1943. A week earlier, McInnis had gone through the Morse section with a handful of cards. Each described the two-hour shift an operator had to work on Christmas Day. As the only bachelor on the crew, I was offered many of those cards. I reported for work at 8 a.m. and worked right through to midnight. Every two hours the wire chief would ask me my name, and over that tedious day, I became, in turn, Murphy, Dooley, McCready, and so on with a new name every other hour. Sixteen hours of double time caused me to bless old Kris Kringle.

One other event still causes me to smile. One St. Patrick's Day, I looked around the Morse section and could see: Murphy, Casey, Dooley, McCready, Mulhearn, and Marcovitch. Marcovitch was the only one wearing a shamrock.

My research on the end of Morse is only anecdotal, but I believe it is fairly accurate. There was a clear division at age 45. Operators older than 45 generally refused to knuckle under and become teletype operators. They felt

they could always find work on smaller railways, or in the United States. Several brokerage houses had Morse men working for them. Those operators under 45 were inclined to grumble about their ill luck, but they became, in effect, production typists. If you have been a Morse operator, you can only conclude communications via keyboard has no soul.

I still have my "bug," that being the name of my semi-automatic Morse key that will make dots as long as I hold that lever over. Once in the mid-1960s I won a wager based upon Morse. The CPR superintendent in Medicine Hat, Bill Flett, took a party of pheasant hunters to Bassano, Alberta, in his private car. The evening before the hunt, we were having dinner when the subject of railways came up. I mentioned that I had worked as a Morse operator and my buddies refused to believe me. Proof was easy: we walked to the depot where a co-operative station agent gave me a sheaf of messages, which I transmitted to Calgary. There was amazement all around. Back in the rail car, I collected my winnings.

Gordon Fraser, a friend now living in retirement in Brandon, had been one of those station agents. In a recent meeting he told me of the sequence of events which led up to the end of Morse in rural settings. There was no dramatic end-of-Morse day. Instead, rail officials picked and chose individual stations, deeming them redundant. The shutdown took several years.

And that's my story; at 22, I became a victim of technology. Morse may be gone, but the memories are still clear and strong. ❧

Prairie Monuments: A Video History of Oakville, Manitoba

by Nikki McLeod
Oakville, Manitoba

When most people hear the name Oakville, they immediately think of the large Ontario city of that name. However, my Oakville is actually located halfway between Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, just three kilometers south of the number one highway. Although many people have never heard of Oakville, it is home to several people of note. Take for instance, Janet Marie Salway, who was inducted into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame; Joan Ingram, who is recognized in the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame as well as the Manitoba Softball Hall of Fame; also Rick Blight, former NHL star and curling legend. Many travelers may view Oakville as a mere rest stop on the way to a greater destination, but to the people that live here, it is a little something more. My video, *Prairie Monuments*, is the story of Oakville.

Sometime before European settlers arrived, an Aboriginal tribe set up camp near the area that is now known as Oakville. There was little available drinking

The video Prairie Monuments, from which this article is excerpted, received the Dr. Edward Shaw Award in the 2006 Young Historians Competition sponsored by the Manitoba Historical Society.

water, poor land, and little wood. The tribe abandoned their camp but they left behind the name, Kawende, which, in English, means no good. You might think that people would not want to live in a no good town so in 1890, the name was changed from Kawende to Oakville. This is said to be because of the great number of oak trees that once covered the region. However, in 1891, the name was changed once more, this time from Oakville, back to Kawende. This was apparently to avoid confusion with Oakville, Ontario. On 13 March 1939, the name was officially changed back from Kawende to Oakville.

Over a century has passed since the town of Oakville began. The town that once was, does not exist anymore.



Main Street in Oakville, 1950s.

PCI Archive, Yosh Tashiro Collection



PCI Archive, Yosh Tashiro Collection.

Mr. Bott in the paint department of Oakville's Crescent Lumber Yard, June 1952.

In place of the old businesses are empty lots. The few businesses that are left survive, but even some of their owners are trying to move on. The question that remains, is, can Oakville survive? It is clear that no natural disaster could curb the spirit of the people, but our recent setbacks have been man-made. A downfall in the economy, a terrific train wreck, and urbanization have all played a roll in creating the current crisis. Perhaps the name Kawende now fits?

History shows that Oakville was started by hard-working pioneers who would not give up. Time and time again they were challenged by nature but each time, they stood by each other and would not stop trying. They have helped each other through good times and bad. They held church services in their homes. They spent days building new schools. They helped shovel their neighbors driveway. The people are the reason the community exists and the reason that it will exist into the future. ☺



Prairie Monuments

The 17-minute video *Prairie Monuments* by Nikki McLeod is available for viewing on the MHS web site:

www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/59/praiemonuments.shtml

The 82-megabyte video is available in the Flash Video (FLV) format. A free FLV-compatible player can be downloaded at the following link:

Adobe Media Player
www.adobe.com/products/mediaplayer

Commemorating Margaret Newton

by Parks Canada
Winnipeg, Manitoba



Parks Canada

The Newton plaque unveiling was done by (L-R): Mrs. Margaret Kemp, niece of Margaret Newton; Dr. David Swales, nephew of Margaret Newton; Dr. Robert O'Kell, Manitoba Member of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada; Dr. James Kolmer, United States Department of Agriculture; Dr. David Wall, Cereal Research Centre; and Mr. Brian Pallister, MP for Portage-Lisgar.

On 17 July 2008 in Portage La Prairie Mr. Brian Pallister, Member of Parliament for Portage-Lisgar, on behalf of Environment Minister John Baird, unveiled a Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque commemorating Margaret Newton.

"Our Government is proud to recognize Dr. Margaret Newton, whose discoveries on the nature of wheat rust fungus ended the serious threat of this disease to Canadian farmers and the Canadian economy," said Mr. Pallister. "Dr. Newton, an acclaimed scientist both nationally and internationally, is an exceptional role model for Canadian women in science."

In a time when it was difficult for female scientists to break into the male dominated scientific community, Margaret Newton (1887–1971) earned the respect of scientists from around the world. Her discoveries about the nature of wheat rust fungus ended the serious threat to the Canadian economy of this disease, which caused losses of millions of dollars to Canadian farmers every year.

Margaret grew up on a farm in Plaisance, a small town in western Quebec. She excelled academically at McGill University's School of Agriculture at Macdonald College. At

the end of her second year, she won the Governor General's medal for highest standing and continued to lead her class until her graduation. It was at McGill that she launched her career by making an important discovery that, for the first time, shed some light on wheat rust.

In 1916, an epidemic of wheat stem rust devastated the West. Margaret Newton took up the challenge of fighting this disease. Through the application of the Mendelian Laws to wheat stem rust she and her colleagues at the Dominion Rust Research Laboratory advanced the knowledge of the genetic make-up of rust disease that contributed to the breeding of rust resistant grains. As a result of this research, plant breeders learned how to control wheat rust.

Margaret Newton became an international authority on rusts and was invited to speak to scientists all over the world. Her discoveries had important ramifications not only for Canada, but for all wheat producing countries.

The ceremony to commemorate the achievements of Dr. Newton took place in conjunction with the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame's annual event, at which Dr. Newton was also inducted as a member of the Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame is located in the Keystone Centre in Brandon. ❧

Plaque Text

MARGARET NEWTON (1887–1971)

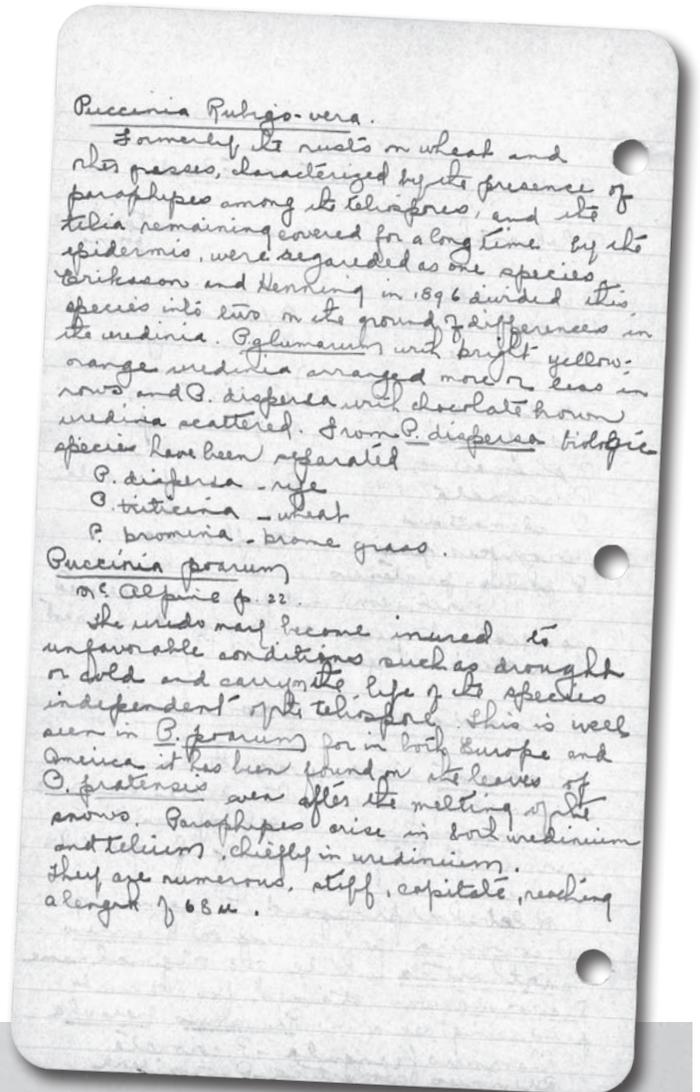
While still a doctoral student in plant pathology, Margaret Newton discovered that there was more than one strain of wheat rust. Her experiments advanced scientific knowledge of stem rust in wheat, which represented a major threat to the Canadian economy. Throughout her long career, much of it spent at Winnipeg's Dominion Rust Research Laboratory, her meticulous research led to the development of rust-resistant grains. Margaret Newton became an internationally acclaimed scientist and a striking role model for Canadian women in science.



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Margaret Newton (1887–1971) attended Macdonald College in Montreal and was one of the first women in Canada to receive a degree in agriculture. She began postgraduate work with grain rust, and did her doctoral research at the University of Saskatchewan, receiving a PhD from the University of Minnesota. In 1922 she was the first woman in Canada to achieve a PhD in agriculture. Newton was the founding scientist at the Dominion Rust Research Laboratory in Winnipeg. In 1942 she was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and, six years later, she was the first female recipient of its Flavelle Medal.

A page from Margaret Newton's research notebook describes the characteristics of the rust species with which she worked.



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Margaret Newton seeding rust plots with staff of the Dominion Rust Research Laboratory in an undated photograph.

Manitoba's War On Wildlife

by Gordon Goldsborough
Department of Biological Sciences, University of Manitoba

It was inevitable, as European-style agriculture was imposed on the prairie ecosystem starting in the 1800s, that human interests would come into conflict with those of wild animals. Manitoba's Municipal Act, first enacted in 1873, instructed municipalities to pass by-laws "for the destruction of wolves, foxes, gophers and rats within the municipality and for fixing the indemnity to be paid therefore, the proof required that any animal was killed within the municipality and the manner of payment."¹ In other words, municipal officials actively aided and abetted a war on wildlife that went on throughout the twentieth century.

Mechanization during and after World War One was undoubtedly responsible for remarkable gains in farm crop yields. But this was only a benefit if most of the crop ended up in the farmer's granary. Consumption in the field by pests represented an unacceptable loss, especially when every bit of food was needed to sustain Canada's war machine overseas. Public enemy number one was the "gopher", a collective name for three common species occurring in Manitoba at the time: the Flickertail or Richardson's Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus richardsonii*), the Scrub Gopher or Franklin's Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus franklinii*), and the Striped Gopher or Thirteen-Lined Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*). By feeding on developing grain heads, gophers were a threat that no farmer could ignore. During the summer of 1917, for example, there were an estimated 10 million gophers in western Manitoba, at densities ranging from 5 to 30 per acre. They could consume or spoil an estimated two and a quarter million bushels of grain, so killing even two million of them would translate into a saving of half a million bushels. The threat to the Allied war effort was

clear. One especially imaginative advertisement in the *Western Municipal News* magazine portrayed gophers as invading German soldiers, replete with spiked helmets and scythes.

A 1918 government pamphlet advised that "gopher-shooting with a .22 is good business as well as good sport," but the primary weapon in the farmer's arsenal against gophers was poison. Anton Mickelson, one of the primary purveyors of gopher poison at the time, became well-known in municipal circles, and a regular attendee

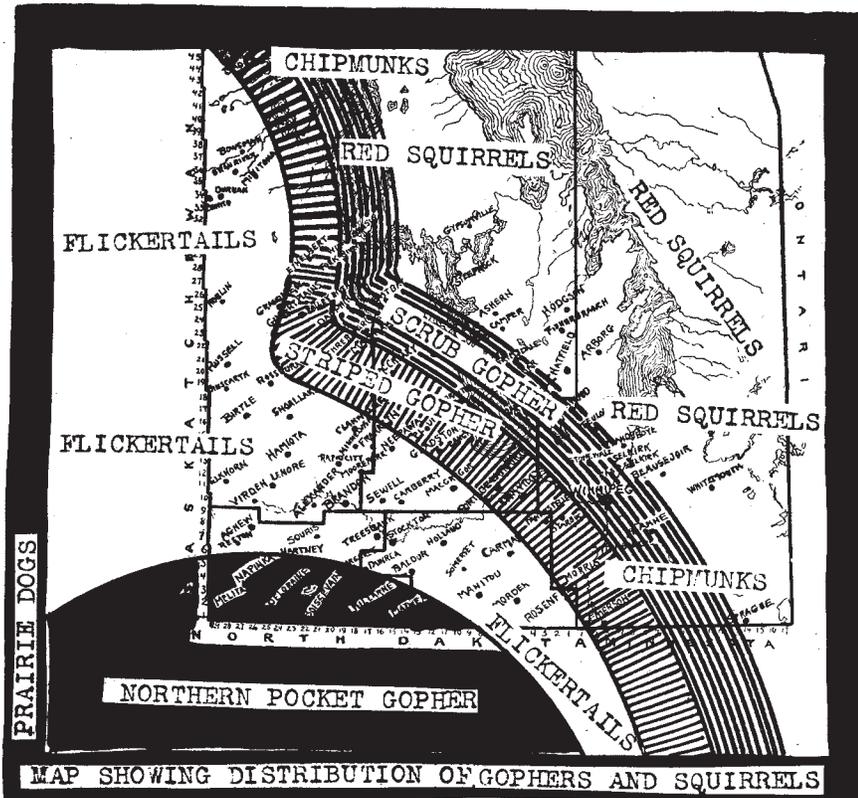
at annual conventions, where he offered wholesale prices to municipalities. He arrived on the Manitoba scene around 1912, when his company and others began marketing such products as *Kill-Em-Quick*, *Ready Rodo*, *Gophercide*, *Bolduan's Poisoned Grain*, and *My Own*. Home-made recipes with names like *North Dakota Mixture* and *Canadian Vinegar Mixture* were also available. The active ingredient in all of them was strychnine, and commercial formulations were usually a greenish-blue liquid smelling strongly of vinegar. Mixed in a gallon pail of water, wheat or oats would be

added until the solution was fully absorbed. Then the poisoned grain would be spread on the ground at places frequented by gophers. It was well known that gophers could travel considerable distances from their burrows to grain fields, so non-agricultural sites were also targets for gopher control. A 1912 resolution by the Union of Manitoba Municipalities (UMM) urged railways to destroy gophers burrowing on their rights-of-way. A 1917 resolution wanted the Municipal Act amended to give municipalities the right to pass by-laws making gopher destruction compulsory on all residents, and a 1919 resolution wanted municipalities to be able to bill land owners who were derelict in their



Portage Daily Graphic, 17 June 1952, PCI Archive, Yosh Tashiro Collection

Wolf hunters. Leslie Poole and Verne Ferris display a timber wolf they shot at Macdonald near Portage la Prairie, 1952.



Manitoba Agriculture and Immigration pamphlet, 1918, Manitoba Legislative Library.

Three gopher species were widely distributed across much of southwestern Manitoba, as shown in this 1918 map from a provincial government pamphlet advocating their eradication.

gopher-killing duty. In the 1930s, the UMM wanted municipalities to prohibit the trapping of weasels—natural gopher predators—and some municipalities gave out free poison.

Warriors for the battle against gophers were also recruited in the schoolyard, as programs of the Manitoba Agriculture and Immigration Department, coordinated by the Municipal Commissioner's office and local municipal offices, encouraged children to participate in gopher eradication programs. Kids who caught, killed, and collected gopher tails (as proof) could win prizes for their schools. In 1917, some 100,000 gopher tails were turned in during four days of effort.² A 1918 school competition offered a first prize of a record player and a collection of records. Second prize was a nine-volume set of *Cassell's Illustrated History of England*. (One can only imagine the enthusiasm with which students would fight for that prize!) And Boys' and Girls' Clubs around the province turned in a resounding 483,567 tails in 1919.³ Through the 1920s and 1930s, bounties were paid for tails. The Rural Municipality (RM) of Glenwood offered the princely sum of five cents per tail in 1933 while the RM of Shoal Lake gave a more usual fee of one cent—the first time it had paid any bounty—but it nevertheless

succeeded in collecting 78,238 tails.⁴ The RM of Louise paid out \$395.35 in 1936, for 39,535 tails.⁵ And the municipal programs continued into at least the mid-1940s. Generations of school children—many now in their senior years—have fond memories of the campaign against these “submarines in the wheat field”.

Once the Great War was over and the spread of global socialism became the new enemy, gophers were vilified not as Germany soldiers but as “Bolsheiwheaties” striving to liberate wheat fields in the name of the proletariat critters. And the carnage continued. In the spring of 1919, 510,000 flickertail gophers were poisoned and, in 1921, a one-day shooting record of 385 gophers was set (by one person). The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, counterpart to the UMM, got into the business of making and selling its own “S.A.R.M.” brand of strychnine-based gopher poison, which it offered at low prices with free shipping to any point in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba. It sold 160,812 cans in 1935 alone.⁶

The dastardly wolves in our fairy tales are but one sign of the long-held revulsion that humans have had for these predatory animals. In 1893, the Manitoba legislature passed “An Act to Encourage the Destroying of Wolves” without providing any specific reason to do so. The reason was probably understood to be common sense, for wolves were widely represented as an unacceptable threat to domestic animals. The Act authorized the treasurers of all Rural Municipalities to pay a bounty of \$2 for each wolf

Western Municipal News, March 1918, page 75.



Don't Let The Gophers Hold You Up and Take All Your Profits

Gophers were portrayed as invading German soldiers, intent on destroying the crops of patriotic Manitoba farmers, in this March 1918 poison advertisement.



The Annual Bolshe wheat ie Parade

is scheduled to march as soon as the new wheat sprouts. The tender green shoots of growing grain will be at the mercy of this horde of hungry raiders—unless the Municipality breaks up the march with GOPHERCIDE.

NOW is the time for the Council to take action so that the Municipality, as a whole, and each individual Grain Grower in it, will lend their efforts to stamping out the Gophers.

Gophercide

Gets the Gophers Every Time

But it is not enough for one here and there to use GOPHERCIDE. It should be concerted work—with the members of the Council and other leaders acting officially and inducing every citizen to do his or her duty.

GOPHERCIDE is Strychnine, without strychnine's bitter taste. It is strychnine that dissolves in warm water without the use of acids or vinegar. In other words, GOPHERCIDE has all the deadliness of strychnine, without any of the disadvantages of ordinary strychnine.

A package of GOPHERCIDE, dissolved in half a gallon of warm water, will poison a gallon of wheat; this wheat will kill about 400 gophers, because gophers like the taste of it and will eat it eagerly.

GO after the gophers NOW. Get the Council and all the citizens to act—and clean the fields of gophers before the new wheat comes up.

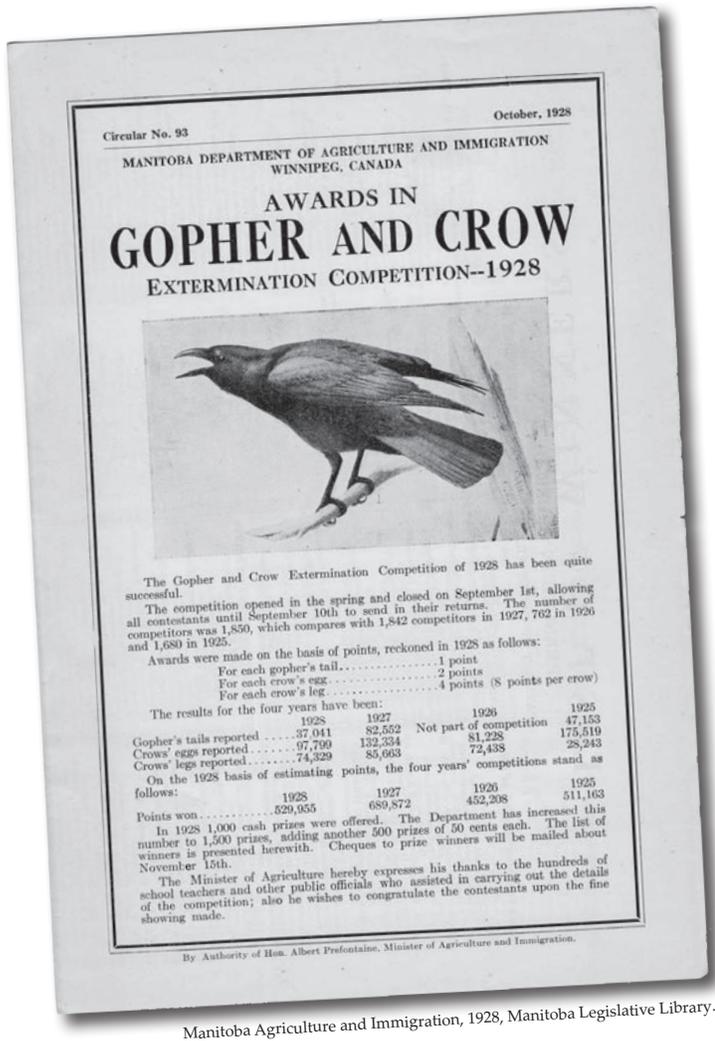
National Drug & Chemical Company of Canada Limited

MONTREAL WINNIPEG REGINA SASKATOON CALGARY
EDMONTON NELSON VANCOUVER VICTORIA and EASTERN BRANCHES

Chemical Analysis of Manufactured Poisons reported by Andrews and Cruickshank, analytical and consulting chemists to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Regina, shows: Gophercide contains ten times the quantity of Strychnine of all other preparations examined.

Western Municipal News, March 1920, page 95.

Radical gophers. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, gophers were portrayed as "Bolshe wheaties" in this 1920 advertisement for gopher poison from the *Western Municipal News*.



Manitoba Agriculture and Immigration, 1928, Manitoba Legislative Library.

The killing fields. A 1928 provincial report gave the results of that year's gopher and crow extermination contest.

killed, to a maximum of \$300 per year. A complicated system of verification was set up to protect municipalities from being conned by dishonest hunters. (Wolf heads had to be presented "with the ears on" to no fewer than two Justices of the Peace, who would then cut off the ears and issue the hunter with a certificate to be redeemed at the municipal office.) Municipalities would then be reimbursed by the Municipal Commissioner for half their total bounty payment. In 1906, the bounty was increased to \$5 for "timber wolves" but retained at \$2 for "ordinary wolves" (i.e., coyotes). The requirement for municipalities to front the cash and seek reimbursement was challenged unsuccessfully by the UMM in 1911. It asked to have the bounty doubled in 1913 and 1917, and the province to pay the entire bounty in 1916. In 1913, the use of poisons for killing wolves was prohibited, under threat of a \$50 fine, presumably to safeguard domestic dogs and "good" wild animals which might inadvertently stumble upon and eat the poison. Between 1907 and 1931, statistics maintained by the Municipal Commissioner show that wolf bounties were mostly paid to municipalities in wooded areas of the province although, surprisingly, the highest bounty—an

average of \$438 per year, ranging from \$69 to \$2,103—was paid to the RM of Portage la Prairie, which was mostly prairie. Even some villages, towns and cities paid out wolf bounties, probably for kills in their outskirts, but the amounts were generally small, averaging less than \$10 a year.

Justice was swift and ruthless for wolf bounty swindlers. In 1932, three men from St. Lazare went from office to office in the RMs of Ellice, Woodworth, Hamiota, Harrison, Blanshard, Wallace, Oakland, Whitehead, Edward, and Birtle, acquiring bounties ranging from \$12 to \$14, for rabbit heads passed off as those of wolf pups. The men were found guilty and sentenced to "two years at hard labor in Stony Mountain penitentiary."⁷ Before they had completed their sentence, the province did away with bounties altogether, citing hard economic times and widespread fraud. Some municipalities maintained the bounties without provincial support while those which did not became, in the words of one 1935 letter writer to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, "wolf sanctuaries."⁸ The UMM resolved, in 1934 and again in 1936, to urge the province to make it compulsory for all municipalities to pay a bounty. A \$5 province-wide bounty was reinstated. But a perceived increase in the number of wolves in the Interlake during the late 1930s justified a UMM resolution to raise the bounty to \$15 per adult and \$5 per pup, and to pay a bounty year-round, as opposed to just during the summer months. Another perceived wolf surplus in 1951 was the basis for a resolution calling for the bounty to be increased to \$25. As circumstances warranted, municipal councils decided whether to pay bounties in some years and not in others. But concerns over fraud remained. A 1951 UMM resolution urged that the bounty for pups not accompanied by an adult wolf head or pelt be cut in half, on grounds that aboriginal hunters were not killing adults so as to "keep seed" for a steady income.

The scientific basis for thinking that wolf eradication would protect domestic animals is shaky. Wolf bounties paid out between 1907 and 1931 peaked every nine years, in 1907, 1917 and 1926, probably because there were more wolves available to be killed in those years. Periodic waxes and wanes in predator populations are understood by wildlife biologists to reflect cycles in the abundance of prey animals. Since the supply of domestic animals is not typically cyclical, varying instead as a result of economic factors, it is likely that the number of wolves was determined more by the abundance of wild rodents and hares than by availability of sheep, chickens, and cattle. While it is undoubtedly true that some farmers suffered losses when wolves attacked their livestock, in general, the wolf bounty played on a widespread public misperception about wolves. On the other hand, it is likely that wide-scale replacement of native plants on the prairies with agricultural species, and the adoption of farm practices to maximize plant yield, led to greater overall food availability for plant-eating animals. This, in turn, provided more prey for wolves, so they flourished.

Human attitudes about crows have been more ambivalent than for wolves. Some argued that crows threatened game birds, especially prairie chickens, by destroying their eggs. In 1924, the RM of Lorne proposed a new bounty to be established on crows, on much the same terms as wolves.⁹ Between 1925 and at least 1929, the province sponsored a crow extermination competition, coordinated out of municipal offices, in which participants were given two points for every crow egg turned in, and four points for each crow leg (eight for a pair). The annual egg count ranged from 81,228 (in 1926) to a staggering 177,564 (in 1929); leg counts were understandably less, averaging 75,607, since crows typically had fewer legs than eggs.¹⁰ Despite the impacts on crow populations that loss of these numbers of eggs would represent, hunters in 1935 remained adamant that crows "destroyed more wild game birds than all the hunters of the land" and that the UMM should petition the provincial government to increase the bounty accordingly. As recently as 1972, the UMM renewed its opposition to crows, arguing that they (as well as blackbirds) damaged sunflower crops in the southern agricultural belt.

The basis for opposition to other perceived pests has not always been based on scientific evidence. In 1990, the UMM passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a bounty on magpies—a crow relative—not because they ate crops or killed valuable game animals, but because they "are scavengers and chase away harmless species."¹¹ A similarly dubious motive underlay a 1942 UMM resolution on crow ducks which, despite their name, are related to neither crows nor ducks. Also called cormorants, the fish-eating birds nest around Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis and other water bodies, and are widely perceived as having excessively voracious appetites that deprive lake fishers of their rightful share of the resource. This contention has never been proven. From the late 1940s to the mid '50s, the provincial government assisted commercial fishers on Lake Winnipegosis in destroying cormorant colonies, reducing bird numbers from 39,000 in 1945 to about 19,000 in 1951.

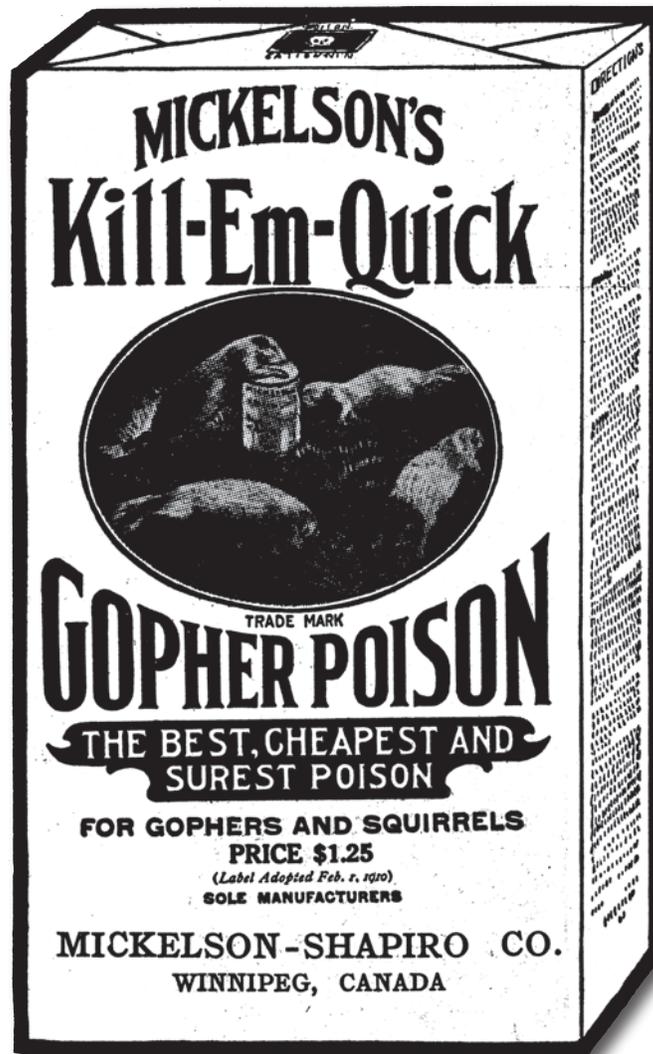
"Rats"—or more properly, muskrats—have long been sought by trappers, but they are a perennial thorn in the side of municipal road workers, especially where routes go through wet, low-lying areas that the scaly-tailed rodents find attractive. By burrowing in road grades, muskrats compromise the structural integrity of the road bed. At its 1905 founding convention, the UMM passed a resolution advocating the removal of protection for muskrats which would allow them to be "destroyed in any manner."¹² In 1925, the provincial government passed an order-in-council to permit the "trapping, killing or capturing of

muskrats between October 1 and November 15 on highways, road allowances and 440 yards on each side of such road allowances, in townships 13 to 22 inclusive in ranges 17 to 29 inclusive."¹³

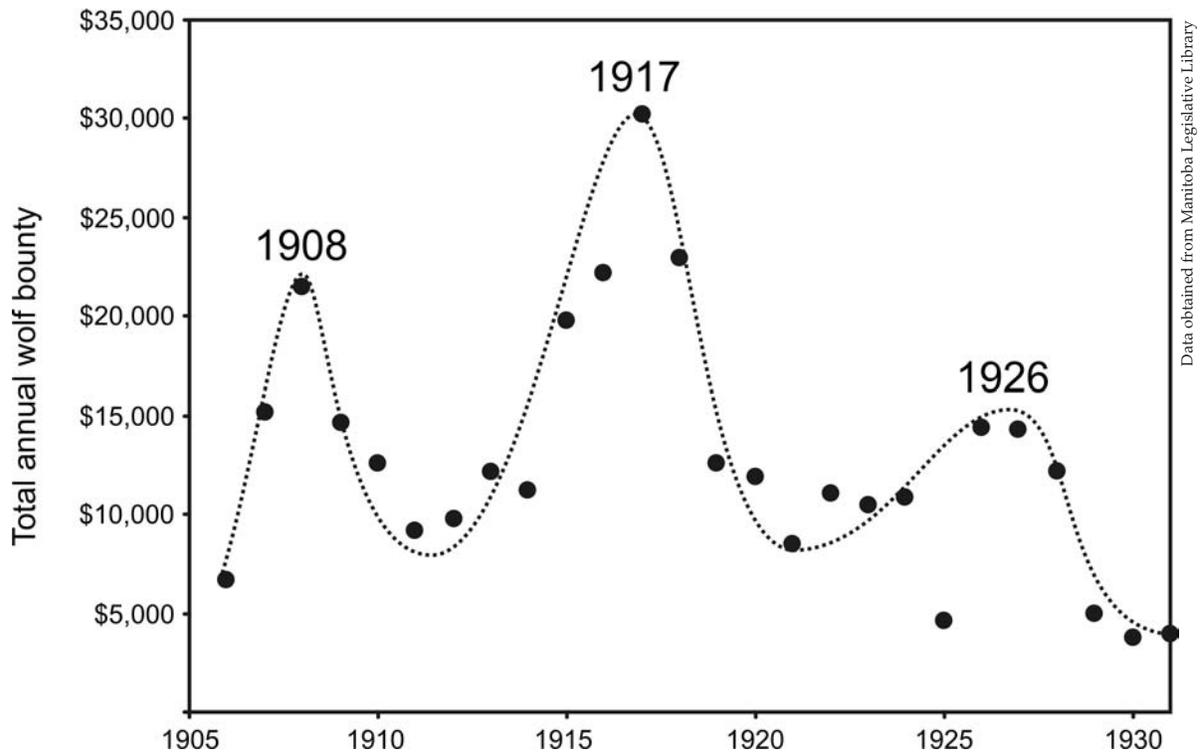
Not all agricultural pests are native animals. Rats—not to be confused with muskrats to which they are unrelated—have a long history of association with humans, and probably arrived on the prairies along with European settlers, and were known to occur in Manitoba by the 1920s. They carry disease-bearing fleas, undermine buildings and public works with their tunnels, and through their cosmopolitan tastes, destroy and contaminate a wide range of foodstuffs, being considered "a greater pest than gophers."¹⁴

Even "man's best friend"—the domestic dog—has incurred its master's wrath when it disturbed the peace and ran at large, necessitating the building of municipal dog pounds, and the issuing of municipal dog

tags to identify runaway curs. And woe help the mindless mutts that acquired a taste for harassing and killing sheep, and occasionally other livestock. Starting with the provincial Sheep Protection Act of 1917 and continuing through the 1930s, the UMM took the view that municipal responsibility for damages should only attach in cases where the dog's owner could not be identified, that sheep found running at large deserved whatever they got, and that stray dogs caught in the act should be put down—no questions asked.¹⁵



Western Municipal News, February 1915, page 29.



Data obtained from Manitoba Legislative Library

The total annual wolf bounty paid in Manitoba, between 1907 and 1931, peaked every nine years, probably as wolves flourished when their prey animals did so too. This runs counter to the argument by farmers that wolves thrive by eating their livestock. Data were obtained from budgetary summaries compiled and published annually by the provincial government.

Fido could redeem himself by chasing wildlife from master's crops. It was well known that wild ducks, geese and cranes could consume large quantities of grain when they dropped into fields in vast numbers during their fall migration. However, there was an upside because, unlike most other agricultural pests, waterfowl were tasty. Generations of rural dwellers and urbanites alike made fall pilgrimages to the marshes and fields to shoot plump, south-bound birds, and this annual ritual became (and, in some areas, remains) a lucrative source of income for Rural Municipalities deluged with hunters. The UMM proposed in 1928 that the date of the fall duck season should be moved forward two weeks, to the first of September, to achieve the dual benefit of putting more birds in the larder and more profits in the farmer's pocket. And a 1947 resolution called for "bona fide farmers [to] be granted permission by law to take any steps necessary to protect their grain crops from damage by wild ducks whether in or out of the shooting season." The provincial government was not receptive because, five years later, another resolution called for "those who benefit from the abundance of game" to compensate farmers affected by losses from marauding ducks and deer. And, in 1978 and again in 1984, the UMM called on higher levels of government to develop long-term strategies for minimizing crop damage and compensating affected farmers. Oddly, in 1972, the UMM was against a provincial proposal that would have helped with the problem, when they passed a resolution opposed to shooting on Sundays, on the grounds this would double the number of hunters. (In fact, the number of hunters has been declining consistently since the 1970s.)

During the 1920s and '30s, a new conservation ethic was arising, founded on the view that protection of wildlife habitat was essential for sustainable populations, and that humans had to intercede to protect endangered spaces. In 1924, the UMM resolved that municipalities should be given the power to establish "Wild Game Bird Sanctuaries" up to eight square miles in their jurisdiction. In the late 1920s, UMM President Duncan McDonald lobbied actively to convert an obscure forest reserve in western Manitoba into Riding Mountain National Park, in 1930. But the eradication programs through much of the twentieth century had an inevitable impact of populations of the targeted species. Fox, which were perennially identified as problems by UMM resolutions—as recently as 1967—were so scarce by the late 1970s that the UMM resolved that:

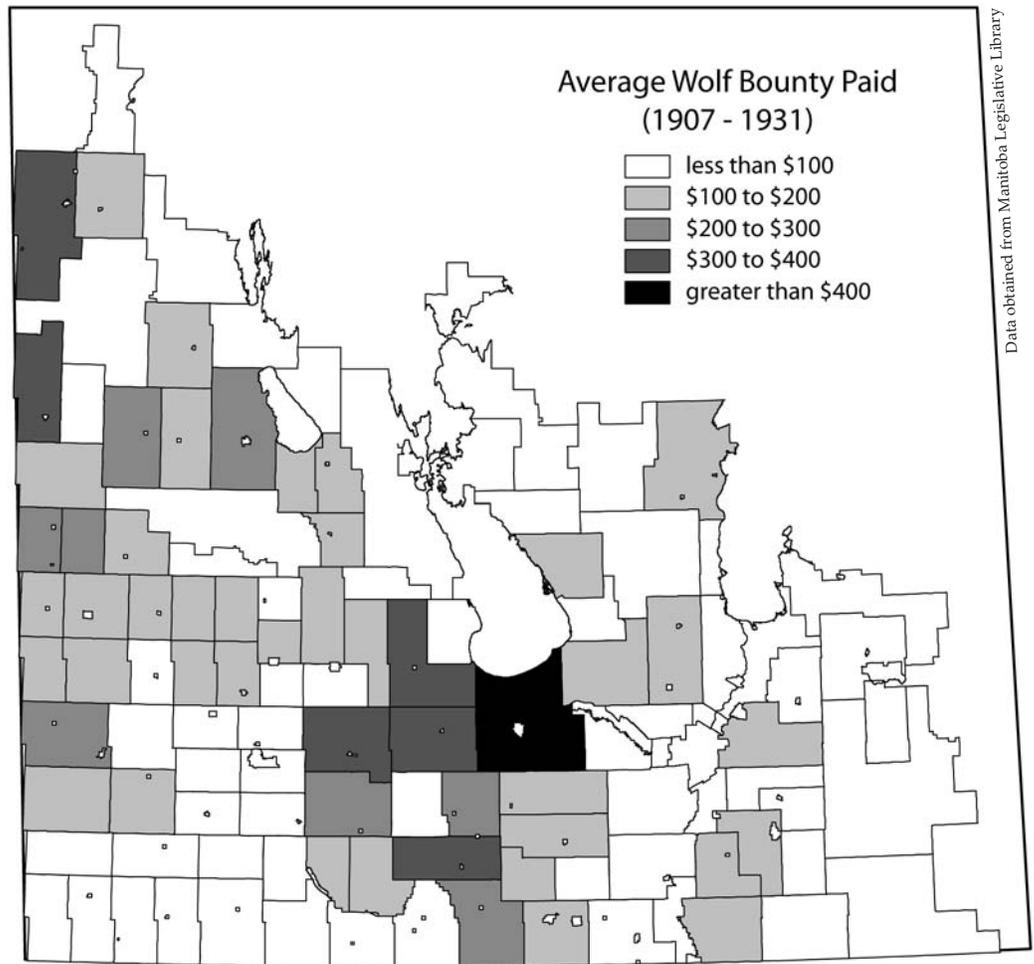
Whereas the fox population has been decimated due to the heavy demand for its fur and the high price offered for the fox pelt; and whereas we are now faced with an overpopulation of rabbits, mice and gophers; and whereas rabbits, mice and gophers are causing heavy damage to crops and gardens; therefore be it resolved that the Union of Manitoba Municipalities request the Province of Manitoba to declare fox an endangered species and declare a moratorium on fox hunting in order to protect foxes and to give a chance to nature to increase the population of foxes, as they are the best control to reduce the rabbit, mice and gopher population.¹⁶

In southern Manitoba, the haunting calls of coyotes at dusk are becoming more common now as their populations are rebounding. The recovery is perhaps the result of declining fur prices and waning interest in trapping as a source of livelihood. The trend toward industrialized farming, where chickens and other prey animals are raised in large barns where they are less vulnerable to predators, means that farmers are less concerned about killing predators. Yet, negatives attitudes about predatory animals remain. Wildlife conservation organizations such as Manitoba's Delta Waterfowl Foundation promote "predator control" as a means of stimulating wild duck and goose populations for the benefit of waterfowl hunters. And gophers remain a popular target. In 2002, the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation (SWF) instituted its controversial Ken Turcot Memorial Gopher Derby, named for a long-time SWF member who "lived to shoot gophers" and described as "the biggest killing contest in Canadian history".¹⁷ In 2005, Health Canada proposed to continue the use of strychnine for killing northern pocket gophers, skunks, pigeons, wolves, coyotes, and black bears. It also recommended "the use of strychnine to control Richardson's, Columbian, Franklin and thirteen-lined ground squirrels ... on an interim basis in consideration of the ongoing work by a national expert group to develop and promote a pest management strategy for the control of Richardson's ground squirrel [and] the lack of practical alternatives at this time."¹⁸ The war on wildlife continues with no armistice in sight. ☞

Notes

This article is excerpted, in part, with permission of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, from my 2008 book *With One Voice: A History of Municipal Governance in Manitoba*.

1. "The gopher pest in Manitoba," Manitoba Department of Agriculture, Circular No. 117, February 1937. [Manitoba Legislative Library]
2. *Western Municipal News* [hereafter WMN], 1918, p. 155.
3. WMN, 1919, p. 236.



Portage wolf sanctuary. A municipal map of annual wolf bounties paid between 1907 and 1931 shows—surprisingly—that the highest bounties were paid by the RM of Portage la Prairie and adjoining municipalities of south-central Manitoba.

4. WMN, 1935, p. 264.
5. WMN, 1936, p. 227.
6. WMN, January 1936, S.A.R.M. advertisement.
7. WMN, 1932, p. 297.
8. WMN, 1935, p. 106.
9. UMM Resolutions, 1924, #23. [Archives of Manitoba, UMM Fonds]
10. "Awards in Gopher and Crow Extermination Competition, 1929." Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Immigration, Circular No. 95, October 1929. [Manitoba Legislative Library]
11. UMM Resolutions, 1990, #45.
12. UMM Resolutions, 1905, #4.
13. WMN, 1925, p. 314.
14. WMN, 1928, p. 340.
15. UMM Resolutions, 1926 #9 and 1927 #20.
16. UMM Resolutions, 1978, #21.
17. "Saskatoon gopher derby may go into the hole," Animal People, June 2002, www.animalpeoplenews.org/02/6/saskatoon602.html; "Gopher hunt draws international fire," *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 2 April 2002, page A1.
18. "Re-evaluation of Strychnine," Proposed Acceptability for Continuing Registration PACR2005-08, Health Canada, Pest Management Regulatory Agency, September 2005, www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/pdf/infonotes/InfoNote-Strychnine-e.pdf

Data obtained from Manitoba Legislative Library

Roblin's Knox Presbyterian Church

by Hazel Blennerhassett
Roblin, Manitoba

There exists in Roblin an old church. It was lovingly built by good-hearted volunteers and has stood for a hundred years, serving the community well.

They would be pleased, those long gone pioneers, whose descendents still labour to care for their proud old building. They came together for the first time in April 1904 to conduct a Presbyterian service in the CNR freight shed in Roblin. By September of 1906, they were ready to build a church, and the Ladies Aid Society purchased two lots for the purpose. Alas, no progress could be made in 1907; no money could be spared for the church following a devastating crop failure.

But in 1908, the congregation rolled up its sleeves and ploughed ahead. Two horses worked the four-horse-plow to carve the hole for the foundation, hauling in 100 loads of stones, and volunteers raised the walls and roof when they could spare the time from farming. The completed church could seat 150 people with room for 100 children in Sunday School. Although the cornerstone is dated 1908, it was opened for worship on 18 July 1909, as Knox Presbyterian Church.

In those days church activities were the heart of social life in rural communities and there followed a flurry of events mostly having to do with food and fundraising. Teas and suppers, breakfasts, lawn socials, concerts and plays provided fun and funds to support the Minister, the building and mission work. Of course, there was Bible study, temperance work and Sunday service as well. In 1916, the Methodist congregation joined Knox, a union that was so successful that by 1921 they could no longer fit inside the church building, and had to hold services in the local high school. Clearly, this would not do, and 1925 saw local farmers once more hauling 100 loads of stones to the church to build an addition, raising the seating capacity to 400. The renovated United Church was filled on 13 December for a splendid opening service.

Cash was almost non-existent during the 1930s. The congregation could make no mortgage payments for five years; the Minister's salary was reduced twice. Once again, the Ladies Aid came to the rescue with socials and sales to raise the \$300 annual interest on the mortgage.

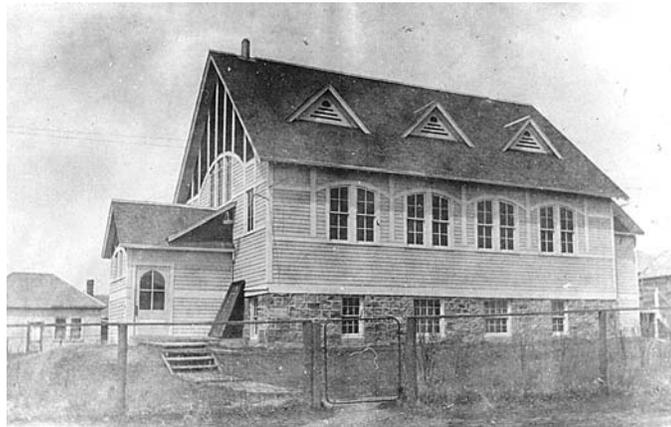
The period 1925 to 1958 proved a testament to the quality of work of the church builders, as the structure received little attention for over 30 years. Fortunately, by 1958, the congregation was once again able to undertake a major

renovation of the basement and front of the Sanctuary. But imagine the horror of the congregation in 1973 to see that the south wall of the building had developed a tilt. Investigations showed that the rafters were spreading; allowing the wall to shift, and the building inspector advised that the church should not be used when it was windy—in case it fell down!

While the congregation shared space in the Roman Catholic Church, extensive repairs were done to lower

the ceiling, replace the roof, straighten the walls and close some windows. The work cost \$20,000 and was finished by the end of 1974. In May 1975, the Roman Catholic congregation joined Knox in a rare event: a joint communion service to celebrate the re-opening of the building.

By 2004, the congregation had struggled for 10 years to find a way to make the building fully accessible and improve kitchen and washroom space but the size and slope of the lot made it difficult, and some were worried that the old building was not sound. In 2004, the congregation voted to build a new church at another site. Many assumed the 96-year-old church, one of the oldest buildings in Roblin and a landmark in the centre of town would be demolished. But there was a small community group that still had plenty of heart, many of them direct descendents of the pioneers of 1908. They realized that in order to save a building it must be perceived to have usefulness. They developed the concept of a Life & Art Centre for Roblin,



H. Blennerhassett

Roblin's Knox Presbyterian Church, no date.

and asked the Knox congregation to donate the building to a community Board for that purpose. Once again, the building is undergoing extensive repair and renovation, which will take some years to complete.

Building code requirements these days place a heavy burden on small groups attempting to keep old buildings in use. The work will probably cost over \$100,000 in the end, which is being obtained from a variety of local and provincial organizations, as well as fundraising events. And whilst the horses are gone, volunteers' cars can be seen outside the building constantly as they hammer, nail, tape and paint to keep the beloved building going.

Now the upstairs houses a lovely performance venue, which regularly hosts plays, readings and musical performances by local and touring groups. It has become the home of the Roblin Dance Club and is used for such diverse activities as the High School Art Show, family reunions and weddings and an annual Wine Tasting event.

Work to renovate the basement is still under way in this 100th anniversary year. Already it is used for meetings by local community groups, and houses a Book Exchange and Fair Trade Goods shop. Some ideas for future use when the renovations are complete include a coffee shop, craft sales, meeting space, space for craft workshops, and a possible home for Roblin's Visitor Centre.

The Life and Art Centre, standing in the middle of our community, makes a number of statements. It's honourable to be old; it's right and good to re-use existing resources; the community wants and needs gathering places; small towns can have music and theatre; people care about their history and their heritage. It is a very small group of people that has pioneered the development of the Life and Art Centre, and they would welcome more involvement from the community. But they have amply demonstrated what can be done with a fine old building when you have heart. ☛

In Search of Buffalo Hair Cloth

by Laura Peers

Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

When we think of warm clothing in the early Red River Settlement, what comes to mind is probably capots, coats made from Hudson's Bay Company blankets. Few people are aware that families in Red River spun and wove their own cloth, some of it from bison "wool" or hair. Although there are many archival references to cloth production in the Settlement, I have never been able to see an example of this native industry; there are no samples of such cloth in the Manitoba Museum. Perhaps the readers of *Manitoba History* might be able to assist?

The making of homespun cloth was a major part of the domestic economy across eastern North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Linen, linsey-woolsey (a linen-wool mix), and homespun wool were used to produce everything from kitchen towels and diapers to suits. Home textile production was so central that it became a metaphor for independent, self-sufficient pioneer life: we still refer to "homespun talent."

In Red River, things were different: home production of cloth might have been seen initially as a threat to the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly and profits. The creation of Red River as a settlement, however, and the arrival of Selkirk's Irish and Highland Scots settlers (some of whom were weavers) beginning in 1811, opened the way for cloth production. By the early 1820s, the Buffalo Wool Company's records include an inventory of "Buffalo Wool Cloth": 191 yards fine cloth, unfulled; 292 yds coarse cloth, unfulled; 72 yds coarse cloth, fulled; 63 yds fine cloth, fulled (HBCA F.34/1, Buffalo Wool Company, fo.12).

The Church Missionary Society was also determined to teach spinning and weaving to its Aboriginal and

Métis converts in Red River as a way of assimilating them to "civilized" habits, and of offering them a means of independence from hunting and trading. In 1833, Reverend Cockran claimed that fifteen girls in his school were learning to spin and that he had purchased buffalo hair "which, when wove, makes tolerably good cloth" (A77, Cockran to Secretaries, 25 July 1833). By 1844, Cockran could report that "Several of the Indian women spin wool and a good deal of home made cloth has this year been manufactured..." (CMS Reel A78, Report of Indian Settlement Red River, 1 August 1844). Flax was grown for several years, but deemed unsuitable to the climate.

Although J. J. Hargrave claimed, in his memoir of Red River life in 1871, that "the weaving of "Red River cloth" ... [was one of the] ... most common exercises of domestic manufacture," in fact, the process fell off, probably due to its labour-intensive nature. It was simply easier to purchase cloth imported by the Company than to produce it at home.

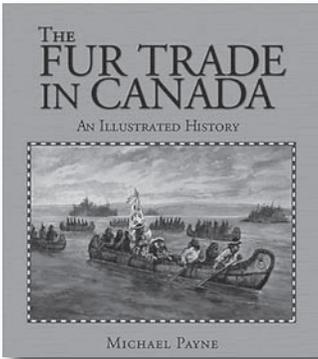
But where did those hundreds of yards of cloth listed in the Buffalo Wool Company records go? Did all the cloth produced for home use eventually get used up? Why have no examples of Red River cloth ever been donated to the Manitoba Museum? Does anyone have any samples of this cloth, perhaps as garments, shawls or blankets that might yield clues about this vanished industry? If you do, please contact Sharon Reilly, Curator of Social History at The Manitoba Museum, sreilly@manitobamuseum.ca and Laura Peers, laura.peers@prm.ox.ac.uk ☛

Reviews

Michael Payne, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Illustrated History*

Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2004, 96 pages.

ISBN 9781550288438, \$24.95 (paperback).



As Michael Payne observes in his introduction, it is not easy to summarize over 500 years of fur trade history: Payne makes the job even more challenging by giving himself less than 100 pages in which to do it. What he has produced is like a platter of historical *hors d'oeuvres*, a collection of tasty tidbits that leave us wanting more.

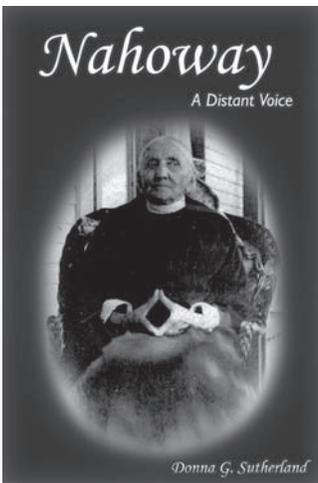
Payne has approached the history of the fur trade from many angles, having taught high school history, earned a PhD, and worked with historic sites and archives. Not only is he aware of the complexities of the topic, he makes no attempt to hide them from his readers. Although he never has the space to elaborate, he highlights the diversity of furs and goods that were traded, the complex roles that First Nations played in the trade, the many important ways in which women contributed to the business, and the multicultural nature of fur trade communities.

The book is richly illustrated. Some of the images will be familiar to those who have read similar books, while others are seldom seen; but all of them bring something to the story. For instance, towards the end of the book there is a photograph of Fort Edmonton being dismantled while the Alberta legislature building rises in the background, a powerful visual representation of the transition from one social and economic world to another. Not only is there a healthy mix of historic images, Payne's public history roots show in his liberal use of photographs from current historic sites and costumed interpretation.

However, this is never in danger of being just a picture book. Payne's lively prose fills most of the pages, covering a lot of ground from centuries-old Aboriginal trading patterns to the fur trade of the 20th century. As he points out, the fur trade is a key element in Canadian history, touching all the regions of the country and involving many of its peoples in a shared enterprise. This book invites us to learn more, whether through further reading or by visiting the many museums and historic sites across the country.

Scott Stephen
Parks Canada

Donna G. Sutherland, *Nahoway: A Distant Voice*. Petersfield, Manitoba: White Buffalo Books, 2008, 400 pages. ISBN 9781552382271, \$44.95 (paperback)



Nahoway: A Distant Voice is a unique, deeply personal and emotional narrative of the author's quest to discover and reconnect with her Cree/Scots ancestry in the Hudson Bay fur trade. Donna G. Sutherland has published several scholarly articles and a book on Aboriginal and fur trade history. However, with *Nahoway*, Sutherland took a different approach as her latest book is not intended as an analytical scholarly inquiry into aspects of

Aboriginal/ European relations within the fur trade in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, but as a moving narrative of a personal quest, combining aspects of the spiritual with archival research.

The book begins with the description of a dream or vision of her distant female ancestor Nahoway, compelling

her to embark on a decade-long quest to reconnect with the Aboriginal component of her ancestry and family history, which had been suppressed in her family for generations.

The first chapters of the book juxtapose Sutherland's academic studies of the fur trade and Aboriginal history with spiritual approaches to the subject, to some extent based on spiritual practices and concepts current among contemporary Aboriginal people. In the following chapters the author brings to life some of her Cree/ English/Scots ancestors who lived on the shores of Hudson Bay during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some of them coastal Cree people, others employees of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) from England, Scotland and the Orkney Islands. Due to intermarriage, the biological boundaries between Aboriginal and European became increasingly blurred, and many of the individuals the reader meets throughout the narrative were part Cree, part European. However, cultural and ethnic distinctions were often more rigid than biological ones. In this context, based on the interpretation of fur trader's correspondence and journals, as well as Aboriginal oral traditions, the author details perceptions of race and occurrences of discrimination from

both an Aboriginal and a European perspective.

The narrative centers on Sutherland's ancestor Nahoway, a woman of Cree/Scots descent, who was born in the late 1700s and eventually married fur trader William Sinclair, with whom she traveled extensively between Hudson Bay and trading posts in the interior and with whom she had a large family. Other important members of their family trees are introduced as well, often through extensive quotations from primary documents and the author's commentary to contextualize these individuals.

The book is a comfortable read, primarily directed at a non-academic audience, but of interest to the professional fur trade or Aboriginal historian. One purpose of the book is to show how combining archival research with oral traditions, artefacts and Aboriginal spiritual concepts can provide a rich understanding of the interconnectedness of the lives of the original inhabitants of North America and the European newcomers and their descendants, especially those with ancestral roots in both. Furthermore, even though Aboriginal and Métis women in the fur trade left few if any written records, the book demonstrates how much can be learned about their lives through a combination of the interpretation of archival records through the lens of Aboriginal traditions and concepts.

A strength of the book is in the rich archival research and the amazing detail gleaned from Hudson's Bay Company records and the personal correspondence of mostly men involved in the fur trade in various positions and capacities.

To provide context for the narrative about Nahoway and her Cree kin, Sutherland interweaves sections on

Aboriginal life ways, subsistence activities, cultural and spiritual practices and concepts with almost every chapter. Unfortunately, to a great extent she draws on sources from outside a Lowland Cree cultural context, substituting information from Aboriginal cultures from other regions of North America, sometimes as far away as the southwestern US. These overgeneralizations somewhat diminish the impact of the narrative, grafting practices and concepts from outside the Hudson Bay Lowlands to the coastal Cree of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Included in this rather vague and sometimes misleading portrayal of distinct Aboriginal cultures and their belief systems are current Aboriginal spiritual practices that may or may not have been part of the belief systems and worldview of the eighteenth and nineteenth century coastal Cree.

Another strong point of the book is that it connects the story of Nahoway and her kin to concrete locations, such as monuments, buildings, riverbanks and rock faces from the shores of Hudson Bay to the Red River Settlement/Winnipeg, where important events in the lives of the people under discussion happened and that can still be visited today.

Overall, the book is a comfortable read with a compelling and at times suspenseful narrative that will hopefully help to encourage others with a similar Aboriginal/European heritage to explore and reconnect with the life stories of their ancestors whose lives and actions were an integral part in shaping Manitoban society.

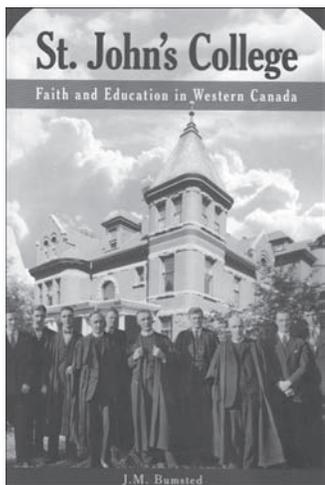
Roland Bohr

History Department, University of Winnipeg

J. M. Bumsted, *St. John's College: Faith and Education in Western Canada*

Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006, 224 pages.

ISBN 9780887556920, \$24.95 (paperback).



I can think of no one better suited to writing the history of St John's College than Jack Bumsted. An award-winning historian of Red River and former President of the Manitoba Historical Society, Bumsted has been a Fellow of St. John's since 1980. Furthermore, Bumsted had already made extensive use of St. John's College's archives in writing *The University of Manitoba: An Illustrated History*.

This book is "neither a celebratory romp through the past nor a huge tome with several hundred pages of footnotes," but a "biography of the college." As such, it contains tidbits of everyday college

life (like the evolution of *The Johnian*), topics of importance within the college (such as the challenges of developing the college library), and issues of broader significance (like university education for veterans). It makes interesting and instructive reading not only for "old Johnians," but for all who are interested in small colleges, large universities, the history of education, and the Anglican Church in western Canada.

The college's roots lie deep in the surprisingly rich intellectual environment of the Red River Settlement. Under Bishop (later Archbishop) Robert Machray, St John's became an important part of the cultural infrastructure of early Winnipeg. It focussed on collegiate-level education and theological training, but soon added university-level secular education in the arts and sciences. St. John's was a founding college of the University of Manitoba in 1877, although its role within the university's structure quickly passed (and largely remains) outside of its control. The University of Manitoba was initially organized as a

federation of autonomous denominational colleges: the university examined candidates and granted degrees, but lacked the resources to do anything more. The 20th century history of all of the founding colleges has been in many ways the story of adapting to the steady growth and centralisation of the institution they helped create.

The history of St John's College reflects the history of the larger university, but it also reflects the changing fortunes of education, the Anglican Church, and Winnipeg's WASP establishment. The college's role in Winnipeg and in western Canada was challenged by economic downturns, a major financial scandal, and two world wars. Perhaps the most serious setback was the defalcation of 1932, a financial and moral disaster in which the college and diocese together lost around \$1 million. John Machray, bursar of the college and nephew of the late Archbishop, was arrested and sentenced to seven years for theft from the university. St John's was forced to slash faculty salaries, in most cases by more than 50%. The college pulled through, however: enrolment was up, the Depression had reduced the cost of living (and financial expectations), and the national church pitched in through the Restoration Fund.

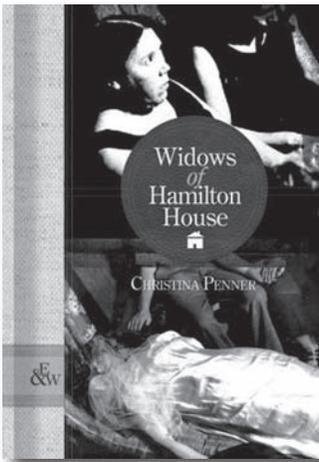
The college reached another very low point in 1950, just before the appointment as Warden of Rev. Laurence Wilmot—still a legendary figure in the hearts and minds

of Johnians—and the much-debated move to the U of M's new Fort Garry campus. St. John's rode the post-war educational and religious booms through the 1960s: the end of that wave, coinciding with changes in government funding structures and in the university's organization, seriously undermined the college's autonomy. In spite of these developments, and of the Anglican Church's decision to train its ordinands elsewhere in western Canada, St. John's "has continued to search, with various degrees of success, for ways to serve both the academic community and the church."

This book is not without its flaws: in some places, for instance, the writing (or perhaps the editing) seems surprisingly unpolished. Although Bumsted paints a detailed picture of the defalcation, there are many people, events, and other topics about which the reader would like to learn a great deal more. That is a limitation that Bumsted places on himself in this book: his stated goal is to provide a lively and engaging narrative, not to overburden the reader with details and footnotes (although an index would have been nice). In his introduction, he expresses the hope that his account will be expanded upon in a future volume that takes full advantage of the college's remarkable archives. As a Johnian myself, I share that hope.

Scott Stephen
Parks Canada

**Christina Penner, *Widows of Hamilton House*
Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2008, 240 pages.
ISBN 9781894283847, \$29.95 (hardcover).**



Widows of Hamilton House is a literary novel about love and loss by Christina Penner. As the title suggests, it is set against the backdrop of Hamilton House, the house of Dr. TG Hamilton, located on Henderson Highway in Winnipeg. In the early 1900s, Dr. Hamilton's son Arthur died during the flu epidemic and shortly thereafter, the doctor and his wife Lillian began to hold séances at their home. Into this house some 70

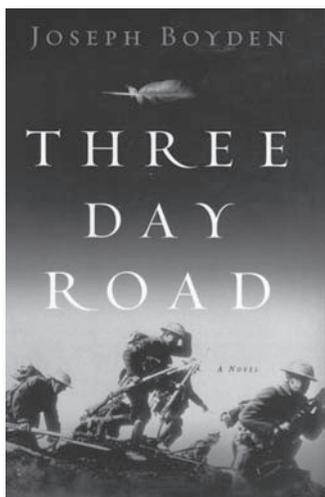
years later comes Ruth, a young woman recovering from a failed love affair. At this point in time, a group of Mennonites have purchased the home and rent Ruth a suite on the second floor. Her subsequent relationship with a young doctor and his mother, and Ruth's interest in what went on in Hamilton House during the time of the séances are parallel themes of the book. The archives at the University of Manitoba allow Ruth to delve into the lives

of the Hamiltons and particularly into the personality and mind of Lillian, who lost her husband TG in 1935. Ruth uses this investigation as a foil to her own thinking and actions. Playing against this spiritualism is Ruth's Mennonite background and her rebellion against the same.

While the historical content and local flavour of the novel pull the reader along, the relationships are perhaps more complicated than they need to be. Ruth's love for Lon, her lover and later husband, is not entirely convincing. A more thorough editing of the book would help reduce inconsistencies: the song "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers" is referred to variously as "Them Golden Slippers," "Those Golden Slippers," and "Dem Golden Slippers." One is also never quite sure about the accuracy of the facts presented in the novel, which is distracting. But the language of the novel can be quite lyrical, and in real life Penner is a friend of the Hamilton family, which infuses her commentary with a particular intimacy. That, combined with the rich historical context and the ideas about what *really* happened in Hamilton House, make for an intriguing read.

Shelley Sweeney
Head, Archives & Special Collections
University of Manitoba

Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road*
Toronto: Penguin Group Canada, 2008, 368 pages.
ISBN 9780143056959, \$20.00 (paperback)



In his debut novel *Three Day Road*, Joseph Boyden tells a powerful and dramatic story of two Cree men from Moose Factory, Xavier and Elijah, who experience the horrors of trench warfare in World War I as snipers with the Canadian forces in Belgium and France. Through the perspective of Niska, Xavier's aunt, Boyden presents a parallel story of an Aboriginal woman caught up in rapid cultural change and personal loss. The story is

told in flashbacks, alternating between Niska's and Xavier's perspective.

Niska and Xavier come from a family whose traditional obligation has been the extermination of cannibals, persons who had turned into a windigo. In northern Cree culture the concept of "windigo," the ultimate expression of selfishness through survival cannibalism, was believed to eventually cause an unstoppable and irreversible desire for human flesh and for killing in the afflicted person. In order to remove such a threat from a community, northern Cree people called upon specialists who had the necessary ritual knowledge and skills to deal with persons who had turned windigo.

As a young woman, after the death of her father, Niska moved away from the settlement of Moose Factory to live a reclusive life in the bush, sustaining herself through hunting, trapping and gathering. When her sister was incapacitated, she ended up raising her nephew Xavier, whom she trained to be a trapper, hunter and marksman. Eventually, the two took in Xavier's friend Elijah, who spent his pre-teen years in a residential school. Soon, Elijah also learned and eventually excelled at hunting and trapping.

As young men, Xavier and Elijah decided to join the Canadian military to serve overseas. Soon marginalized

in the military as Aboriginal people, they eventually gained the attention of their superiors and the grudging respect of their fellow soldiers through their excellence as marksmen.

Aboard ship, on the troop transport to Europe, both witnessed the abuse of morphine by non-Aboriginal soldiers. When they finally entered the trenches, the use of morphine made bearable the pain from their injuries, as well as the mental strain caused by their horrific experiences of combat. However, under the strain of war the two friends developed in different directions. While Xavier became increasingly protective of Elijah, Elijah discovered his aptitude and taste for killing and turned to increasingly gruesome and maniacal behaviour. Eventually, he became the kind of monster Xavier and his ancestors have been trained to slay.

The chapters describing Xavier's and Elijah's experiences are interwoven with sections of Niska telling her life story, illustrating the growing influence of the Hudson's Bay Company, various levels of government, as well as missionaries, clergy and residential schools on Cree communities on Hudson Bay.

While the story is told with the dramatic flow of a page-turner, the language creates vivid images of the stark landscape of the Hudson Bay Lowlands and the boreal forest with its rivers, rocks and lakes, but also of the horrific fighting in moonscapes of craters, shell holes, dugouts and trenches on the western front. The story contains aspects of deep tragedy, but also of healing and hope and presents an interesting approach in its combination of a First World War background with Aboriginal perspectives and elements such as the windigo theme, transplanted to the battlefields of Europe.

Canadian author Joseph Boyden claims Irish, Scottish and Métis roots and has published several short stories. He divides his time between northern Ontario, and New Orleans, where he teaches writing at the University of New Orleans.

Roland Bohr

History Department, University of Winnipeg

Future History

In upcoming issues of *Manitoba History* ...

- The life and work of Reverend Harry Lehotsky
- The Winnipeg street railway
- Secrets of the Winnipeg General Strike
- A history of Red River dredging
- Book reviews & more

Burton Lysecki Books

Quality Books Bought & Sold!

**Professional dealer of quality
used and out-of-print books
since 1971**

Manitoba	Military
Local History	Canadian Military
Western Canada	Regimental Histories
Canada	Transportation
Native History	Travels & Exploration
Arctic	Select General Stock

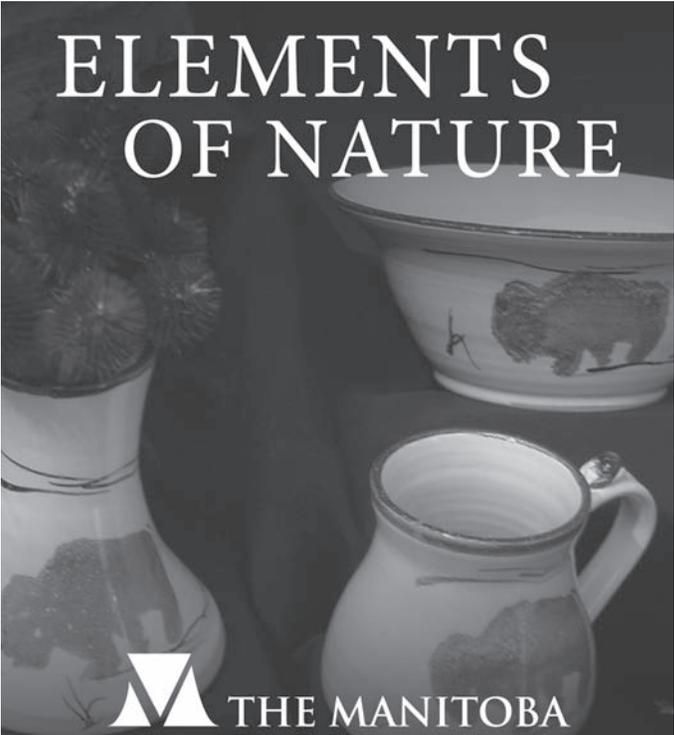
Always buying interesting books.

Monday to Saturday 11-6; Sundays Noon-5

527 Osborne St. Winnipeg 204-284-4546
www.lysecki.com

MEMBER: ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

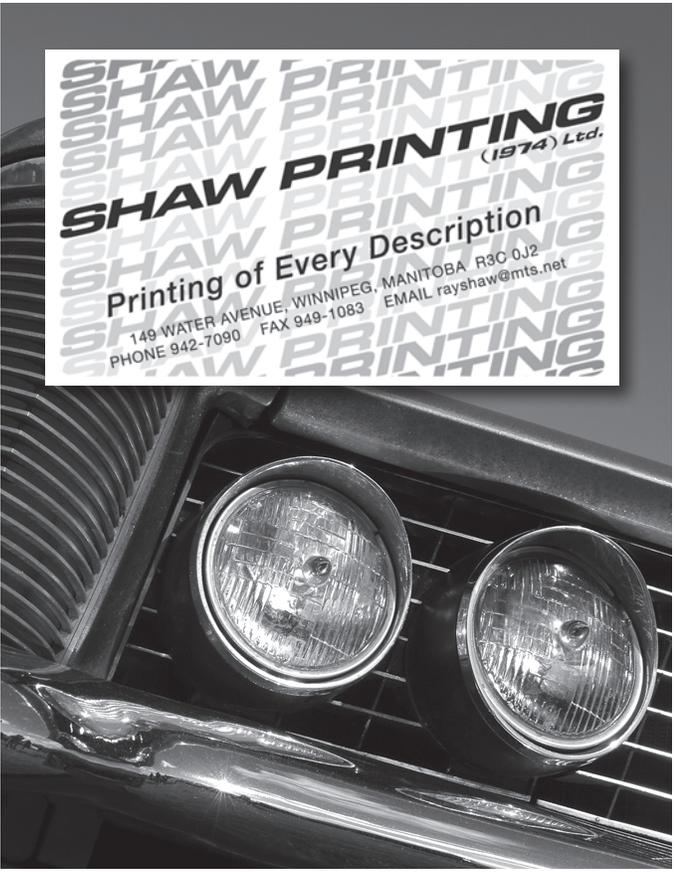
ELEMENTS OF NATURE



**THE MANITOBA
MUSEUM SHOP**

unique, distinctive, exclusive

Open 11-4pm Phone: (204) 988 0615



SHAW PRINTING
(1974) Ltd.
SHAW PRINTING
Printing of Every Description
149 WATER AVENUE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA R3C 0J2
PHONE 942-7090 FAX 949-1083 EMAIL rayshaw@mts.net

Greenfield Books Ltd.

Member:
Antiquarian Booksellers'
Association of Canada

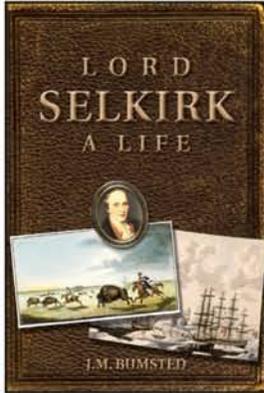
**We buy and sell books and
ephemera on Winnipeg
and Manitoba history.**

by appointment at:
217 Academy Road, Winnipeg
204-488-2023
mail@greenfieldbooks.com

Our books online at
www.greenfieldbooks.com

Cozy up to Canadian History

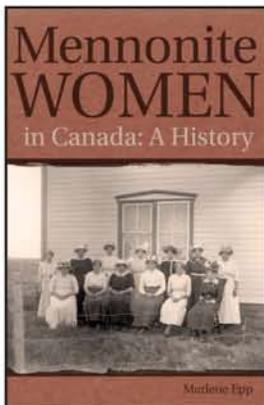
NEW BOOKS FOR LONG WINTERS



Lord Selkirk: A Life
by **J.M. Bumsted**

The product of three decades of research, *Lord Selkirk: A Life* is the definitive biography of Lord Selkirk. Bumsted's passionate prose and thoughtful analysis illuminate not only the man, but also the political and economic realities of the British empire at the turn of the nineteenth century. He analyzes Selkirk's position within these realities, showing how his paternalistic attitudes informed his "social experiments" in colonization and translated into unpredictable, and often tragic, outcomes. Bumsted also provides extensive detail on the complexities of colonization, the Scottish Enlightenment, Scottish peerage, the fur trade, the Red River settlement, and early British-Canadian politics. A must-read for all Manitoba history buffs!

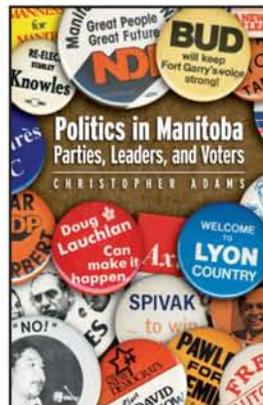
"This is the work of a scholar at the top of his game. There is not going to be a better biography of Selkirk in a very long time." – Robin Fisher, author of *Vancouver's Voyage*
978-0-88755-184-0 • Cloth • \$39.95



Mennonite Women in Canada: A History
by **Marlene Epp**

"Here at last is a sophisticated yet highly accessible study of the remarkably diverse types of Mennonite women who have helped shape the history of Canadian society." – Franca Iacovetta, author of *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*

978-0-88755-706-4 • Paper • \$26.95



Politics in Manitoba Parties, Leaders, and Voters
by **Christopher Adams**

The first comprehensive review of the Manitoba party system that combines history and contemporary public opinion data to reveal the political and voter trends that have shaped the province of Manitoba over the past 130 years.

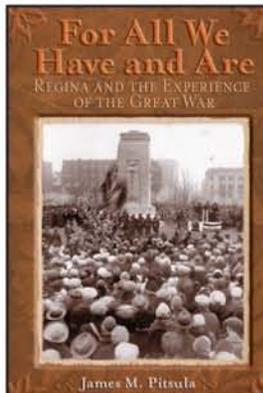
978-0-88755-704-0 • Paper • \$24.95



Perspectives of Saskatchewan
by **Jene M. Porter, ed.**

Eighteen noted scholars present an in-depth look at the major developments in the province's history, including art, literature, politics, First Nations history, northern development, and religion.

978-0-88755-183-3 • Cloth • \$49.95



For All We Have and Are Regina and the Experience of the Great War
by **James M. Pitsula**

A vivid account of the impact of World War I on the city of Regina, from soldiers on the battlefield, to women on the home front. "Sets a high standard for local historians and should be welcomed as a model." – Desmond Morton

978-0-88755-708-8 • Paper • \$26.95