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THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES, 1870-1905

Although brief in time span the development of the North-West Territories to 1905 encompassed some of the most stirring and significant developments in the life of the nation during this period. And the history of the present day North-West Territories since 1905 reveals many of the same issues in the struggle to escape a colonial relationship with the federal government and to promote economic progress and settlement. This is the chief problem of Canada’s North today, and territorial opinion is vigorous and emphatic on the same issues.

I The Acquisition of the North-West by Canada

Acquisition of the North West was one of the important objectives of the Fathers of Confederation. As the Quebec Resolutions of 1864 stated: “The North-West Territory, British Columbia and Vancouver shall be admitted into the Union on such terms and conditions as the Parliament of the Federated Provinces shall deem equitable, and as shall receive the assent of Her Majesty; and in the case of British Columbia or Vancouver, as shall be agreed to by the Legislature of each Province.” Apprehension regarding American expansionist ambitions prompted the Macdonald-Brown coalition government to declare that the future interests of Canada and all British North America required the establishment of a strong government in the North West.

A strong government, in the view of the Conservative administration, meant a system in which the territorial government would not be permitted to obstruct federal authority and policy. Section 146 of the British North America Act provided that the legislatures of the colonies of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and British Columbia should take the initiative in seeking admission to the union, but in the case of Rupert’s Land the Parliament of Canada would take the initiative, and also create the territorial constitution. The same principle applied to what was called the North Western Territory, the vast unorganized area of Crown land situated north and west of Rupert’s Land. This procedure, so far as Rupert’s Land was concerned, was to arouse the hostility of Louis Riel and the métis settlers in the Red River Settlement who claimed that they had been ignored by the British and Canadian governments. It was the Canadian government which bore the brunt of this hostility during the disturbances of 1869-70.
II Constitutional Development

In the history of the North-West Territories the evolution of the constitution is one of the central themes. The initial form of this constitution was set forth in "an Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory when united with Canada," passed in 1869. Sir John A. Macdonald described it as a provisional territorial government. It provided for the appointment of a Lieutenant-Governor who was to administer the government under periodic instructions from Ottawa, and a Council to aid in administration of not less than seven or more than fifteen members, appointed from Ottawa.

Although Macdonald planned to appoint some residents of the Red River Settlement to the Council, the movement led by Riel prevented fulfillment of this intention. Riel's successful resistance to the imposition of federal authority led to the creation of the diminutive province of Manitoba, and the reservation of 1,400,000 acres for the métis. The vast remaining part of the North West continued to be administered under the original legislation. The economy-minded Conservative administration combined the offices of Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba and the Territories, a system which continued until 1876. The first Council was formally constituted late in 1872 by the appointment of eleven members. Only two were residents of the Territories since the majority of men with a knowledge of the North West lived in Manitoba. Meanwhile in 1871 Parliament replaced the temporary government act, which was due to expire, with another act in exactly the same terms rather than one providing a carefully designed constitution.

In the 1870's the métis made their way west, to escape the insults of the white settlers in Winnipeg, and to continue to hunt the buffalo which were still available until the early 1880's. They sold their claims to land in Manitoba at prices which were notoriously cheap. Some made their way as far west as the missions at Lac Ste. Anne and Lac la Biche. More of them established settlements at Batoche, St. Laurent and St. Louis on the South Saskatchewan River. There was also a small settlement at Qu'Appelle Lakes.

While the métis were migrating west, a political change was taking place which was to have an important effect on the Territories. The accession to power of the Liberal Party in 1873, headed by Alexander Mackenzie, seemed to provide assurance of an improved territorial constitution since the Liberals while in opposition were consistently critical of Macdonald's handling of North West affairs. The new constitution was unveiled in 1875 when Parliament passed
“The North West Territories Act.” It had two noteworthy features — a Governor resident in the Territories (the capital was located in Battleford till 1882, and from 1882 to 1905 in Regina), and a provision which permitted the election of members to the territorial council as population increased. When the number of elected councillors numbered twenty-one the Council would be replaced by a Legislative Assembly.

Unfortunately the Act of 1875 suffered from hasty drafting, and the creation of an Assembly was not clearly stated as introducing the principle of responsible government. Macdonald’s comment as chief opposition critic was that they “should not clog themselves with the clause introducing the popular element,” a clear indication of the reactionary spirit with which the constitution would be administered whenever he returned to power. Another defect was the failure to provide for territorial representation in Parliament. The Act conferred the right to separate schools then prevailing in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, and by a further amendment in 1877 gave equality to French and English in the courts and the records and proceedings of the Council. Another provision, the establishment of prohibition, aroused the hostility of the settlers, but was successful in promoting the peaceful settlement of the Territories.

The first resident Governor of the Territories, David Laird, was a conscientious administrator who established good relations with the settlers and Indians, but was not interested in constitutional issues. He was favoured by Mackenzie because of his stern morality, caution, and devotion to duty. The three Council members initially appointed included a magistrate, a lawyer, and the commissioner of the Mounted Police, but no representative of the métis people. Laird called for such an appointment, and Pascal Breland was selected, but he was an old man who spent most of his time in Manitoba and was not well known to the métis of the South Saskatchewan River valley. Before the end of Laird’s term the first elected councillor was chosen in 1881. He was a Hudson’s Bay Company factor; although his electoral district included the métis settlements, the English-speaking Prince Albert voters determined the outcome.

Mackenzie’s refusal to sanction an amnesty for the two French leaders of the Red River disturbances simply heightened the sense of grievance of the métis people and alienated them from the institutions of the Territories. Nor did the newspapers in Battleford and Regina, which posed as spokesmen for territorial interests, give any support to this element of the population.
Early in May, 1873, a band of American whiskey traders crossed the boundary at Cypress Hills and massacred over thirty Indian men, women and children. Lawlessness also prevailed in the Saskatchewan valley. Colonel Robertson Ross and Lieutenant Butler, and the North West Council, all urged the establishment of a military force. The result was the organization of the North West Mounted Police, which marched west in 1874 to the site of the Cypress Hills massacre. The police soon established themselves in the opinion of the Indians as their protectors.

One of the federal government’s initial activities in the West was to negotiate a series of Indian treaties to assure peaceful settlement. The first Indian treaty of 1871 with the Chippewa and Swampy Cree covered Manitoba; the second released an area which is today central Manitoba and a small part of south-eastern Saskatchewan, held by the Chippewa. The third, negotiated in 1873, was with the Saulteau of the Lake of the Woods district. In 1874 the Qu’Appelle Treaty was signed by Lieutenant-Governor Morris with the Assiniboines, Cree, and Saulteaux of the area adjoining Treaty No. 2, stretching from Cypress Hills to Lake Winnipegosis. Treaty number 6 signed at Ft. Carleton in 1876 with the Plain and Wood Cree covered a large area comprising the valley of the North Saskatchewan to the Rockies, where the Indians were warlike and hostile to white settlement. Treaty 7, signed in 1877, was with the powerful Blackfoot Confederacy of southern Alberta, headed by the able chief Crowfoot.

The integration of the Indian into Canadian society was the ultimate objective of official policy, and to promote this, positive action by the federal government was necessary. It was assumed that to “make them good, industrious and useful citizens” a long-term policy was necessary, involving the establishment of reserves of land, the development of competence in other forms of labour than the hunt, and the creation of an interest in agriculture. A few Indians accepted this program, but the majority were restive and unwilling to give up the hunt in favour of sedentary occupations. Late in 1883 they were all settled upon reserves, but in succeeding years the other features of the policy were not notably successful.

In 1871 a survey system was adopted, similar to the American square township of thirty-six 640-acre sections. Allotments already taken up along the river banks were laid out in narrow lots for the benefit of the squatters already in the area. The survey of the Canadian West was the largest area in the world on the same system,
and was remarkably accurate. Each year’s activity showed that the amount of arable land was much larger than had been estimated. John Macoun, the botanist, demonstrated that the southern part of the Territories was not as arid as Captain John Palliser, the British explorer, and Professor Hind had predicted. The original route for the Canadian Pacific Railway ran north west from Winnipeg to the Yellowhead Pass. Macoun’s findings permitted the line to run due west from Winnipeg.

The Canadian Pacific was organized in 1881, committed to an all Canadian route and to a connection with Vancouver within ten years. The speed of construction was amazingly rapid, and the line reached the crossing of the South Saskatchewan in 1883. A point where a creek crossed the main line was reached in the spring of 1882, and here Regina, the future capital of the Territories, was located. The summit of the Rockies was reached in June, 1883. Until the discovery of the Kicking Horse Pass, it was anticipated that the line might have to be diverted north to the Yellowhead from a point in the south. Finally the line reached Vancouver in 1885, thus completing one of the great projects of Canadian history.

The federal government adopted a land policy early in 1871. It was provided that a homestead of 160 acres could be granted free to the head of a family or an individual twenty-one years old. A patent was available at the end of three years, after proof of occupancy and cultivation was submitted to the land agent. Another form of land grant was the ranch, which was to dominate the economy of southern Alberta. Ranching proper, which involved the ranging of cattle throughout the year, began in 1877. The federal government provided for ranches of 100,000 acres in 1881. The cattle were sold in the towns along the line of the C.P.R., and in 1887 the first train-load was shipped to the British market.

IV The French in the North West

In the first Commons debate on the acquisition of the North-West, the most eloquent spokesman for expansionism among the ministers was the Hon. Alexander Morris. “Long years ago,” he said, “the Jesuit Fathers and the Early French pioneers and traders passed up the Ottawa from Montreal into the valleys of the Red River of the North and the Saskatchewan, and settled themselves there with an enterprise which we would do well to follow. Surely, Sir, with the advance which railways and steam have given us we can follow where the early French settlers found their way.” But despite this generous tribute to the French enterprise in the Territories
it was only the missionaries, particularly the pioneer priest Father Lacombe of Lac Ste. Anne, who made any effort to promote settlement.

The French in the St. Lawrence valley became involved in the clash between the competing expansionism of Ontario and Quebec. In this contest the French were at a serious disadvantage due to a number of considerations. There was no spontaneous movement similar to that generated in Ontario based on an optimism regarding the rewards of Western settlement. While the French regarded the country as an infertile, hostile land, Ontarians relied on the scientific opinion of Professor Hind, of the Hind and Dawson Expeditions of 1857 and 1858. Hind, a professor of geology and natural history at Trinity College, Toronto, spent two years in the North West, the first in the Red River Settlement, the second travelling over four thousand miles covering a vast rectangle as far west as the South Saskatchewan. Hind estimated that this area, along with the present-day Manitoba, contained a large area of agricultural and grazing land. Dawson’s estimate of the area of fertile land was more optimistic, and more accurate. It is interesting to note that while Hind had a poor estimate of the métis, Dawson’s report was much more favorable and would have changed the course of Canadian history a decade later if MacDonald and his colleagues had given it the attention it deserved.

French Canadian emigration to the West was slight despite the hopes of those who had migrated to Manitoba after 1870. The attractions of individual success in a frontier region were offset by the attitude promoted by intellectuals and clerics in Quebec which stressed the virtues of a self-sufficient rural community. Colonization of the unsettled regions of Lower Canada was considered preferable to what was regarded as leaving the homeland, and this attitude doomed the appeals of French representatives in Manitoba and the Territories. The numerical inferiority of the French permitted the attacks on the French language in Manitoba in the 1870’s which were taken up later by the territorial government.

Settlement of the prairie west was a formidable experience even for English-Canadian settlers with their relatively substantial financial resources and their ability to adapt Ontario agricultural experience. In Quebec, on the other hand, improvement in agricultural technique had lagged, and there was reason to expect that the failure rate among French Canadians would be higher. Moreover while the French emigrated as a family group, the English-speaking immigrant left his family in the East until he had established himself or, if he were a bachelor, until he was ready to seek a bride. The English Canadian
thought nothing of leaving his family and working on the railroad
during the winter, whereas this opportunity was ignored by the pub-
licity literature circulated in Quebec.

V The North West Rebellion

Undoubtedly the most dramatic episode in territorial history
was the Saskatchewan, or second Riel Rebellion. The frustration of
Riel and the métis and a group of English-speaking sympathisers in
the Prince Albert district with the tardy action on land claims, the
refusal to extend the river lot survey, and the failure to grant parlia-
mentary representation was the root cause of the Rebellion. Edgar
Dewdney, Laird’s successor, did nothing to dispel the grievances
except to suggest that the métis could be pacified by a few thousand
dollars spent on employment grading roads. This completely ignored
Riel’s demands, embodied in a bill of rights which included a request
for provincial status and action to improve the social and economic
needs of his people and the native Indians. Riel’s trial and execution
in Regina in 1885 set off shock waves which convulsed the politics of
Eastern Canada.

Edgar Dewdney was a vigorous promoter of Conservative party
interests and sought by various means to protect the reputation of
the Macdonald administration on all occasions. During the Rebellion
the Prince Albert Times, a caustic critic of the administration, in
its vehement editorials fed the flames in the area of greatest unrest:
Dewdney silenced the paper by extending financial assistance to the
publisher, producing an abrupt change of policy. But he was unable
to silence the Edmonton Bulletin, whose editor wrote, “If history is
to be taken as a guide, what could be plainer than that without re-
bellion the people of the North West need expect nothing, while with
rebellion they may reasonably expect to get their rights.” Looking
back on the events of 1885 the Council majority declared, “Knowing
as we do the great influence always had over the Indians by the Half-
Breeds, we have to regret that the repeated representations heretofore
made by the North-West Council, on behalf of the Half-Breeds and
their claims, did not receive more immediate attention.” In the long
and acrimonious debate which followed Dewdney resorted to charging
one member with lack of devotion to the Conservative party.

And so the Saskatchewan Rebellion came to an end with the
hanging of Riel at Regina. The resulting cleavage between English
Canada and Quebec became one of the tragedies of Canadian life.
As for Riel himself, he has in recent years attained the position of a
folk hero among many westerners, although no such view was evident
in the Territories at the time. The territorial newspapers and the public were unanimous in condemning him and approving his execution. Nor was there any recognition a year later when the Territories gained parliamentary representation that it was the Rebellion which had prompted this belated reform.

VI The Development of Territorial Autonomy

In the preparation of legislation Dewdney proved to be helpful in arranging for the drafting of bills for Council consideration. Of 125 ordinances only one was disallowed by the federal government. The judges among the appointed councillors also proved to be helpful in improving the drafts. And as chief administrator of the daily activities of the territorial government, including the dispensing of funds on public works and education there was general praise of Dewdney's fairness and interest. So far as the federal government was concerned, Macdonald had every reason to be satisfied with what he described as the Governor's discharge of his function as "a paternal despot . . . governed by instructions from Head Quarters."

The activities in the Council in late 1886 stressed three areas of concern. Despite the grant of parliamentary representation, it became a regular practice of the Council, and later the Assembly, to transmit memorials to the federal government containing references to the distinctive needs and interests of the settlers in the plains region dealing with such matters as land regulations, transportation facilities, freight rates, and the tariff. Another preoccupation of the council was the early establishment of the Legislative Assembly. Finally, the provision of adequate financial resources was a major concern.

In 1888 the Legislative Assembly was established by parliament, consisting of twenty-five members including three judges without voting powers. To meet the criticism that there was no provision for an executive body the bill was amended to provide for an "advisory council in matters of finance," four in number and presided over by the Governor with voting power. But the jurisdiction of the Council did not cover the whole field of territorial administration, and the Governor retained exclusive control of the annual Parliamentary grant.

The elections to the Assembly were held in the late spring of 1888 and Joseph Royal, the new Governor, arranged for the selection of the first Advisory Council. Of the four selected, F.W.G. Haultain, a young lawyer from Macleod, soon gained a position of pre-eminence. For over a year the Council performed its functions as expected,
then late in 1889 it suddenly resigned. The members complained that the Governor's handling of certain administrative matters ran counter to Council wishes, that the Assembly was judging them by ideal standards, and that their powers were granted in the form of concessions rather than inherent rights. Obviously Haultain and his supporters were seeking to dramatize the inadequacies of the existing system in an attempt to force the federal government to undertake a reorganization. Dewdney, who was selected as Minister of the Interior in August, 1888, and a month later was elected in a by-election for Assiniboia East, became the chief spokesman of the federal government in its resistance to the Assembly and in support of the anti-Haultain forces. The leader of the new Council was Dr. R. O. Brett, the member for Red Deer. In November, 1889, Brett resigned, but Haultain and his supporters were unable to gain immediate control of the executive, with the result that it was arranged that Thomas Tweed, a Medicine Hat businessman, and J. R. Neff, a farmer in the Moosomin area should disburse the Territorial funds until the next meeting of the Assembly. By this time Royal had become very embittered with the majority in the Assembly, yet the critic of his conduct must realize that as a French Canadian he had very few friends in the Territories, and it was natural for him to seek to retain the approval of the federal authorities.

Early in 1890 the Minister of Justice reported that the ordinance which had made Tweed and Neff a council of two was beyond the powers of the Assembly. Royal's response was to call on Brett to head the Advisory Council. One of the most important activities of this Council was to advise the federal government on the amendment of the North West Territories Act which Ottawa was now ready to implement. The amendment of 1891 increased the powers of the assembly with regard to property law, the use of the French language in its proceedings, the boundaries of the electoral districts, and the use of intoxicants in the provisional districts. The legal experts were dispensed with. For the first time territorial funds and parliamentary appropriations could be expended by the Lieutenant-Governor on the advice of the Assembly or a committee of that body. This was a major landmark in the development of territorial autonomy. While this amendment did not meet all the wishes of the Brett Council, it must be credited with an important constitutional achievement. Brett carried on the routine business of the Territories until the middle of 1891 when it became obvious that he would be unable to command a majority in the next Assembly. When the House met late in 1891, Haultain and his associates resumed the leadership and elected J. H. Ross as Speaker. The next activity was to create the
committee authorized by the amendment to the North-West Territori
tories Act.

The ordinance provided for the establishment of a body to be
known as the Executive Committee of the North-West Territories
to aid and advise in the Government of the Territories. It was to
consist of not less than four members who might receive salaries.
The significance of this measure was that it created a body which
was a close approximation to an executive council operating on the
principles of responsible government: the members were to take an
oath of office, and the Governor was excluded from membership.
The day after assenting to the bill Royal called on Haultain to form
a Committee, and on December 31, 1891, he announced the names
of the other members of the Committee.

Although Haultain was to face more opposition in the years to
come, he remained the dominant member of the Assembly. He was
an efficient and honest administrator, possessing distinguished in-
tellectual and oratorical gifts. He was the most vigorous champion
of North West interests, but he showed little sympathy for
French Canadian and Roman Catholic aspirations. In 1892 the use
of French in recording and publishing the proceedings of the Assembly
was abolished by a resolution introduced by Haultain. Moreover
throughout the 1890's he succeeded by successive amendments to the
Schools Ordinance in centralizing control of education in Regina and
reducing the powers of the separate school districts.

In 1892 the Assembly met in August in order to facilitate the
appropriation of the federal grant as soon as possible after the proroga-
tion of Parliament. One of the most important bills which was
introduced proposed to abolish the Board of Education with its
Protestant and Catholic sections and centralize and secularize educa-
tional administration in the hands of the Executive Committee. This
conformed to Haultain's anti-Catholic views. The bill was defeated
by a combination of district jealousies, clashing political ambitions
and personal dislikes, as well as disagreement on educational policy.
In addition to the critics of the school bill, there were the members of
the Brett group and the personal rivalry between Haultain and Hugh
St. Quinton Cayley, a lawyer and member for Calgary. Following
Haultain's defeat the Governor called on Cayley to head the Execu-
tive Committee in September, 1892. Shortly thereafter Cayley lost
a crucial by-election and he announced that he would carry on the
government and then resign when the Assembly met in November,
1892.
One of the next activities of the Haultain Committee was to pass an ordinance making the Committee a permanent body and permitting it to make a quorum of one to strengthen the position of the resident member at the Capital. Royal objected to the bill but the federal government refused to become involved.

In 1893 Haultain went to Ottawa to advocate the views of the Committee through personal interviews. Although he did not secure an increase in the parliamentary appropriation or the establishment of a subsidy, he secured two concessions. The first was a special section in the Supply Act which provided that “the amounts granted . . . for the Government of the North-West Territories shall not be deemed to have lapsed if not expended within the year for which they are granted.” Instead of being paid by letters of credit issued to Haultain and Royal jointly (and during the Cayley Committee regime to Royal and Gordon at the insistence of the Auditor-General), Haultain insisted on a change, and a federal Order-In-Council met his views by specifying that in future the credits were to be made in favor of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and “the chief member of the executive committee.”

VII The Effect of Socio-Economic Developments

The drought of the late eighties brought a sudden decline in migration from Ontario, the United States and Britain, where it was believed that the West was unsuited to farming. It was not until the summer-fallowing technique was developed at the federal experimental farm at Indian Head that the farmers who remained in the West succeeded in their efforts. However this period saw the first European immigration to the Territories, some of it sponsored by the Manitoba and Northwestern Railway, constructed from Winnipeg to the Yorkton district in the eighties, and also by the C.P.R. This was when the German, Danish and English colonies were established.

The District of Saskatchewan, though located in the park belt country, suffered severely from the drought, and the settlers took to stock raising which remained as the dominant form of agriculture in the Saskatoon region till the early years of the century. It was not until American settlers, familiar with dry farming methods, settled on the lands of the Regina to Prince Albert Railway, completed in 1890, that the economy became based on wheat growing. In the District of Alberta prospective homesteaders were much impressed by the parkland between Calgary and Edmonton. The railway line from Calgary to Edmonton, completed in 1891, and from Lethbridge to Medicine Hat, opened up the rich and varied regions of the District.
The decade of the 1890's was characterized by the migration of European settlers not previously represented in the Territories. Mennonites were located north of Saskatoon in 1891, French from France at Domremy and St. Louis in 1893, Hungarians near Yorkton a year later, and Ukrainians on the east side of the South Saskatchewan north of Saskatoon in 1897, and the Doukhobors near Yorkton in 1889. In the District of Alberta in the Edmonton area, Ukrainians, French Canadians, and French from Belgium were settled, and among groups already represented in the West, Scandinavians, Icelanders, and a very large settlement of Germans. Although the Territories were assuming a cosmopolitan character, the English-speaking settlers were much more numerous than the Europeans. With a few exceptions, they were widely dispersed instead of in group settlements.

An example of the federal government's extensive administrative activity in the Territories was its support of a project to encourage the manufacture and export of cheese and skimmed milk. The government provided an advance on the construction of a plant and an advance on revenue from sales. The great advantage of the scheme was the encouragement it gave to farm diversification in the park belt, an area suited to dairy farming.

During the late nineties there were a variety of economic and social developments affecting the Territories. The Canadian Pacific Railway built its Crowsnest Pass line in 1897 and, in return for government support, agreed to a reduction of rates. Another development was the increase in the number of small ranches as the farmers acquired leases around their farms, offsetting the break-up of the large ranches. The same period also saw the development of irrigation on a large scale in southern Alberta and the resulting production of coarse grains for livestock.

The farm movement which had begun with the radical settlers unions of the eighties which advocated low tariffs, fairer freight rates and increased powers of self-government, evolved into a political party in the nineties, the Patrons of Industry. The Patrons were instrumental in the election of the Rev. James Moffat Douglas in Assiniboia East in the general election of 1896. Douglas was responsible for the passage of the Manitoba Grain Act, which also applied to the Territories, providing for the protection of the farmers by the appointment of a commissioner at Winnipeg, with powers of supervision of the grain trade west of Fort William. The C.P.R. was also compelled to provide protection from elevator companies by arranging for direct loading platforms which the farmers could use.
to market grain in Winnipeg. The disappearance of the Patrons led to the formation of still another farmers’ organization, the Territorial Grain Growers Association, in 1902.

The northern part of the Territories remained the domain of the Indian and Eskimo, the clients of the Hudson’s Bay Company and its competitors. But in the lonely river valleys adjacent to Alaska a few gold seekers wandered from creek to creek, undeterred by a harsh climate and formidable topography. By the early 1890’s the Yukon River valley had attracted a large enough population to justify the dispatch of the federal police to halt the Americanization of the frontier. In the following year, 1895, the Yukon District was created and after the Bonanza Creek discovery it became obvious that the District could no longer be administered from Regina. In 1898 parliament created the Yukon Territory with its own executive authority, the Commissioner, and an appointed Council similar to the North West Council of 1872.

VIII The Winning of Responsible Government

The Lieutenant-Governor appointed in 1893 was an Ottawa journalist and Member of Parliament, Charles Herbert Mackintosh. He had no previous connection with the West and was selected primarily for faithful service to the Conservative party. He had an extraordinary sense of self-importance which, had the autonomy movement not been so far advanced by this time, would have created endless conflict and controversy. After three months in his new post he made the extraordinary claim that he knew almost everybody in the Territories either by meeting them or by correspondence. Haultain, he wrote the Prime Minister, was rather inclined to pigheadedness. “I fear power was yielded”, he continued, “and privileges granted before the proper time.”

In correspondence and in a conference in Ottawa Haultain submitted estimates which would have doubled the annual grant. He also proposed the elimination of the federal audit since the lump sum grant did not lapse and a local audit was all that was necessary. The increase fell far short of the territorial request, and there is no doubt that Mackintosh’s influence was decisive. He was particularly critical of the sums being spent on schools, although providing good schools was one of the primary concerns of the settlers.

When he made his financial proposals Haultain also urged the replacement of the Executive Committee by an Executive Council operating on the principle of responsible government, but no change
in territorial legislative powers. However, the amendment to the North-West Territories Act which was introduced in 1894 had one clause establishing an Executive Council with another clause retaining the Executive Committee. Haultain could hardly contain his chagrin and astonishment. "Why . . . in dealing with North-West matters," he wrote the Minister of the Interior, "should you continually resort to heroic and unprecedented remedies when you have such familiar examples to follow as the English, Federal, and Provincial constitutions." The Minister seemed incapable of distinguishing between provincial autonomy and responsible government, and argued that the two were inseparable. On the other hand, the Act did have the merit of increasing the powers of the Assembly. These consisted of control over the number of seats, the size of a quorum, the salary of the Speaker, the sessional indemnity, the extension of the term of the Assembly from three to four years, and the power to incorporate tramway and street railway companies.

The drought of the early 1890's posed a new problem in finance and administration. In 1895 Haultain was again in Ottawa, but there was no supplementary vote to recoup the territorial treasury for relief expenditure. The only benefit of the visit was an extension of the Assembly's powers of incorporating companies to include cooperative associations for irrigation projects and local omnibus and baggage transfer companies. Apart from these concessions the Minister of the Interior in the Commons debate summed up the federal position in the following terms "the North-West Territories Government is still in leading strings".

The estimates which Haultain submitted to Ottawa for 1897 totalled some $378,000.00, whereas the cabinet approved only $242,000.00. With the victory of the Liberals in the election of 1896 a memorial was adopted by the Assembly for submission to Ottawa requesting the extension of the powers of the Assembly to include the incorporation of hospitals and asylums and complete control over real property, as well as the establishment of an Executive Council, to correct the inconsistent arrangements of the North-West Territories Amendment Act of 1894. The financial proposals involved a four-year subsidy made up of a per capita grant and per capita debt allowance which would increase with the growth of population, and a grant taking into account that the natural resources remained under federal control. If these proposals were adopted, the territorial government would be able to effectively plan its financial commitments each year.

The attitude of the new Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton of Manitoba, seemed encouraging. "The swaddling clothes plan of
treateding the North-West (has) come to an end,” he declared in a speech at Moosomin. But the declaration proved to be essentially political rhetoric. While an amendment to the North-West Territories Act created an Executive Council, and on October 1, 1897, Mackintosh invited Haultain to form the first ministry. The extensions of legislative authority were, except for some minor exceptions, rejected. Even more disappointing was the response to the financial proposals. The amount approved for 1897-98 involved an increase of only $40,000.00.

IX The Achievement of Provincial Status

During the 1890’s and culminating in the grant of responsible government in 1897, all of Haultain’s energies were concentrated on the achievement of this reform. But this still left the territorial government without the benefit of the annual subsidies and per capita grants which were paid to the provinces, whereas its financial commitments were soaring due to the rapid increase in population. Additional money was urgently needed for schools and public works. Beginning in 1898 Premier Haultain and the newly elected Assembly requested immediate improvement in the financial terms of the relationship with the federal government and also the implementation of provincial status. Although Haultain was a Conservative in federal politics his stand on provincial status was ably supported by the chief Liberal spokesman in the Territories, J. H. Ross.

All of the implications of the autonomy issue were widely discussed throughout the Territories during 1900, following the circulation of a masterly address which Haultain had delivered in the Assembly earlier in the year. The Minister of the Interior seemed favorably disposed, although time was to prove this deceptive. In October, 1901, Premier Haultain arrived in Ottawa with a comprehensive draft for a provincial constitution. Although given active support by an influential western Liberal member, Walter Scott of Regina, the response of the Minister was outright rejection of the territorial request. “It was not wise at the present time,” he wrote Haultain in the spring of 1902, “to pass legislation forming the North West Territories into a province or provinces.” The population had not yet increased sufficiently, and moreover “there is a considerable divergence of opinion respecting the question whether there should be one province only or more than one province.” The Minister was obviously referring to the opposition to one province in the District of Alberta led by R. B. Bennett, and by two members from Assiniboia and Saskatchewan. These attitudes were generated by
the sense of identity produced by the federal government’s creation of provisional districts, Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Athabasca, in 1882 to assist its postal service. Macdonald had originally viewed these as becoming provinces in the future, and the public soon regarded them in this way. In addition to this sense of district consciousness there were the ambitions of Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Prince Albert to become provincial capitals.

After 1902 there was a rapid increase in the population of the Territories, which further strengthened Haultain’s case. In 1901 the Assembly endorsed a proposal introduced by him and Ross for the creation in 1903 of a single province comprising Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the portion of Athabasca south of the 57th parallel, an area of 404,000 square miles. This was passed unanimously, but following the territorial general election of 1902 a minority in the Assembly advocated the creation of two provinces in the North West. Haultain had long been an advocate of one province between Manitoba and British Columbia — “a good strong province”, as he put it in 1896, with a diversity of resources.

In the House of Commons, the Conservative Party took up the cause of provincial autonomy and in September, 1904, Laurier capitulated to these pressures and notified Haultain that if his party was victorious, an autonomy measure would be introduced at the next session in consultation with the members of Parliament for the Territories. The bills creating the two new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were introduced in Parliament early in 1905. They conferred all the powers other provinces possessed except for the requirements that they maintain the system of separate schools and that the natural resources would remain under federal control. It was Haultain’s vociferous opposition to these features of the constitution which led Lieutenant-Governor Forget to select Walter Scott, the leader of the Liberal party in Saskatchewan, rather than Haultain, to head the first provincial administration in Saskatchewan. Instead he became the leader of the opposition, having organized the Provincial Rights Party. A few years later his political career ended when he was appointed to the Supreme Court of the province.

X Conclusions

Evolving from a simple form of government in 1870 with the federal administration assuming all the trappings of an imperial power, the Territories asserted their rights to self-government. The pervasive involvement of the federal government in land administration and other measures which would advance the national policy
was acceptable to Westerners; this tended to create indifference to territorial politics, which was further handicapped by national party loyalties and personal political ambitions. But at the same time there was widespread support for self government which took the form of keeping constitutional progress in step with social and economic development.

There were other developments in the Territories prior to 1905, however, which continued as issues of public concern down to our own day. The continuance of federal control of the natural resources of the prairie provinces until 1930 was one of the sources of the alienation which exacerbated relations with central Canada. Moreover only a start had been made in dealing with the complex question of the most satisfactory relationship between whites and Indians in the plains, parklands and forested regions of the North-West. The best utilization and conservation of farm lands had received little attention while the frantic rush of homesteaders was proceeding. The prairie West long remained a one-crop economy, vulnerable to sudden changes in climate and world market demand. The discovery and development of mineral resources had only just begun. The development of public services had been largely confined to public works and a public school system; municipal government, outside of a few towns, was in a rudimentary state. A territorial university had been chartered but not brought into being. Communications with market towns and between settlements awaited the expansion of branch railway lines, highways, and a telephone system. Apart from the Yukon, the North remained an unknown land, still locked in the economy of the fur trade. The adjustment of the many and varied immigrant groups to the land and to each other remained to be resolved. These various challenges and dilemmas are among the principal issues in the history of the North-West in the 20th Century.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lingard, C. C., *Territorial Government in Canada: The Autonomy Question in the Old North-West Territories* (University of Toronto Press, 1946)

MacInnes, C. M., *In the Shadow of the Rockies* (Rivingtons, London, 1930)


Table 1

*Lieutenant-Governors of the North-West Territories*

Archibald, Adams George 1870-72  
Morris, Alexander 1872-76  
Laird, David 1876-81  
Dewdney, Edgar 1881-88  
Royal, Joseph 1888-93  
Mackintosh, Charles Herbert 1893-98  
Forget, Amédée Emmanuel 1898-1905

Table 2

*Population of the North-West Territories*  
(not including Indians)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>48,362</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>66,799</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>73,506</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>158,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>361,000 (est.)</td>
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